



It was not "Ye Plague" Oxfordian mythology about the cause of de Vere's death

By Paul Hemenway Altrocchi

For more than 80 years Stratfordians, unhampered by their vacuous premises and the impenetrable corneal opacities of their unyielding conventional wisdom, have enjoyed basting and barbecuing those who believe in Edward de Vere.

So convinced are Oxfordians, on the other hand, that they are the main repositories of Truth—"Vero Nihil Verius"—that they sometimes fail to police themselves with the self-criticism which is essential to hasten the inevitable paradigm shift.

Examples of Oxfordian myths carried on for decades include the false idea that Burghley's daughter, Anne, was "sweet" because Burghley said so¹, and that Oxfordians could debate Stratfordian professors with such powerful logic that they would "see the light" and promptly abandon their anoxic hypotheses.

A myth is an ill-founded belief held uncritically. This paper describes careless research by Oxfordians regarding the cause of Edward de Vere's death, and its uncritical transmittal for three quarters of a century.

The "Ye Plague" Myth

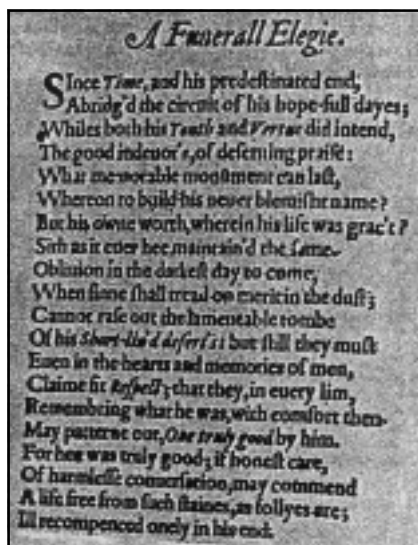
B.M. Ward, in his 1928 biography of de Vere², appears to have initiated the myth that Oxford died of the plague. Ward states:

In the margin of the page in the Parish Register in which the burial occurs has been written 'ye Plague.' It may be that his death at the age of fifty-four was due to this disease.

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Swan song for *Funeral Elegy*

Prof. Donald Foster concedes it's not by Shakespeare;
Oxfordian Richard Kennedy credited in turnaround



The first page from the 1612 *A Funerall Elegie*, the once-famous, but now infamous, poem (by the mysterious "W.S.") that Prof. Foster's computer said in 1995 was by Shakespeare. This claim was questioned by most Shakespeareans around the world right from the beginning. Yet in just a few years *Elegie* found its way into several prestigious Shakespeare collections, whose editors will now have to do a quick about-face and get it right back out.

Ashbourne story update

Barbara Burris's series on the Ashbourne portrait story will continue in our next issue (Fall 2002). Meanwhile, check our Letters page and From the Editors for some thoughts and comments about what we have published so far, particularly Part III and the incredible story of how the Folger Shakespeare Library apparently "engineered" the Hamersley attribution.

In a stunning turn of events in the authorship debate, reported in the June 20th *New York Times*, Prof. Donald Foster of Vassar College has thrown in the towel on his controversial 1995 claim to have found, in the 1612 poem *A Funerall Elegie* (which bore "by W.S." on its title page), a new poem by William Shakespeare.

The reason that this story has authorship overtones is that—as those involved in the authorship debate back then well know—the story behind the story in 1995-1996 was clearly the circa 1612 composition date for *Elegie*, which then—theoretically—put an end to Oxfordian claims that Edward de Vere was Shakespeare. His 1604 death would mean he couldn't have written *Elegie*, therefore he couldn't be Shakespeare.

Now, however, both Foster and his colleague Richard Abrams concede that the poem is most likely by John Ford, and credit the work of fellow scholars Prof. Brian Vickers of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, and Prof. Gilles D. Monsarrat of the University of Burgundy in France, for their concession. Prof. Monsarrat's article in the May *Review of English Studies*, in which he lauds Prof. Brian Vickers's work on *Elegie* (to appear in an upcoming book), makes the case for Ford as the true author.

And, in a further authorship twist to this story, Prof. Vickers credits Oxfordian Richard Kennedy (of Newport, Oregon) as "the first to identify John Ford as the author of the poem." Kennedy had advanced the issue by his research on the *Elegie* in 1996 and his forceful insistence in several Internet Shakespeare discussion forums that the real author of *Elegie* was John Ford, a prolific but undistinguished writer of verse—

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Letters:

To the Editors:

I enjoyed reading your article "Smithsonian showdown and New York Times feature article rock the authorship debate," (*Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2002) but there is one misrepresentation of fact in it, which I am sure is a result of a misunderstanding. You wrote:

Niederkorn's judicious but sympathetic treatment of the Oxford case marks a gigantic shift in attitude from *The New York Times* of a few years ago. In comments to the newsletter, Niederkorn underscored that attitudes towards the authorship question have shifted throughout the institution. . .

I have no knowledge of any shift of attitudes throughout *The Times*. What I tried to underscore in reply to questions on Oxford Day was that the thinking at *The Times* is not monolithic. Articles appear all the time depicting the different sides of various issues. Every writer brings an individual perspective to every piece, and editors bring individual perspectives as well.

Skepticism is a hallmark of journalism. The old adage to young writers in the news business is, "If your mother says she loves you, check it out." If anything, skepticism was the natural reaction to the subject of my article by my colleagues at *The Times*, not credulity. Come to think of it, Oxfordians I've met are more prone to skepticism than credulity, too.

William S. Niederkorn
The New York Times
New York, NY
29 May 2002

To the Editors:

Barbara Burris's researches into the Ashbourne portrait make fascinating reading (*Shakespeare Matters* Vol. 1, nos. 1, 2 and 3), revealing evidence of apparent skull-duggery committed by the Folger authorities on several occasions. Her main thesis is of course that the painting is not after all of Sir Hugh Hamersley, and painted in 1612, as claimed by the Folger, but of Oxford, painted in the late 1570s by Cornelius Ketel, as proposed by Charles Wisner Barrell in 1940.

Her main evidence for the earlier dat-

ing is the wrist ruffs worn by the Ashbourne sitter, which had gone out of fashion by mid-1580s, so that the date of 1612 originally painted on the picture is an impossibility. Never having taken much notice of wrist ruffs up till now, I thought I would look through the only book of Tudor and Jacobean portraits I have. Sure enough, all the sitters after about 1590 were wearing wrist cuffs rather than ruffs—apart that is from one painted by Michiel Jansz van Miereveld circa 1610, wearing what are undoubtedly wrist ruffs. The sitter was Sir Edward Cecil, later Viscount Wimbledon. The existence of just one person portrayed wearing wrist ruffs so long (25 years) after this style had supposedly gone out of fashion is enough to show that the Ashbourne could also have been painted around 1610, and removes one of the cornerstones of Barbara Burris's argument. Moreover, this portrait was painted in Holland; as a successful London merchant, it is not improbable that Hamersley would visit Holland now and again on business, and therefore possible that he was painted during such a visit, especially as the best Dutch painters were regarded as superior to any in England. As it happens, Cornelius Ketel returned to Holland in 1581, and died in 1616.

It seems to me that the existence of this

portrait of Sir Edward Cecil wearing wrist ruffs, painted around 1610, makes it impossible to claim that the Ashbourne *must* have been painted before 1585, although of course it may have been. There may be many good reasons for ruling out Hamersley as the sitter for the Ashbourne, but wrist ruffs are not one of them.

John M. Rollett
Ipswich, Suffolk, United Kingdom
30 June 2002

To the Editors:

Thank you for the splendid series on the Ashbourne portrait. However, a couple of points in Ms. Burris's Part III account (*Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2002) that my p. 9 statement did not cover deserve clarification.

On p. 16 Ms. Burris asks, "If this were truly a blind search," how could Helen Cyr know that the 1687 date listed "was a typographical error?" The answer is simple. She did *not* know and as Ms. Burris's narrative makes clear, Helen continued the search within the time available.

My 1979 statement (in the summer 1979 *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*) that 1687 was a "typographical error" is patently an *ex post facto* deduction from

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Editorial Offices
P.O. Box 263
Somerville, MA 02143

Co-Editors:
Dr. Roger Stritmatter, William Boyle

Contributing Editors:
Mark Anderson, Dr. Charles Berney,
Charles Boyle, Dr. Felicia Londre,
Alex McNeil, Dr. Anne Pluto,
Elisabeth Sears, Richard Whalen,
Hank Whittemore, Dr. Daniel Wright

Phone (Somerville, MA): (617) 628-3411
Phone (Northampton, MA): (413) 585-8610
Fax (Somerville, MA): (617) 628-4258
email: newsletter@ShakespeareFellowship.org
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The Shakespeare Fellowship
P.O. Box 561
Belmont MA 02478

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

The Society was founded and incorporated in 2001 in the State of Massachusetts and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state (nonprofit status pending).

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what the Folger told us during the “fortuitous” call to Ms. Lievsay the next day—“miraculous help,” indeed!

Also, it cannot be overemphasized that what Helen and I saw in 1979 were clearly indicative of a Hamersley shield: clearly rams’ heads, clearly yellow on a red shield, less clearly the letters “MORE” on the scroll, and the griffin crest. Burris’s statement that the “wrong date, added to the wrong colors...” (p. 16) made two strikes against Hamersley ought to be amended to “this wrong date made one strike,” etc., although I admit that such an amendment lessens the force of her argument.

But two other factors turned the tide for Helen and myself. The purported absence of the “CK” monogram and Michaels’s statement to us that the neck ruff and signet ring were original paint—misstatements as it now turns out.

All this persuaded Charlton Ogburn, Helen and myself that we had no choice but to give up. The Folger held all the cards, and we had the word of an allegedly trustworthy “expert.”

Gordon C. Cyr
Baltimore, Maryland
11 July 2002

To the Editors:

Mark Anderson’s amazing discovery of Gabriel Harvey’s boast that he could “dismask ... a rich mummer” and become “one of the famousest authors in England” (*Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2002) set a bell ringing in my head. I’ve finally identified the connection that was haunting me.

Elsewhere I have argued that in *Greene’s Groatworth of Wit* the word “supposes” in the following famous passage is to be understood in the obsolete Elizabethan sense of “pretends”:

... for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tyger’s hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes [that is, *pretends*] he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a cuntry.

If this is the meaning intended, an actor—very likely Shakspeare from Stratford—is being accused of *pretending* to be a playwright, just as Aesop’s crow *pretended*

to be a peacock by wearing a disguise.

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

Groatworth is known to have caused an uproar when it appeared. Was Harvey writing—probably only within six months of *Groatworth’s* appearance—that, if he had wanted to, he could have revealed the truth of the situation alluded to in *Groatworth*, and thus become a best-selling author? Was he saying that he could have “dismasked” the upstart actor who was “beautified” with others’ feathers?

If so, it also seems significant that Harvey should even think to bring up the rather non-sequitur subject of the fraudulent *Groatworth* actor in the course of writing his *Pierce* pamphlet—a pamphlet in which it seems Edward de Vere was very much on his mind.

Jonathan Dixon
Santa Fe, New Mexico
7 June 2002

To the Editors:

In your current issue of *Shakespeare Matters* (Spring 2002), Hank Whitemore has an interesting article and makes some good points, but I have a bit of a problem with the lack of rigor in the citations and format.

In the paragraph that starts “On Tuesday night,” he concludes with a sentence that is a quote from a historical document, using antique spelling—“certain Noblemen were admitted to the degree of Masters of Artes ... in her Grace’s lodging,” and then gives us a set of indented paragraphs naming various individuals in the Latin style (“Edwardus Vere, Comes Oxoniae”). This gives the impression that all of the indented paragraphs, which use antique spelling,

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From the Editors: Why the Ashbourne portrait matters

We had planned to publish Part IV of Barbara Burris’s series on the Ashbourne portrait in his issue, but a number of circumstances have forced us to delay it until our Fall 2002 issue.

We will take the opportunity in this space to comment on reactions to date. We feel this is important since some of the responses we have received are, (1) that this story is too long and complicated to be in the newsletter—it belongs in a journal, or better yet, a book, and (2) that we shouldn’t be criticizing the Folger Shakespeare Library about their handling of the Ashbourne.

So let us briefly consider both these concerns. First, true, it is a complicated story. But on the other hand it is an important story, one of the most important stories in the long, troubled history of the authorship debate. And Part IV will also be lengthy, discussing in detail some more fine points about how the painting changed over time, especially during the period 1979-1989.

Secondly, of the responses we have received so far, perhaps the most intriguing—and unsettling—have been those who advise us not to alienate the Folger Shakespeare Library. Given the long, bitter history of the authorship debate, this sort of response is, to us, incredible. The authorship debate is really more than a debate—it’s a battle, and a high-stakes battle at that. For it to ever be resolved, someone in the end must get hurt, because in the end someone is 100% wrong. And whoever is on the wrong side of this debate has missed more than “Who was Shakespeare.” They’ve missed also “Who writes history?” and “Who decides what is or is not true?”

In the course of this battle let us also remember how often each side has questioned the other’s integrity. So now, in Burris’s careful review of the Ashbourne story—immeasurably aided by the Folger’s own files—we find that one of the most prominent “purported” portraits of Shakespeare is, after all, almost certainly an overpainting of Edward de Vere—the true Shakespeare—and further, we find that the Folger has engaged in some highly questionable activities in order to deny that the original sitter for this “Shakespeare” portrait was the true Shakespeare.

If this isn’t worth a battle, then just what are we all doing here?

Elegy (continued from page 1)

and later plays—in the 17th century. The *Times* article also provides the incredible background story, which of course includes the swift endorsement of *Elegy* by three major publishers, including the prestigious *Riverside Shakespeare*.

How could the distinguished editors of that volume mistake the *Funeral Elegy* for a poem by Shakespeare? As noted above, the answer is simply this: a 1612 publication eulogizing a man who died in the same year was proof positive that Edward de Vere, who died in 1604, could not have been the real author: hence the precipitous and now slightly ridiculous rush to canonize the awful poem.

Stratfordians are denying that authorship played any role in the *Elegy* fiasco, but anyone who followed this story in 1995 and 1996 knows otherwise. Consider that less than two years after Donald Foster and Richard Abrams began promoting the case in earnest, the *Elegy* was canonized in the *Riverside Shakespeare*. It was subsequently reprinted in two other major collections,

including renowned Harvard scholar Stephen Greenblatt's own Norton edition, and endorsed by Harold Bloom as a poem by Shakespeare.

Greenblatt, who has reportedly received a million dollar advance from the Norton Co. to rescue the Stratford bard from the Oxford menace (in an upcoming biography tentatively titled *Will of the World*), fired off an irate letter to *The New York Times* (printed on June 22nd) in response to their June 20th article. Among other astonishing and unsubstantiated claims in the letter is that the re-attribution of the *Funeral Elegy* to John Ford has no bearing on the question of who wrote Shakespeare's plays.

Well, again, this is not true, and there's no escaping the paper trails left by all parties as the *Elegy* story unfolded six years ago. The *Elegy*, as Oxfordians have argued extensively since 1995, was a perfect magic bullet—and was endorsed by Dr. Foster as such in oral communications with interested parties—for slaying the Oxfordian dragon (see the Commentary by

Dan Wright on page 5). The Shakespeare industry endorsed the *Funeral Elegy* and its 1612 date with such great rapidity because—with its post-1604 composition date—it seemed like a convenient way to fend off the danger of the Oxford heresy. Yet as most Shakespeare students are aware, the post-1604 composition dates for *any* Shakespeare plays are pure conjecture, and the orthodox argument that de Vere died before some of the plays were written is merely a paper tiger. Now that the *Elegy* gambit has boomeranged, it is of course necessary to deny that there was ever any connection between the two things.

We should also note here another astounding claim in Prof. Greenblatt's *New York Times* letter: "Nor has evidence in favor of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, 'as the author of the works of Shakespeare' been growing in recent years. There is no evidence at all that de Vere, who died in 1604, wrote them."

We believe that any open-minded reader will agree that Professor Greenblatt is quite wrong on both these points. —WEB/RS

The "Catholic question" returns

Oxfordian researcher Peter Dickson, in recent communications with us, reported about the most recent issue of *The Shakespeare Quarterly* (Spring 2002) in which an article by Richard Bearman, archivist at Stratford-on-Avon, apparently is aimed—as Dickson puts it—"to destroy totally the intriguing and promising claim that the Stratford man migrated or rather fled Protestant authorities in 1579-1581 to the north country to become a tutor in the households of aristocratic Catholic families in Lancashire...."

Dickson finds Bearman's arguments substantive but not conclusive: "Bearman clearly succeeds in his *SQ* article in showing that the evidence being pushed by Catholic enthusiasts within the Stratford camp that the Stratford man was the young 'William Shakeshafte' in these Lancashire households is highly dubious."

This article clearly seems to anticipate a major documentary film on Shakespeare's religion, produced by Michael Wood for the BBC and PBS, due to be broadcast sometime in 2002-2003. The film will assert that the Stratford man was a secret Catholic, a notion which has been endorsed

by a number of leading scholars in recent years, its chief attraction being that turning Shakespeare into a secret Catholic seems like a quick and easy way to solve the problems of conventional biography.

However, as close students of Shakespeare's writings know, the author's being a devout Catholic cannot be so. Although the works betray a definite sympathy for Catholicism, the author's theology—as Dr. Daniel Wright and many others have argued—is definitely Anglican in character, and he used the Protestant Geneva Bible.

On the other hand, the documentary life of the Stratford man actually supports substantially the theory that he was a secret Catholic. Dickson's own research (currently unpublished) shows that there is ample evidence supporting the view that the Stratford man, as Davies remarked in the late 17th century, "died a papist."

If this view is correct, argues Dickson, it seals the case against the Stratford man as the Bard, who—based on the internal evidence of his writings—was demonstrably not a Catholic.

How will orthodoxy reconcile this contradiction? Stay tuned for more fun.

Shakespeare in the new *DNB*

A recent posting on SHAKSPER (the Electronic Shakespeare Conference) brought us up-to-date on the new edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, (due out in 2004) as documented in the project's e-newsletter. Editor Brian Harrison writes

"...[there will be] a huge article on Shakespeare, which carries to the ultimate its discussion on the ramifications of influence. Half the memoir is devoted to the after-life, which has as its denouement the worldwide advertising for cigars which have brand-names such as Hamlet, Romeo y Juliet, Falstaff, and Antonio y Cleopatra. Shakespeare's biography, the history of his life and his cultural after-lives, the [DNB] author concludes, "is not only national but triumphantly international."

Harrison reports that the Shakespeare article will be about 15,000 words. No word on how authorship is being handled, but one can only suspect that if room must be found for "Hamlet the Cigar," there'll be scant room for "Oxford as Shakespeare."

Commentary

Funeral Elegy buried

By Prof. Daniel Wright

It was with much satisfaction that I recently read, on SHAKSPER (the Electronic Shakespeare Conference), Don Foster's capitulation to an analysis published in the most recent edition of the *Review of English Studies*—an analysis supplied by Prof. Gilles Monsarrat of the University of Burgundy—conclusively demonstrating the insubstantiability of Foster's claim—first advanced in his 1989 book *Elegy by W.S.*—that the poem commonly known as *A Funeral Elegy* (and theretofore regarded as of uncertain authorship by more discerning scholars) was a work composed by Shakespeare. The implication of Foster's long-overdue surrender to reason is, for Oxfordians, significant.

Prior to Foster's promotion of his discredited thesis, mainstream Stratfordian legend told us that Stratford Will, at the zenith of his art, forewent his profitable London playwriting career, abandoned his friends and colleagues, and retired to Warwickshire, where he never again put pen to paper except to scrawl some all-but-illegible signatures on his will in 1616. Foster, however, in his *Elegy by W.S.*, attempted to flesh out Shakspeare's less than skeletal biography by suggesting that Shakspeare interrupted this resignation of his supposed literary life to write and hurriedly publish, in 1612, a poem eulogizing a young Devonshire friend after learning that the young man had been murdered. In promoting this notion, Foster realized that his assertion, if vindicated, would overturn the Oxfordian authorship thesis. Simply put—given its late January/early February 1612 composition date—if *A Funeral Elegy* was by Shakespeare, then, *sine dubio*, Oxford wasn't Shakespeare.

Many Stratfordians, anxious to find some post-1604 argument for Shakespeare's literary life, rushed to board Foster's new, but doomed, ship. Foster himself acknowledged, with the promotion of his thesis, that "anti-Stratfordians have a huge stake in dismissing the *Elegy*," and he mocked Oxfordian opponent Richard Kennedy (whose pioneering work on the *Elegy* contributed to Monsarrat's determination that

John Ford was its author), by sneering that "Kennedy's attribution has nothing to sustain it," and he impudently boasted that Kennedy "cannot in the long run do any harm to me or to Shakespearean studies . . ." David Kathman, a champion of Foster's

by Prof. Monserrat (the persuasiveness and likely finality of which even Foster concedes), we can be pretty sure that Shakspeare of Stratford—even assuming he could write such verse (a proposition that Stratfordians never have been able to demonstrate)—could not have authored this poem.

William Peter was a commoner, "a private man in rank," hardly the kind of candidate for the conventional Elizabethan or Jacobean eulogy; he was no neighbor or colleague of Shakspeare's, yet the poet tells us that Peter is a man of his long and intimate acquaintance. Apart from this poem, there isn't a word from Shakspeare, William Peter, or anyone else, to suggest that these men even knew each other, let alone—in the words of the elegy—experienced life together in such a way as to be "belov'd" of one another and "fast friend[s]." Why Shakspeare of Stratford would confer on him, above all others, a tribute in death he never had bestowed on another, is puzzling—especially given that composing an elegy was a commemorative act he didn't provide even for his own brother, Gilbert, who died on or near the same day as the obscure William Peter!

Shakspeare's composition of this poem, and the expression of its intimate knowledge of the fellow eulogized, seems bizarre under such circumstances. After all, within the period of time when Shakspeare would have needed to write this poem, he presumably would have been preoccupied with details attending his brother's death, funeral and burial. One wonders therefore not only why but how, within a period of 19 days of the murder of William Peter on 25 January, he would have learned of this fatal attack (the murder was committed in a remote West Country village almost two hundred miles from Stratford), been commissioned by (or sought the commission from) the family of the deceased to write the elegy, composed it, sent it to Bowhay in Devon for the family's approval, received it again in Stratford (presumably with the approval of at least John Peter, to whom he dedicated it), and then conveyed it to London in order to present it to—of all people—

(Continued on page 20)

"In promoting this notion

[that Shakespeare wrote

Elegy in 1612], Foster

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work, cheered on SHAKSPER that "the evidence that Shakespeare did in fact write this poem is surprisingly broad and surprisingly persuasive." Kathman's colleague, Terry Ross, announced that Foster's "book on the *Funeral Elegy* could be a model for attribution studies." He even followed that declaration with the cheeky proclamation that, according to his own calculations, there was no more than a "3 in 1000 chance that it [the *Elegy*] was not written by William Shakespeare of Stratford."

So much for Foster, Kathman and Ross, their authority and their statistical certainties.

Most Oxfordians—and, indeed, many Stratfordians—long have recognized that *A Funeral Elegy* could not possibly have proceeded from the hand of the writer who called himself Shakespeare. However, even apart from the stylometric analysis offered

Fellowship sponsors Shakespeare essay contest

The Board of Trustees of the Shakespeare Fellowship is pleased to announce an exciting new educational initiative: an annual high school essay contest on Shakespeare and the authorship question. The 2003 contest cycle will award a total of \$1250 in cash prizes for the best essays (3000 words or less) written on selected questions. The contest is open to 9-12 grade students in the United States and Canada, and entries must be postmarked on or before January 15, 2003. Official contest rules are on the Fellowship's site: (<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/essaycontestmain.htm>).

"I am particularly enthusiastic about the Fellowship's sponsoring this essay contest," said Fellowship President Chuck Berny. "I believe it will not only encourage participants to think independently about the authorship question (before their minds are clouded by the diehard Stratfordians of Academe), but it may well stimulate a greater appreciation of the marvelous plays and poems which, after all, are the prime reason for the existence of this organization."

A press release, distributed over the

internet to educational websites, is already generating considerable interest: currently the Fellowship contest is featured on the website of the New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE.com), and other sites will soon follow suit as news of the contest filters through the Internet.

Please join us in making the 2003 essay contest a success. You can support the contest, and make valuable contacts for local organizing for the Shakespeare Fellowship, by communicating directly with your local high school and teachers organization. To facilitate your outreach efforts, a copy of the contest press release is enclosed with this mailer. For further information on advertising the contest, please contact contest coordinator Lynne Kositsky (Kositsky@ican.net).

After deliberation, the Essay Committee chose the following six questions for the 2003 contest:

1) At least since the 18th century, "Shakespeare" has been regarded as a mystery in one way or another (in 1989 PBS *Frontline* produced a documentary, *The Shakespeare Mystery*). Write an essay which explores some aspect of this mystery.

2) Are Shakespeare's plays relevant to the 21st century? Why or why not?

3) Traditionally, the central problem of *Hamlet* has been identified as his delay in taking revenge against Claudius. Write an essay exploring the relevance of the play within the play to this problem.

4) Consider Juliet's statement that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Explore the implications of this statement within the play *Romeo and Juliet* or within the context of the Shakespeare authorship mystery.

5) How does the life of an author enter into the construction of his literary work? Illustrate with specific examples from Shakespeare and/or others.

6) Explain how the characters and situations in Shakespeare's drama (e.g. in *Hamlet*) are influenced by the personalities and circumstances of Elizabethan England.

The questions were tailored to elicit student interest in the authorship question and, more generally, to involve students in the task of critical reading and appreciation of Shakespearean texts and their Elizabethan cultural context.

Stritmatter, Kositsky present the Oxfordian case to students in Washington state

Fellowship Board members Lynne Kositsky and Roger Stritmatter wowed a district assembly of 500 Central Kitsap School District 9th-12th graders held at Central Kitsap Jr. High in the state of Washington on April 15th.

The event was arranged by Bob Barrett, a teacher at Kitsap who has brought the authorship debate into the classroom for several years now.

Stritmatter led the assembly through a brief discussion of the nature of evidence in the authorship question (examining the name "Shakespeare" on title pages, the front material of the First Folio, and the Stratford bust), and spoke about the life of the young Edward de Vere.

Kositsky read from her book, *A Question of Will*, in particular the sections where the protagonist Willow (who time travels to the 16th century) talks with Edward de Vere.

The students were, we understand, quite

taken with the whole notion of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, and especially with Kositsky's manner of having someone their own age asking him questions.

One of the chapters she read from was towards the end of *Will*, where the young protagonist Willow confronts de Vere about why he hides his identity. Speaking as someone who knows that "Shakespeare" will be the most revered writer of modern times—while de Vere is no more than a historical footnote—Willow tries to talk him into revealing his identity now, in the 16th century, and change history.

"I am that I am," de Vere fires back at her (using a line from sonnet 121). "Edward de Vere has his reputation to consider. He's not about to be pilloried for a play."

"You'll be stunningly sorry," Willow tells him, "after you're dead."

The students loved this give and take about the authorship story, and asked many questions of both presenters.

Conference Update

Complete details for the Fellowship's first annual conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts (October 18th to 20th) can be found on the flyer mailed to all members with this issue of the newsletter, or on the Shakespeare Fellowship website: www.shakespearefellowship.org.

Several events that attendees may wish to note include: 1) the Stritmatter-Ross debate on Oxford's Geneva Bible will take place on Sunday afternoon (2:30 to 4:30); 2) Saturday morning will begin with a teachers/newbie workshop (8:30 to 10:00) featuring Mark Alexander's "25 Connections" Power Point slide show, and 3) the "Shakespeare and the Rule of Law" panel and reception will run from 5:00 to 8:00 Friday afternoon at the Social Law Library in Boston. Prof. David Lowenthal of Boston College will moderate, with *Measure for Measure* being the focal point of the discussion.

Send email to Conference chair Lynne Kositsky at: Kositsky@ican.net, or phone 617-628-3411 (in Somerville, MA) for the most current information about schedule, speakers, accommodations, etc.

Oxford Weekend in Cambridge: 15th Annual Banquet celebrated, panels explore Shakespeare and authorship

Fifty Oxfordians and their guests turned out for the 15th Annual Oxford Day Banquet on April 26th, 2002. The event was, as usual, held in the venerable Harvard Faculty Club in Cambridge.

There were two featured speakers: author Hank Whittemore—who is also an Oxfordian researcher and *Shakespeare Matters* columnist—speaking on the historical significance of Oxford's being Shakespeare, and William Niederkorn of *The New York Times*, who spoke on his personal journey in studying the authorship question and on bringing it to the attention of colleagues at the *Times*. His recent article (February 10th) on the authorship was a milestone in the debate.

An innovation in this year's festivities was the addition of two panel discussions held the morning after the banquet, on the nearby campus of Lesley University.

The first panel, organized by moderator Chuck Berney, included representatives from several recent productions of the quasi-Shakespearean play *Thomas of Woodstock*. These were Tim Holcomb and Roger Stritmatter, director and dramaturg of the Hampshire Shakespeare Company's 1999 production; Lisa Risley,



Sarah Smith announces that her authorship-based novel has been accepted for publication next year, while Shakespeare Matters co-editor William Boyle reports on the latest news in authorshipland.



co-founder of Lesley College's Oxford Street Players, who produced *Woodstock* in 2000; and Professor Michael Egan of the English department of University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who was dramaturg for the Emerson College production in February 2002. Professor Egan is the editor of a new edition of *Woodstock* to be published soon.

All the panelists agreed that *Woodstock* was an early play by Shakespeare, though the question of "Who was Shakespeare?" was not discussed. Participants described their respective approaches to the scene in which *Woodstock* converses with a horse—

the 1999 production was performed outdoors and used a real horse, while the other productions took place in small indoor theatres and used human actors portraying a horse. Professor Egan speculated that the play was written specifically for the provincial tour of 1592-93, which would involve outdoor performances with horses easily available.

Much of the discussion focused on the relationship between *Woodstock* and Shakespeare's history play *Richard II*. Both depict contentions between Richard II and his nobles, with the events in *Woodstock* occurring earlier (Professor Egan, in fact, argued that *Woodstock* should be titled *Richard II, Part One*). Moderator Berney pointed out a mismatch between the two plays, namely that the official responsible for *Woodstock*'s murder in Calais is named William Lapoole in the earlier play, and Thomas Mowbray in the later. Another anomaly is that Richard's wife Anne and the sycophant Henry Green die in *Woodstock* but are alive in *Richard II*.

The second panel, organized and moderated by Dr. Roger Stritmatter, focused on "The State of the Debate." Other panelists were: William Boyle, co-editor with Stritmatter of *Shakespeare Matters*; Hank Whittemore and Mark Anderson, columnists for *SM*; and William Niederkorn of *The New York Times*.

The consensus of all was, of course, that much progress has been made on all fronts in the debate—especially in academe and in the major print media—and that the publicity and credibility provided by Niederkorn's February 10th article in the *Times* is great news for all. All agreed that publicity, not more evidence, is key.

The two areas that received the most attention were the problems of how to present the authorship issue to newcomers, which of course touches on how to handle theories about royal heirs and conspiracy, and the longer term problem of how Oxfordians can begin the work of creating annotated collections of Shakespeare's works, a project which would entail much effort, and need years of work and substantial funding to accomplish.

Upcoming events: Renaissance Festival in Vermont in August; SOS Conference in October

The 6th Renaissance Festival in Killington, Vermont, will take place from August 15th to 18th. The Festival features the Renaissonics, performing Renaissance music and Oxford's own songs (music and words) from *As You Like It*—announced as such in the program and in performance by group director John Tyson. The Renaissonics will also perform in *Woodstock* on Thursday evening (August 15th). The Renaissonics tour in Europe every year and the group now presents Oxford as a playwright/musician to their audiences when performing his music.

Other activities include "Discovering Shakespeare," papers by Oxfordian speakers given at the nearby Sherbourne Public Library on Friday and Saturday morning. Call Jean Karlhuber at 802-422-4307 for

further details.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society—now headquartered in Washington, DC—will hold its 26th Annual Conference there from October 10th through 13th at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. Conference planning was still in progress as we went to press, but points of interest will include the Folger Shakespeare Library and Theater, the Library of Congress, and the Kreeger Museum. Call the Society at 202-207-0281 for further details.

Fellowship members who attend the conference may wish to take the opportunity to visit the Folger Shakespeare Library and view the "restored" Ashbourne portrait. The portrait—hung in the Founders Room—can only be seen by taking the public tour of the Library.

Edward de Vere Studies Conference

6th annual gathering in Portland draws a record 200 attendees

By Nathan Baca

Record-breaking attendance at the 2002 Edward De Vere Studies Conference prompted *Oregonian* reporter John Foyston to lead off his two-page article on the conference with the suggestion that a visitor might think that he'd "stumbled into a sports bar for English majors or an alternate universe. Either would explain the sight of 200 people hooting and hollering over . . . a debate about who really wrote the Shakespeare canon." Foyston's observation of the excitement in a Concordia University auditorium overflowing with attendees was shared by media representatives from both coasts of the United States—including representatives from publications as widely variant as *The Harvard Business Review* and *The New York Times*.

Leading the charge into the breach of Stratfordian orthodoxy on the opening night of the conference was Shakespeare Fellowship President Dr. Charles Berney, who regaled the attendees with his rollicking Sherlock Holmes-like rendering of "The Adventure of the Stratford Bust." Rev. John Baker, a former instructor at Florida State University, followed Dr. Berney with a stunning visual presentation that suggested the Stratford man's celebrated home, New Place, was not a single-family dwelling but rather a *hostel*—yet another indication that Tradition's candidate for Shakespeare was, first and last, not a poet or a playwright but a conventional tradesman.

The conference recessed for its extended evening presentation/entertainment to the university's Lutheran Church of Saint Michael, where Dr. Eric Altschuler of the University of California-San Diego (and author of *Bachanalia: The Essential Listener's Guide to Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier*) offered a presentation on the madrigals of Thomas Weelkes, accompanied by vocalists from the Portland State University Madrigal Ensemble. Weelkes's madrigals, according to Altschuler and fellow researcher William Jansen, likely were not

compositions by Thomas Weelkes but lyrical works by acclaimed musician, poet and playwright Edward de Vere.

When conference-goers returned to the university auditorium on Friday morning they were treated to Canadian author Lynne Kositsky's insight and humour in an address that built on last year's presentation



Among this year's presenters were Prof. Stephen May (top), an expert on Oxford's extant poetry (under his own name), and Barbara Burris speaking on the Ashbourne portrait.

of the risks that attend defense of the Oxfordian thesis in a Stratfordian world. Among her anecdotes that brought laughter of recognition from the largely Oxfordian audience was an account of a run-in with her sister, a Stratfordian English professor, over the authorship issue: "My sister told me that I and my fellow Oxfordians were all 'mad—barking, barking mad.' To that," she reported, "all I could say was 'Woof!'"

Kositsky was followed by Andrew

Duvall, one of the many Oxfordian English majors (and English honor society members) at Concordia University who recently traveled with Professor Daniel Wright to conduct research at the British Library. Duvall introduced a classic moment in Oxfordian film history—a screening of the late Charlton Ogburn, Jr.'s 1984 televised debate with Professor Maurice Charney on *Firing Line*, moderated by host William F. Buckley. Ogburn's stinging rebuffs of the Stratfordian spokesman from Princeton led the stymied professor to spurt out so many frustrated declarations of "Preposterous!" that their absurd overuse prompted sardonic comment from the officially neutral Mr Buckley. The recurrence of Charney's sputtering exclamations also invited some members of the audience, in *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fashion, to chime in unison, "Preposterous!" whenever he uttered it, incapable as he seemed of a more reasoned response to Ogburn.

Professor Charles Kunert, Dean of Concordia University's College of Arts and Sciences, formally opened the conference late on Friday morning with a warm welcome to attendees and the press, saluting those who had assembled to undertake the unpopular challenge of unseating Tradition's Bard from his usurped pedestal. Professor Daniel Wright, Director of the Edward De Vere Studies Conference and the university's Institute for Oxfordian Studies, read letters of greeting to the conference from his De Vere Society Co-patron, Sir Derek Jacobi; Globe Theatre Director Mark Rylance; actor Michael York; *Harper's* Editor Lewis Lapham, and many others.

Dr. Wright was followed by keynote speaker Hank Whittemore, who invited readers of Shakespeare to look anew at the documented histories of Ben Jonson and Will Shaksper with an eye toward contemplating what they suggested about the likelihood of Will Shaksper's authorship of the Shakespeare canon. Whittemore spoke again in the afternoon on "A Real Life

Inspiration for Hamlet's Mousetrap," wherein he discussed a remarkable event of Oxford's boyhood during his attendance at a play, an incident that informs the famous scene in *Hamlet* where the prince attempts to "catch the conscience of the King."

Friday afternoon's audience had its attention riveted to independent scholar Barbara Burris's "The Counterfeit Presentment," a detailed account of the Folger Shakespeare Library's questionable treatment of the Ashbourne portrait. Many of the particulars of her jaw-dropping narrative are already familiar to readers of *Shakespeare Matters*. In an extensive visual presentation, Burris revealed numerous alterations made to the portrait which provide clear evidence of manipulation and distortion of the original work. The alterations, confirmed by internal correspondence in the Folger's own files, demonstrate a concerted effort by Folger officials to resist acknowledging that the portrait—attributed by it first as Shakespeare and then as London Lord Mayor Hugh Hamersley—is, instead, almost certainly a 16th century portrait of Edward de Vere by the Dutch painter Cornelis Ketel.

Jonni Lea Dunn, English Department Chair at Alvarado High School in Alvarado, Texas, and author of the M.A. thesis, "The Literary Patronage of Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," spoke on her research pointing to Oxford's patronage of writers whose works were hardly typical of the age but, rather, were of a "highly specific type or complexion." Professor Steven May of Georgetown continued this examination of Oxford's literary history, but from a perspective that focused on his evaluation of Oxford's known verse that has led him, over the years, to adopt a more skeptical view regarding Oxfordian claims about de Vere's authorship of the poetry and plays traditionally attributed to Shakespeare.

On Friday evening, conference-goers were treated to a lively production by the Concordia University Student Players of Pierre Corneille's seventeenth-century play *The Illusion*, a work of rare ingenuity adapted for the modern stage by award-winning playwright Tony Kushner and directed by CU Professor of Theatre Scott



Pictured top to bottom are Concordia Prof. Stephen Simpson speaking on Oxford's psychology, Jonni Lea Dunn speaking on Oxford's patronage of writers, and Concordia alumnus Jason Moore speaking on teaching the authorship question in the high school classroom.

Thurman.

Saturday morning commenced with a compelling presentation by Paul Altrocchi, M.D., on the cause of Oxford's death, in which he authoritatively dismissed the common misconception among many Oxfordians that de Vere died of the plague (his paper is published in this issue, beginning on page 1). Dr. Kevin Simpson, Professor of Psychology at Concordia University, continued the clinical analysis of de Vere in his

presentation, "Madness in Great Ones Must Not Unwatched Go": Edward de Vere and the Creativity-Madness Debate in Psychology." Simpson indicated that he thought most psychologists would see in Edward de Vere a person whose experience and psychological temperament would make him a far more plausible candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works than the Stratford man. Simpson also pointed out that the indicia of certain types of mental and emotional disorder in Oxford would actually contribute to this argument, as highly creative people often suffer from the kind of traumas and psychological irregularities that are consistent with what we know of Oxford's life.

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, Concordia graduate and editor of *The Oxfordian*, presented a paper titled "Who Was the Duchess of Malfi?" in which she advanced her suspicions that John Webster, a coachman's son whose biography is similar to Shakspeare's, was a stand-in for the writer-poet Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and mother of the "incomparable paire of brethren" to whom Shakespeare's First Folio was dedicated. The argument is one that Hughes plans to explore more fully in a book on the subject when she completes her nearly-finished book on Oxford's tutors.

Following a lunch of baked salmon, Richard Roe, a conference favourite, embellished his earlier presentations on the subject of his own book that is nearing completion—Oxford in Italy. Roe's two-hour presentation concentrated on Shakespeare and Venice, delighting spectators with slides of those locations in Venice mentioned by Shakespeare and visited by Edward de Vere (a study all the more interesting because, as we know, the Stratford man never traveled to Italy). An interview with Roe by Mark Anderson appears on pages 24-25 of this issue.

Concordia alumnus Andrew Werth followed Roe and rocked the assembly with his second in a series of devastating analyses of the Shakespeare works that unquestionably verify the writer's competence in

(Continued on page 10)

De Vere Studies (continued from page 9)

Attic Greek. Traditional scholars have skulked away from this claim for fluency, as they can make no credible case for ancient Greek being part of the curriculum of the Stratford grammar school—a school for which there is no evidence of Will Shakspeare's enrollment.

Closing out the day's presentations was Professor Alan Nelson of the University of California at Berkeley, who spoke on Oxford's stewardship of the Earls Colne Grammar School. Nelson, a vocal critic of the Oxfordian thesis, maintained that part of the reason for dismissing Oxford as Shakespeare must be based on Oxford's apparently inattentive supervision of one of the grammar schools within his jurisdiction, a thesis that many participants in the conference did not find persuasive.

On Saturday evening, the conference recessed to the comfort and luxury of the Columbia Edgewater Country Club overlooking the mighty Columbia River that forms the boundary between the states of Oregon and Washington. There, over marion-berry cheesecake and coffee, following entrees of filet mignon and prime rib, Oxfordian humorist Dee Hartmann of Indiana entertained conference members with anecdotes from her days as a doctoral student and Shakespeare instructor. Dr. Charles Schlimpert, President of Concordia University, conferred the annual Scholarship Award on Professor Nelson. Both President Schlimpert and Professor Wright praised Nelson's commitment to exploring archives all over the world for more information on Edward de Vere and for making his discoveries available to Oxfordians. Professor Nelson, upon receiving the award, indicated his intent to bestow all of his research and transcripts on de Vere to the Sylvester Library at Concordia University.

Professor Wright then read a letter of acceptance from Sir Derek Jacobi, this year's recipient of the conference's Achievement in the Arts Award. Sir Derek could not be present due to his commitment to perform in *The Hollow Crown* in Wellington, New Zealand, on the weekend of the conference, but he was able to receive his award directly from Dr. Wright during one of Wright's recent research trips to London. (Sir Derek's acceptance speech is reprinted in full on page 11).

Oxfordian Dr. Michael Delahoyd of the English Department at Washington State University opened Sunday's busy agenda with his paper on "Edward de Vere's Trea-

sonous (Self-) Examinations," followed by Mark Alexander's presentation of "Twenty-five Remarkable Connections" that establish an intimate association between Oxford and "Shakespeare"—twenty-five foundational elements which, in effect, form the basis for a strong circumstantial case that Edward de Vere was Shakespeare. Rounding out the morning's presentations was Dr. Roger Stritmatter, who spoke on a new reading of *Venus and Adonis*, pointing out clues in the text that support the notion that Venus is Elizabeth and Adonis is Oxford.

Following Sunday brunch, author Richard Whalen electrified listeners with his presentation of new evidence that Shakespeare traveled to Scotland (which, like Italy, Edward de Vere visited but Stratford Will did not). Whalen was followed by historian Ramon Jimenez who, for the second year in a row, presented a fine paper ("In brawl ridiculous": Philip Sidney, Oxford and the Battle of Agincourt") on Shakespeare's sources relevant to a better understanding of *Henry the Fifth*.

The next presenter was Professor Ren Draya of Blackburn College, who also addressed *Henry the Fifth* in her paper, "'The Gentler Gamester': Sports and Gambling in *King Henry the Fifth*." Concordia alumnus and Hudson's Bay High School honors English teacher Jason Moore closed out the day's activities with a presentation of his approach to teaching the authorship question in the high school classroom. He was followed by a group of his students who, through skits and monologues, illustrated the level of their development as Oxfordians

preparing to head out to colleges and universities. Their remarkably impressive grounding in Oxfordianism by Jason Moore promises that they will vigorously challenge their Stratfordian professors in the classroom!

Next year's conference will convene at the university from 10-13 April and will feature presentations from Professor Joseph Pequigney of the State University of New York at Stony Brook (author of *Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*) and William Rubinstein, Professor of History and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society from the University of Wales and author of the celebrated article on the authorship question that appeared last autumn in Britain's most popular history journal, *History Today*. The Concordia University Student Players, under the direction of Professor Scott Thurman, will also perform the hit comedy *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare: Abridged* at the CU Theatre on the opening night of the conference. This is not a conference you want to miss!

To enroll, download a registration form from the conference website at www.deverestudies.org/register.html! (Registrations close, as always with the receipt of the 200th paid reservation.) Where else can you have so much fun, dine so well, and learn so much—all while enjoying the company of old friends and making many new ones? Even though I am graduating as an English major from Concordia this year, I'm going to be back—and I want to see you there too!

The Institute for Oxfordian Studies

at Concordia University

announces

The 1st Annual Oxfordian Studies Seminar

August 11 – 17

Tuition is \$995 and includes instructional costs, all books, classroom supplies, a week's lodging on campus, all breakfasts and lunches, a luncheon cruise on the Willamette River aboard the *Portland Spirit*, a guided tour of the world-famous Japanese Gardens, an evening at Powell's City of Books, and other treats!

For more details, contact Professor Daniel Wright

email: dwright@cu-portland.edu

Sir Derek Jacobi's acceptance speech

Let me first thank you very much indeed for the honour you do me by conferring upon me the conference's Vero Nihil Verius Award for Artistic Excellence. My deep regret is that I cannot be with you to receive it in person. I must plead the peripatetic life of the strolling player, the vagabond, a life that keeps me traveling as a chronicler of the times, often to bournes from which I am only too eager to return. I wish I could be with you, but fate and the need to earn a living decree otherwise [Editors' Note: Sir Derek, on the night of the conference's Awards Banquet, was performing with Diana Rigg, Ian Richardson and the Royal Shakespeare Company in *The Hollow Crown* at the Michael Fowler Centre in Wellington, New Zealand].

Like a growing number of interested parties, I have had grave doubts for some time now of the validity of the Stratford man's claim to have written some of the greatest literature the world has produced. Indeed, I must admit that it still seems incredible to me that one mind could possibly have encompassed such a monumental feat—but if so, that man is most likely to have been Edward de Vere—possibly with a little collaboration. Like you, I live in hope that an acceptable solution is possible and that this most fascinating riddle will finally be solved.

My reactions are, of course, hardly academic, and I haven't the minutiae of knowledge or arguments at my fingertips like your good selves—I'm still studying and discovering—but, as an actor, my instincts and antennae tell me that only someone connected with the vicissitudes of stage production could have created these complex dramas. Is there indeed any incontrovertible, unequivocal evidence that Stratford Will was even an actor?

But, of course, with doubt comes not discussion but accusation. We are labeled eccentrics and loonies (oh, if only old Thomas had himself used a pseudonym!). All these years of academic dedication lavished on the wrong man must be defended, at all costs it seems. Reputations tremble, an industry turns pale, and the weapons of ridicule and abuse are leveled and fired.

But at least the battle lines have been drawn, and it is heartening to see how many recruits are enlisting in the Doubters Army: people, like myself, who cannot reconcile the illiteracy of Shakspeare's offspring alongside his own deep and adept knowledge of medicine, art, music, geography, law and his almost nonchalant use of metaphor from, for example, sporting activities



Courtesy, Essex County Newspapers
Sir Derek Jacobi, in front of Castle Hedingham, 1999.

that were exclusively the pursuit of the aristocracy—not to mention his mastery of history, languages and the intricacies of survival at court. The only evidence of Shakspeare's literary life was produced after he died and is open to dispute. Nothing, while alive, apart from some shaky signatures, puts a pen in his hand. Legend, hearsay and myth have created this writer.

I have taken part in thirty-one of the plays so far, and I can imagine—I can feel—someone behind the words whose education and life experiences, whose knowledge of all strata of society, whose relationships and temperament simply do not fit the grain hoarder, the money lender and the entrepreneur, but chime accurately, and at times indelibly, with what we know about de Vere. And it's not enough to say, "Oh, but the works of Shakespeare survive

whoever wrote them; it doesn't therefore matter."

Yes, it does! The disclosure of the real author would enhance not only the historical significance but also the contemporary excitement of these treasures for both actors and spectators; and it shouldn't be regarded as potential professional suicide, heresy or an actor's silliness to come out and say so. As a performer in the public eye and therefore subject to public criticism and attack, I am acutely conscious of the significance of accepting this token of committed involvement in the authorship debate. My wish is that more actors, with similar suspicions, would nail their colours to the mast and accept whatever brickbats the eminent and learned critics have to throw. The restrictive orthodox analysis must be open to seriously considered debate. There must be a challenge to the selective evidence of the scholars, based on their desire to justify their man rather than assess objective criteria. Too much is conjecture, guesswork, allegory and assumption—what one writer has called "a well documented blank."

However, I would also urge the anti-Stratfordian to avoid over-egging the de Vere pudding. "The lady doth protest too much" is not a healthy slogan for the cause. Take a lesson from us actors who constantly are told that "less is more." Our lifeblood as performers is constant questioning, research, analysis, intellectual and emotional honesty: the play's the thing, not the player. Without the dramatist, we have no opportunity to strut whatever stuff we possess, and in this particular case above all, if we could find the true author of these exquisite dramas, the rewards for both actor and audience would be immense. A spotlight would be thrown on hitherto unfathomable passages, and centuries of delight would be highlighted by the knowledge of the real events, situations and characters that guided and informed the author's hand. Let there be vigorous and legitimate debate!

Once more, my heartfelt thanks and my sincerest regret that I cannot be with you this evening.

Research Notes

The Maiden and the Mermaid

By Carl S. Caruso

The Manor of Rysing land-package worth £250 in yearly fee-farm in come may not have been the only legacy left behind for the seventeenth Earl of Oxford by his cousin, the Duke of Norfolk, who was executed for treason by Queen Elizabeth's government in June of 1572.

In the early days of her captivity, Mary, Queen of Scots, had exchanged affectionate and loving letters with the Duke of Norfolk in a formalized pen-friendship which culminated in a kind of literary "betrothal." The two had naively hoped that their projected marriage would be pleasing to Mary's cousin, Queen Elizabeth. As it turned out, of course, it wasn't acceptable at all.

Mary and Norfolk never actually met, but during their literary courtship, gifts were exchanged including a fine diamond from Norfolk which Mary hung unseen around her neck "until I give it again to the owner of it and me both." From Mary came a miniature portrait of herself set in gold, and a pillow, probably embroidered by her, with the motto "VIRESCIT IN VULNERE VULTUS," meaning "The Will is Renewed in the Wound," and the arms of Scotland stitched thereon: all symbolizing Mary's courage and fidelity in her captivity. When Norfolk was arrested on September 7, 1571, in the wake of the Ridolfi revelations, it was specifically for sending money to Mary's supporters in Scotland.

Mary's envoy to England, Leslie, was arrested at the same time, and he revealed the details of her correspondence with Norfolk, including the existence of the embroidered pillow. The northern border revolt of two years earlier was then unfairly linked to the romantic communication between the pair, along with Norfolk's supposedly treasonous correspondence with the northern Earls. (Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, p. 417 ff.)

All this was more than twenty years in the past when one of the best Elizabethan printers, Thomas Creede, began publishing under his own name in 1593. For many of his quartos, he used a unique block-print emblem (Fig. 1) which featured a crowned, but otherwise naked, female figure walk-

ing forward and holding a book while being urged onward by a hand from a cloud holding a multi-lashed scourge. The surrounding inscription reads "VIRESCIT VULNERE VERITAS," meaning "Truth is Renewed by a Wound." The somewhat countercultural history of the motto would have been clear to anyone familiar with the story of the embroidered pillow.

A similar countercultural influence may be noted in the name of London's Mermaid Tavern, made famous by the patronage of Shakespeare and other literary men. "Mermaid" was a euphemism for "siren" or "prostitute" in the usage of the day, and few of the tavern's patrons at the end of the century could have been unaware that Mary, Queen of Scots, had once been depicted as just such a mermaid.

In the days following the Kirk o' Field explosion and the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley, a famous placard (Fig. 2, reproduced from Antonia Fraser's *Mary, Queen of Scots*, p. 368 ff.) featuring Mary as mermaid had appeared on the streets of Edinburgh. As in Creede's emblem, the placard featured a line drawing of a female figure, naked from the waist upwards, but wearing a crown. In the placard, the figure has the lower body of a fish and is seated on a bench, holding an oversized lily in one hand and some sort of scroll in the other. In the Creede emblem the female figure is striding forward, holding an open book in both hands before her as she walks.

The somewhat irreverent name of the Mermaid Tavern—which was hosted by Shakespeare's dear friend William Johnson—along with its possible allusion to the Queen of the Scots, would have been pleasing to a patron such as Robin Catesby, the prime mover of the 1605 Gun Powder Plot. As a disaffected Catholic, Catesby would have identified strongly with the executed Catholic queen. He and some of his friends did, in fact, make the Mermaid Tavern their favorite London haunt, as did some of the leading literary men of the age.

Thomas Creede had been apprenticed to Thomas East, whose name had begun appearing on books in 1576. Over a period of twenty years, Creede's master had printed

at least fourteen books directly linked to the seventeenth Earl of Oxford or to his wife, Anne. East printed Lyly's *Euphues and his England* (Q1-Q6, 1580-1588); Greene's *Gwydonius, Carde of Fancie* (Q1, 1584); *Psalmes Sonets & Songs of sadness & piety* by William Bird (1588), which contains a poem by Oxford set to music for five voices; and two books by John Farmer, one of which is *Plainsong (Diverse and sundry ways)* (1571). The earliest book printed by East appears to be Arthur Golding's *Psalms of David* translation of 1571. It was dedicated to Lord Oxford, as were both of the books by Farmer, Greene's *Carde of Fancie*, and Lyly's *Euphues and his England*.

Thomas Creede, in turn, used his unique "Wounded Truth" emblem on numerous quartos from 1594 to 1605, including reprints of Greene's *Groatsworth* and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, along with the first complete version of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1599. Among other quartos, the emblem also appeared on two very good editions of Shakespeare's *Richard III* in 1598 and 1602, and a number of various works which may be described as Shakespearean or Oxfordian "apocrypha." In these cases, the texts are prototypes—as in the case of the early *Richard III* and *Henry V* plays, not in keeping with the plays later printed in the First Folio—or else the actual authorship doubtful.

It is impossible to say that the Earl of Oxford had any direct connection with the genesis of Creede's emblem or with its use on the dramatic quartos, but the original motto on the embroidered pillow would clearly have been of interest to him because of his friendship with the executed Duke. The substitution of "Veritas" for "Vultus" in the revised motto would have certainly pleased the seventeenth Earl since he, along with his literary friends, identified strongly with the Latin root for truth (*ver*), which was directly connected with his own family name, "Vere," and with his family motto, "VERONIHIIL VERIUS," or "Nothing Truer than Truth."

It is impossible to say exactly how Oxford felt about Mary, Queen of Scots,

who had probably embroidered the original pillow. She had been executed in 1587, accused of complicity in the Babington plot—which in most respects resembled the earlier plot named after Ridolfi. Lord Oxford had been one of the commissioners at her trial for high treason. He had not, however, been one of the ten who were persuaded to sign her death warrant by his father-in-law, Lord Burghley.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that Oxford had identified strongly with the executed Duke of Norfolk, who had been the recipient of the embroidered “VIRESCIT IN VULNERE VULTUS” pillow. At the time of Norfolk’s arrest, Oxford was twenty-one, his cousin

and good friend Norfolk, thirty-three. Despite his youth, Oxford had attempted to implement a plan to rescue Norfolk from his imprisonment, a crime which could easily have merited the death penalty for himself had it been discovered. When it failed to materialize, he hoped that his marriage to Lord Burghley’s daughter, Anne, would give him enough influence with the Queen at least to spare Norfolk’s life.

That hope, too, would be disappointed. His new father-in-law, Lord Burghley, was Secretary of State at the time, but, in the face of international power politics, could actually do nothing to save Norfolk from the headsman’s ax. Queen Elizabeth’s reluctance to actually execute Norfolk after his conviction was interpreted as a sign of weakness by the French and the Spanish, who were closely monitoring the situation. There was talk that the King of France was readying a force of twenty ships for the purpose of unseating her, and the Spanish could draw on large ground forces from the Duke of Alva’s reserves in Germany for the same purpose. To discourage the formation of a French-Spanish alliance against her, the Queen, with great reluctance and after many stays of execution, finally allowed the death sentence against Norfolk



Fig. 1

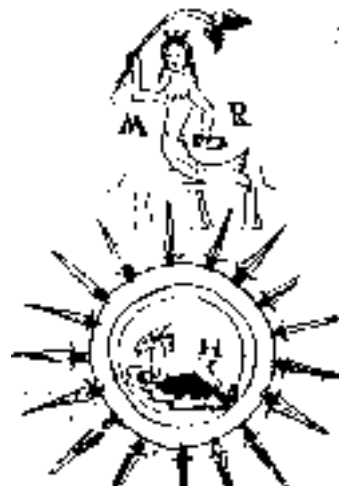


Fig. 2

*Might printer Thomas Creede’s “Wounded Truth” emblem (Fig. 1, left, with its motto, “Truth renewed by a wound”) be connected in some way with both (1) the “Mermaid” emblem (Fig. 2, right) associated with Mary Queen of Scots shortly after the Darnley murder in 1567, and (2) the motto Mary had once stitched on a pillow (“The Will is renewed in the wound”) sent to Oxford’s friend the Duke of Norfolk in the days leading up to his execution in 1572? (The Mermaid emblem is from the Public Record Office, Controller of H. M. Stationery Office, reproduced from the facsimile in Antonia Fraser’s *Mary, Queen of Scots.*)*

to be carried out.

Early historians speculated that Oxford must have been embittered by the loss of his friend, and perhaps he was. For the sake of his new marriage and on account of his public responsibilities as Lord Great Chamberlain, no sign of this bitterness is to be seen either in his letters of the period, or in his public demeanor.

In 1576, however, some four years after Norfolk’s execution, he did secretly become a Catholic, remaining so until his public recantation of Catholicism at Christmas of 1580. According to the testimony of his cousin and co-religionist, Lord Henry Howard, Oxford privately expressed much bitterness over the fate of the Duke of Norfolk in the intervening years.

During the early 1580s, Oxford was out of favor with the Queen for some thirty months on account of his secret adherence to the Catholic faith during the decade previous. Ultimately, however, his fundamental loyalty to Her Majesty, which had in fact never wavered, was recognized, and he was restored to her favour in June of 1583. Except for those two-and-a-half years when he was barred from coming to Court, the relationship between Oxford and the Queen was a very special one, and continued to be so to the end of their respective lives. Eliza-

beth passed away in March of 1603, Oxford in June of 1604.

We may speculate that, even if Lord Oxford had designed Thomas Creede’s “Wounded Truth” emblem with his own hand and had personally promoted its frequent use by the printer during the last decade of her reign, the Queen would probably not have held it against him. She herself had many regrets over the unfortunate fate of the Duke of Norfolk, and even more regrets over the execution of the Queen of the Scots. As with Norfolk, she had failed to countermand Mary’s death order, but she had subsequently mourned her cousin’s execution most sincerely, to the point where her refusal to eat endangered her own life.

By the end of the century not everyone would have recalled the detail of the em-

broidered pillow with its Latin motto, but Elizabeth certainly would have remembered it quite well. If she did have occasion to see the “Wounded Truth” emblem as used by Creede, she would probably not only have identified the crowned female figure with the Queen of Scots, but may have even taken some comfort in it. No longer was her former rival derided as a “siren” or a “prostitute.” Indeed, the redeemed maiden’s former sufferings are depicted as having come from the hand of Providence (the hand from the cloud with the scourge which is seen behind her). Furthermore, she seems to be proceeding to a place of intellectual enlightenment and peace (the open book which she holds before her).

Or, ignoring the similarity of the motto with that of Mary’s embroidered pillow, Elizabeth may have simply identified the maiden of the woodcut with herself. Elizabeth was, after all, an enthusiast of fine literature and an inspiration to every kind of literary art, the very embodiment of the Elizabethan age. And, like most monarchs of the period, she would have considered herself as an earnest seeker of “Truth” as she understood it.

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Ye plague (continued from page 1)

In 1943, Carrington³ uses the word “seems” instead of “it may be”:

The immediate cause of his death seems to have been the plague, since the words “ye plague” are written in the margin of the page of the Parish Register which contains the entry of his burial.

Charlton Ogburn, Jr. in 1984⁴ gets rid of “Ye” and says that in the margin of the burial register of the Church of St. Augustine in Hackney “is the annotation ‘The Plague’. Perhaps, already weakened in health, he was one of its victims.”

William Plumer Fowler in 1986⁵, 58 years after Ward’s book, without checking primary sources, gets rid of any uncertainty and states that “The Earl died of the plague ... on June 24, 1604 -- aged 54.”

The last “documentation” was in 1993 in *The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*. Barron states that he went to the Greater London Records Office and confirmed Ward’s research finding of 1928:

We found the parish records for Hackney and went to the original documents and in their ancient pages found the notation of Edward de Vere’s death from the plague.⁶

Since all of the above articles and books are in error, and have perpetuated the plague myth for 74 years, perhaps it is time to ask some basic questions.

What is plague?

Ninth century BC doctors in India were aware that rats were carriers of plague⁷ but 16th century England was completely baffled. It is now known that the causative bacillus, *Pasteurella pestis*, is transmitted by fleas from sick or dying rats to humans.

Plague is a horrific disease not difficult to diagnose, especially during an epidemic. After an incubation period of two to eight days, victims develop enlarged pus-filled lymph glands (buboes, hence bubonic plague), black and purple skin lesions, small and large blisters, fever, vomiting, headaches, and often delirium. Seventy percent die in one to several days. There is a septicemic form without buboes. Direct human-to-human transmission may occur from the pneumonic form which can kill entire families almost simultaneously.

Plague is associated with urban squalor and poor sanitation, which encourage rat infestation. Fleas are lured by rats, domestic animals, and lack of personal hygiene. Sixteenth century London—with its crowded tenements, narrow tortuous alleys, horse manure, human sewage and garbage in the streets—was a perfect host for epidemic plague. It was rightfully regarded as one of the world’s filthiest cities.⁸ Only its frequent rain made London habitable.

Was there a plague epidemic in England in 1604?

The first European plague pandemic occurred in 541 AD; the second in 1346 killed 30 million people and was labeled the Black Death.

The following epidemics each killed about 20,000 people in London, a fifth of its population: 1563, 1575, 1593, 1603, and 1625.⁹ There was an epidemic in 1603, not 1604. Do sporadic cases

occur after an epidemic? Yes.

King James entered London for a quick coronation on July 25, 1603, just at the onset of the 1603 epidemic, then fled to the country for eight months. He returned to London on March 15, 1604, after the epidemic was thought to have ended. Playhouses reopened in February, 1604, except for *The Curtain*, which opened after Lent ended in April.¹⁰

Many of London’s wealthy had homes in the country to which they fled for safety immediately at the onset of an epidemic. They didn’t know why, but plague rates were lower in villages like Hackney, three miles from London’s center, where de Vere lived with his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham. Should they have felt completely safe? No. (See the chart below for plague deaths recorded by month in Hackney.)

Would a body infected with plague be allowed inside a church?

The records clearly state that Edward de Vere was buried in a tomb inside the Church of St. Augustine in Hackney.¹¹ Elizabeth Trentham, de Vere’s second wife, wrote in her will that she wished “to be buried in the Church of Hackney ... as near unto the body of my late dear and noble Lord and husband as may be.”

Since the 1540s it had been against the laws of England for plague victims to be buried inside of churches.¹² This is obviously a very powerful argument that Edward de Vere did NOT die of plague.

What are the facts?

1. Edward de Vere died on June 24, 1604.
2. The burial records are now available from the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA).¹³ De Vere’s burial is listed under The Church of St. John at Hackney, Mare Street, which was built between 1792 and 1797 as a replacement for the torn-down Church of St. Augustine.

Plague deaths in Hackney, Oct. 1603 to Dec. 1604

Date	“Pla.” = plague	No cause of death listed
Oct. 1603	9	1
Nov. 1603	9	1
Dec. 1603	4	9
Jan. 1604	1	6
Feb. 1604	0	4
Mar. 1604	2	1
Apr. 1604	1	4
May 1604	1	4
June 1604	1	2
July 1604	0	7
Aug. 1604	0	5
Sept. 1604	0	7
Oct. 1604	0	3
Nov. 1604	0	4
Dec. 1604	0	5

3. LMA's reference number P79/JN1/022 is a slim volume containing a summary of burials between March, 1600, and June, 1652, with no cause of death listed. This record states that in May, 1603: "Here began the great plague but I have set down none but men or women of note. I have left out all children and vagabonds." Alongside the burial date of July 6, 1604, the record simply states: "Edward Veare, earl of oxford."

4. LMA's reference number P79/JN1/021 lists date of burial and, if thought to be a victim of plague, "pla." in the margin on the same line as the name of the deceased. Clinical diagnoses were not accurate — "pla." could mean any sudden death, but was usually correct during an epidemic. "Pest." for pestilence referred to almost any infectious disease.

5. Every death caused by presumed plague was precisely labeled "pla." and numbered immediately adjacent to the entry of the deceased. The diagnosis did not apply to nearby names without a label.

6. There were 241 cases labeled as "pla." in the first five months of the plague epidemic beginning in May, 1603, an average of 48 cases per month in "men and women of note." The first case of plague in October, 1603, is numbered "pla. 242."

7. Causes of death for those buried in Hackney in the months preceding and following Edward de Vere's death are shown in the box on page 14 (where "date" = month buried and "pla." = plague).

8. The plague was tapering off by January, 1604 (using our present calendar year, with January the first month of a new year). Using these criteria, there were no burials for plague for one month preceding de Vere's burial on July 6, nor in the next five months. The last sporadic case of plague from this epidemic was buried in Hackney on June 6, 1604; de Vere was buried July 6.

9. There was no word "Ye" or "the" before "pla." on any of the five pages of burial register examined. The term "Ye Plague," quoted by B.M. Ward as being in the margin adjacent to de Vere's burial, is a fiction.

10. Since the last numbered case diagnosed as plague in Hackney was #269, the assumption of nobles that London's surrounding villages were safe from plague was erroneous.

11. There is NO diagnosis of "pla." adjacent to de Vere's name, nor is there a plague case number. There are only three "pla." diagnoses on de Vere's register page containing 29 deaths. The closest "pla." is 6 deaths above de Vere, one month before de Vere's burial, and has absolutely NO significance regarding de Vere's cause of death.

12. To the left of de Vere's name is an antique asterisk in pencil consisting of a large "X" with a period in each of the four spaces created. This can neither be dated nor interpreted but was clearly made many decades later than the time of burial

(Continued on page 16)

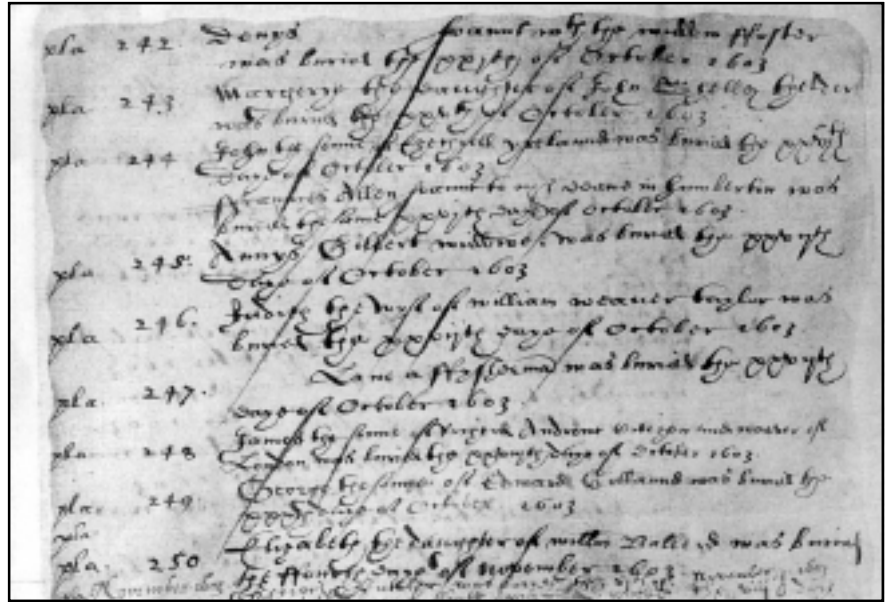


Figure 1. Each deceased person with a diagnosis of plague has the term "pla." and a sequential case number written on the same line as the name and date of burial.

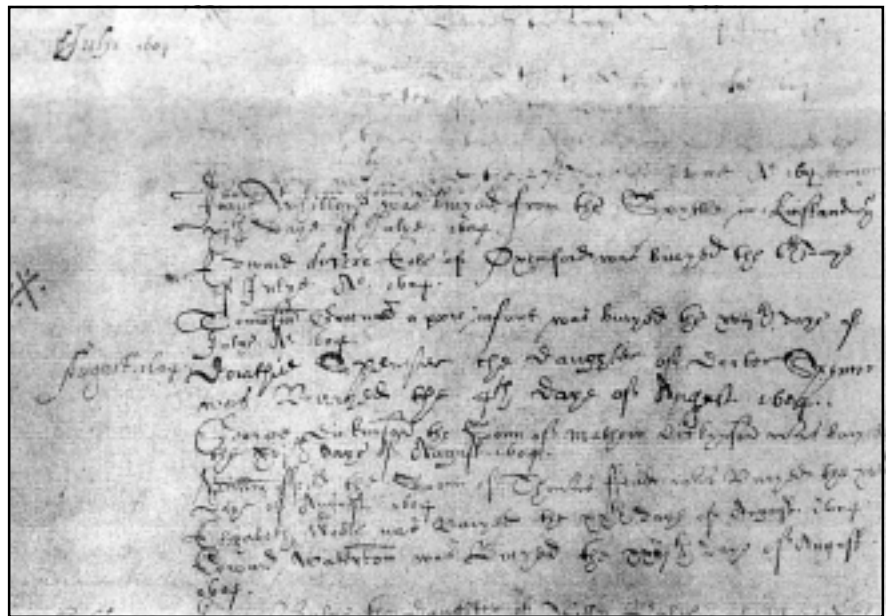


Figure 2. Edward de Vere's burial record does not have "pla." or a case number, but only the peculiar asterisk (far left, center) added later.

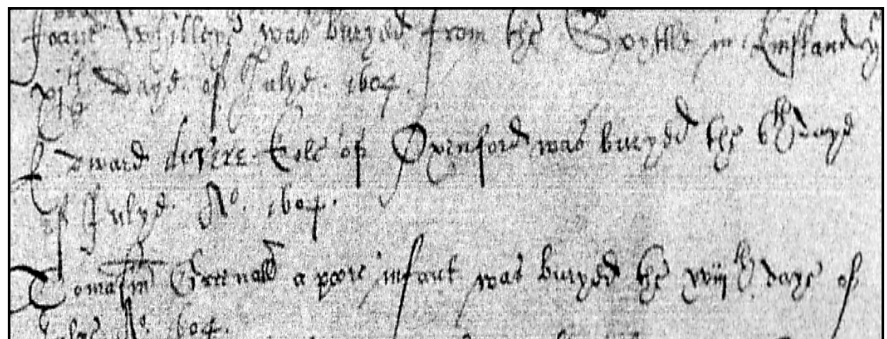


Figure 3. Detail from Fig. 2, showing the entry: "Edward de Vere Earle of Oxenford was buried the 6th day of July A^o 1604."

Ye plague (continued from page 15)

since pencils with such a sharp point did not appear until the late 1600s.¹⁴

13. St. Augustine Church simply recorded de Vere's burial as follows:

Edward de Vere, Erle of Oxenford, was buried the sixth daye of July A^o 1604. (A^o = anno = year)

What was Edward de Vere's actual cause of death?

In early 1604, Edward de Vere designated his cousin Francis Vere, recently retired General-in-Chief in The Netherlands,¹⁵ as the legal guardian of his 11-year-old son, Henry.¹⁶ On June 18, 1604, six days before his death, Edward granted custody and revenues of the Forest of Essex, over which he had stewardship, to his son-in-law, Francis Lord Norris, husband of Bridget, jointly with Francis Vere.¹⁷ The grant was for a period of seven years, at which time de Vere's son Henry would be 18, a legal adult. Victims dying of plague are too sick to make legal instruments, and lawyers do not make house calls on plague-infested houses, even if the clients are rich! But, for the reasons already given, de Vere did not die of plague.

One wonders whether he had premonitory cardiac symptoms, did his legal business, and then died shortly thereafter of a coronary occlusion. It should be recalled that his father, John, died suddenly at the age of 46.

Was the mild clumsiness of his right hand, about which he writes, the result of a cerebral ischemic event? Myocardial infarction is more often the cause of death in such patients than cerebrovascular disease. One can only guess. There is insufficient evidence to allow a conclusive diagnosis of de Vere's death at the age of 54.

Comments

All of us are familiar with the immense power of conventional belief and Oxfordians use Stratfordian rigidity as their premier example. But all humans at times create and/or convey myths, even Oxfordians.

Myths tend to become more dogmatic as time passes, partly because of the reverence of disciples for their own authority figures and for other guild "experts."

Too few researchers have the discipline and tenacity to check primary sources. Even when they do, they may not believe their own eyes and may find it more prudent to perpetuate conventional wisdom than challenge it. To most humans, it just doesn't seem right or natural to doubt respected guild authorities.

But, as Skrabanek and McCormick emphasized, "The fallacy of authority is believing things to be true because of the authoritative source of the information."¹⁸ Despite error in fact or interpretation, the myth is thereafter attached to the names of the dominant authorities and subsequently referred to as indisputable gospel.

As Stephen Toulmin of the University of Michigan said:

An established conceptual scheme carries considerable intellectual authority; a dominant individual carries magisterial authority.¹⁹

Thus a myth is perpetuated in pervasive fashion, mal-influencing at least a generation of believing guild disciples and never re-scrutinized.

Although of no significance to the authorship debate, the "ye

plague" myth exemplifies typical processes of myth initiation, evolution, and perpetuation.

Conclusion

The village of Hackney was not exempt from plague but Edward de Vere did not die of the plague in 1604 for the following reasons:

1. The plague epidemic of 1603 had ended before he died.
2. The burial record of St. Augustine Church, Hackney, does not list him as dying from the plague nor number him as a plague victim. The observation that "Ye plague" was written next to his name in the burial register as the cause of de Vere's death is a careless error.
3. The three other cases of "Pla." listed on the same page of the burial register have no relevance to de Vere's cause of death.
4. De Vere was buried inside the Church of St. Augustine in Hackney. It had been against English law for more than 60 years to bury plague victims inside a church.

The myth that Edward de Vere died of "Ye Plague" is a classic example of an unfounded belief held uncritically and passed on without scrutiny for the past 74 years. It should be discarded and should remind Oxfordians that it is not only Stratfordians who are capable of believing and transmitting myths but all humans, including Oxfordians.

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Book review

Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth. By Paul Streitz (Oxford Institute Press, 2001) 325 pages, \$32.50.

By Christopher Paul

The central premise of Paul Streitz's *Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth I* is that the 17th Earl of Oxford was the first son of Elizabeth Tudor and that the 3rd Earl of Southampton was a later product of their incestuous union. It should be noted that this book is one of an increasing number of authorship books—Oxfordian and others—that are becoming available through the phenomenon of internet publishing. While it is admirable that authors can now reach readers in this manner, such books also can reveal the flaws of not having a more rigorous editorial and publication process in place to force an author to hone his argument and his rhetoric—or at the very least to present a product free of typos and easily correctable errors.

Leaving such problems temporarily aside, *Oxford* begins well enough with a promising chapter that sets up the imposture behind the Ashbourne portrait, nicely dovetailing with the deception involved in the authorship issue as a whole. Streitz draws a shrewd parallel between the modern-day duplicity of the Folger Shakespeare Library and similar policies in Elizabethan England, right down to the “myth of the Virgin Queen” and beyond—to the Earl of Oxford and “circumstances that are simply unimaginable.”

In the following chapter, “Sex, Murder, Incest, and Tudors,” Streitz offers mini-biographies of the principal characters carefully crafted to highlight the details relevant to his purpose. “The Summer of 1548” and the first section of “A Hasty Marriage and Three Murders” lay the foundation for the central theory of the book, but miss many marks in their narrow frame.

Several astute observations are eloquently rendered in the chapter “A Literary and Theatrical Life,” but Streitz stumbles in a few places here as well, such as his tortuous leap in analogizing the title page of *The Weakest goest to the Wall*, which states it was played by “the Earle of Oxenford, Lord great Chamberlaine of England His ser-

vants.” Streitz’s logic, typically, goes like this:

This title connects Oxford in an irrefutable way to an acting company and proves that such actors were “His servants.” They were servants to the only Lord Great Chamberlain of England from 1562 until his disappearance in 1604. By extension, this

**“...[Internet published]
books can reveal the flaws
of not having a more
rigorous editorial and
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hone his argument...”**

means that other works performed by the Chamberlain’s Men were performed by a theatrical company under the control of the Earl of Oxford... (p. 211)

Streitz then shows us the title page of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which states it was “acted by the Lord Chamberlain his Servants.” One can only conclude from this passage that Streitz is apparently unaware that the “Lord Chamberlain” and the “Lord Great Chamberlain” were two different royal offices, held by two different persons. As one continues to read, one sees this kind of overreaching connection rear its head continually.

When not tripping over spelling gaffes, which the author’s *errata* slip does not begin to cover (the footnotes are generally a mess as well), Streitz’s words flow smoothly and he has an engaging, often persuasive style. The open-minded, yet uninformed, reader will very likely be impressed and taken in by much of Streitz’s book. Streitz’s foremost shortcoming in *Oxford*, however, is the representation of his material as fact rather than conjecture. He accuses Harold Bloom of “stating conjecture as fact,” yet too infrequently quali-

fies his own work with “alleged” and “if.”

It is the myriad mistakes in *Oxford*, coupled with the numerous examples of pure conjecture juxtaposed with factual errors and typos, that completely undercut his efforts. On page 32, for example, he castigates Harold Bloom for not being aware that “his sugared sonnets among his private friends’ was a statement a literary figure of the time, Francis Meres, applied to the writings of the Earl of Oxford!” (it was, of course, Shakespeare that Meres was referring to in *Palladis Tamia* in 1598). On p. 229 Streitz tells us: “Contrary to popular belief, William Shakespeare was not born on April 24, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon. The man born on that date was named Gulielmus Shakspere.” Does he not comprehend that such Latin entries were commonplace, and that Gulielmus is merely the Latinized form of William, or am I missing a joke here? On the same page he disconcertingly refers to Looney’s groundbreaking book as *Shakespeare’s Identity Revealed*.

At one point Streitz writes: “The myth of the Virgin Queen has been built up over the years. When evidence appears to contradict it, that evidence is simply denied.” Yet he not only denies contradictory evidence, but in most instances he omits it entirely. What evidence he does include is more often than not misinterpreted. The book does offer plenty of interesting food for thought, yet Streitz’s heedless determination to promulgate acknowledged fallacies—and to create some new ones—is simply indefensible.

The first thing one notices is Streitz’s considerable knack for turning words to his own purpose, forcing meaning where this is none, or twisting the evidence to suit his objective, such as his rendition of the Duchess of Feria’s later account of a midwife who purportedly assisted the Princess Elizabeth in delivering a child. Streitz chooses to accept as authentic the entire tale except for the slight detail that the child was “miserably destroyed.” For Streitz, only that part “appears to be conjecture” (p. 91).

He manages to back himself into some interesting corners as well, as when he writes within several pages:

(Continued on page 18)

Book review (continued from page 17)

The depositions may record information that was damaging to Princess Elizabeth, but how thorough do they want to be if Sir Thomas Smith, William Cecil, and Edward Seymour are already privy to a secret? (page 85)

Katherine Parr removes Elizabeth from the household at Hatfield and sends her to Sir Anthony Denny. She does this with the assistance and knowledge of Edward Seymour (the Lord Protector), Sir Thomas Smith, and William Cecil. (pages 89-90)

Yet Streitz offers no explanation why Elizabeth would later write to Edward Seymour (in an excerpt he prints on p. 86) denying that she is “with child.” If Edward Seymour was privy to the secret birth, it makes little sense that they would have carried on such a correspondence. Streitz goes on to write in the same section, “In her letter, Elizabeth denied she was pregnant, of which no one had accused her” and “Only Elizabeth ever mentioned the possibility of a child.”

This is an utterly baffling claim, since in the very excerpt he cites, Elizabeth wrote:

Master Tyrwhit and others have told me that there goeth rumours abroad, which be greatly both against my Honour and Honesty (which, above all things I esteem), which be these; that I am in the Tower, and with Child by my Lord Admiral.

Obviously, she *was* being accused, and Tyrwhitt had informed her of the rumors. If Tyrwhitt knew of the rumors, it follows that Seymour knew of them. In any case, she plainly states that she had been told about the rumors being spread, and, in that context, denies that they are true. So it was completely appropriate for her to discuss the rumors, Seymour having asked her for an explanation. She did not haul it in from left field, as Streitz implies. And when not quoting spurious letters fabricated by the mendacious Gregorio Leti (p. 70), Streitz embarrassingly misrepresents authentic letters, such as Elizabeth’s message to Seymour (p. 87), in which he claims her phrase “to have such a one” refers to a child. When this letter is viewed in context, the words are obviously a reference to her new governess, Lady Tyrwhitt (who had just replaced the long-standing and beloved Kate Ashley).

Not content to have his readers tackle Edward de Vere and Henry Wriothesley as

the sons of Queen Elizabeth, Streitz undermines his central premise with the inclusion in the Appendix of a section titled “Elizabeth’s Babyland” (p. 286). Oddly, this list of Elizabeth’s alleged offspring does not include Francis Bacon (the original “Prince Tudor”) or the comparatively well-documented case for Arthur Dudley. Yet it includes the likes of the Earl of Essex, of whom Streitz writes earlier (p. 156):

While this author has not done any

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of [his] ... approach...”***

thorough investigation of the birth of Robert Devereux, the most plausible conclusion is that he was the son of Elizabeth and Robert Dudley and was born in 1566.

Acknowledging that he hasn’t done any research and then—in the same sentence—offering up an extreme theory as the “most plausible” is a hallmark of Streitz’s entire approach to this material. He demonstrates throughout his book a strange notion of what constitutes “most plausible.”

Another such example of this approach can be found in his contention that Oxford did not die on June 24, 1604. Again, such speculation only undercuts the thrust of the book’s main argument. Streitz writes, revealingly:

The evidence that contradicts this theory is the record of Oxford buried in Hackney (it could have been forged). ... But then again, this whole story, although true, is so wildly improbable that a dramatic and mysterious end is only fitting. (p. 165)

So nothing is sacred in *Oxford*, and it seems that anything goes. And when one reads that “a dramatic and mysterious end is only fitting,” it is fair to wonder if one is dealing here with an historian or a novelist.

Building on this premise that Oxford didn’t die in 1604, Streitz unnecessarily relegates *The Tempest* to the Stratfordian chronology and its spurious connection to the Strachey letter of 1610 when he muses, “Could it be that Oxford later returned to England and then wrote his last play which was recorded as being first performed in 1611?” (p. 166)

He does not mention a letter to Robert Cecil from Oxford’s widow written less than two months after his received date of death, in which she plainly refers to his decease.¹ He also does not mention that there was an inquisition post mortem for Edward de Vere dated 27 September 1604.²

Neither does he mention a memorandum dated 26 November, 1609, regarding a London garden formerly owned by Oxford, in which it states:

By an inquisition taken at Guildhall, London, 13 Aug. 1608, it was found that Earl Edward died seized of such messuage and garden ... The saide Earle Edward ... about fower yeares past now died...³

He does not mention any number of other documents informing us that Edward de Vere was deceased, including Nathaniel Baxter’s posthumous paean in the c. 1606 *Sir Philip Sidney’s Ourania*, in which the good Earl is extolled in no uncertain terms that inform us that he is dead.⁴

This level of historical distortion occurs throughout the book. For example, he perpetuates various hoary myths such as Margery Vere (*née* Golding) hastily remarrying after the 16th Earl’s, which he inexplicably indicates was “within months after the death of her husband, but the exact date of the marriage is uncertain.” (p. 114) As the exact date is not known, how can Streitz claim it followed the 16th Earl’s death “within months?”

Further, he also manages to create some brand new historical humdingers, claiming on p. 143 for example,

Then in January of 1575, Oxford departed for a Continental tour with permission of the Queen. Before leaving, he entailed his lands to his cousin, Horatio Vere.’

This concoction runs completely counter to the extant 1575 indenture prior to Oxford’s travel, which lists Horatio Vere (who was ten years old in 1575) as the

sixteenth and very last of the heirs named to inherit Oxford's lands should the previous fifteen, beginning with Hugh Vere, "defaulte of suche heires males."⁵ Streitiz is certainly aware of this indenture, and he offers no other source to validate his unsubstantiated claim.

Yet another characteristic example of this slipshod approach can be found in his take on certain events in August 1623, just months before the First Folio was published:

There was a meeting in August 1623 on the Earl of Southampton's boat *The Prince* (appropriately titled, some might say). At this meeting were James I, Henry Wriothesley, Horace Vere (Oxford's cousin), and the Herbert brothers. Publication of the First Folio occurred the November after this meeting. (p. 241)

He repeats this item on p. 289 in his chronological table "Oxford History." No source is listed, but in all likelihood Streitiz drew it from A.L. Rowse's *Shakespeare's Southampton*. On p. 286, Rowse writes:

On 14 August Southampton was at Beaulieu, requesting a pass for his son, Lord Wriothesley to go to the Low Countries with Sir Horace Vere, with four servants and four horses, and that he might take leave of the King. It seems that James paid his last visit to Beaulieu this month, with Pembroke and Montgomery in his Train as usual. Then they all went on board the *Prince* at Portsmouth, to pay Southampton's island-province a visit at Calshot.

Rowse's two footnotes for this information cite *Cal. S.P. Dom., 1623-1625, 55* and Nichols's *Progresses [of King James], iv, 903*. From those sources we see that Rowse copied the brief Cal. S.P. Domestic citation almost verbatim:

Aug. 14. Beaulieu. 104. Earl of Southampton to Sec. Conway. Requests a pass for his son to go into the Low Countries with Sir Horace Vere, with four servants and four horses, and that he may take leave of the King.

The entry in Nichols's *Progresses* runs thus:

At this time the King was staying at Beaulieu, the mansion of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton. The 20th of August, says Phineas Pette the Shipwright in his Diary, "his Majesty, then lying in the

New Forest at Beaulieu House, imbarqued himselfe and Traine and came on board the *Prince*, then riding in Stokes Bay by Portsmouth, with the Marquis of Hamilton, the Lords Chamberlain [Pembroke], Holderness, Kelly, Carlisle, Montgomery, and divers other attendants, who all dined on board the *Prince*, our admiral the Earl of Rutland being absent at London. His Majestie was very well pleased, and after dinner, again imbarquing in the barge, lay hovering in the midst of the Fleet till all the ships had discharged their ordnance, and landed on the shore at Shott Castle.

**"...out of 154 sonnets,
Streitiz lists only one—
No. 143—that could be
construed as Oxford
being the son of the
Queen. That seems
rather telling."**

The "Shipwright Phineas Pette" did indeed keep the ship's journal. The full name of the ship was the *Prince Royal*, and it belonged not to Southampton, but to King James. This was the boat upon which he was making his Progress at that time.⁶ Not only does Streitiz delegate its ownership to Southampton, he also includes Horace Vere as one of the participants at the so-called "meeting." Yet the source mentioning Horace Vere is completely separate from that mentioning the *Prince*, and doesn't necessarily imply Horace Vere was even present. It's simply a request to the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Conway (who had served as Francis Vere's lieutenant-governor at Brill), for Southampton's son to accompany Horace Vere in the Low Countries. Had Horace Vere, who was renowned at the time, actually been in attendance, Pette would surely have included him among his roster of distinguished names that embarked on the 20th. Yet Streitiz's imagination freely interprets these facts into something larger and knocks it off as some kind of portentous meeting in conjunction with the publication of the First Folio.

For another kind of interpretation, we find on page 279:

While any literary interpretation is subject to skepticism and misinterpretation, suspecting the worst, there simply was no other way for Oxford to leave any historical record of his life except in his poetry and plays...

In light of this statement, it is interesting that there is only one place in the entire book where Streitiz makes an attempt to show any literary allusions pointing to Oxford as Elizabeth's son (other than pointing out Shakespeare's sympathy for bastards and the analogy that the autobiographical Hamlet was a prince and the son of the Queen, ergo...). It is found on p. 270:

Now, let us see if the sonnets shed further light on the two major contentions of this book: first, that Henry Wriothesley was the son of Queen Elizabeth and Edward de Vere and, second, that Edward de Vere was the son of Elizabeth.

Here Streitiz turns to what is arguably the most intensely autobiographical writing in the Shakespeare canon. Myriad allusions are found which may be interpreted to support the first contention, but *out of 154 sonnets*, Streitiz lists *only one*—No. 143—that could be construed as Oxford being the son of the Queen. That seems rather telling.

This abbreviated and random summary of some of the faults with Streitiz's book is not exhaustive and makes no attempt to be. While I have not honed in on the mass of details that must be taken into consideration to determine whether Elizabeth Tudor had a child by Thomas Seymour in 1548 and whether that child could have been Edward de Vere (there is too huge an amount of raw historical data that is debatable to fill these pages), I *have* tried to demonstrate that Streitiz, in dealing with these difficult issues and an incomplete historical record, doesn't seem concerned with accuracy or truth in many instances, as long as it propels his cause célèbre. Such flaws do not inspire one with confidence or trust in Streitiz's work. Sadly, he seems neither to comprehend nor simply even to care that publicly advancing *theories* posturing as fact can be more harmful than beneficial.

At the very least, as one determined to air the theory publicly rather than explore it through ongoing private research with

(Continued on page 20)

Wright (continued from page 5)

Thomas Thorpe (the same man who ostensibly had pirated and published Shakspeare's *Sonnets* less than three years earlier!) who would promptly register it for publication. All other curiosities aside, absent a postal service, faxes, telephones, good roads, automobiles and trains, a rational being can only be astonished at the pace with which these events took place—so astonished, perhaps, as not to believe them possible.

The assumption by some Stratfordians that the primacy Shakspeare's placement of this young man's death in his renewed literary attentions over that of his own brother might be explained by the poet's intimate friendship with William Peter—an intimacy of such degree that, as one Stratfordian has suggested, he may have been among the first persons away from the murder scene to be informed of William Peter's death. Such a rationalization to account for the rapidity of the composition, transmission and registration of *A Funeral Elegy* beggars belief. After all, in the *Funeral Elegy*, the poet praises William Peter as a man who, among his many virtues, has been a husband of "firm affection" for nine years and a father of "careful providence." William Peter, however, at the time of his murder, had only been married for *three years* and had *no children* at all! How intimate could the relationship between Shakspeare and Peter have been?

Book review (continued from page 19)

other Oxfordians, Streitzy should have employed a different approach, one that kept the material to a fair level of speculation, and one that laid out *all* the evidence, pro and con. Unfortunately, as to laying out *all* the evidence, there is not a jot of intellectual honesty in *Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth I*. This failure can only do harm to the central premise that the author is pushing—a premise far beyond more conventional explanations of the same set of facts. In its present form, *Oxford, Son of Queen Elizabeth I* cannot bear up under any kind of rigorous critical evaluation.

In any future publications on this topic, one has to confront *prima facie* evidence that contradicts the Prince Tudor theory in all its protean forms. Any writer who does not do so, but sweeps contradictions under the rug as Streitzy has, can never hope to make a serious impression in the resolution of the "Shake-speare" mystery.

Of course, there are dozens of other reasons, much written of elsewhere, to discredit the fanciful notion of Shakespeare as author of this miserable poem. *A Funeral Elegy* not only very poorly compares with Shakespeare's mature style (coming, according to Stratfordian chronology, only a handful of years after his composition of the inimitable *Sonnets* and during the same year that some Stratfordians suggest he wrote *The Tempest*). Equally damning of the claim that Shakespeare wrote it, in my appraisal, is the poet's celebration of the expectations for his own youth in this wretched doggerel. This is a strange and inexplicable attitude to strike many years after having mourned in the *Sonnets*, written perhaps more than ten years earlier, that even then one could see in him "[t]hat time of year . . . when yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang," the "twilight of such day as after sunset fadeth in the west" and "the glowing of such fire that on the ashes of his youth doth lie."

In any case, the attitude toward the authorship of texts that precludes Stratfordian fundamentalists from considering that the works of Shakespeare just might be by someone other than Stratford Will ("Shakespeare's name is on the title page, I believe it, and that settles it") was exploded by Donald Foster himself in his concession on 20 June to *The New York Times* that Shakespeare was not the writer of the *EL-*

egy. In acknowledging that superficial assumptions don't guide us very reliably when it comes to identifying Elizabethan/Jacobean manuscripts, Foster conceded that there is a limit to what someone can assume about a text's origins. He stated that scholars in the future must more carefully consider "how important a close look at language can be in establishing authorship, rather than depending on title page attributions."

Finally, of course, we don't know why Ford (or, more likely, Thorpe) appended the initials "W.S." to this poem. Many manuscripts of dubious origin from the era carry these initials, and some even bear the name of "William Shakespeare." We know that all of these texts are unlikely to be—in whole or in part—the work of the writer who called himself Shakespeare. Maybe now some Stratfordians will be less willing to leap in and say these works are Shakespearean merely because a title page or someone like Donald Foster says so.

Now we await the embarrassed rush by those editors of Shakespeare's works who subscribed to this ludicrous notion regarding the *Elegy* to disavow their earlier enthusiasm as they scramble to jettison the *Elegy* from their publications and get into lifeboats to avoid being sucked down with the plunge of this ill-fated vessel, a ship captained by Don Foster that was destined to sink the moment it left harbor.

If Oxfordians wish to succeed and dominate the "Shake-speare" authorship paradigm, it is imperative that there exist some understood delineation between the set of facts that are accepted and defended, and budding theories that are not quite Tudor Roses. ©2002, Christopher Paul

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1. HMC Salisbury, Vol. 16, p. 258 - Hatfield 189/147
2. Public Records Office, C142/286/165
3. PRO SP15/39, f. 141; Transcript: Alan Nelson
4. Most Oxfordians are only aware of Baxter's acrostic poem to Susan Vere in *Ourlania*, in which it is clear, even there, that her father is deceased by Baxter's use of the word 'whilom.' However, this writer will soon be publishing a paper on what else Baxter had to say about Oxford in that work, and its relevance to the Shake-speare authorship question.
5. Essex Record Office D/DRg2/25; Transcript: Alan Nelson

6. In *Pepys's Miscellanies*, vol. 5, p. 267 is 'A List of the King's Ships, Anno 1633; Established by the Lords of the Council for the measuring His Majesty's Ships, Whitehall.' The *Prince Royal* heads the list of 50 ships, weighing in at 1187 tons, length of the keel 115 feet, capacity of 500 men, and a total of 55 guns.

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A Year in The Life

1580: The year of living dangerously

By Hank Whittemore

Edward de Vere was just thirty years old in 1580, but more than half his life had gone by, two-thirds of it spent under the sovereign gaze of Elizabeth Tudor. As her royal ward and then as one of her most intimate favorites at Court, he had supported the Queen amid threats from Spain and the Pope as well as from her own Catholic subjects bent on replacing her with Mary Stuart. Now she was alienating many of her own Protestant subjects, not to mention Puritans, by apparently deciding to marry young Alençon of France. Oxford had publicly defended Elizabeth's policies along with Lord Burghley and the Earl of Sussex, in bitter conflict with self-seeking Leicester, whose nephew Philip Sidney had joined him in opposition to the French match—an alliance that the Queen, despite her gaudy displays of romantic passion, undoubtedly intended to keep putting off till doomsday.

Could it be that Elizabeth would allow a French Catholic anywhere near the throne of England? The betting here is that, no, it was all a fantastical act played on the world stage in order to keep the Spanish menace at bay until England might acquire the military strength to withstand an invasion. Was it merely coincidental that Oxford's tennis-court quarrel with Sidney the previous August had occurred in full view of the visiting French commissioners, who had watched this marvelous confrontation from the windows of their private galleries? Or was Edward de Vere, a consummate actor worthy of the Queen's own talents, putting on an "antic disposition" that Hamlet would have envied? It would seem that both Oxford and Elizabeth viewed all England as a stage; and who, then or now, might pluck out the heart of either's mystery?

In the year 1580 the current phase of Oxford's writing career, which had begun upon his return from Italy in 1576, was about to become intensely productive through most of this decade that would see England's victory over Philip's armada in 1588. Meanwhile the Shakespeare pseudonym was still thirteen years away, not to appear until 1593, when yet another decade of labor with his pen would follow. Biographers of Oxford are faced with trying to comprehend what exactly, in the life

of their subject during 1580, led him into the personal crucible from whose fires the world's greatest tragedies would be born. That year "may be said to mark the highest point attained by Lord Oxford as a courtier and Royal favorite," writes his first chroni-

*"...a developing
hypothesis of this
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and Francis Walsingham ...
to help gather
intelligence..."*

cler, B. M. Ward, in 1928, adding that "before the end of 1580 he took the first step in a course of action which—however patriotically intended—was destined to dethrone him from that position of prestige and authority which he had occupied at the Court" since his emergence at twenty-one in 1571.

It should be noted that a developing hypothesis of this column is that Oxford was working on different levels and in various ways in direct association with William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, to help gather intelligence—in particular, about the plans and doings of Catholics dedicated to overthrowing (and murdering) Elizabeth with the help of Spain, with the goal of liberating Mary Queen of Scots and installing her as Mary II of England. In this effort, the evidence would seem to show, Oxford was also playing a variety of public roles to throw others off the track of his serious

pursuits. Following is a list of some of some events in this "year of living dangerously" for Oxford, along with my sporadic commentary in italics ("Author's note") related to this hypothesis of his possible intelligence activities.

New Year's Day, 1580: Oxford's gift to Queen Elizabeth was "a fair jewel of gold, being a ship garnished fully with diamonds, and a mean pearl pendant."¹

Challenge to Sidney, Jan. 27, 1580: Oxford and Elizabeth were reported walking together in the orchard of Whitehall Palace at eleven in the morning; and apparently on the same day Oxford challenged Philip Sidney in writing to a duel, which the earl himself declined after Sir Philip had accepted it. The information is murky, but it seems Oxford was placed under house arrest from 29 January to 11 February, having been commanded by the Queen to keep to his chamber. Sidney, banished from Court, retired to Wilton until October.²

Author's note: The tennis-court quarrel had happened in August 1579, so why would Oxford issue such a challenge several months later? My tentative answer is that the earl was deliberately making himself a motley to the view and giving Elizabeth an excuse to rebuke him—so others might believe he was on shaky ground in terms of the Queen's favor.

Spanish Threat: "The year opened full of anxiety for Elizabeth. The ostentatious fitting out of the Spanish fleet, and the active support by Spain and the Pope of the Desmond rebellion, the success of Parma, and the desperate attempts of Orange to reunite Flanders with Holland under Alençon in the national cause, were all so many dangers to England. If Elizabeth offended France or alienated Alençon himself... she would have to face Spain alone."³

Twelfth Night, 1580: A "pleasant conceit of Vere, Earl of Oxford, discontented at the rising of a mean gentleman in the English Court, circa 1580"—reportedly cited in Francis Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa* (1732-35) and thought by Clark to be a reference to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* as a caricature of Sir Christopher Hatton.

Merchant of Venice, Feb. 2, 1580: "*The history of Portio and demorantes was shewn at Whitehall ... enacted by the Lord*

(Continued on page 22)

Whittemore (continued from page 21)

Chamberleyns servants” was a recorded reference to actors patronized by Sussex and, in the view of Mrs. Clark, an early version of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Antony and Cleopatra, 1580: Clark also dates this play to about now, believing Oxford wrote it to commemorate Alençon’s visit the previous August—a chance to portray the Queen in terms of her charms and flirtations, as well as to depict her outbursts of rage and other aspects, not to mention her ability to lie shamelessly and without hesitation.

Earthquake, April 6, 1580: “Wednesday in Easter week, about six of the clock towards evening, a sudden earthquake happening in London and almost generally throughout England, caused such amazement of the people as was wonderful for that time, and caused them to make earnest prayers unto Almighty God.”⁴

Oxford’s Players, April 12: By now Warwick’s men had transferred into Oxford’s service and the Lord Mayor complained about a disorder at the “Theatre.” Next day the Privy Council committed some of Oxford’s actors to the Marshalsea for involvement in a fray at the Inns of Court. In June both Burghley and Sussex recommended to Vice Chancellor John Hatcher of Cambridge that Oxford’s men be allowed to “show their cunning in several plays already practiced by them before the Queen’s Majesty,” as Hatcher wrote by way of advising against it.⁵ This is “the first evidence we have that the Earl of Oxford had become the patron of a troupe of actors,” Clark writes. “Hitherto, his plays seem always to have been produced by the Lord Chamberlain’s Company or the Paul’s Boys, the former under the patronage of the Earl of Sussex, his great friend, and the latter made up from the choir-boys of St. Paul’s Cathedral, probably under the patronage of the Queen.”⁶

Author’s note: It would appear that the importance of the Chamberlain’s Men under Sussex during the 1570s up to his death in 1583 cannot be overestimated; and that the Queen regarded Oxford’s plays as essential aspects of the royal entertainment provided for the visiting French entourage. In addition, when the Egyptian queen came on the court stage, the image was every bit as powerful as the sight of Elizabeth herself on progress or aboard her royal barge; and reports of the English monarch as Cleopatra would speed to France and the other European courts.

Jesuit Threat, June 1580: “Two Jesuits in disguise, Edmund Campion and Rob-

ert Parsons, arrived in England under papal instructions from Rome ... to pretend loyalty until such time as military action took the place of peaceful penetration. The Pope was openly at war with England; Campion and Parsons were working hard to enlist recruits.” In July the Queen “issued a proclamation appealing to her subjects to stand fast” and the Privy Council began “a policy of increased severity towards the recusants,”⁷ who adds that Elizabeth acquiesced the following year.) Burghley and Walsingham stepped up measures to place potential leaders of any Catholic rebellion under surveillance.

Euphues and his England, 1580: John Lyly, *protégé* of Burghley and Edward de Vere’s personal secretary, dedicated this novel to Oxford by referring to *Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit*, of the previous year:

My first burden coming before his time, must needs be a blind whelp, the second brought forth after his time must needs be a monster, the one I sent to a noble man to nurse, who with great love brought him up, for a year: so that wheresoever he wander, he hath his Nurse’s name in his forehead, where sucking his first milk, he cannot forget his first Master. The other (right Honourable) being but yet in his swath clothes, that in his infancy he may be kept by your good care from falls, and in his youth by your great countenance shielded from blows...⁸ [modern English by author, HW]

These extraordinarily popular romances represented the birth of the modern English novel. Aimed at the Court and the universities, but expressly dedicated “to the Ladies and Gentlewomen of England,” they were “mainly pretexts for sophisticated discussion of contemporary manners and modes in a style whose graceful ornateness is really an end in itself,” the Bloomsbury editors write. But Jusserand declares, on the other hand:

From the time of Lyly until our own day, the English novel generally speaking has remained ... a moralizing agent; the author has recourse to a thousand skillful and fascinating devices, and leads us by the hand through all sorts of flowery paths; but whatever the manner may be, he almost invariably, without saying so, leads us to the sermon.

Euphues is a young contemporary Athenian who

goes to Naples, thence to England, to

study men and governments. ... Grave with that gravity peculiar to lay preachers, well-informed on every subject, even on his own merits, assured by his conscience that in making mankind sharer in his illumination, he will assure their salvation, he addresses moral epistles to his fellow men to guide them through life. Omniscient ... he instructs the world in the truth about marriage, travel, religion. ... When women are his subject he is especially earnest and eloquent, and having, as it seems, suffered much at their hands, he concludes: “Come to me all ye lovers that have been delivered by fancy, the glass of pestilence, or deluded by women, the gate to perdition; be as earnest to seek a medicine as you were eager to run into a mischief.”⁹

Not to be ignored in *Euphues His England* was Queen Elizabeth:

Here, Ladies, is a Glass for all Princes to behold ... As this noble Prince is endowed with mercy, patience and moderation, so is she adorned with singular beauty and chastity, excelling in the one *Venus*, in the other *Vesta* ... who by the space of twenty and odd years with continual peace against all policies, with sundry miracles, contrary to all hope, hath governed that noble Island. Against whom neither foreign force, nor civil fraud, neither discord at home, nor conspiracies abroad, could prevail ... O blessed peace, oh happy Prince, O fortunate people: The living God is only the English God, where he hath placed peace, which bringeth all plenty, anointed a Virgin Queen ... the Goddess of Beauty ...¹⁰

Author’s note: Part of the working hypothesis of this column is that Oxford was deliberately fostering the image of himself as the quintessential “Italianate Englishman” who was quite taken with himself and his fancy clothing and so forth—an aspect of his volatile “antic disposition” to distract others from considering that he might be playing an important Secret Service role in terms of gathering intelligence at extremely high levels of the Elizabethan nobility. This is not to propose that he was a “spy” in the ordinary sense, but that he was working on behalf of the policies being pursued by both Burghley and Walsingham; and that he was carving out for himself a multifaceted role that included recreating England’s royal history on the stage as well as working with other writers who were genuine, government-paid spies.

Harvey on Oxford, Summer 1580: Edmund Spenser had written to Gabriel Harvey about the earthquake, adding he had received Harvey’s “English hexameters” and liked them “exceedingly well.” Harvey

now replied with a “learned judgment of earthquakes” and added some poems, among them *Speculum Tuscanismi*, a caricature of Oxford, which included these telling lines:

Not the like discourser for Tongue, and
head to be found out,
Not the like resolute man for great and
serious affairs,
Not the like Lynx to spy out secrets and
privities of States...¹¹

Author's note: In other parts of his hexameters, Harvey depicted Oxford as the Italianate Englishman (in other words, as Euphues himself), but in the lines above he was clearly informing Spenser that the earl, while undoubtedly sincere in his Renaissance spirit, was broadcasting his own eccentric personality in order to accomplish much more than that in the way of “great and serious” matters.

Zelauto, the Fountain of Fame ... given for a friendly entertainment to Euphues, at his late arrival into England, 1580: Anthony Munday, the anti-Catholic English spy and “Servant to the Right Honourable the Earl of Oxenford,” dedicated this novel to Edward de Vere:

So my simple self (Right Honourable) having sufficiently seen the rare virtues of your noble mind, the heroic qualities of your prudent person. ... Yet thus much I am to assure your Honour, that among all the brave books which have been bestowed, these my little labours contain so much faithful zeal to your welfare as others whatsoever, I speak without any exception....

Munday had gone into Oxford's service at the very time he was also gathering intelligence against Catholics for Burghley and Walsingham. In the previous year Munday had enrolled at the English College in Rome, under an alias, and from there he had gone to Paris and Rheims as an informer.¹² It was Munday who had “successfully induced Campion to return to England, duping him into a sham conspiracy,” write Phillips and Keatman,¹³ adding that Campion walked right into a trap that had been laid for him. (They also add that, upon Campion's hanging in 1581, Munday “attended the execution, gleefully writing up the event in his diary.”)

Author's note: It would seem that Harvey's cryptic description of Oxford's ability “to spy out secrets and privities of States” was accurate. How could Oxford not have known all about Munday's operations for

England's unofficial Secret Service under Burghley and Walsingham? In fact, even when Oxford himself would be publicly humiliated by the Queen's banishment of him from Court, Munday would continue to enjoy the royal favor and patronage, becoming a Messenger of the Chamber. In the years to come, the writers in Oxford's circle would include other known spies, including Christopher Marlowe and his friend Thomas Watson.

Vavasour's Pregnancy, July 1580:

Anne Vavasour would have conceived Oxford's illegitimate son around now, given that Edward Vere or Veere would be born the following March. One may marvel that this Maid of Honor to the Queen was able concealed her pregnancy until then, but apparently she did so; and we might also marvel at the fact that she was related to Oxford's Catholic relatives who, even now, were colluding with Spain to plan their acts of high treason.

Drake's Return, September 1580:

“About that time returned into England Francis Drake, flowing with great wealth, and flourishing with greater glory, having prosperously sailed round about the world ... in the space of three years or thereabouts, to the great admiration of all men. ... The Queen received him graciously, and laid up his wealth by way of sequestration. ... His ship she caused to be drawn up into a little creek near Depford upon the Thames ... and in it being consecrated for a memorial with great ceremony, she was banqueted, and honored Drake with the dignity of Knighthood.”¹⁴

Then came the Lord Chamberlain with
his white staff,
And all the people began to laugh;
And then the Queen began to speak,
“You're welcome home, Sir Francis
Drake.”
(*Elizabethan Lyrics*, Ault, 104)

Eva Turner Clark, citing Albert Feuillerat about Oxford as an actor, speculates that people would have “recognized Oxford as a comedian who had given them much pleasure.” She also notes, “The question forces itself upon us: Why should the people laugh at the Lord Chamberlain? ... In 1580 the person holding the honor of Lord Chamberlain ... (was) Sussex, a serious and dignified man, about fifty-five years of age, so it seems unlikely that there would be any occasion to laugh at him. There remains to be considered the incumbent of that other office with a similar title—Lord Great Chamberlain of England.”¹⁵

Author's note: Was this more of the antic disposition? Drake's triumphant return was more than the successful conclusion of a miraculous voyage (akin to the moon landing by the U.S. in 1969); in fact it represented one of Elizabeth's most mighty acts in defiance of Spain and the Pope. As Trevelyan writes in 1933: “The situation (internationally) reached its crisis over Drake's voyage round the world ... the greatest piratical expedition in history. ‘Drake!’ she exclaimed. ‘So it is that I would gladly be revenged on the King of Spain for divers injuries that I have received!’”¹⁶

Oxford's Treason Charges, December

1580: Oxford charged his Catholic associates Henry Howard, Charles Arundel and Francis Southampton, with treasonous plans involving Spain and the Pope—to be taken up in our next column, which will deal with 1581 because its events follow so closely from this explosive episode. To what extent had Oxford shared the religious and/or political views of Howard, brother of the late Duke of Norfolk? Had Oxford actually been spying out the secrets of his erstwhile friends? Had he been carrying on with them, in private, to the point where they believed he shared their goals and finally dropped their guard, telling him their secrets? To what shall we attribute Elizabeth's subsequent wrath against Edward de Vere and her banishment of him from Court? Was she, too, playing a role, perhaps to give him a cover?

To what extent have we, as Oxfordians, tended to view Edward de Vere as “outside the box” or removed from the central policymaking of the Elizabethan reign and its implementation? Might it not be time to throw off the shackles of Stratfordian conceptions about the man who was “Shakespeare” and begin to view him, beyond the writings he has left us, as a central mover and shaper of his age?

Written suggestions to *Shakespeare Matters* are welcome. The author would be glad to discuss his evolving hypothesis of Oxford's possible intelligence role with all comers (email: hankw@optonline.net).

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2. Christopher Paul supplied evidence from the Historical MSS Commission 58 – Bath Longleat MSS., Vol. IV – Seymour Papers, 186, from Hertford's diary about Oxford walking in the orchard with Elizabeth; There
(Continued on page 27)

Paradigm Shift
By Mark K. Anderson

Richard Roe on Shakespeare in Italy

Like Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller before him, Richard Roe was a World War II airman who converted his wartime experience into peacetime literature. Unlike the two American novelists, however, Roe works in nonfiction.

He's now finishing a project that could rank among such landmarks of Shakespeare scholarship—orthodox or otherwise—as Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Roger Stritmatter's *de Vere Bible studies* and Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. Stationed in Italy during the war, Roe fell in love with the land he was fighting to liberate. He also found himself engaged in a hunt that generates more heat than light from orthodox scholars: The loaded question of Shakespeare's knowledge of Italy. While Roe was hardly the first to undertake such a task—his predecessors include Ernesto Grillo, Karl Elze and Georges Lambin—his novel approach mirrored J. Thomas Looney's. He treated the Shakespeare canon as a forensic database, never once worrying about retrofitting the author's knowledge to a plausible Italian itinerary. The Shakespeare he studied, Roe quickly discovered, was an experienced Italian traveler with many months of explorations across the peninsula stashed away in his memory and notes.

For the past ten years, Roe has traveled throughout Italy, delving into archives, interviewing local historians and conducting as extensive a study of Shakespeare's Italy as has ever been done. He hopes to complete his book *Shakespeare in Italy: Secret of the Centuries* by November. Expect it to be a must-have for any Oxfordian—and, one would hope, Stratfordian—bookshelf by the end of 2003 or early 2004.

I spoke with Roe at the Sixth Annual *De Vere Studies Conference* in Portland, Oregon, in April.

Shakespeare Matters: What first inspired you to investigate Shakespeare and Italy?

Richard Roe: I'd long sensed the enormous preoccupation the playwright had with Italy. As a result, I thought it was downright peculiar that the whole subject was avoided by the orthodox Shakespeareans. They were ridiculing this knowledge. I began to become a little bit angry



Richard Roe, author of the forthcoming book *Shakespeare in Italy: Secret of the Centuries*. (Photo by Mark K. Anderson)

with that simply because I had enough experience in Italy to know that these people doing the ridiculing didn't know anything about Italy. I had been in Sicily. And I'd had an occasion in Sicily where I was startled at how intimately the playwright knew Sicily.

SM: What was it?

R.R: In *The Winter's Tale*, two nobles have gone to ask the Oracle at Delphi whether or not Hermione has been a faithful wife. And they return in a very peculiar way from the Oracle back to Sicily. They're going to Palermo—because it's the only place in Sicily that had a royal palace; all the other buildings which were occupied by

kings in Sicily were always called castles. There was only one palace, and that was the Norman palace in Palermo.

A messenger appears at the palace and tells the king that the two nobles have returned from Delphi, and they are "posting" on their way. [*Winter's Tale* 2.3.193-207] But I said to myself, "Why in the devil would they be posting?" The harbor in Palermo is a thousand meters from the door of the Norman palace. They could have stopped for a pizza and a bottle of wine and still beat the messenger. I decided I would look into where on earth they would have landed (see the map on page 25 to follow their route).

There are many yachtsmen's rules on why you don't go north through the Straits of Messina even today. It's very dangerous. Treacherous seas, treacherous winds. And in those days they had Scylla and Charybdis flanking the Strait of Messina. Moreover, a sailor I met in Messina pointed out to me that you could go along the southern coast of Sicily because it's like a river. It flows at four knots from east to west. So you could get clear around to the western shore of Sicily without even having any winds. So they've landed at Trápani. They didn't land at Palermo at all, and that's why they're posting.

Now there's a very brief scene that is usually ignored in productions of *The Winter's Tale* in which you've got these two nobles, Cleomenes and Dion, on their way to Palermo. We know that they're posting [i.e. changing horses] because their last remark in the scene is, "Go; fresh horses!" So where would they be? Trápani was 90 kilometers from Palermo, and a Sicilian horse was good for about 30 kilometers. So they'd either be stopping 30 kilometers east of Trápani or 60 kilometers east of Trápani.

And here's where the playwright fakes people out.

Cleomenes:

The climate's delicate, the air most sweet,

Fertile the isle, the temple
 much surpassing
 The common praise it bears. (3.1.1-3)

Cleomenes is talking in the present tense — although he's always construed to be talking in the past tense [i.e. about Delphi]. He says, "Fertile the isle." He's talking about Sicily. We know Delphi isn't an island, and it isn't fertile. And here he's given us a clue. Cleomenes says that the temple surpasses its reputation for beauty. And is there a temple? There is. It is beautiful, and it is stunning. And it stands by itself at the first of the two postings [between Trápani and Palermo]. If you look down the road to where the posting station would be, right up there on the rise is this exquisite temple.

This guy knew Sicily like the back of his hand.

SM: Shakespeare's knowledge of Venice is something that has been given a lot of attention over the years. How about his knowledge of other northern Italian cities, such as Verona or Mantua?

RR: I've written three chapters about the playwright's knowledge of Venice, which is constantly startling. As for Verona, that was the first place I returned to after I had my tour of duty and gone to law school. I returned to Verona because of the ease and simplicity of remembering the lines of *Romeo and Juliet*. I'll tell you about one thing. It was what turned me completely on to the need to examine the Italian plays. I thought it might help to draw a profile of this playwright, whoever he was, because of the constant assertion that Shakespeare was ignorant about Italy. When I arrived in Verona, I steeled my nerves, because either my project would be a fool's errand, or it would be justified.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, when the brawl is over in the first act, Romeo's mother is talking to her nephew. She asks him if he knows where her son is. Her nephew says he saw Romeo earlier this morning in a sycamore grove. The way it's described is very specific. He said he saw Romeo among the sycamores that "westward rooteth from this city side." [1.2.122]

Now that wall was the same wall that's there today. It was built in the early 16th century or the late 15th. So I stepped out of my hotel and got in the taxi. I told the taxi driver to take me outside of the western wall of the city of Verona.

And the sycamores are still there! I got



Map of Sicily, detailing the route that the servants Cleomenes and Dion took in *The Winter's Tale*, as they returned from Delphi. (NASA satellite image)

the biggest goosebumps anybody could ever get. Then I said to myself, well, maybe it's a kind of a general remark. So I asked the taxi driver to take me all around the city wall of Verona. Today the sycamores are spread up towards the north and towards the river. But essentially they were always on the western side and nowhere else.

That was my second experience. The first one was in the ultimate southern end of Italy. And this was up in the north.

SM: He seems to know the whole breadth of Italy. What were some of the more revealing connections that you later found?

RR: One of the ones I stumbled across that really startled me was the act in *All's Well That Ends Well* where Bertram is returning to Florence from his victory in Siena. And the topography of Florence is described in startlingly precise and accurate terms. But you've really got to spend some time in Florence with maps and interviewing historians. It's a difficult thing to describe in an interview.

SM: Many Stratfordians, of course, claim that Shakespeare also got many things about Italy wrong. Have you found any instance where this was so?

RR: Never. None. They are the ones who are ignorant, in every instance. I've catalogued all the critiques made from the 19th and 20th centuries—and all they're doing today on the Internet is repeating the same old stories. On all occasions, the whole treatment of Shakespeare's [ignorance] of Italy is wrong.

SM: How many specific Italian con-

nections are we talking about here?

RR: When I was about a third of a way into the manuscript, I made a checklist, and I counted 78 instances. But now the number is out of control.

SM: How did Shakespeare actually use his knowledge of Italy?

RR: This is the ultimate question. I can only give you some ingredients and try to draw a conclusion. The plays, as the heretics have suggested, were first performed before the Royal court or in front of a group of noblemen at a party or some such occasion. In those environments, he may have well wanted to impart a very clever knowledge of Italy so that they would recognize his erudition, and in fact he could make them laugh. So they could say, "Oh, I remember that!"

Here's the thing. In no case, outside of mentioning the Rialto in *Merchant of Venice*, does this author refer to tourist attractions. He doesn't write a travelogue. In each place, he is describing something so obscure, off the wall, peculiar that a tourist would not even pay any attention to it. He's giving you what I have come to believe is his personal, direct knowledge of his experiences in Italy. That isn't the kind of thing that somebody would mention that they came home from a trip or mention in a pub over a tankard of ale. This stuff is so peculiar and so bizarre. It's also spread over all of Italy and Sicily—except for two places.

There is no real intimate geography of Rome in the Roman plays, and there is no real intimate knowledge of the mainland

(Continued on page 28)

*Confidential Video Bard**Midsummer Night's Dream revisited*

By Chuck Berney

The Spring 2001 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* carried the first *Video Bard* column, in which I reviewed five productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, including a 1968 version based on the Royal Shakespeare Company's production, directed by Peter Hall. Some time after this column came out, I received an e-mail from *Shakespeare Fellowship* member Christopher Paul, pointing out that I had missed a more recent version of *Dream* which was his personal favorite. I was able to find it in a local video outlet. It is dated 1996, and is again based on a production by the Royal Shakespeare Company, this time under the direction of Adrian Noble.

In the last issue of *Shakespeare Matters* I reviewed three videos of *As You Like It*, and commented on the difficulties of finding a visual style appropriate for the presentation of Shakespearean plays on video. The plays were written for the stage, where the palpable presence of living actors (and their interaction with the audience) is an essential part of the experience. If they are adapted for video simply by photographing actors in realistic surroundings (as so many of the BBC versions do) the plays can seem talky and unconvincing, the heightened language inappropriate and abnormal.

I agree with Christopher Paul that the Adrian Noble production is the best *Dream* of the lot—it's the only one I've seen that seems *magical*. This version follows a 1994 stage production, so the actors have thoroughly mastered the rhythms and nuances of their lines, and Noble has reworked the material extensively for video presentation. I believe he was consciously aware of the problems mentioned above, so I am going to describe his treatment in some detail.

The camera is floating above a cloudscape; far below, one sees a lighted window. We cut to the window and glide into the room. It is a child's room; as the camera pans we see toys—a teddy bear, a miniature theatre, a rabbit figure, a clown. We pan to the Boy, asleep, with his arm across an illustrated edition of

A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Cut to the Boy walking down a long, narrow hall, passing a statue of a faun. His way is blocked by a pair of large doors. He puts his eye to the keyhole and sees Theseus talking to Hippolyta: "Now, fair Hippolyta,

"If [the plays] are

adapted for video

... by photographing

actors in realistic

surroundings ... [they]

can seem talky and

unconvincing ..."

our nuptial hour draws on apace. . . ." The play proper has begun.

First point: the director has made it clear that this is the Boy's dream, that the things we see will be governed by the laws of dreams, not by the everyday laws of cause and effect (for example, we don't see the Boy open the doors and hide under the table—he simply *is* under the table). Second point: the Boy is a surrogate audience; in every scene there are insert shots of the Boy's reaction—amusement, puzzlement, sympathy, fear. Our reactions to scenes are governed (to some extent) not by their credibility, but by their effect on the Boy.

At the end of the scene between Lysander, Hermia and Helena (1.1), Helena runs out of the room. The Boy follows her, and finds himself falling through a black void (we get a shot of the Boy in bed calling "Mommy!"). The black void gradually defines itself as a tube, and the Boy lands with a *thump* in a potbellied stove located in a crude shack. It is raining outside, and the Mechanicals enter, shaking out their umbrellas, accompanied by a rustic gavotte on the trombone.

At the conclusion of scene two the

Mechanicals leave. An umbrella ascends above the clouds, then descends. The handle is grasped—we see it is Puck, floating in the air, the umbrella a parachute. Another umbrella appears, bearing a Fairy; she and Puck do an abridged version of 2.1 ("How now, spirit, whither wander you?"). On "She never had so sweet a changeling," the Boy watches as Puck plucks a drop from the umbrella and inflates it to a large bubble, in which is seen the turbaned face of the changeling (it is, of course, the Boy's face). On the Fairy's line ("And here my mistress. Would that he were gone"), the Boy blows a stream of bubbles into the miniature theatre. As they descend we see that each bubble contains a fairy, the largest bearing Titania (a reference to the arrival of Glinda the Good in *The Wizard of Oz*; this will not be the last reference to that magical film).

The scene is now a stage, stretching to infinity, with hanging colored lights suggesting both foliage and stars. Titania accuses Oberon of dallying with Hippolyta ("... the bouncing Amazon, your buskin'd mistress, and your warrior love . . ."), to which he replies "I know of thy love for Theseus" (thus the text hints that Titania and Hippolyta are interchangeable, as are Oberon and Theseus). When Oberon snarls "I'll make her render up her page to me" the Boy gasps, strengthening the identification of the Boy as changeling.

Oberon's speech, "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows," is delivered with his face (and Puck's) thrust into the front of a miniature theatre, while the Boy looks in from the back. All three appear to be normal size, in contrast to the bubble-borne entrance of Titania and the fairy band, when they were all small enough to fit inside the toy stage. When Oberon mentions a "sweet Athenian lady," the Boy moves a miniature female figure forward onto the stage. On Puck's line, "Fear not my lord! Your servant shall do so," Puck and Oberon grasp umbrella handles and are wafted skyward; the camera pulls back to show they are suspended by marionette strings which the Boy is lifting—another dazzling change of scale.

The action has moved from a realistic

representation of a boy's bedroom to a mostly realistic 18th century drawing room to a semi-realistic shack, and finally has transcended reality altogether by showing only stages—miniature and infinite. The director has seized every opportunity to show us that what we are seeing is not real, but magical.

In the last newsletter, the Video Bard made a conjecture: "When several video versions of a Shakespeare comedy are available, the most entertaining version will be based on a stage production." The video reviewed here provides further support for this conjecture. Further, we discussed the necessity of guiding the viewer away from "normal," realistic expectations to a mental model appropriate for the stage. The director of this production, as discussed above, has done that most brilliantly.

Doubling. It is fairly common for the actors playing Oberon and Titania to double as Theseus and Hippolyta, as they do in this production. Less common is having the actor playing Puck (Oberon's assistant) double as Philostrate (Theseus's assistant); both parts are played here by Barry Lynch with sly knowingness. An even bolder stroke is having the Mechanicals (Snut, Starveling, Quince and Flute) double as the Fairies (Moth, Cobweb, Mustardseed and Peaseblossom), reminding us that in *The Wizard of Oz*, the Kansas Mechanicals (Hunk, Hickory and Zeke) reappear in Oz as the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the

Cowardly Lion (Snug the Joiner appears in lion costume in this *Dream* sequence).

Personnel. Alex Jennings displays a laser-like intensity as Oberon/Theseus, and Lindsay Duncan is serenely voluptuous as Titania/Hippolyta (she won a Tony for her work in *Private Lives*). We commented above on the textual hint that these personas are blurred; the actors support this by playing the two roles in exactly the same way, leading to a little joke at the end: after the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe" Hippolyta congratulates the players; when she comes to Bottom there is a start of mutual recognition (though of course it was Bottom and Titania who had the roll in the hay). Desmond Barrit is the most lovable Bottom of any production I've seen. The Boy is sympathetically played by Osheen Jones.

The Director. Adrian Noble recently resigned as Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, possibly over controversy associated with his proposal that the existing Shakespeare theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon be torn down (how's that for symbolizing the Paradigm Shift?).

I have barely scratched the surface in describing the fantastic weave of Shakespearean text, cultural references and beautiful images in this amazing video. Noble is one of our most imaginative directors—he is a national treasure, and after his resignation will surely land on his feet. But will the Royal Shakespeare Company?

Whittemore (continued from page 23)

- is also information on Alan Nelson's website (<http://violet.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/>) about Oxford's challenge to Sidney and his subsequent house arrest, which may or may not have been related.
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Anderson (continued from page 25)

kingdom of Naples. He has hopped over, I've concluded, the papal states and Naples. And every Italian event alluded to in the plays that I've found occurred prior to 1580.

SM: Some fiction writers today painstakingly labor over staying true to precise details in their works. With intimate detail, I think they'd argue, comes intimate art.

RR: It may have been like a crutch. For example mystery writers either write about a city which they have great familiarity, or they diagram an imaginary city, and they keep a map on their desk, so that readers can't attack them for sending one of their characters down the wrong street.

SM: Did you find any good jokes?

RR: In *The Taming of the Shrew*, he makes a joke about Pisa. It's a pun. But it's been misinterpreted by the critics. And I know he loves the joke, because he tells it twice. He says, "Pisa, renowned for its grave citizens."

Now anyone will tell you the Pisans are really quite solemn. When you consider the effusiveness of most Italians, the Pisans are very staid and reserved. And that was a good enough explanation for several years. But then I decided I would branch out and see more than just the Leaning Tower and spend some more time in the cathedral. Now against one side of the cathedral is a big wall. And inside the walled area is an enormous and elaborate graveyard.

What happened during the Crusades is

the Archbishop of Pisa persuaded the sailors when they dropped off their pilgrims in the holy land—and they're returning empty—to go up on Mt. Calvary and bring home some of the earth. Some of that earth might contain drops of the blood of Christ. This became a very big deal. And it took a number of years. But they brought home enough earth from the mount to spread out two or three feet thick and fill the inside of the cathedral. A wall was built around it. So if you had the incredible privilege of being buried in the very earth on which Christ had bled, you'd probably shoot straight to heaven without any purgatory.

Needless to say, that wasn't for everybody. You had to be on the inside track with the Archbishop. You had to be a pretty important guy to get buried inside the "campo sacro."

SM: So the joke is: Pisa, renowned for its grave citizens.

RR: Yes. It's a pun. He's talking about the campo sacro. This guy's a real devil. He's doing this to you all the time.

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Letters (continued from page 3)

are from the same historical source as the "Masters of Artes" quote that also uses antique spelling. If this were true, the only cited source that fits is the cite to John Nichols from 1823.

But I doubt that Nichols said that Oxford was "the poet-dramatist to become 'Shakespeare' in 1593" since if this were true, such a statement in 1823 would be prime evidence for the Oxford cause and we would all know about it. Thus, I doubt that the indented paragraphs are quoted from any historical source even though the use of the Latin terminology tends to give that impression.

In this era when so many authors are being accused of failing to properly cite sources (Stephen Ambrose most prominently), advocates of a controversial position must be especially careful to cite accurately, because unclear citations (or lack of citations) will be seized on by opponents to discredit the entire argument.

Edward Sisson
Chevy Chase, Maryland
5 June 2002

Editors: We thank Mr. Sisson for his remarks, and must acknowledge that he was not alone in being somewhat confused by the comments that appeared next to the Latinized names of those who received degrees at Cambridge in 1564.

These comments came from the author, not from Nichols, and in hindsight they should have been italicized and clearly labeled as comments, not cited text.

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