Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

10:3 "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments..." Summer 2011

"Look Not on this Picture": Ambiguity in the Shakespeare First Folio Preface

by Richard F. Whalen

Shakespeare scholars and editors contend, or simply assume, that the prefatory matter in First Folio of 1623 provides straightforward, valid evidence that William Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the works of Shakespeare. They cite the dedication over the names of John Heminge and Henry Condell, former actors mentioned in Shakspere's will, who state that they collected the plays "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare, by humble offer of his plays, to your most noble patronage." And they cite the allusions to "sweet swan of Avon" by Ben Jonson and "thy Stratford monument" by Leonard Digges as pointing to Stratford-on-Avon.

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Wikipedia Wars: Is Coverage of the Authorship Question "Fair and Balanced"?

by Bill Boyle

On April 23, 2011, Wikipedia marked the traditional Shakespeare birthday by making its "Shakespeare Authorship Question" article the featured article of the day on its gateway "Main Page." At first blush one might think that choice reflected some anti-Stratfordian bias on the part of Wiki administrators, but that is far from the truth. In fact, it was the most ardent of Stratfordian defenders who were responsible for the April 23 article of the day, as they were celebrating its brand-new status as a "Featured Article" on the Wiki pages. A "Featured Article" -- isn't that an honor in itself, in addition to its appearance on the Main Page for a day? Sadly, no. There is a story behind this Wiki story, one that's been percolating – or raging – for several years.

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Shakespeare's Shylock and the Strange Case of Gaspar Ribeiro

by Earl Showerman, MD

An Oxfordian approach to *The Merchant of Venice* incorporates a multi-disciplinary analysis of the play's literary sources, nomenclature, allegory, geography, and topicalities that reflect contemporaneous events and personalities in light of the known education, literary connections, and travels of Edward de Vere. *Merchant* offers a myriad of possible connections. We know that de Vere was fluent in Italian and Latin, was the dedicatee of one of the play's acknowledged sources (Anthony Munday's euphuistic novel *Zelauto*) and had traveled to Venice in 1575-76, where he was known to have frequented the theaters, attended the Church of Santa Maria Formosa, and bought a Hebrew Bible.

The relevant arguments supporting the Earl of Oxford's claim to *The Merchant of Venice* are further explored in this issue by William Farina, author of *De Vere as Shakespeare* (2006). Oxfordians Noemi Magri,[1] Richard Lester,[2] Michael Delahoyde,[3] Richard Paul Roe,[4] Ian Haste,[5] Ren Draya and Richard Whalen[6] have all published works that examine Shakespeare's grasp of Venetian law, geography, literature, commerce and theater arts. *Brief Chronicles* managing editor Gary Goldstein has persuasively argued that Shakespeare depended on the Hebrew Bible for the nomenclature of his Jews in this troublesome comedy.[7] An English translation of *Shakespeare in Venice: Exploring the*

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Letters

To the Editor:

The Shakespeare Fellowship had been alerted last fall that Rice University's *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* would include a review of our online journal *Brief Chronicles* in the Spring issue. What appeared in the volume released this week serves as a litmus test for the limitations of the academic attention span.

The editor of this Rice University study reviewed in several paragraphs the new publications that represent "notable development in Shakespeare studies: the return of the author." In a rather poorly defined opening, the editor discusses a recent but unnamed book that appears to be a retread of the usual Stratfordian rationales. In the grandiose vocabulary of mainstream academia, this new orthodox offering targets "historicist purveyors of collaboration and the bardolatrous proponents of Shakespeare's transhistorical exceptionalism." I promise you I didn't make this up! In fact, my word processor doesn't recognize several the words in the sentence, but inventing new words to characterize old ideas is what English professors do for a living.

On a more serious note, there's another new offering titled *Shakespeare's Book: Essays in Reading, Writing, and Reception* edited by Richard Meek, Jane Rickard, and Richard Wilson. In this book, one will find "reflections on Shakespeare's authorship grounded in a sense of the importance of books – the books Shakespeare read, the books he represented within his works, the books within which his works were first read." And all this from someone who didn't OWN any books?

The editor's second paragraph is more productive. He discusses a new book on stylometrics written by Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney – big shots to be sure. Entitled *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, Craig and Kinney explore "Shakespeare's" authorship of part of *Sir Thomas More* and the 1602 additions of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Also, they provide "titillating conclusions" that "Shakespeare" collaborated with other writers in the apocryphal works *Arden of Faversham* and *Edward III*, and the canonical *Henry VI*, Parts 1 and 2.

This is not exactly something of which we Oxfordians are unaware, and I would be interested in a comparison of the Craig/Kinney material with the work of Ramón Jiménez on the Shakespearean Apocrypha. The Rice University editor ends this segment with a glowing report on David Bevington's overview of the history of Shakespearean biography, a book with the not-too-inventive title *Shakespeare and Biography*.

....inventing new words to characterize old ideas is what English professors do for a living.

Finally, my patience was rewarded with the notice of William Leahy's collection *Shakespeare and His Authors: Critical Perspectives on the Authorship Question*. The Rice editor puts on his fighting gloves: "Shakespeareans" regard the claims of those who espouse alternative candidates as "crackpot delusion worthy of the serendipitously named anti-Stratfordians J. Thomas Looney and Geroge M. Battey." Warming to his topic, he decries Mark Rylance's essay as "little more than knee-jerk dissent based largely on the supposed difference between what we know of Shakespeare-the-man and what the plays suggest about their author."

Well, after all, isn't this the heart of the problem? But amid these timeless clichés, the Rice reviewer puts in parenthesis a note of a new journal edited by Roger Stritmatter.

Don't suggest we lose any sleep over this one.

Bonner Miller Cutting

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Fellowship is to promote public awareness and acceptance of the authorship of the Shakespeare Canon by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), and further to encourage a high level of scholarly research and publication into all aspects of Shakespeare studies, and also into the history and culture of the Elizabethan era.
The Society was founded and incorporated in 2001 in the State of Massachusetts and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state. It is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit (Fed ID 04-3578550).
Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Shakespeare Matters welcomes articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters and news items. Contributions should be reasonably concise and, when appropriate, validated by peer review. The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Fellowship as a literary and educational organization.

From the President:

The Watershed

This autumn promises to be a watershed season for Oxfordians with several outstanding authorship conferences, the publication of a number of titles by Oxfordian researchers, and the posting of *Brief Chronicles III*. Several documentary videos on the Shakespeare authorship question are about to be released and the much-anticipated Hollywood film, *Anonymous*, directed by Roland Emmerich, will be showing in theaters nationwide by the end of October. Clearly the question of the Shakespeare attribution is about to undergo a seismic transformation in public awareness.

The 15th Annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference will convene at Concordia University in Portland from September 6 -9. This year, the conference will feature a presentation by director Roland Emmerich and a pre-release screening of *Anonymous*. Other presenters include Roger Stritmatter, Alan H. Nelson, Michael Egan, Daniel Wright, Sylvia Holmes, Bonner Cutting, Sally Mosher, Hank Whittemore and Michael Dunn. The conference will also feature several panels, discussion groups, study-and-report sessions, and other forums. At Concordia I will be presenting a paper on "Shakespeare and Venice," an outgrowth of research into the origins of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* which appears elsewhere in this issue.

The 7th Annual Shakespeare Authorship Conference, jointly sponsored by the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society, will convene at the Washington Court Hotel in the nation's capital from October 13-16. This year's program promises to be truly outstanding. Presenters include two scholars from England, Heward Wilkinson and Kevin Gilvary; the latter edited of the De Vere Society publiction, *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* (2010). Mark Anderson will deliver

Dr. Earl Showerman at the 2009 Concordia Conference.

the keynote address on "Prince Tudor: The Elephant in the Room," and Bonner Cutting and Tom Regnier will also speak on various aspects of the Prince Tudor narrative. The conference program includes a tour of the Folger Shakespeare Library with a viewing of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible guided by Roger Stritmatter.

Other scheduled speakers include Oxfordian writers Katherine Chiljan and Peter Dickson, each of whom is publishing a book on the authorship question this fall, as well as Dan Wright, Richard Waugaman, Ren Draya, Frank Davis, Richard Whalen, Ramón Jiménez, Gerit Quealy, Barbara Burris, Ron Hess, Ron Halstead, Albert Burgstahler, Alan Green, Tom Hunter, Tom Townsend, Marty Hyatt and myself. The program committee is also working on arranging previews of *Anonymous* as well as two new documentaries, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's *Nothing Is Truer than Truth* and *Last Will. & Testament*, a production long in development by Laura Mathias and Lisa Wilson of First Folio Pictures, Inc. *Shakespeare Matters* will include a full report on the conference in a later issue, and the syllabus for the educational program will also be posted on the Shakespeare Fellowship website at the conclusion of the conference. To register for this year's joint conference, go to the Shakespeare Fellowship website.

Finally, Gary Goldstein has submitted his resignation from the board of trustees of the Shakespeare Fellowship over concerns regarding the response of the board to his proposals for a position statement on Roland Emmerich's film, *Anonymous*. Gary served nearly three years on the board, contributing greatly to our awareness of developments and publications in the world of authorship studies; he remains as Managing Editor of *Brief Chronicles*. In August, the board elected Kathryn Sharpe to serve for the remainder of Gary's term. Kathryn has been nominated to serve a full three year term starting in October at our annual meeting.

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From a Never Writer to an Ever Reader: News...

Dating Shakespeare's Plays

This new volume from Parapress, edited by De Vere Society member Kevin Gilvary, is among the most important recent books in Shakespearean studies. It is the first comprehensive review of the chronology of the Shakespearean canon from first principles since E.K. Chambers 1930 *Shakespeare: A Study of Facts*. Gilvary and the volume's contributors – among them Noemi Magri, Phillip Johnson, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, Alex McNeil, Sally Hazleton, Lee Tudor-Pole, Alaistair Everitt, John Rollett, Richard Malim and Ramón Jiménez – deserve congratulations for an outstanding production. We hope in a future issue of *Shakespeare Matters* to bring readers a detailed review. For now, be advised that for anyone doing research into chronological matters – orthodox or Oxfordian – this volume is a must-read.

I Know Why the Caged Stratfordian Mutters

In anticipation of the Roland Emmerich film *Anonymous,* depicting Edward de Vere as the mind behind Shakespeare, nervous remarks in establishment periodicals and blogs have increased exponentially. While not in favor of a wholesale re-appraisal of the Shakespeare creative origins, the writers are also not confident in their knowledge about the issue. This is because who wrote Shakespeare has not been a mainstream study among American or British academicians. Under present pressures, they know something is happening, but not what.

The Guardian published an article June 15, 2011, by John Crace, entitled, "The Unreasonable Doubt of Roland Emmerich's *Anonymous*." (http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jun/16/roland-emmerich-anonymous-shakespeare-authorship) It has many of the features, pro and con, of the blog exchanges about the Shakespeare authorship controversy appearing during recent months. The article title burlesques the 'Doubt About Will' petition,

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initiated by John Shahan of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition. Crace's undefended point is that there is no good reason to doubt, nor ever was, Shakespeare of Stratford being the author.

Ad hominem follows *non sequitur*. Crace said Emmerich never "let the facts get in the way of a good story." He gratuitously disparaged the Mayfair headquarters of the English Speaking Union, ("shabby-chic") which sponsored an informal debate between Shakespeare skeptics, including Emmerich, and the defenders on June 6. (http://www.vimeo.com/theesu/anonymousdebate) In snubbing the room he did not mention that the dean of English Shakespeare studies Stanley Wells wore pink (shirt), purple (tie) and baby-blue (jacket), to dress down for an

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Origins of Shylock's Venice: Mermaid Tavern or H.K.U.?

by William Farina

(Portions excerpted from a paper first presented at the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference in Portland, OR on April 13, 2007. Special thanks to Dr. Earl Showerman for three years of relentless encouragement.)

It is fascinating how innocently insightful (but unintentionally subversive) orthodox scholarship proves easily adaptable to the Oxfordian theory. Orthodox scholarship can often be applied and adapted to help build our overall understanding of the Oxfordian theory while concurrently giving it new shapes and forms. Such is certainly the case with *The Merchant of Venice*, a work which has generated enormous amounts of critical commentary, seemingly disproportionate to the rest of the canon. Within the context of the authorship question, it is not overstatement to say that *Merchant* has been at the forefront of the debate ever since John Thomas Looney introduced the Oxfordian hypothesis back in 1920. This darn play just keeps on rearing its provocative head. Lawyers (for one) love it, and most audiences are simultaneously drawn to and repulsed by its disturbing subject matter. Everyone seems to get worked up over a story widely viewed as anti-Semitic—rightfully, in my opinion—and there are no real good guys. Even the heroine Portia says and does some very disconcerting things. Whenever the authorship debate comes up, *Merchant* seems naturally to move front and center. Four hundred ten years after its initial publication, new light continues to be shed upon its creation. This article provides me a convenient opportunity to recap some recent highlights and to offer a much needed correction for an overzealous comment made in a previously published essay.[1]

If the play text was itself not controversial enough, to question the true identity of Shakespeare the writer may appear at first to hopelessly muddle any clear comprehension of the work, especially for newcomers. In this case, however, raising the authorship issue seems to have the opposite effect. Once we entertain the possibility of an alternative Shakespeare, then *Merchant of Venice* suddenly comes into sharp focus.

If the play text was itself not controversial enough, to question the true identity of Shakespeare the writer may appear at first to hopelessly muddle any clear comprehension of the work, especially for newcomers. In this case, however, raising the authorship issue seems to have the opposite effect. Once we entertain the possibility of an alternative Shakespeare, then *Merchant of Venice* suddenly comes into sharp focus. If the alleged poor-boy-made-good actor from Warwickshire was the true author, we can only marvel at how he acquired and retained impressive quantities of esoteric knowledge casually displayed in the work. This gratuitous knowledge relates not only to English and Italian jurisprudence, but to the city of Venice itself, as well as real-life people, places, and incidents taken from the Veneto. Many defenders of the traditional Bard, some of whom should know better, have vehemently maintained that Shakespeare's learning was in fact not impressive. The closer one looks, however, the less convincing these condescending explanations of the Bard's genius appear to be—indeed, they are frequently and rudely debunked. Alternatively, were the works written by a renegade aristocrat (Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford) using a pseudonym ("William Shakespeare") and a front man (Will Shakspere of Stratford), as a growing minority of skeptics seem to think? Was the canon possibly created by an individual whom ordinary Bardolators can relate to less on a personal level, but who had the necessary resources and wherewithal at his disposal, in addition to prodigious God-given talent? Ultimately, it comes down to which scenario is more likely for the author to have acquired his expertise: a provincial glover's son with a blank slate biography who somehow managed to pull himself up by the bootstraps, or a bad-boy son of privilege with stellar poet-playwright credentials and of whose troubled life we probably know more than we really care to.

Let us begin with a quick review of the early paper trail of Shakespeare's category-defying masterpiece. The first quarto of *The Merchant of Venice* was published in 1600. As with all of the canon, there are no manuscripts. The play had been mentioned by Francis Meres in 1598, and the title was registered that year. The quarto frontispiece refers to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, whom everyone agrees was Shakespeare's principal acting company during that period.[2] The basic plot was taken from Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*, a work not fully translated from Italian into English until the 19th century. Anthony Munday's novel *Zelauto* (1580) is often acknowledged as an influence, without mentioning that Munday lavishly dedicated it and other works to de Vere, or that Munday was his servant and secretary.[3] Thus orthodox scholars recognize the sources, but ignore de Vere's possible role in the creative process. The dean of British Shakespearean scholars,

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(Shylock's Venice, cont. from p. 5)

Edmund Chambers, speculated that *Merchant* was probably written sometime before 1596, but sensibly suggested that the roots of the play went back at least 20 years before that date.[4]

If one examines the period alluded to by Chambers—the late 1570s and early 1580s (when a teenage Will Shakspere was still in Warwickshire, begetting children with an older woman)—some suggestive play activity in London is documented. In 1579 a lost anonymous drama titled *The Jew* was performed at the Bull Inn in Bishopsgate, described by one witness as a cautionary tale against "The greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody minds of usurers." That sounds similar to *Merchant* and Chambers recognized the connection. In 1580 another lost anonymous play was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at court, titled *The History of Portio and Demorantes*. Oxfordians have reasonably surmised that this could be a mistranscription of "Portia and the Merchant" or possibly a new title for *The Jew*. The Lord Chamberlain at that time was Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex and an early mentor to de Vere. As should now be obvious, the English sources of Shakespeare's play are to be found at a time and place in which de Vere was active as a court impresario, following his return from Italy in 1576. During that period he was losing his shirt financially (not unlike the merchant Antonio in the play), including a failed investment of £3,000 in an attempt to discover the Northwest Passage.

Thanks to the pioneering work of Oxfordian researchers such as Noemi Magri, we are increasingly certain that Shakespeare the writer knew a lot more about the Veneto than what he could have gathered merely from reading books. The playwright, if he did not personally travel to Italy, must have had a chat with someone who did. De Vere not only traveled to Italy, he made Venice his base of operations in 1575-76. The Venetian Republic at this time included the city, the Veneto region, and extensive portions of the eastern Mediterranean world. Vast territorial reach, combined with an economy founded upon international trade, made for a very diverse and cosmopolitan city in terms of race, religion, and culture. The Bard repeatedly shows a keen awareness of this diversity in his works.

Comparisons with other Elizabethan plays having Jewish themes underscore the uniqueness of Shakespeare's achievement. In 1584 a drama by Robert Wilson titled *Three Ladies of London* was published, a story taking its cue from Munday's *Zelauto* in which a loan for 3,000 ducats with two installments is made between (tables turned) a sympathetic Jewish borrower and an unscrupulous Christian moneylender. Beyond this, similarities between *Three Ladies* and *Merchant* are slight, but the Bard was clearly familiar with this work, or perhaps it was the other way around, if one is open to the idea that "Shakespeare" may have been active as a playwright by then. Christopher Marlowe's drama *The Jew of Malta* was produced around 1590 and likely also known to the Bard. Although Marlowe was a writer of genius and *Jew of Malta* shows flashes of it, most will agree that Marlowe's Barabas is no Shylock. Barabas is pretty much the type of one-dimensional, stock Jewish villain that one would expect from an Elizabethan playwright. Shylock, in contrast, stands apart, particularly in the way in which his character can alternatively be sympathetic or evil. Not long ago, when F. Murray Abraham portrayed both characters in simultaneous productions, *New York Times* critic Charles Isherwood noted that Barabas was merely "a vicious caricature" while remarking that Shylock "proves to be the more unsettling of the two figures."[5] Even Jewish historians of the Venetian Ghetto who deny that Shakespeare traveled to Italy, such as Benjamin Ravid, admit that the Bard's portrayal was a watershed, especially when compared to other period writers such as Marlowe. Ravid noted that "Shylock represented a relatively less hostile portrayal of the Jew, one that was unprecedented until the Enlightenment."[6]

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Dr. Magri has made a convincing case, based on numerous details in the play, that Belmont was a real place: namely, the

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[Editor's note: Michael Kositsky submitted this work of fiction a while back. Any similarities between it and the Shakespeare authorship question are, of course, coincidental.]

Detective Superintendent Blattshap Gets His Man

A play in one act
by Michael Kositsky

Dramatis Personae

Constable Neldy

Superintendent Blattshap

Mr. Smyth

(Detective Superintendent Blattshap and his sidekick Constable Neldy are walking abreast toward the home of a Mr. Smyth)

Neld.….and the program was basically presenting the argument that William Shakespeare was written by someone else? Some Earl guy….

Blat. I suppose it was BBC 2?

Neld. Yes, sir.

Blat. Well, look here Neldy. Everyone knows that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare. We haven't got time for that sort of nonsense. We have a job to do. Ah, here we are.

(knocks on the door)

Mr. Smith?

Smyth. Well. Actually it's Smyth. As if there was an "e" at the end.

Blat. But there isn't an "e" at the end, is there?

Smyth. No, but it's pronounced Smyth, nevertheless.

Blat. By whom?

Smyth. What do you mean by whom? By me. My parents. My friends… Who are you, anyway? What do you want?

Blat. Ah. Sorry, Mr. Smith.

Smyth. Smyth!

Blat. I'm Detective Superintendent Blattshap and this is my assistant, Constable Neldy. May we come in?

Smyth. What's this about?

Blat. Why don't we all go inside and we'll discuss everything there? In a civilized manner.

Smyth. Of course. Of course. In a civilized manner. Do come in. We can sit here in the living room. Now, Detective Superintendent, what can I do for you? Always willing to help the constabulary with their inquiries, you know.

Blat. I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Smith.

Smyth. Oh, for heaven's sakes, Superintendent……..

Blat. Detective Superintendent.

Smyth. Well, yes, I know. Detective Superintendent. But really, I must insist that you pronounce my name correctly.

Blat. But I am pronouncing it correctly. It's you and your family and your friends who are mispronouncing it.

Smyth. Oh, for the love of Pete…..

Blat. Now, look here, Mr. Smith. If you're going to be unco-

Blat. Now, look here, Mr. Smith. If you're going to be uncooperative with the police we'll just have to take the rest of this interview down to the station. Remember. As you said, a civilized manner. I'll tell you what, let's ask Constable Neldy here what he thinks? He's taken a course or two in English grammar and he even watches BBC 2, you know. Now, Constable Neldy, how would you pronounce the name S-M-Y-T-H?

Smyth. Well, sir, because it is minus an "e" at the end it is obviously pronounced Smith, as in S-M-I-T-H.

operative with the police we'll just have to take the rest of this interview down to the station. Remember. As you said, a civilized manner. I'll tell you what, let's ask Constable Neldy here what he thinks? He's taken a course or two in English grammar and he even watches BBC 2, you know. Now, Constable Neldy, how would you pronounce the name S-M-Y-T-H?

Smyth. Well, sir, because it is minus an "e" at the end it is obviously pronounced Smith, as in S-M-I-T-H.

Blat. Good. There you have it and let's hope that's an end to it. We are finally agreed, are we not, Mr. Smith?

(Continued on p. 18)

(Wikipedia, cont. from p. 1)

(Cartoon by Peter Steiner. *The New Yorker*, July 5, 1993 issue [69:20], page 61)

Anti-Stratfordians have long known that the authorship debate is an endless battleground where every fact and every interpretation of every fact are in contention. In the Internet age the battle has intensified, nowhere more so than on Wikipedia. In the 1990s most authorship battles took place on discussion boards and ListServs, and on comment threads under articles on various websites (and they still do). The battle has now shifted to a forum that most people believe represents a consensus of opinion and a source of facts on controversial issues. But recent events surrounding the editing of articles about the Shakespeare authorship debate show that any such belief is mistaken.

First, a bit of history about Wikipedia. It was founded in 2001, and has since flourished as the Internet's go-to site for quick information about almost any topic (it's available in 278 languages and has 400 million visitors per month). In recent years articles have appeared in mainstream media about Wikipedia, emphasizing the fact that most academic institutions warn their students away from it, as it is widely considered that information on Wikipedia is not reliable. On college campuses it is a big no-no to cite Wikipedia as a source for anything. Yet even some professors will admit that, for a quick lookup of some fact, that is where they go first. So do I. So does almost everyone.

In a January 2011 *Slate* magazine (slate.com) article, "Jesus of Wikipedia" by Chris Wilson, we learn some of the recent history about one battle over a controversial issue: the entry for Jesus Christ. It was created by Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales in 2001, and has since become notorious for the endless disputes about what can and cannot be said there about Jesus. One illuminating example dates from 2002, when a group called "Jews for Jesus" was banned from making edits on the Jesus article. The name of that group — and its banishment — seems to say it all about the problems associated with Wikipedia entries on controversial topics.

In a February 2011 *New Yorker* article, Adam Gopnik neatly sums up the problem of collective entries and collective editing on Wikipedia:

> [one] sees the limits of the so-called extended mind clearly in the mob- made Wikipedia the perfect product of that new vast super-sized cognition: when there's easy agreement, it's fine, and when there is widespread disagreement on values or facts as with, say, the origins of capitalism it's fine too; you get both sides. The trouble comes when one side is right and the other side is wrong and doesn't know it. The Shakespeare authorship page and the shroud of Turin page are scenes of constant conflict, and are packed with unreliable information. Creationists crowd cyberspace every bit as effectively as evolutionists, and extend their minds just as fully. Our trouble is not the over-all absence of smartness, but the intractable power of pure stupidity and no machine or mind seems expanded enough to cure that.

Yes, one side is wrong and doesn't know it (we can all agree with that). Which brings us to how the "Shakespeare Authorship Question" article has been treated. In the early years of Wikipedia there was little mention of the authorship debate. Then Oxfordian Stephen Moorer, director of the Pacific Repertory Theater in Carmel, California, took it upon himself in 2005-2006 to start editing Shakespeare authorship articles and related articles in Wikipedia (on Wikipedia, anyone can plunge in to create or edit articles). Moorer did his best to work from a neutral point of view, but, as an Oxfordian, the very fact that he was editing such articles made them biased in the eyes of others. At first, mainstream Shakespeareans (i.e., Stratfordians) made few attempts to counter-edit what Moorer had done.

But early in 2010 that changed. Moorer contacted several Oxfordian email discussion groups in March 2010, alerting them to a new concerted effort on Wikipedia to revert all the work that he had done the previous years. Moorer wrote that several Stratfordian editors were now determined to drastically downsize, or even delete, major authorship articles and related articles on Shakespeare authorship, and articles having to do directly with the Oxfordian theory. Two of these editors, Tom Reedy, and an anonymous editor known as Nishidani, were also determined to eliminate all references to Oxford and Oxfordians appearing in any articles about Shakespeare or Elizabethan history. For example, Moorer wrote that editing reverts (as they're called on Wikipedia) were occurring under the following entries (this is a partial list):

Shakespeare's plays
Chronology of Shakespeare's plays
George Gascoigne
Mary Sidney
Shakespeare's sonnets
Martin Marprelate

Hamlet
Frances Meres

In addition to making all these changes, the Stratfordian editors also eventually managed by late 2010 to have Moorer himself banned from further editing activity on any of the Shakespeare or Shakespeare authorship articles on Wikipedia, claiming he was too biased and had a "point of view" on the authorship topic, another no-no on Wikipedia (Stratfordians, of course, don't carry the POV stigma, yet another of Wikipedia's problems with controversial issues). This move came after four years of editing by Moorer, during which there had been very little actual criticism of his edits.

One can conjecture that this concerted effort has come about because of the impending release later this year of the Shakespeare authorship themed movie *Anonymous*. For the rest of 2010 and well into 2011 this activity continued, and as some new Oxfordian editors showed up they too were first attacked, and then banned. Most prominent among them was Nina Green, moderator of the Phaeton discussion email list. Green spent several months doing battle over many issues, large and small, but in the end she too was banned. The more she battled, the more that proved her bias.

Yet no one has been able to challenge Stratfordian editors as being biased and being just as worthy of banishment for trying to "own" an article. It also became clear over the past year that the ground rules of the editing process (where even the overseeing editors and arbitrators can be anonymous) was itself flawed, and that biased editors could guarantee certain outcomes. Such was the ultimate fate of the Shakespeare authorship debate on Wikipedia.

A good way to grasp the enormous changes that have occurred over the past year is to compare the Table of Contents from December 2009 with the Table of Contents from April 23, 2011 (Table One, following page).

Comparing the two tables of contents, one sees that entire sections which attempted to explain such basics of the debate as the "Shaksper" vs "Shakespeare" spelling issue, or the common thread among all anti-Stratfordians that the authorship debate is primarily about perceptions of how and why authors write (as opposed to the so-called snob issues of social standing), have been deleted or reduced to one or two sentences. All such edits favor the status quo, and cast doubters into doubt. That was precisely the intention of the coordinated revision of this page and related pages that began in early 2010.

In addition to the articles that Moorer mentioned in his e-mails of March 2010, I checked other related articles on Wikipedia about which I have direct detailed knowledge, having written and edited articles about these subjects (not on Wikipedia) over the past ten years. In two instances I found evidence of just how biased the reporting/editing process on Wikipedia can be.

The first example is Wikipedia's article on the Ashbourne portrait of Shakespeare. Here the mainstream view promoted by the Folger Shakespeare Library predominates, with numerous quotes from art historian William Pressly, who has written about the portrait several times over the past 15 years. The article goes out of its way to trash the work done by Charles Wisner Barrell in the 1940s (and ignores the recent work in 2002 by Barbara Burris), implying that the the "CK" initials that appear on the x-rays reproduced in the 1940 *Scientific American* article were somehow "fabricated," and lauds the work done by Pressly (18 of the article's 30 footnotes cite him). The article conspicuously fails to mention that Pressly, in addressing the critical issue of whether the initials "CK" are on the portrait (a crucial matter in determining whether artist Cornelius Ketel, known to have painted the 17th Earl of Oxford, was the original painter of the "Ashbourne," and whether the x-rays published in 1940 were accurate) contradicted himself in two 1993 articles. In one ("The Ashbourne Portrait of Shakespeare: Through the Looking Glass," published in the Spring 1993 issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly*) he claimed that x-rays taken in 1948/49 revealed no "CK"; but in "A Catalogue of Paintings in the Folger Library" (also published that year) he said that "the monogram is only faintly visible" in the same x-rays. Having seen for myself the ghostly outline of "CK" when I examined a set of x-rays in 2002 (and experienced firsthand how difficult that was), I can appreciate Pressly's dilemma. But to leave out this contradiction is not good reporting, and leaves unresolved the matter of whether the "CK" initials had ever appeared on the painting; by implication, Barrell is smeared as having "concocted" them. If something this complicated is going

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Table One: Anatomy of Wikipedia Carnage: Authorship Page Table of Contents, April 2009-April 2011.

to be addressed at all in a Wikipedia article, it needs to be fair and thorough.

The second example, which at first seems unconnected to Shakespeare, is the entry for actor Leslie Howard's 1941 propaganda film *Pimpernel Smith.* The film is known to Oxfordians because Howard promotes the Oxfordian theory, stating unequivocally in

three scenes that Oxford was Shakespeare. There is no written record as to how those scenes came to appear in the film, nor is it discussed in either of his children's biographies of him, or in two more recent biographies. But facts are facts, and the fact of three mentions of this controversial theory is absent from the *Pimpernel Smith* entry. When an attempt was made to add that fact to the entry in 2010 it was immediately deleted. Such is life on Wikipedia. Yet in his 2010 authorship book *Contested Will*, James Shapiro writes that the *Pimpernel Smith* scenes meant that "The Oxfordian cause had clearly arrived" (194).

Returning to the "Shakespeare Authorship Question" article, by excluding many facts from the its summation of the issue, the new article misrepresents the entire history of the debate. It contains 231 footnotes, the overwhelming majority from mainstream scholars who support the Stratfordian status quo: Samuel Schoenbaum, Alan Nelson, James Shapiro, Frank Wadsworth, Michael Dodson, David Kathman, Irvin Matus, etc. There are few entries from any anti-Stratfordians, save for a couple each for Diana Price, Charlton Ogburn, J. Thomas Looney, and a few others; in most of those instances the article cites what they say and then refutes it. There are no quotes in which any anti-Stratfordian is cited for refuting a Stratfordian, a perfect example of how unbalanced the article is.

An example of the gamesmanship present throughout the rewritten and re-edited article can be seen in two consecutive sections of the article. First, in the section "Name as a Pseudonym" the first sentence reads, "In his surviving signatures William Shakespeare did not spell his name as it appears on most Shakespeare title pages" (the signatures are all reproduced, but no attention is called to the consistent "Shak" vs. "Shake" difference). Then, in the next section under the heading "Case for Shakespeare's authorship," we read: "Nearly all academics believe that the author referred to as 'Shakespeare' was the same William Shakespeare who was born in Stratford-on-Avon in 1564 and who died there in 1616." Well, it was William Shaksper who was born in Stratford in 1564, and "William Shaksper" is how he signed his name. But with this one subtle statement the article is now set up to conflate the "William Shakespeare" on title pages with "William Shakespeare" of Stratford. In fact, the entire article is a monstrous collection of cute moves and cute edits that only those who really understand the debate can spot.

Another conspicuous problem with the revised article concerns who is and who isn't a scholar who can be cited. Dr. Daniel Wright, Director of the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre at Concordia University in Portland, OR, and Dr. Roger Stritmatter, who was awarded a PhD for his work on Edward de Vere's bible and its relationship to Shakespeare, now teaches at Coppin State University in Baltimore, MD, and has published numerous articles on Shakespkeare and early modern studies in peer reviewed acadrmic journals, are nowhere to be found. That the "rules" on Wikipedia (rules which are really nothing more than an endless wrestling match between competing points of view) can permit this speaks volumes.

As can be found in the discussion pages associated with the article, these absences are justified on the grounds that they are not scholars with "sufficient" expertise on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan era. But scholars who can be cited include David Kathman, co-founder of the rabidly pro-Stratfordian Shakespeare Authorship Page on the Internet; according to his own biography, Kathman is "a Chartered Financial Analyst who makes [his] living as a mutual fund analyst for Morningstar in Chicago." Kathman has a PhD in linguistics and, to be sure, has researched and written much about the authorship issue, but it's not his profession. Another citable authority is Tom Reedy, who spearheaded the changes during the last year or so on the Shakespeare Authorship Wikipedia page. Reedy has been a cohort of Kathman for fifteen years, sharing bylines on the Shakespeare Authorship page and joining in the endless mudslinging on humanities.lit.authors. Shakespeare, an unmoderated online discussion forum. Reedy has a BA in English from San Angelo State University in Texas, but is employed by the Denton County Sheriff's Office and (according to his own biography) is "an amateur Shakespeare scholar. . . ." Also passing muster is Irvin Matus, author of *Shakespeare in Fact*, a 1994 book which sought to debunk all anti-Stratfordian claims; Matus is a self-taught high school graduate who spent many years of his life homeless in Washington, DC (and for a while in the 1990s was even put up by an Oxfordian).

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Other problems abound in the article. Nonetheless, having achieved the status of a featured article on Wikipedia, it will stand unchanged for at least one full year. This was the goal of Tom Reedy, Nishidani, and others when they set out to rewrite all things about Shakespeare authorship on Wikipedia. But in the long term, what they have done may turn out to be a pyrrhic victory. The faults and biases in the present article are obvious, and the entire history of the debate, the edit reverts, the vari-

(Continued on p. 12)

(Wikipedia, cont. from p. 11)

ous forms of the article over time, and all the attendant heated discussions are fully archived and available to anyone who would like to look at them.

Finally, if the goal of the exercise was to have a Wikipedia article that would scare newcomers away from the authorship debate, it is a failure. Recently, after the movie trailers for *Anonymous* began appearing on the Internet, folks who were unfamiliar with the debate turned to Wikipedia to see that they could learn. One interesting example came when a blogger (John Couture at Movie Trailer News) reacted to the trailer by going to Wikipedia for more information:

> I decided to turn to the modern-day equivalent of knowledge, Wikipedia. To be honest I was surprised at the sheer amount of space allotted to what is surely a crackpot conspiracy theory. I read quite a bit and, to be honest, I'm beginning to get skeptical.

So, even with all its bias, the "Shakespeare Authorship Question" article provided sufficient information to get a newbie to read and think about the issue, not to flee from it. That's all anyone could ask. With enough reading and thinking by thousands, if not tens of thousands, of other newcomers, the debate will live on until it is resolved. After all, it is an issue in which one side is wrong and doesn't know it.

(Gaspar Ribeiro, cont. from p. 1)

City with Shylock and Othello (2007) by Italian scholars Shaul Bassi and Alberto Toso Fei has just been published. Following in the footsteps of Professor Ernesto Grillo, Bassi and Fei note allusions to many Venetian places and customs in these dramas, and write of "hidden corners that seem to whisper 'Shakespeare was here.'"[8]

Farina's article discusses what may be the most compelling case for Shakespeare's personal knowledge of Venice and its people, the discoveries made by Manchester University Professor Brian Pullan. Over 30 years ago, Pullan published the first in a series of reports on Gaspar Ribeiro,[9] the Portuguese/Venetian Marrano, trader and moneylender, who could arguably serve as the prototype for Shylock. Pullan's analyses of Venetian Inquisition documents helped him establish a link between Ribeiro and Shylock. Curiously, no current edition of *The Merchant of Venice* makes reference to his remarkable findings. Only the Italian scholars, Bassi and Fei,[10] have ever reported on Pullan's research. To understand how thoroughly radical and important are Pullan's findings, it is worthwhile to first examine influential studies that reflect the reigning view of the cultural origins of Shakespeare's Shylock.

Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy (1992) by John Gross is an excellent scholarly study of Shakespeare's character and won the Royal Society of Literature Award. Gross recounts the historical tradition of critical interpretations of the Jew and traces the evolution of representations of Shylock over the past two centuries. Regarding Shakespeare's characterization of the moneylender, however, no scholar has explored the disturbing questions raised by this tragicomedy better than Columbia University professor James Shapiro. In *Shakespeare and the Jews* (1996), Shapiro presents an unsentimental, historicist approach, described glowingly by one critic as "a groundbreaking study of Elizabethan anti-Semitism which offers a shockingly long pedigree for Shakespeare's Shylock." Shapiro essentially demythologizes the history of the Jews in England by challenging the prevailing theory of the absent Jew, and detailing numerous cultural representations of the notorious Jewish "blood libel." Shapiro is particularly interested in the conflicted reactions of Jewish Shakespeare scholars to *The Merchant of Venice*, critiquing Israel Gollancz and Stephen Greenblatt over their interpretation of an authorial intent to advocate for religious tolerance. Shapiro's book, with some 75 pages of endnotes and citations, won the

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Summarizing his argument, Shapiro writes, "Certainly the greatest limitation of the approaches taken by historians and literary critics of all stripes is the manner in which most have steered around the question of how and why the English were obsessed with Jews in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and why this obsession continues to make its pressure felt in discussions of Shakespeare and the Jews. If Jews were just not that important to English culture, it is hard to make sense of their frequent appearance not only in Tudor and Stewart dramas but also in English chronicles, travel narratives and sermons…."

1997 Roland H. Bainton Book Prize for Literature.

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ominously, they secretly desired to take the knife to Christians in order to circumcise or even castrate them."[12]

In *Will of the World* (2005), Harvard University professor Stephen Greenblatt briefly recounts the history of anti-Jewish sentiment in England and compares *Merchant* to Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. Greenblatt goes out on a thin biographical limb in Chapter 9, "Laughter at the Scaffold," boldly conjecturing that Shakespeare witnessed the execution of the former Jew, Rodrigo Lopez, in 1594 and that the bizarre behavior of the mob on hearing Lopez's last words informed the playwright's ambivalent treatment of his Jewish moneylender. When Lopez proclaimed his loyalty to Queen Elizabeth and his love of Jesus Christ, the mob broke out into inappropriate laughter. Greenblatt suggests a topicality of tone in this instance, that "the mocking voices of Salerio, Solanio, and Graziano are very close to what the playwright would have heard at the foot of the scaffold on which Lopez was hanged. *Merchant* found a way to give the spectators something of what the crowd at the execution enjoyed, but without the blood and gore."[13] The prevailing theory that Lopez's trial and execution is connected to Shakespeare's Jew has been embraced by many scholars, but William Farina has described this assumption as "making a mountain out of a molehill."[14] In this regard, Greenblatt's assertions seem to arise more from his airy imagination than from any credible historical precedent. Perhaps we should be looking elsewhere for the answers to the origins of Shylock's character.

Gross, Shapiro and Greenblatt are exclusively Anglocentric in their analyses. None of them takes seriously the idea that *Merchant* may reflect actual incidents or people in Venice. They subscribe to the belief that, when speaking of Venice, Shakespeare must really mean London. Gross contends that Shakespeare's knowledge of Jewish life in Venice was "clearly very limited"; Shylock's employment of a Christian like Launcelot Gobbo violates Venetian law and the omission of any reference to the ghetto implies "large depths of ignorance elsewhere.… A work of art must be taken on its own terms, and nobody needs to know much about Venice itself in order to appreciate Shakespeare's Venice. But if one stands back, it is hard not to sigh a little over the gulf between the world of Shylock and the real world of his Venetian coreligionists."[15] The extent to which Shakespeare scholars and theater professionals adhere to this view was reflected in the program guide for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2010 production of *Merchant:* "Shakespeare knew almost nothing about Jewish spirituality or of Jewish daily life."

To the contrary, over the past century many scholars have demonstrated that the playwright had a remarkable familiarity with Venetian culture, trade, geography, law, Jews and conversos, and that he made reference to specific places and incidents associated with the Veneto. Shakespeare's knowledge of his Italian settings has been innocently remarked upon by scholars throughout Europe, including British (E. K. Chambers and Hugh Trevor-Roper), Italians (Ernesto Grillo and Pietro Rebora) and Germans (Karl Elze and Gregor Sarazin). Richard Paul Roe's *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, to be published by Harper's this November, hopefully will demonstrate how radically innovative Oxfordian Italian topical analyses have become.

As for the dating of *Merchant*, it has been suggested by a number of scholars that the comic servant Launcelot Gobbo may have inspired several malicious references to Robert Cecil. Letters by Francis Davison dated 1596 refer to a "St. Gobbo" as the enemy of Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex. Gobbo is an Italian word meaning "hunchback," a possible reference to the deformed Cecil. Many Shakespeare editors have noted the name itself may have been taken from the locally famous Gobbo proclamation statue at the Rialto Bridge in Venice.

Professor Pullan, however, has suggested that the father and son Gobbo characters in *Merchant* were actually named for father and son guards at the Venetian ghetto who gave testimony to the Inquisition in 1589: "Domenicus dictus il Gobbo custos ghetti" and his son, "Tonin fiol di Gobo." Pullan further reports that as a sideline, "the elder Gobbo used to sell herbs or greenery from a basket in the ghetto, which may call to mind the basket carried by

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Old Gobbo when he makes his entrance…."[16] The Gobbos were called as witnesses in the trial of Giorgio Moretto heard by the Holy Office, a case which Pullan interprets as an unhappy version of the romance of Lorenzo and Jessica.

He was charged with failing to keep his proper distance from the Jewish community, in that he had frequented the ghetto during Lent, attended Jewish festivals, weddings, and circumcisions and, worse still, hung around a Jewish girl. Her name was Rachel, and she was a daughter of a certain Issac the deaf.[17]

Pullan points out that Shakespeare may have subtly alluded to the Moretto case in *Merchant* when he has Shylock insist

(Continued on p. 14)

(Gaspar Ribeiro, cont. from p. 13)

that Jessica "lock up my doors," "clamber not to the casements," "nor thrust your head into the public street," "but stop my houses ears." Moretto's defense was that he intended to convert Rachel to Christianity, but that "because her family noticed, they barred the doors and balconies…."[18] Shakespeare's doubling of the Gobbo characters in this comedy represents a possible topical reference that challenges the assumption of the author's ignorance of the ways of Venetian Jews.

Farina has previously reviewed the basic connections made by Professor Pullan linking Gaspar Ribeiro to Shylock, including the fact that Ribeiro lived in the parish of Santa Maria Formosa, where he was successfully sued in 1567 for making a usurious 3,000-ducat loan. It is highly probable that Oxford knew of Ribeiro because de Vere was known to frequent the Church of Santa Maria Formosa during his Italian tour in 1575-76.

In the 1570s, Ribeiro had become a "pillar of parochial affairs" and had even been elected to the office of Gestaldo, chief officer of the fraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, for the parish of Santa Maria Formosa. He lent hangings to the church, contributed 200-300 ducats for church projects, and gave alms to a monastery. Despite these actions, he was later accused of being so miserly that "he trusts no one and fears that everybody would destroy him."

One common supposition among scholars is that if there was a Venetian Shylock, he must have been a Germanic Jew because only the Nazione Tedesca were officially licensed to lend money. There is a difficulty here, though, in that the Germanic Jews of Venice were actually pawnbrokers who lent small sums on pledge, a few ducats at a time, not 3,000 ducats as in the Ribeiro case. Although Jewish scholar Cecil Roth disagrees, it is reasonable to entertain the possibility that Shylock was based on a converso, as conversos were frequently accused of illicit money lending, often for larger amounts and at a higher rate than professing Jews. Gaspar Ribeiro was well known for his interest in making money. A Portuguese priest who knew the family said, "(Ribeiro) is neither Christian nor Jew nor Turk, and I could not tell you what law he follows, save that of making money."[19] In his most recent publication on *Merchant,* "Shakespeare's Shylock Evidence from Venice" (2008), Pullan writes:

> The Ribeiros were themselves Jews who were merely adopting a veneer of Christianity…. Insuring against the day that they could no longer live safely in Venice, they were trying to forge bonds with the Jewish world through the marriage of Gaspar's son, Joao, with a young woman living in the ghetto. Her name was Alumbra, and she was an impoverished relative of the most powerful figure in international Jewry, the former New Christian Joao Miquez, Duke of Naxos and tax farmer extraordinary to the Turkish Sultan. After his son's death in the late 1570's, the aged Gaspar was charged before the Holy Office in Venice with reverting secretly to the Jewish faith; the clearest proof of his crime appeared to be the fact that he had arranged his son's marriage. The voluminous records of his trial depict a Marrano family torn and divided against itself, with father and son drawn toward Judaism and Gaspar's daughter Violante playing the role of Jessica and taking up with a Christian husband. A strong-minded, independent woman, unafraid of public scenes, she obstinately resisted the schemes of her father and brother to marry her into the distinguished Jewish family of Abravanel. Instead, she acquired a Christian husband, Vincenzo Scrova, a kind of Lorenzo, perhaps, but certainly an imperfect one, since he was a haughty, quarrelsome scion of the nobility of Vincenza on the Venetian mainland.[20]

If one stands back, it is hard not to sigh a little over the gulf between the world of Shylock and the real world of his Venetian coreligionists."[15] The extent to which Shakespeare scholars and theater professionals adhere to this view was reflected in the program guide for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2010 production of *Merchant*: "Shakespeare knew almost nothing about Jewish spirituality or of Jewish daily life."

Farina has already reported on Pullan's discovery that Ribeiro, like Shylock, dealt in precious stones and jewels. According to court records, Gaspar traded in pearls, and gave his daughter–in-law wedding gifts of "gold bracelets studded with precious stones; a pair of gold pendants or earrings set with rubies; pearls and other adornments said to have been made in India." Perhaps the most compelling detail that links Ribeiro and Shylock is the fact that when Gaspar was arrested by the officers of the Inquisition in 1580, there was a "case containing jewels to the value of 2,000 ducats seized by his daughter's husband from Gaspar's house…."[21]

According to Pullan, Ribeiro was very unpopular with the Jews of Venice, and his pathologic meanness made him a "magnet for malicious testimony." Ribeiro evidently drew suspicion of being a secret Judaizer by the meanness of the funeral he ordered for his son who died in 1579. He was also accused of the un-Christian act of eating meat on Friday and Saturday. When Ribeiro was placed under house arrest by the Holy Office, he became severely depressed to the brink of suicide, and his legal defense was chiefly one of insanity or senile incapacity.

During the 1570s Gaspar and his son Joao managed between them the Venetian meat supply. Gaspar was reported to have once quarreled with a customer on the Piazza San Marco over meat he was re-

serving for himself, exclaiming derisively, "This butchery costs me 25,000 crowns, and you want that piece!" That monopoly may actually be alluded to several times in *Merchant*. Shylock says, "A pound of a man's flesh taken from a man, is not so estimable, profitable neither as flesh of muttons, beefs or goats." (1.1.161-3).[22] Launcelot Gobbo takes up the same theme of the economics of carnality when he suggests, "This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs" (3.5.23-24). Launcelot's joke is so important that it is repeated moments later with the entrance of Lorenzo. Jessica reports to her husband that Lancelot "tells me flatly there's no mercy for me in heaven because I am a Jew's daughter, and he says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork" (3.5.32-36).

Religious division within the Ribeiro family surfaced in 1569 when Gaspar's daughter, Violante, "burst forth from the family house and made for the canal to escape a beating inflicted by her brother, screaming to the neighborhood, 'Signori, help me, these dogs would give me by force to a Jew and for this they are thrashing me!'"[23] Three years later, she married a Christian, an arrogant and impulsive nobleman who, according to Pullan, "despised his cantankerous father-in-law, but loved the prospect of his wife's inheritance." Jessica's escape from Shylock's house, which she regarded as "hell," and her conversion to Christianity is the one original plot element in Shakespeare's drama. If Oxford is Shakespeare, we can surmise that Violante Ribeiro's dramatic flight and eventual marriage to a Christian against the wishes of her father inspired that subplot in *Merchant*.

Joao Ribeiro, Violante's brother, secretly married a Jewess in 1575, the year Oxford was in Venice. Joao offered to pay 3,000 ducats toward his wife's dowry, the same amount Antonio borrowed from Shylock to enable Bassanio's courtship of Portia. Ultimately, it was litigation over this unpaid dowry that proved the downfall of the Ribeiros because the case was referred to the Inquisition. Gaspar's bitterness toward his daughter-in-law at the trial was boundless – "he called her 'that bitch' and vowed that he would rather have presented her with a rope than a dress." Gaspar's reported hatred of his Jewish daughter-in-law may be reflected in Shylock's expressed bitterness toward Jessica on hearing Tubal's report of her shameless extravagance, "The curse never fell upon our nation till now, I never felt it till now. Two thousand ducats in that, and other precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear!" (3.1.85-89)

During the Inquisition litigation, Ribeiro's attorneys pleaded a defense based on "diminished capacity" as Gaspar was 87 at the time of his trial, which was a prolonged affair. Ribeiro died shortly after the proceedings began; three years later he was convicted of being an apostate and Judaizer, and his remains were then moved to be buried in unconsecrated ground. The records of the Inquisition demonstrate that Ribeiro was well known both for his parsimony and his stubbornness. Pullan reports that he was once unceremoniously questioned by officers of the Inquisition on the Rialto. His indignant response attests to his openly hostile attitude: "I'm not telling you anything. Do you want me to tell you things I don't know? I can't guess. I'm not a wizard." Pullan further notes that witnesses actually attempted to imitate Gaspar's eccentric speech patterns, a mixture of Portuguese and Italian. Pullan importantly provides documentation that confirms what Gaspar's lawyers claimed, that many "bore witness to the decay in Gaspar's mental powers, speaking of pointless rudeness and petulant rage, of unreliability, childishness, inconsequential and rambling speech."

Religious division within the Ribeiro family surfaced in 1569 when Gaspar's daughter, Violante, "burst forth from the family house and made for the canal to escape a beating inflicted by her brother, screaming to the neighborhood, 'Signori, help me, these dogs would give me by force to a Jew and for this they are thrashing me!'" Three years later, she married a Christian, an arrogant and impulsive nobleman who, according to Pullan, "despised his cantankerous father-in-law, but loved the prospect of his wife's inheritance."

Is it possible that Gaspar Ribeiro's documented idiosyncrasies of speech inform Shylock's rhetoric? John Gross has noted significant, similar peculiarities in Shylock's speeches: "His language is concentrated and terse. He does not waste words, any more than he wastes ducats, and he prefers short words to long ones…. He fights shy of decorative effects and rhetorical tropes; he interrupts himself; his lines are punctuated by questions and exclamations."[24] Gross cites others who have noted Shylock's speech patterns, including Otto Jespersen: "I have counted some forty such deviations from Shakespeare's ordinary usage, and cannot dismiss the thought that he made Shylock's language peculiar on purpose, …." Greenblatt refers to Shylock's "manic repetitive phrases" and John Lyon noted the his "tenaciously repetitive rhetoric." Brian Vickers claims that Shylock's prose is "the great innovation of this play," which he describes as "compulsive verbal pattern-making" through "repetition, parallelism, and extreme brevity of each phrase, a miserliness with words, a sharp cutting language…."[25]

In "'Fair Terms and a Villain's Mind': Rhetorical Patterns in *The Merchant of Venice*," Jane Freeman argues that Shylock uses figures of repetition, repeating words, phrases or syntactical patterns more often than any other character in Shakespeare's comedies. Shylock repeatedly employs epistrophe as well as other rhetorical figures including parallelism, epizeuxis, and a heavy dependence on rhetorical questions.

(Continued on p. 16)

(Gaspar Ribeiro, cont. from p. 15)

- **Epistrophe** - Repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive clauses: "let him look to his bond! he was wont to call me usurer, let him look to his bond! he was wont to lend money for a Christian curr'sy, let him look to his bond!" (3.1.42-44); "I'll have my bond, speak not against my bond, - I have sworn an oath, that I will have my bond:"(3.3.4-5); "I'll have my bond. I will not hear thee speak, I'll have my bond, and therefore speak no more." (3.3.12-13).

- **Epizeuxis** - Repetition of words with no other in between for vehemence or emphasis: "Ho, no, no, no, no:" …. (1.3.13); "Why there, there, there, there!" (3.1.76); "What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?" (3.1.91); "I thank God, I thank God! Is it true, is it true?" (3.1.94).

- **Isocolon** - Figure of speech marked by parallelism: "Three thousand ducats, well." (1.3.1); "For three months, well."(1.3.3); "Antonio shall be bound, well." (1.3.5); "Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound." (1.3.8).

- **Anaphora** - Repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses: "I am very glad of it, - I'll plague him, I'll torture him, - I am glad of it" (3.1.106-7).

- **Rhetorical Questions** - "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?... if you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh, if you poison us do we not die, and if you wrong us shall we not revenge?" (3.1.52-4).

Freeman notes that these tropes share certain traits with John Lyly's style in the Euphues novels. Euphuism is a rhetorical prose style based on repetitive patterns, both rhythmic and syntactic, including isocolon, antitheses, proverbs and rhetorical questions. Freeman asserts that Shylock's use of repetition is not strictly ornamental, but expresses the intensity of his focus, that the frequency of repetition increases as the intensity of his desire for revenge escalates. "Shylock's frequent repetitions are threatening, for they emphasize the rigidity of his position…."[26] Shylock's rigidity, as expressed by his speech patterns, was also noted years earlier by John Palmer:

> Shylock had the trick of compulsive repetition characteristic of a man in whom imagination… forever sits on brood. It is the speech of one who is incapable of humour, whose will always precisely fit his meaning, in whom no play or flight of fancy is possible.[27]

Gross deepens our understanding here by examining the psychology of religious conversion, and the complex cultural position of Marranos. "The idea of an identity so vexed, so suspended between Christian and Jew, may in turn tell us something about the continuing fascination with Shylock, his singular typicality, his revelation and mystery."

Palmer further notes how these "tricks of speech" recur throughout the play "till they culminate in those stubborn, reiterated appeals to his bond of a man possessed by a single thought expressed in a phrase that has become almost an incantation."[28]

In *Shylock is Shakespeare* (2006), Professor Kenneth Gross examines the psychological factors behind this rhetoric of repetition, interpreting it as the key to appreciation of Shylock's deep melancholy. "The repetitions join revenge with mourning, aggressively embedding the lost object within a larger system of losses as if to outwit a loss he cannot control."[29] Gross cites G. Wilson Knight, who suggested that Shylock's repetitions reminded him of Aeschylus' Erinyes "who are impervious to argument and similarly repeat themselves." Gross also notes that in cutting off all pleas for mercy and insisting on having his bond while others should "speak no more," Shylock seems to be speaking to himself as much as to the court:

> The bond has become his one secure possession, all that is left of him in lieu of daughter and ducats – indeed, the means to recompense their loss. It is the cipher of his power and place…. The bond at this point becomes for Shylock the solvent of all meaning, the best answer to all others' speaking, showing the shape of his knowledge of himself and the danger he puts himself in…. He is bound to his bond even more than Antonio is. It is almost the only word he needs, the last best gift he possesses. There is a curious kind of dementia in his speech.[30]

Shylock's enigmatic answers in court and his apparent disinterest in winning sympathy to his cause are indicative of a self-destructive obsession. Gross concludes that "Perhaps he evades rational explanation, such as the law asks of him, so as not to sound crazy to himself. Yet it is at the cost of making himself sound crazy to others."[31]

Gross deepens our understanding here by examining the psychology of religious conversion, and the complex cultural position of Marranos. "The idea of an identity so vexed, so suspended between Christian and Jew, may in turn tell us something about the continuing fascination with Shylock, his singular typicality, his revelation and mystery."[32]

To link Shylock with the history of conversos and crypto-Jews may be most compelling, indeed, because it reassures us so little about what it means to speak of Shylock as a Jew, gives us so little ability to specify the kind of Jewish victim he is. It troubles any wish to save Shylock for Jewish tradition. It reminds us of just how vexed the creation of spiritual continuities can be,

and how this process may be bound to the creation of false saviors or shape suspect images of suffering and loss, salvation and recuperation. If this background helps give some historical shape to the question of Shylock's interiority, it may serve best because it shows us sharply just how much we do not know and cannot know about that interiority. Even what we might call Shylock's Jewishness has become, by the end of the play, a psychotic possession, a private language; we can neither fix it according to historical ideas of Jewish experience nor stigmatize it according to Christian myths of Jewish legalism, guile and murderousness.[33]

If the Marrano Gaspar Ribeiro truly is the prototype for Shylock, Kenneth Gross may very well be much closer to the truth than he realizes. Is it possible that Jespersen, Greenblatt, Vickers, Freeman, and John Gross registered speech patterns founded on the eccentricities of speech of the arguably senile Gaspar Ribeiro? According to Brian Pullan, Ribeiro's peculiar, rude language was comically imitated in the testimony of witnesses to his public outbursts. This mockery may be the source of Solanio and Salerio's retelling of Shylock's exasperated cries after Jessica's flight, "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter! / Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!" and how "all the boys in Venice follow him / Crying, 'His stones, his daughter, and his ducats!'" (2.8.23-24).

If indeed Gaspar Ribeiro is the model for Shylock, perhaps the rhetorical figures Shakespeare employs for Shylock are characteristic of speech patterns associated with dementia, from which Ribeiro arguably suffered. There is a well known clinical syndrome referred to as "frontotemporal dementia" or "primary progressive aphasia," which aligns quite well with the personality and language peculiarities of both Ribeiro and Shylock. The characteristics of this type of dementia, which accounts for about ten per cent of cases of senility, include gradual loss of empathy, neglect of domestic and financial responsibilities, inappropriate behavior and, importantly, perseveration, reciting phrases repeatedly. Frontotemporal dementia is, unlike Alzheimer's disease, typically very slow in onset, and is often initially manifested by the development of rigid and inflexible attitudes and loss of insight into one's personal and social conduct: "Conversation is not spontaneous; responses are brief and one does not elaborate. Some patients may make mechanical, repetitive remarks, echo words spoken by others, or repeat responses."[34]

Whether Shakespeare's rhetorical flourishes in writing Shylock's speeches reflect euphuistic influences, as Jane Freeman argues, or were inspired by an infamous Marrano moneylender ranting in the streets of Venice, as I have suggested, is an intriguing question. Oxfordians should be edified in either case, given de Vere's experiences in Venice and the dedications to him in his secretaries' euphuistic novels: Anthony Munday's *Zelauto* and John Lyly's *Euphues and His England*, both in 1580. Freeman's analysis raises the question whether the lost anonymous play *The Jew* of 1579 might have been an early version of the play entered into the Stationers Register in1598 as *The Marchaunt of Venyce or otherwise called the Jewe of Venyce*.

If the Marrano Gaspar Ribeiro truly is the prototype for Shylock, Kenneth Gross may very well be much closer to the truth than he realizes. Is it possible that Jespersen, Greenblatt, Vickers, Freeman, and John Gross registered speech patterns founded on the eccentricities of speech of the arguably senile Gaspar Ribeiro? According to Brian Pullan, Ribeiro's peculiar, rude language was comically imitated in the testimony of witnesses to his public outbursts.

Despite his detailed findings linking Gaspar Ribeiro to Shylock, Brian Pullan backs away from the precipice with an equivocation: "There is no need to suppose that Shakespeare must have been in Venice himself during the hidden years of his life," resorting to the claim that the playwright could well have learned all he needed to know about Venice from travelers, acquiring his knowledge in the taverns of London of usurious loans and the conflict between Christian and Jew. To the contrary, *The Merchant of Venice* presents too many unique elements associated with the Veneto to be dependent entirely on hearsay from the Mermaid tavern, especially if we accept Pullan's arguments that Gaspar Ribeiro and the Gobbo family are the sources of Shakespeare's Jew and his servant's family name.

Edward de Vere no doubt encountered Gaspar Ribeiro in church during his prolonged stay in Venice. At that time, the rich, old Marrano served as Gestaldo or president of the Santa Maria Formosa Scuola del Sacramento, a devotional society dedicated to insuring respect for the sacrament. That Oxford was forced to borrow funds from a Venetian moneylender in order to continue his travels is another reason he might have known Ribeiro, who lived in the same neighborhood as de Vere. The multiple associations Brian Pullan has provided us almost assuredly links Ribeiro and his family to Shakespeare's Jews. Further, Shylock's rhetoric of repetition may be another previously unrecognized commonality connecting the senile crypto-Jew of Venice with Shakespeare's character. Edward de Vere, who despised moneylenders, would have had both opportunity and motive in writing *The Merchant of Venice* to base his moneyed Jew on the arguably demented, hypocritical Marrano, who may have bought his way into a Venetian church office, but whose miserliness, greed and hostility proved his undoing.

Endnotes

[1] Noemi Magri, "Places in Shakespeare: Belmont and Thereabouts," in *Great Oxford* (Tunbridge Wells: Parapress Ltd. 2004) 91-106.

(Continued on p. 36)

(Blattshap, cont. from p. 7)

Smyth. Well, no. Not really. Reluctantly. For the time being, anyway.Atleast, first tell me what this is about.

Blat. I will. After I ask you a few preliminary questions. May I?

Smyth. All right. Go ahead then.

Blat. Mr. Smith, are you married?

Smyth. No, I am not.

Blat. Are you presently in a relationship?

Smyth. No, I am not.

Blat. Do you always park your car in your garage?

Smyth. Yes. It's safer that way.

Blat. Do you own a gun?

Smyth. A gun?

Blat. Yes, a gun.

Smyth. No, I do not.

Blat. Where do you work?

Smyth. At Highway Chemicals.

Blat. In what capacity?

Smyth. I'm a chemical engineer.

Blat. A chemical engineer? You have to be quite bright, I believe, to be one of those, eh Mr. Smith?

Smyth. I like to think so.

Blat. What time do you normally get to work? Give or take.

Smyth. Precisely eight o'clock.

Blat. Precisely?

Smyth. Yes. Precisely. Anything wrong with that?

Blat. No. Not at all. Very well, then. Thank you for being so cooperative. I suppose that you now want to know what this is all about?

Smyth. Indeed I do.

Blat. Alison Blot.

Smyth. Who?

Blat. Alison Blot. Do you know her?

Smyth. Never heard of her.

Blat. *(turning to Neldy and whispering)* He's a cool customer, Neldy.

(turning back to Smyth)

Here's a picture of her. Do you recognize her?

Smyth. Never seen her before.

Blat. So you say.

Smyth. Yes, I say!

Blat. Where were you on Monday, December 15, between the hours of 11pm and 6am?

Smyth. I was here at home. Sleeping.

Blat. Can anyone verify that?

Smyth. No, they can't.

Smyth. No, you are not certainly permitted to think anything of the sort because Bronsvil is at least 900 miles from here and if I did drive there, which I didn't, I would have had to drive at a speed of about 175mph in order to accomplish all the things that you say I did. And surely, if I had driven at those speeds for such a long distance, one of your diligent, capable crew would have spotted me and arrested me for reckless, insane driving!!

Blat. Exactly what we thought, eh Neldy? We would have spotted you and caught you, for, as you say, insane driving.

Smyth. Exactly. I couldn't have done it.

Blat. But you could have done it if you used a cloaking device.

Blat. Because, as you indicated, you are not married and not at present in a relationship.

Smyth. That's correct.

Blat. So, it is possible that on the aforementioned day and during those aforementioned hours, you left your house at around 11pm. No one would have seen you because it was dark. You got into your car, which was parked in the garage for safety reasons, drove to Bronsvil, let yourself in to Ms. Blot's apartment, shot her in the head, drove home, parked your car back in the garage for safety reasons, took a shower, had breakfast and made it into work by eight o'clock, precisely.

Smyth. Are you crazy? Are you crazy? I don't know this woman!
(standing up) I've never been to Bronsvil! And I don't own a gun!

Blat. Now, sit down Mr. Smith. Remember. We are having a civilized conversation here. Take a deep breath and sit down. *(Smyth sits down)* There. That's better. Now. Let's take this one point at a time. You're sure you've never been to Bronsvil?

Smyth. Absolutely!

Blat. But we are certainly permitted to think that you could have driven there and back without being seen?

Smyth. No, you are not certainly permitted to think anything of the sort because Bronsvil is at least 900 miles from here and if I did drive there, which I didn't, I would have had to drive at a speed of about 175mph in order to accomplish all the things that you say I did. And surely, if I had driven at those speeds for such a long distance, one of your diligent, capable crew would have spotted me and arrested me for reckless, insane driving!!

Blat. Exactly what we thought, eh Neldy? We would have spotted you and caught you, for, as you say, insane driving.

Smyth. Exactly. I couldn't have done it.

Blat. But you could have done it if you used a cloaking device.

Smyth. A cloaking device?

Blat. Yes. You know. Like the Klingons on Star Trek. They have cloaking devices for their spaceships.

Smyth. You're joking.

Blat. Not at all.

Smyth. This is a practical joke, surely. Who put you up to this? Was it Greg? Harold?

Blat. This is totally serious, Mr. Smith. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that, you being a chemical engineer and quite a bright guy as you yourself admit, invented an automobile cloaking device (an ACD) and used it on that fateful night.

Smyth. If that were so, where is this cloaking device?

Blat. You know perfectly well that we don't know where it is. Otherwise we'd produce it. But you know where it is because you used it.

Smyth. How the hell do you know that I used it?

Blat. Because we never caught you! And you were speeding like an insane driver, in your own words.

Smyth. That's not proof. That's circular reasoning.

Blat. Now, Mr. Smith, let's not have any of your fancy, superior sounding expressions. From our perspective we are undoubtedly permitted to conclude that you cloaked your car, drove at or about 175 mph to Bronsvil, committed the murder and made it back in plenty of time to get to work by eight. After all, nobody saw you. Nobody phoned the police. Nobody picked you up on radar. There is no other possible conclusion.

Smyth. *(raising his voice)* Of course there is. I didn't go so there was nothing to see!

Blat. So you say. By the way, how did you know how far it was to Bronsvil and how fast you had to travel to make it there and back?

Smyth. I used to be a traveling salesman and I often went to Cartervil which as you probably know is close to Bronsvil although I never went to Bronsvil itself. I knew the area fairly well.

Blat. And is that when you met Alison Blot?

Smyth. I already told you, I never even heard that name before!!

Blat. I put it to you, Mr. Smith, that during the time you were a traveling salesman in the Cartervil & Bronsvil area you unquestionably had a torrid love affair with Alison Blot. You cleverly never met in her house (otherwise we would have found your fingerprints) but carried on your secret liaisons in various hotels and motels. We asked around in all of these types of establishments in the area and showed all relevant people pictures of the two of you. Nobody recognized either of you. Not a single solitary soul.

Smyth. Well of course not. I was never with her. And that proves it, 'cause nobody saw us.

Blat. It certainly does not prove anything of the sort. The way we figure it, the only thing it proves is that both of you must have been wearing disguises!

Smyth. Disguises? Why on earth for? What do I have to hide?

Blat. The cloaking device, Mr. Smith. The cloaking device.

Smyth. But there is no cloaking device.

Blat. So you say.

Smyth. That's not proof. That's circular reasoning.

Blat. Now, Mr. Smith, let's not have any of your fancy, superior sounding expressions. From our perspective we are undoubtedly permitted to conclude that you cloaked your car, drove at or about 175mph to Bronsvil, committed the murder and made it back in plenty of time to get to work by eight. After all, nobody saw you. Nobody phoned the police. Nobody picked you up on radar. There is no other possible conclusion.

Smyth. Lord, help us all.

Blat. You more than likely told Ms. Blot all about your discovery and the need not to be recognized became instantly apparent to her, whereupon she agreed to wear a disguise also. Later though, she attempted to blackmail you by threatening to end the affair and take her knowledge of your brilliant invention to the papers. It was then that you probably hatched your despicable plan and decided to kill her.

Smyth. This is outrageous! It's all conjecture and supposition!

Blat. Long words, Mr. Smith. Very impressive. Incidentally, where did you get rid of the gun?

Smyth. I don't have a gun!

Blat. I know you don't have a gun. You got rid of it.

Smyth. I never had a gun.

Blat. Of course you did. How else could you have killed her?

Smyth. I didn't kill her.

Blat. But she's dead, isn't she?

Smyth. I'll take your word for it. But I didn't kill her. How many times do I have to tell you?

Blat. *(aside to Neldy)* Methinks he doth protest too much, eh Neldy?

Smyth. *(shouting)*I tell you I didn't kill her!

Blat. So you say.

Smyth. Oh, my god. This is a nightmare.

Blat. I wonder if you've noticed, Mr. Smith, that I've been calling you Smith as in S-M-I-T-H for about the last 15 minutes. You seem to have accepted our pronunciation after all. Perhaps, if we talked for another 15 minutes you'd come around to our way of thinking about themurder even with all our so-called conjectures and suppositions.

Smyth. Never.

Blat. How did you get the key?

Smyth. What key?

Blat. The key to Ms. Blot's apartment.

Smyth. I didn't.

Blat. You must have.

Smyth. Why?

Blat. Because there were no signs of forced entry.

Smyth. But I never even met the woman.

Blat. I put it to you, Mr. Smith that when you were having the affair with her, as we have earlier established, she doubtless gave you an extra key as lovers usually do. You used the key to gain entry, and wearing gloves, you shot her with the gun that you purchased illegally from some criminal. You locked the door on your way out and while driving back you cleverly ditched the gun, the gloves and the key.

Smyth. …and I suppose that because you and your men never found any of the aforementioned items, that proves that it

(Continued on p. 20)

(Blattshap, cont. from p. 19)

happened just the way you described.

Blat. Exactly! You are a bright man, Mr. Smith. You would have made a great detective!

Smyth. Listen very carefully, Detective Superintendent. No judge or jury in their right mind would find me guilty with your kind of evidence and your kind of logic.

Blat. So you say.

Epilogue: Three months later Mr. Smyth was found guilty of premeditated murder and was hanged within the year, vehemently protesting his innocence to the bitter end.

Epilogue:.....After many years of exhaustive searches by hundreds of officers and amateur sleuths, no trace of the cloaking device, gun, key, gloves or disguises has ever been found. Most experts point out that although this shows how clever Mr. Smyth was in carrying out his heinous crime, it also proves how truly brilliant Detective Superintendent Blattshap was in running him down and bringing him to justice. In fact, Blattshap's superlative interrogative techniques, his unerring logical approach and his use of evidence-based arguments are now studied and employed across the globe.

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For his outstanding work in solving this extremely difficult and perplexing case, Detective Superintendent Blattshap was promoted to Chief Detective Superintendent where he remained until his retirement at age 86. In his last public statement, The Chief made the following statement: "I would like to reaffirm my complete and total confidence that someone, somewhere will one day turn up one or all of the missing items from the Smyth/Blot case."

So he says.

(Shylock's Venice, cont. from p. 6)

famous Villa Foscari, designed by renowned architect Palladio, prominently located on the Brenta Canal about 20 miles west of Venice.[8] Interestingly, about the same time Magri's article was being published, the 2004 movie version of *Merchant* starring Al Pacino (Shylock) and Jeremy Irons (Antonio) was being filmed on location, and the filmmakers used the Villa Foscari as the setting for Belmont.[9] Shortly afterward, Irons startled an incredulous Charlie Rose during a television interview by raising the authorship question and Edward de Vere specifically.[10] Another example of geographic precision comes when Padua is mentioned as the city from which Balthazar (Portia in disguise) rushes to Venice in the role of legal advisor during the trial scene. Shakespeare, it seems, was aware that Padua was a university town and center of legal training. The Brenta Canal, which connects all of these places, is the most prominent inland waterway in northern Italy and still in use today. During Shakespeare's time a network of canals stretched from Venice all the way to Turin, and the Bard seems highly cognizant of this, repeatedly insisting on the possibility of inland water travel in his Italian plays. Nevertheless, many commentators cite this as proof of his supposed ignorance of Italian topography. The same critics will then question Shakespeare's firsthand experience because he does not specifically mention canals in *The Merchant of Venice*, while he alludes to them in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Tempest*.

Not only do we know that de Vere spent considerable time in Venice, we have a good idea exactly where he could be found: within the parish of Santa Maria Formosa, to this day a popular tourist destination and short stroll from Saint Mark's Square. It was here that the wayward Earl met Italian choirboy Orazio Cuoco, later taking him back to England as a page. Several Oxfordian commentators (including myself) have pointed out that Santa Maria Formosa was also the parish of the famed courtesan poet Veronica Franco (1546-1591). Across the piazza from the church was the literary salon of Domenico Venier (1517-1582), who played host to the most famous Italian poets of the era, including Franco and others interested in themes from Ovid and the sonnet form. Franco's best known collection, *Terze Rime*, was published in 1575, the same year that de Vere arrived in Venice, then a leading European center for the book publishing industry. Here we have yet another one of those curious little parallels that, in the case of de Vere, seem to number in the hundreds.

This leads us to the central question surrounding the Bard's general familiarity with Italy and specific knowledge of Venice: where and how did he get it? Was it merely from reading books and hanging out at the Mermaid Tavern in London, or did he actually travel to Venice? That Shakespeare had a remarkably firm handle on his Italian settings continues to be remarked upon by the most orthodox of scholars.[11] Is it more likely that Shakespeare was a genius blessed with total recall so that he could absorb, retain, and squeeze out every secondhand scrap of minutiae ever told to him, or that these details came from personal experience, then convincingly transmitted through the works? Did all come from the Mermaid Tavern, or from the proverbial Hard Knocks University ("H.K.U.")?[12] As for other English-penned, Italian-set drama (of which there is relatively little), another period work

which should be compared is Ben Jonson's *Volpone,* probably written around 1605, well after Shakespeare's *Merchant*. *Volpone* is also set in Venice. Although Jonson never traveled to Italy, he tosses in a fair amount of factually accurate book learning about the city. Yet most readers have no trouble concluding that Jonson does not effortlessly evoke Venetian atmosphere nearly as well as Shakespeare. More egregiously, Jonson displays many common prejudices and preconceptions against Italians that one would expect from an English Elizabethan playwright, often making fun of Italians and their manners, probably to the great amusement of English audiences. Shakespeare, by contrast, never makes fun of Italians merely for being Italian. He does, however, consistently make fun of common-born characters (such as the buffoonish Launcelot Gobbo), which is doubly surprising, given who the audiences were at the public playhouses, as well as the Bard's own alleged common-born background.

Others have argued that Shakespeare was never in Italy because there are occasional factual errors, omissions, and distortions in the works.[13] Indeed there are. For example, Shakespeare never mentions the Ghetto by name. Another example is that Venetian Jews such as Shylock were not permitted to have Christian servants like Launcelot Gobbo. Such arguments are reasonable, but hardly convincing. Regarding non-references to the Ghetto (like non-references to Venetian canals), one must remember that the work is not a snapshot-accurate travelogue but rather dramatic fiction. While audiences are given stunning amounts of local color presented in an unobtrusive, offhand manner (unlike, say, Ben Jonson), Shakespeare as a playwright was not obligated to do this. Moreover, dramatists are given license to change or omit facts to enhance the story, and Shakespeare, as we know, never hesitated to do so. Perhaps the Ghetto is not mentioned because English audiences had never heard of it and could not imagine it. To analogize, some say that the Venetian traveler Marco Polo never went to China because he never mentions the Great Wall in his writings. In truth, it does not prove anything; one could counter that the most obvious things often go unwritten.

As for things that Shakespeare does tell us, he knows that there was a community of Jewish moneylenders in Venice who interacted with Christian borrowers—something certainly not found in England at the time. Jews in Elizabethan England had to join the Church of England or go to jail. Shakespeare also knows that business was transacted in the Rialto district of Venice, adjacent to the Ghetto, and he uses the name Gobbo, the name of a statue located within the Rialto. He knows that Antonio, like the entire Venetian economy, depended on foreign maritime commerce. He knows that great country estates and the university city of Padua were not far away; he also knows exactly how far, and that you needed to use the traghetti ferries to reach them from Venice. He knows about the untranslated Italian sources to the play, and a lot more besides, as we are about to see. If other Elizabethan playwrights were aware of these things, we have yet to see any evidence. Artificial Italian signposts of the type found in the work of Jonson, Marlowe, and Wilson are hardly comparable.

And then there is the law. *The Merchant of Venice* contains the most famous trial scene in all of drama: Act IV, in which Shylock tries to physically collect a pound of flesh from Antonio. It is highly unusual stagecraft on several levels, but Shakespeare's knowledge of Venetian legal precedent alone has inspired much academic debate. In addition to the trial scene itself, *Merchant* is surely the best-known example of a play with a legalistic central theme. Oxfordians maintain that Shakespeare knew his law quite well, and in this sequence the audience is thrown numerous snippets distinctively Italian, if not Venetian, in their associations. Once again we must ask, where and how did he get this information?

Most readers have no trouble concluding that Jonson does not effortlessly evoke Venetian atmosphere nearly as well as Shakespeare. More egregiously, Jonson displays many common prejudices and preconceptions against Italians that one would expect from an English Elizabethan playwright, often making fun of Italians and their manners, probably to the great amusement of English audiences. Shakespeare, by contrast, never makes fun of Italians merely for being Italian. He does, however, consistently make fun of common-born characters (such as the buffoonish Launcelot Gobbo), which is doubly surprising, given who the audiences were at the public playhouses, as well as the Bard's own alleged common-born background.

Edward de Vere had formal legal training and spent a lifetime in and out of court for various misfortunes, misdeeds and foolish behavior, and we know that he lived in Venice. (Will Shakspere, it should be added in fairness, was also a rather litigious guy who spent significant amounts of time in court, that is, when not otherwise missing in action during the late 1580s and early 1590s.)

The true extent of Shakespeare's legal expertise and how he may have acquired it has always been at the center of the authorship question. One of the earliest skeptics to weigh in, and still one of the most eloquent, was Mark Twain. Borrowing freely from the writings of English barrister George Greenwood, Twain mocked the ridiculous notion that the traditional Shakespeare, when not suing and being sued, must have developed his judicial acumen by hanging out in the law courts just for fun—similar to the manner in which he supposedly gathered his Italian knowledge from frequenting the Mermaid Tavern. Traditionalists counter by pointing out that Twain's own novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson* displays the same sophistication even though Twain was not himself trained as an attorney. Twain had in fact hired a professional

(Continued on p. 22)

(Shylock's Venice, cont. from p. 21)

consultant to help him get things right, so why not Shakespeare as well? One response is that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is a single book in Twain's very large oeuvre, whereas legal terminology permeates the entire Shakespeare canon—that is why we notice it so much. A thorough overview of this three-century debate, incidentally, may be found in Mark Alexander's excellent article in *The Oxfordian*.[14] Moreover, several current and past members of the United States Supreme Court have agreed that Shakespeare was adroit in his use of such terminology. Recently retired Justice John Paul Stevens, a professed doubter of the Stratford man, has written on this subject, using *The Merchant of Venice* as an example.[15] Stevens joins a very long and distinguished list of specialized professionals impressed by the Bard's high comfort level whenever making reference to the law.[16]

Everyone agrees that de Vere, while in Venice, frequented the Church of Santa Maria Formosa. As it turns out, a few other things were going on in that parish during the period leading up to his visit, including the public trial of Gaspar Ribeiro, a Portuguese Jewish converso (one converted to Christianity, or at least pretending to be) then living there, along with many other former Jews known as New Christians or Marranos. During 1567-68, seven years before de Vere arrived in Venice, Ribeiro was sued and found guilty of making a usurious loan in the principal amount of 3,000 ducats (the same amount that Shylock lends),,,,,

In addition to terminology, there are things in *Merchant* unlikely to have been heard in any English legal venue of that period. Shylock's relentless bloodlust for Antonio, as noted by more than one commentator, is disturbingly suggestive of the notorious Jewish blood libel—the myth that Jews abducted Christian children for purposes of ritual human sacrifice. Yes, bloodlust was a common allegory for usury and debt collection, and yes, Shakespeare uses it that way in *Timon of Athens*; nevertheless, in *Merchant of Venice* it becomes literal, as it did for those who believed in the blood libels made against Jews. Perhaps the most infamous case occurred in 1475 in the northern Italian city of Trento, located along the upper Adige River Valley just north of Verona, a short distance from Venice and Padua. Oxfordians such as Charlton Ogburn, Jr., believed that de Vere passed through Trento as he descended into Italy via the Brenner Pass and Swiss Alps. In Trento, a murdered child was discovered. Following a maniacal witch hunt egged on by Catholic clergymen, eight prominent Jewish citizens were arrested, tortured, and forced to accept baptism by the local authorities. Then they were executed. They also happened to be the wealthiest Jews in town, and their family property was confiscated by the ruling archbishop. As a finale to these series of outrages, the dead child was canonized by the church. During the 20th century, this bogus sainthood was revoked by Second Vatican and the injustice of the entire affair widely recognized; nevertheless, to this day, you can still find some people venerating "Saint" Simon of Trento. Other similar cases of blood libels were reported in northern Italy during the late 15th century, and this may have been one of de Vere's most vivid impressions of the place when he arrived there exactly one hundred years after the mass hysteria in Trento.

To reiterate, everyone agrees that de Vere, while in Venice, frequented the Church of Santa Maria Formosa. As it turns out, a few other things were going on in that parish during the period leading up to his visit, including the public trial of Gaspar Ribeiro, a Portuguese Jewish converso (one converted to Christianity, or at least pretending to be) then living there, along with many other former Jews known as New Christians or Marranos.[17] During 1567-68, seven years before de Vere arrived in Venice, Ribeiro was sued and found guilty of making a usurious loan in the principal amount of 3,000 ducats (the same amount that Shylock lends) in connection with a shipping venture (the same manner in which Antonio intends to repay the loan in the play), and—after he was found guilty—like Shylock had his sentence reduced. Other parallels (to list only a few) between Ribeiro and Shylock include their love of precious stones, their publicly suspicious attitude towards their servants, and the involvement of their children in marriages that appeared to be mixed unions between Jews and Christians. Last but not least, it was determined by the Inquisition after Ribeiro's death that he had in fact been living secretly as a Jew while publicly pretending to be a Christian. (See also Dr. Earl Showerman's article elsewhere in this issue.)

What is my source for this information? A lunatic fringe website? No, the source is Professor Brian Pullan of Manchester University, widely considered the world's leading expert on Venetian Jews of 16th century, and whose classic essay "Shakespeare's Shylock: Evidence from Venice," last appeared in print about 10 years ago. Professor Pullan is not an Oxfordian; he wrote in an almost apologetic tone to his orthodox and mostly British colleagues. The article has been widely ignored; I was unaware of it until recently. The only other Oxfordian to comment upon it, as far as I know, has been Robert Detobel. Pullan controversially asserted that "It is…arguable that Shakespeare had scraps of knowledge of things Venetian, not broad impressions of the place but points of detail…"[18] Points of detail indeed. Professor Pullan concludes his analysis with a provocative thesis:

> There is no reason to suppose without further discussion that Venice was simply a pseudonym for London, that

> Shakespeare acquired all his knowledge of Venice from books, or that he was profoundly ignorant of Venetian reality, for his Jews have credible experiences that can be related to Venice more readily than England.[19]

Then he completely departs from the mainstream: "Perhaps Gaspar Ribeiro, the marrano of Venice, was closer to Shylock than was Dr. Rodrigo Lopez, the marrano of London who was once put up as a favorable candidate."[20] The question obviously is whether the "English" sources for *Merchant* were themselves derived from actual events in Venice reported by recently returned travelers such as de Vere. Professor Pullan backs away from the precipice with this important hedge:

> There is no need to suppose that Shakespeare must have been in Venice himself during the hidden years of his life…Stories of usurious loans, conflict between Christian and Jew, of conversions to Christianity and lapses into Judaism, could very well have been repeated to him by sailors and travelers in London. These disparate fragments of information, lodging in the mind of someone endowed with an infinite curiosity, a tenacious memory, and an insatiable appetite for news, might well have been blended and sublimated into a work of art derived both from literature and from life.[21]

Thus Pullan aligns himself—no doubt for the sake of self-preservation—with those insisting that Shakespeare the writer was the greatest human sponge who ever lived, not unlike many modern academics who themselves aspire to be.

To write about Shakespeare, and this play in particular, is to make occasional mistakes, and yours truly is no exception. In my 2005 book, I confidently asserted that Shylock's sentence of punishment in Act IV—confiscation of half his property by the state and half by the wronged party (plus a discretionary death sentence)—was supposedly identical to one mandated by the Venetian "Alien Statute" of the period.[22] I have since learned through correspondence with various authorities, including Dr. Magri, that there is little or no factual basis for this claim.[23] Therefore, I wish to offer a retraction and set the written record straight. Let it not be forgotten, however, that Shakespeare's poetic license in this fictitious scene was firmly grounded in recorded events of the time. These included the strange-but-true case of Gaspar Ribeiro, complex commercial relations between alien Jews and the Venetian Republic, and documented legal precedent for the Jewish blood libel in northern Italy. Above all, readers should not lose sight of the fact that Shakespeare the writer possessed some very atypical and, for an Englishman, exotic, "points of detail" when creating the trial scene in which Shylock is chastised by the Venetian court.

Cecil Roth, elder statesman of historians specialized in this field, wrote that property confiscation laws were "perhaps the most terrible weapon" used against Jews by Christian authorities because these punished not only alleged wrongdoers, but their dependents as well.[24] As for Shakespeare, it is (if nothing else) quite surprising that he knew enough to use the Jewish blood libel as stage fodder. He shows enough familiarity with Italian legal precedent to punish Shylock with both property confiscation and forced religious conversion, in addition to the threatened prospect of capital punishment. Nor let us forget that he makes a centerpiece of the longstanding debate among legal philosophers over the proper overlap between abstract concepts of law and equity, culminating in Portia's "The quality of mercy…" speech. Not bad for a Warwickshire yeoman, if indeed such a person was the true author. As for Grays Inn alumnus Edward de Vere, it is likely that he noticed a number of things while frequenting

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Santa Maria Formosa. One may have been that Europe's most prestigious literary salon was located right across the piazza. Another was that the neighborhood had the greatest concentration of New Christians in Venice, who often transacted business with their Jewish brethren when the latter were not confined to the Ghetto during curfew hours. This was precisely the case with Ribeiro, although it was later charged he merely masqueraded as a Christian. It would also explain how a Jew could have Christian servants, as does Shylock.

The bright Venetian thread running through much of the canon leaves little doubt that the Bard's muse was remarkably inspired by Europe's then most dynamic urban environment. Whether details came from experience or pure imagination, however, remains an open question. In the final analysis, one must weigh conjectured book learning versus documented life experience. To create works such as The Merchant of Venice, does one simply need pure reading, informed conversation, and

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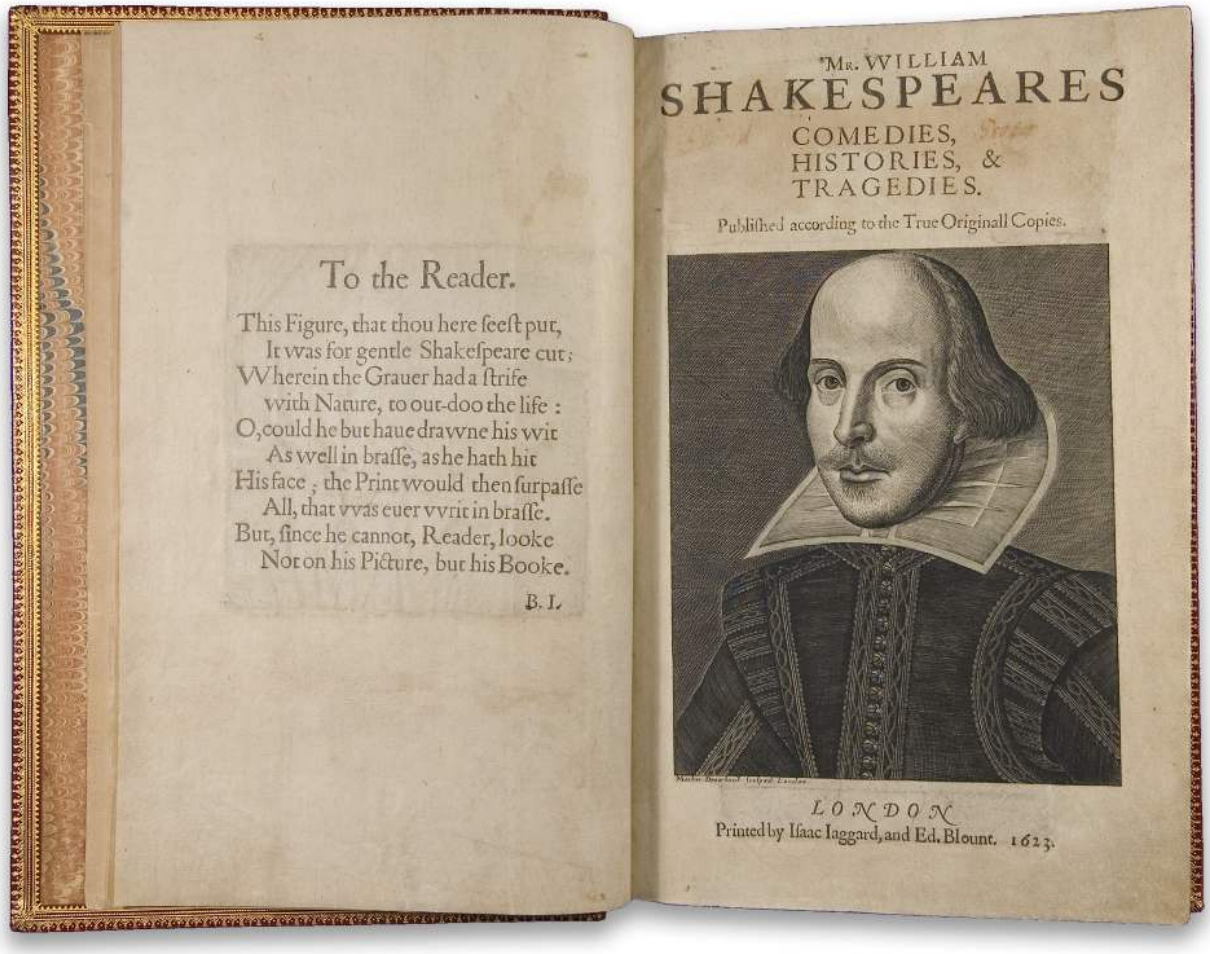
(First Folio, cont. from p. 1)



To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Grauer had a strife
with Nature, to out-doo the life:
O, could he but haue drawne his wit
As well in brasse, as he hath hit
His face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was euer writ in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I.

THE WORKES OF
MR. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.

LONDON
Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

They take these passages at face value. What they have not considered, however, is that Ben Jonson, their principal authority, has a reputation for ambiguity, veiled falsehoods and subtle self-contradiction in his writings, notably in prefatory matter in the First Folio. His testimony for Shakespeare's identity is not reliable.

Among those citing his testimony in the First Folio is Thomas Pendleton, professor of English at Iona College and co-editor of *The Shakespeare Newsletter.* In the winter 2003-4 issue, he says that "the evidence for Shakespeare of Stratford—preeminently the will, the Stratford monument and the First Folio—is so abundant as to make the search for a 'real' Shakespeare basically pointless." (104). He elaborates in the fall 2006 issue arguing that Heminge and Condell say that the plays in the First Folio "were written by their 'friend and fellow' William Shakespeare in the most literal sense possible: '[We] have scarce received from him a blot in his papers'" (43-44).

Alan Nelson, professor emeritus of the University of California-Berkeley, delivered a paper at a seminar at the University of Tennessee on "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" and in the abstract for his paper published in *The Tennessee Law Review* he wrote: "I argue that the documentary evidence for Shakespeare [of Stratford], which survives most abundantly in the First Folio of 1623 but also in standard historical sources .... demonstrates the traditional claims [for him]" (149). Non-Stratfordians, he says, must believe that the First Folio "is not an honest tribute organized by Heminge and Condell, but a tissue of lies supervised by William and Philip Herbert [earls of Pembroke and Montgomery to whom the First Folio is dedicated], with the voluntary or forced cooperation of Ben Jonson, who lied through his teeth both to his contemporaries and to posterity" (163).

Usually, however, biographers who believe that Will Shakspere was the poet-dramatist simply assume that the First Folio proves it. S. Schoenbaum, for example, devoted three pages in *William Shakespeare, a Compact Documentary Life* to the prefatory matter in First Folio. He takes it at face value without even bothering to cite it as proof of authorship (314-17). He would have considered it self-evident, straightforward testimony by Ben Jonson, Heminge and Condell and Leonard Digges (for "thy Stratford monument.")

Two Stratfordian scholars who do mention ambiguity in the First Folio and elsewhere do not elaborate further. Gary

Taylor warns in passing of "the ambiguous oracles of the First Folio" in his introduction to the Textual Companion to the Wells-Taylor collected works of Shakespeare (18). In answer to a query, however, he said he hadn't published anything more on the "ambiguous oracles" and hadn't thought about it since his 1997 Companion. Dennis Kay, a Shakespeare biographer, observed in an article in *Early Modern Literary Studies*: "As is now widely recognized, ambiguity was a feature of Elizabethan courtly performance" (25 online). But that's all he says.

Shakespeare establishment scholars do not question whether ambiguity in the First Folio prefatory matter may invalidate it as evidence for the Stratford man as the author. They have not recognized the extent to which Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, and Ben Jonson in particular, used ambiguity to disguise their meanings and how their ambiguous writings, self-contradictions and veiled meanings have been identified by Jonsonian scholars and by scholars of early modern literature. The contrast is striking.

Ambiguity is defined as double-meaning, an expression that is equivocal. (OED 3.a. b, 4) It can range from confused, careless writing that is unintentionally ambiguous to the simple pun that is relatively obvious and perhaps amusing to a more radical—and deliberate—ambiguity that elicits alternative reactions, or multiple reactions or even opposing reactions to the same piece of writing. *In Seven Types of Ambiguity*, William Empson says, "We call it ambiguous, I think, when we recognize that there could be a puzzle as to what the author meant, in that alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading" (x).

Deliberate ambiguity allows the writer to leave the truth of the matter unstated and can provide immunity from blame, reprisals or prosecution for the writer who needs protection. The discerning reader is expected to see through the ambiguity and even appreciate how the writer has wittily avoided taking a public position while expressing something the reader knows or suspects to be true. See Empson, esp. 1, 192.

There is abundant evidence that Jonson's works contain passages that can be identified as deliberately self-contradictory and ambiguous and that ambiguity was a prominent characteristic of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. It was often used in deliberately violating government and/or church censorship, or to avoid offending the powers that be. The purpose was to convey veiled meanings, to blur dangerous or inconvenient facts, and, in the words of one Jonson biographer, to create a "maze of seductive falsehoods," to enlighten and entertain the discerning reader or playgoer.

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One of Jonson's favorite authors from antiquity was Quintilian, who wrote in *The Orator's Education* (9.2) on various uses of ambiguity, including:

> For now it is time now to come to the very common device, which I am sure the reader is especially waiting for, in which we drop a hint to show that what we want to be understood is not what we are saying—not necessarily the opposite (as in irony) but something hidden and left to the hearer to discover. . . . [And]
>
> You can speak as openly as you like against . . . tyrants, as long as you can be understood differently, because you are not trying to avoid giving offense, only its dangerous repercussions. If danger can be avoided by some ambiguity of expression, everyone will admire its cunning.

Following his Roman mentor Quintilian, Jonson was especially cunning in his use of ambiguity.

Unlike Shakespeare biographers and editors, Jonsonian scholars do recognize that Jonson cannot always be taken at face value. They discuss how he used ambiguity with wit and artistry when writing about forbidden and dangerous contemporary matters—and how, in consequence, he has left contradictions and puzzles for commentators centuries later to unravel and resolve.

In the most recent and probably most authoritative biography of Ben Jonson, David Riggs of Stanford University finds ambiguity throughout Jonson's work. He gives several examples from Jonson's poems and plays: In "Inviting a Friend to Supper" the menu "is tantalizingly equivocal" (230). The verse collection entitled "The Forest quietly but insistently addresses the tensions and ambiguities in Jonson's self-conception as a courtly amateur" (234). The poem "To Heaven" shows that "Jonson's [mental] state bristles with contradictions" (237). In *Catiline*, Jonson situates his own position on religion "beyond the reach of any recoverable meaning" (178).

Jonson's poem "A Speech According to Horace," says Riggs, is a "mock encomium" full of irony and ambiguity (299). Jonson's principal editor, George Parfitt of Nottingham University, wrote an article on the poem for *Studies in English Literature*, entitling it "History and Ambiguity:

(Continued on p. 26)

(First Folio, cont. from p. 25)

Jonson's 'A Speech According to Horace.'"

Jonson's *Volpone* "is an ambiguous drama, with an ambiguous protagonist," says Mario Praz (183). And Riggs writes: "Like *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, *Volpone* forces its readers to work their way through a maze of seductive falsehoods; if they are any wiser at the end of the play, it is because they have withstood this assault on their moral bearings. . . . Just as Volpone gulls his clients, Jonson gulls his audience; but Jonson's falsehood has the capacity to educate as well as to delude." (136-7) By extension, unwary readers of Jonson's prefatory poems in the First Folio risk being gulled by a maze of seductive falsehoods that make them lose their literary-historical bearings.

Ben Jonson was a master of creative ambiguity, but he was not alone in his use of ambiguity. A survey of Elizabethan and Jacobean writings is far beyond the scope of this research, but some examples would include *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, Henry Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream*, Sidney's *Arcadia* and many passages in Spencer and Nashe.

The Elizabethan writer who made the greatest creative use of ambiguity to convey hidden meanings was undoubtedly Shakespeare. The richness and complexity of Shakespeare's writing is owed in large part to his adroit use of poetic ambiguity. Scholars recognize many ambiguous passages in Shakespeare. For example, Wolfgang Clemen, A. P. Rossiter, Norman Rabkin, and Rene Girard discuss the dramatist's use of ambiguity and ambivalence in their articles in *Shakespeare, an Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*. Jonathan Bate, in his book, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, reports with great admiration on the work of William Empson, who wrote *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. "Shakespeare," says Bate, "gave Empson more examples of ambiguity than any other poet" (309).

Two eminent scholars of English Renaissance literature have examined Jonson's use of ambiguity in the First Folio. Neither is a member of the Shakespeare establishment. Neither has published widely on Shakespeare nor edited a Shakespeare play. Their findings may thus be taken as relatively objective.

Annabel Patterson, Sterling professor of English at Yale University, argues that Elizabethan and Jacobean writers frequently used ambiguity to convey hidden meanings. In the introduction to her *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*, she says, "I argue throughout this book that the unstable but unavoidable relationship between writers and holders of power was creative of a set of conventions that both sides partially understood and could partly articulate, conventions as to how far a writer could go in explicit address to the contentious issues of his day, and how, if he did not choose the confrontational approach, he could encode his opinions so that nobody would be required to make an example of him." (12) That is, he could encode his opinions in ambiguous language that could be understood by those in the know while preserving deniability.

Patterson describes Jonson as the most complex of authors and says that in his plays, "there is evidence, if we look carefully, [emphasis added] of a highly sophisticated system of oblique communication, of unwritten rules whereby writers could communicate with readers or audiences (among whom were the very same authorities who were responsible for state censorship) without producing a direct confrontation."

Patterson also describes the extent of this ambiguity: "What we can find everywhere apparent and widely understood, at least from the middle of the sixteenth century in England onward, is a system of communication ('literature') in which ambiguity becomes a creative and necessary instrument, while at the same time the art (and the theory) of interpretation was reinvented, expanded and honed. I call this phenomenon 'the hermeneutics of censorship'"(18). And later on, she says the "functional, conscious, textual ambiguity" was often used by writers who were divided against themselves or who found the "loyalties divided by events" (66).

Patterson's view of ambiguity is cited by Gail Kern Paster, former Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, in a guide to Shakespeare. "Shakespeare," she says, "was a master of ambiguity, and if his plays encode topical allusions to religious controversy, as scholars have sometimes argued, they do so without sacrificing their purchase on timelessness" (6).

Patterson describes Jonson as the most complex of authors and says that in his plays, "there is evidence, *if we look carefully*, [emphasis added] of a highly sophisticated system of oblique communication, of unwritten rules whereby writers could communicate with readers or audiences (among whom were the very same authorities who were responsible for state censorship) without producing a direct confrontation" (53). Jonson was twice imprisoned for his share in two plays, and five times he faced accusations for other writings. Patterson says he "incorporated them [these "harassments"] into a political and social theory of literature, a poetics of censorship" (57). The possibility of prison and torture was a real incentive for Jonson to hone his skills for cunning ambiguity.

Regarding the relationship between literature and historical events, Patterson points out that in his 1616 collected plays Jonson published his *Sejanus* and along with it a short, sardonic poem, "The New Crie," that seems to undercut the politically controversial play, creating "a record of ambiguity and interpretive difficulty," says Patterson, "in which texts and historical events are equally resistant to simple, settled meanings." (64) This ambiguity would seem to apply equally well to Jonson's prefatory matter for the Shakespeare

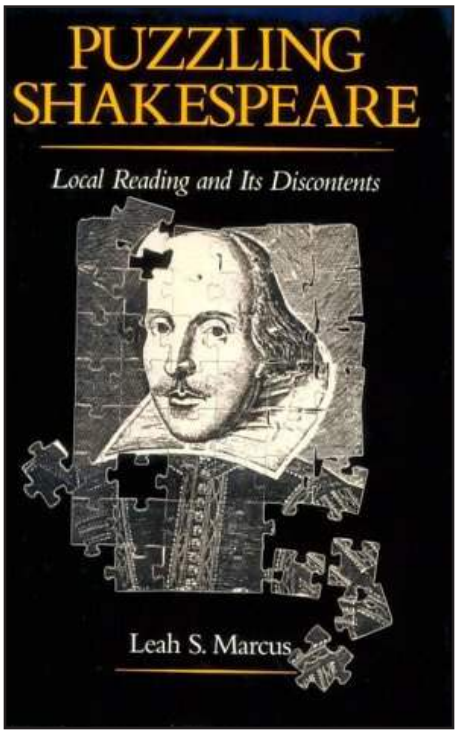
First Folio—ambiguity, interpretive difficulty, no simple, settled meanings. Patterson notes the importance of prefatory matter that addresses the reader and his or her expectations. "In general," she says, "late modern criticism has not paid enough attention to the interpretive status of introductory materials in early modern texts" (56).

Leah Marcus has paid close attention to the introductory matter in the First Folio. She is a chaired professor of English Renaissance literature at Vanderbilt University and in her *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*, she devotes the first fifty pages to the large portrait in the First Folio and Ben Jonson's poem on the facing page. She interprets the portrait as an iconoclastic image that contradicts itself and almost abolishes the pictured Shakespeare as the author. For contrast, she includes ten other frontispieces and title pages, including those for the works of King James and Ben Jonson, both published in 1616.

She finds the portrait odd and unsettling. That's mild. It has dismayed almost all Shakespeare commentators. Hugh Trevor-Roper, Oxford Regius Professor of History, styled it "the blank face of a country oaf" (41). J. Dover Wilson called it a false image that the world turns from in disgust (6). W. W. Greg wrote simply: "It is not pleasing and has little technical merit" (451). Schoenbaum blamed the engraver: "Droeshout's deficiencies are, alas, only too gross" (315). Biographer Katherine Duncan-Jones referred to the "childish clumsiness" that produced "an inept and witless-looking image" (280). Then there's the famous portrait painter, Thomas Gainsborough. When David Garrick asked him to paint a portrait of the poet-dramatist for his Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford in 1769, Gainsborough replied: "Damn the original picture of him (with your leave); for I think a stupider face I never beheld except D—k's" (1:328). He lost his commission.

Marcus's extended analysis of the portrait begins by noting that "if the First Folio is considered in light of other English folios of the period…there is something quite odd about the way it starts out." She notes the "unsettling size and directness" of the portrait, "stark and unadorned." Unlike most portraits on title pages, it has no frame, no ornamental borders, no allegorical figures and devices that might be expected" (2).

Following Greg, she notes its "raw directness" and suggests that the portrait is saying "this is the Man Himself" and continues, "That, at least, is what the portrait seems to say; the verses on the facing page say otherwise. . . . The poem undermines the visual power of the portrait. . . Shakespeare, the verses tell us, is not to be found after all in the compelling image opposite. The poem undermines the visual power of the portrait by insisting on it as something constructed and 'put'



there" (18).

She goes on to argue that Jonson's poem is "in a precise sense of the term, iconoclastic, shattering the power of the visual image in order to locate Shakespeare's identity elsewhere [namely] in 'wit.'" And therefore, "Jonson's poem abolishes Shakespeare as an entity apart from his writings" (19).

She also finds a contradiction in the claim "Published according to the True Original Copies," which appears above the portrait on the title page. She asks, "If these are 'True 'originals,' what would a false one be? How can something be both an original and a copy?" The claim contradicts itself "seeming at first to set forth something direct and immediately apprehensible, then undermining the authenticity of what it presents" (19-20). Summing up, she says, "The First Folio opens with an implicit promise to communicate an authorial identity, which it instead repeatedly displaces: Shakespeare is somehow there, but nowhere definitively there" (20). The title page, she says, "refuses to yield a clear message about the author" (22).

Turning her attention to the anti-Stratfordian interpretation, she says they, "respond to Shakespeare's failure to possess a stable authorial identity by re-assigning his works to someone else, usually the earl of Oxford. . . . someone less shadowy than the picture on the front of the folio, someone with a full and detailed life story and impeccable upper-class credentials, someone easier to assimilate to the honorable role of author" (34-5). She says that because anti-Stratfordians make the same use of topical allusions as does traditional historical methodology, they "wildly disrupt the efforts of Shakespearean historicism" in a way that "has been more corrosive than we have been willing to admit . . . casting a faint yet lingering odor of inauthenticity over all Shakespearean historicism" (35).

Four other commentators who have addressed Jonson's ambiguity are listed by the anti-Stratfordian Diana Price in her chapter on the First Folio in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (191). Analyzing Jonson's use of ambiguity, Price suggests that "if the commoner Shakspere was the author, there was no need for ambiguity. If Jonson's tributes were entirely complimentary and sincere, there was no need for ambiguity. On the other hand, if an aristocrat was the author there was every reason for ambiguity" (192-3). For whatever reason, Price does not mention Marcus. She cites Patterson in only one sentence on Jonson's ambiguity and Riggs several times but not on Jonson's ambiguity. Marcus, Patterson and Riggs are probably the most important and most respected university scholars to have identified the ambiguity in the First Folio that has been overlooked or deliberately ignored by Shakespeare establishment

(Continued on p. 28)

(First Folio, cont. from p. 27)

scholars, who consider Jonson a reliable witness whose testimony can be taken at face value.

As if to set the tone for what follows, Jonson opens the First Folio the prefatory material with ambiguity. The first two of the eleven pages contain several instances of ambiguity—indicators that the entire prefatory matter may well be "a maze of seductive falsehoods." Jonson's contemporary readers would be immediately on the alert for sly falsehoods, veiled meanings and especially the ambiguous passages that could convey hidden meanings.

As Marcus points out, Jonson contradicts himself in his poem on the portrait when says that it is not of Shakespeare but made for him and that the reader should not pay any attention to it. The opening two lines of Jonson's poem "To the Reader" on the page facing the title page with its extremely large portrait says, "This figure…was for gentle Shakespeare cut." But a frontispiece portrait in any book is always *of* the author, not *for* him. So, in this case if it is *for* Shakespeare, it's not of him, and if it's not of him, it's not Shakespeare's likeness. The poem contradicts itself. Then, after several convoluted lines about the engraver's aborted effort "to out-do the life" the poem closes by exhorting the reader to "look / Not on his picture, but his book." This could be just the usual poetic conceit, but it reinforces the poem's opening lines that say that the portrait that should be the image of the author is not the image of the author.

Stratfordian biographers rarely comment on the poem. One who did was Schoenbaum, but the best he could say was that "an over-subtle reader will detect a latent irony in Jonson's conclusion [to look at the book, not the picture]…but the advice is sound enough" (315-17). He does not, however, give the text of the 10-line poem so the reader can judge whether the advice is sound enough.

Leah Marcus also notes that the headline on the title page, "Published According to the True Original Copies" is either extravagant puffery or a falsehood given the obvious disparity of sources for the play texts. And, as she argues, the portrait itself is an iconoclastic image that contradicts itself and Jonson's portrait poem.

Three more instances of ambiguity in the First Folio, which have not received the attention they deserve, might be cited: the use of "figure" for the portrait, the description of Shakespeare as "gentle," and a grammatical construction favored by Jonson. Stratfordian scholars have not analyzed any of them.

The first line in the First Folio is, "This figure that thou here seest put," referring to the "figure" in the big portrait on the opposite page. "Figure," of course, has many meanings. The first is the bodily form, shape or appearance of a person or thing, which readers would readily apply to the depiction of a man in a portrait, although the OED does not give "portrait" as one of the meanings of "figure."

As if to set the tone for what follows, Jonson opens the First Folio the prefatory material with ambiguity. The first two of the eleven pages contain several instances of ambiguity—indicators that the entire prefatory matter may well be "a maze of seductive falsehoods." Jonson's contemporary readers would be immediately on the alert for sly falsehoods, veiled meanings and especially the ambiguous passages that could convey hidden meanings.

Another early meaning of "figure" is "an imaginary form, a phantasm" (OED 9.b, obs.). The OED gives just two examples: from Chaucer, "Or if the soule . . . warneth al and some . . . Be avisions or be figures;" and from *Merry Wives of Windsor*, "To scrape the figures out of your husbands' braines" (4.2.231). In Shakespeare's day then, "figure" could have called to mind a phantasm as well as a portrait or a portrait that was a phantasm, an "illusion, a deceptive appearance," according to the OED (I.1.a).

The word "gentle" would also have had an alternative and special meaning for perceptive readers of the First Folio in the early 1600s. It occurs three times in the prefatory matter. Jonson says in his portrait poem, "This figure . . . was for gentle Shakespeare cut" and in his long eulogy he again refers to "my gentle Shakespeare." The Heminge-Condell letter addressing the reader says Shakespeare was "a most gentle expresser" of Nature. No one before had ever called Shakespeare gentle.

The ostensible authors of the letters, Heminge and Condell, were almost certainly not the authors, and Jonson almost certainly was. Citing Greg (17-21,) Marcus says the language in the Heminge-Condell prefatory address "so strongly echoes the Induction to Jonson's Bartholomew Fair that many are convinced Jonson wrote the preface himself" (22).

To 17th century readers of the First Folio , however, "gentle" did not primarily mean kind and tender; it was a secondary meaning. The earliest and primary meaning was "of persons, well-born, belonging to a family of position; originally used synonymously with noble" with instances ranging from 1225 to 1625 (OED 1.a). Only later in the 16th century did "gentle" begin to take on the secondary meaning of "mild of disposition or behaviour, kind, tender" (OED 8). The OED places first "that sense…which was actually the earliest in the language; others follow in the order in which they appear to have arisen" (xxix). Jonson used "gentle" to describe the Shakespeare of the First Folio as a nobleman but ambiguously, since "gentle" could also be said to describe someone kind and tender. In today's parlance, Jonson sought deniability.

That "gentle" in Elizabethan times primarily described someone of superior birth and rank, an aristocrat, is confirmed by its use in several Shakespeare plays in contexts that could not mean kind and tender. Charlton Ogburn found several, including one in *Richard II*. When Henry

Percy, the earl of Northumberland, tells the king he has sent the severed heads of four men to London, the king says, "We thank thee, gentle Percy, for thy pains" (5.6.11). Ogburn notes that Northumberland was gentle in that he was "of superior birth, certainly no other sense" (225).

Two additional examples can be cited. When Mercutio, a kinsman to the prince of Verona, quarrels with Tybalt, he calls him a rat-catcher and draws his sword, Romeo says "Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up." (3.1.84) Mercutio is anything but mild in disposition. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Agamemnon tells his warrior commander, "Go, gentle knight, / Stand by our Ajax" in his combat with Hector (4.5.88). He surely does not mean for his warrior to be tender and mild in behavior. Shakespeare uses "gentle" almost four hundred times. A survey of all of them would no doubt turn up more examples of "gentle" used in its earliest and primary meaning of well-born and noble.

Today's meaning of "gentle" is so pervasive that readers can be easily and understandably be misled into thinking the word simply describes the dramatist as a nice guy. This is the meaning of "gentle" for Marchette Chute, biographer of both Jonson and Shakespeare of Stratford. She believes that his gentleness "came from his natural courtesy of mind" (111). The well-regarded biography by Park Honan ignores the primary meaning of "gentle" and paints a strikingly sweet and gentle Shakespeare of Stratford: He "lack(s) a quirky egotism" (18). He has a "habit of mind of courtesy. . . . humane, receptive and alert to tenderness" (21). He is "self-abnegating. . . . (having) daily self-effacing duties" in the theater (207). His "behaviour was easy and companionable" (235). Biographer Dennis Kay refers to the "habitual references to him as 'sweet' and 'gentle,'" although he cautions against taking those characterizations at face value (164).

The Stratfordian biographer Katherine Duncan-Jones also embraces today's usual meaning of "gentle" retrospectively for the First Folio. But she reads it as mockery. "Jonson," she writes in *Ungentle Shakespeare*, "characteristically drew attention to his 'beloved' Shakespeare's 'gentle' status so persistently and knowingly as in effect to mock it" (281). She finds Jonson describing Shakespeare "living up to the flamboyant aggression suggested by his surname in writing [the] lines of verse, 'he seems to shake a lance / As brandished at the eyes of ignorance.'" And she points to Jonson's lines that "it is with rage," rather than with gentleness, that he [Shakespeare] is implored to admonish the theater of latter days" (277-8). The lines she cites are from Jonson's longer poem: "Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage, / Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage."

Similarly, in his eulogy to Shakespeare Jonson writes, "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek, / From thence to honour thee, I would not seek / For names, but call forth thundering Aeschylus…" etc. The initial "though" seems to say, although you had small Latin and less Greek. But as in the lines in the song to Celia, the First Folio lines might well be read, "Even if you only had small Latin and less Greek," as first noted by the Stratfordian C. M. Ingleby (151-2). The similarity of the two ambiguous constructions in Jonson's poems have not been noted by Jonsonian or Shakespearean scholars.

That Jonson practiced ambiguity in his writings also finds support in an ambiguous grammatical construction that occurs not only in his long eulogy to Shakespeare in the First Folio but also in his famous "Song: To Celia." Lines in both works are ambiguously subjunctive and in the same way. The song, which opens, "Drink to me, only, with thine eyes," ends, "But might I of Jove's nectar sup, / I would not change for thine." David Riggs notes that the ambiguity was first identified by Empson and says: "By rights, the poet should be saying, 'but even if I could sup Jove's nectar, I would not exchange thine for it.' Yet the literal sense of the passage goes in the opposite direction: 'but if I could sup Jove's nectar, I would not exchange it for thine.'" (235)

Similarly, in his eulogy to Shakespeare Jonson writes, "And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek, / From thence to honour thee, I would not seek / For names, but call forth thundering Aeschylus…" etc. The initial "though" seems to say, *although* you had small Latin and less Greek. But as in the lines in the song to Celia, the First Folio lines might well be read, "*Even if* you only had small Latin and less Greek," as first noted by the Stratfordian C. M. Ingleby (151-2). The similarity of the two ambiguous constructions in Jonson's poems have not been noted by Jonsonian or Shakespearean scholars.

These instances of ambiguity and self-contradiction identified by Jonsonian and English Renaissance scholars, along with several others documented by anti-Stratfordian scholars, cast grave doubt on the reliability of the evidence in the First Folio for Shakespeare's identity and character. The others include the unsettling anomalies in the portrait image, Jonson's allusion to "Sweet Swan of Avon" and three pages later Leonard Digges' allusion to "thy Stratford monument" that point ambiguously either to Stratford-on-Avon, or to the Earl of Oxford's two properties on the Avon River and near the London suburb of Stratford. "Monument" could mean the stone monument in the Stratford church or the plays themselves metaphorically as a monument to Shakespeare's genius. The OED gives as the earliest usages for monument "a sepulchre" (1, obs.) and "a written document" (2.a). See Whalen, "Stratford Bust."

Jonson's use of ambiguity in the First Folio gets indirect support from his prior publishing experience and his close connections to the earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, to whom it was dedicated. No one was more qualified to see the First Folio through the press than Ben Jonson. Six years earlier, he had been the editor

(Continued on p. 30)

(First Folio, cont. from p. 29)

and publisher of his own *Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (1616), the first English collection of plays in a folio. At the time, King James granted him an annual pension of sixty-six pounds for unspecified services. Jonson was personally involved in all aspects of his own thousand-page folio from beginning to end, revising both its contents and presentation. "Jonson was tinkering with the folio text until the very last minute," says Riggs (226). Thus, Jonson was eminently qualified to shape and control the prefatory matter in the Shakespeare First Folio, the second English collection of plays, also about a thousand pages long. And he was in a perfect position to introduce as much ambiguity and seductive falsehood as he judged necessary and appropriate, especially given his connections with the Herbert family.

Jonson was not lying; he was practicing the art and politics of selective ambiguity. His use of equivocal, self-contradictory, veiled language and seductive falsehoods has not been sufficiently recognized. Indeed, it is ignored by nearly all Shakespeare establishment scholars. Their reading of the prefatory matter to the First Folio has been literal and uncritical. Jonsonian scholars, however, are well aware of his penchant and talent for ambiguity. The First Folio can be properly interpreted and understood only in light of Jonson's reputation for deliberate ambiguity in its many forms and in light of the prevalence of such deliberately ambiguous writing during the reigns of Elizabeth and James.

Jonson's close association with William Herbert, the 3rd earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain and Jonson's patron, reinforces the conclusion that Jonson was using ambiguity to obfuscate the identity of Shakespeare. The Herberts were the most important and influential literary patrons of the time. Riggs says that with publication of his *Works* in 1616, Jonson "makes his way into an extended circle of blood relations and family retainers that revolves around the Herberts and the Sidneys. The central figure in this network is Pembroke. His brother Montgomery was married to Susan Vere, a cousin of Horace Vere" (230). (Riggs doesn't mention that Susan's father was Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, and the leading candidate today for authorship honors.) Riggs details how Jonson in prison sought Pembroke's aid, how several of his masques supported Pembroke's political ambitions and how he dedicated several of his most important works to Pembroke (179, 215, 226, 230, 232).

As Lord Chamberlain, Pembroke oversaw the theater, and plays performed in public and at court and their publication. He had the government position and the family wealth to authorize and finance the very expensive publishing project.

If Oxford indeed was the dramatist writing under the pen name William Shakespeare, the brothers Pembroke and Montgomery, the latter Oxford's son-in-law, had the means, motive and opportunity to sponsor the First Folio of thirty-six plays—eighteen of which had never before been printed and might well have been lost to posterity. And if Oxford was Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, knowing his patron's close family connections to Oxford, would have had the means, motive and opportunity to employ artistic ambiguity, subtle self-contradiction and seductive falsehoods in the prefatory matter to the First Folio.

Thus, a knowledgeable and perceptive Jacobean reader of the First Folio might well divine that Jonson wrote the dedication to the two earls and the letter to the readers ascribed to Heminge and Condell (they were not scholars and writers) and that he was describing the late 17th Earl of Oxford as his "friend and fellow," that is, his fellow poet and playwright, whose plays were collected in the First Folio.

Jonson was not lying; he was practicing the art and politics of selective ambiguity. His use of equivocal, self-contradictory, veiled language and seductive falsehoods has not been sufficiently recognized. Indeed, it is ignored by nearly all Shakespeare establishment scholars. Their reading of the prefatory matter to the First Folio has been literal and uncritical. Jonsonian scholars, however, are well aware of his penchant and talent for ambiguity. The First Folio can be properly interpreted and understood only in light of Jonson's reputation for deliberate ambiguity in its many forms and in light of the prevalence of such deliberately ambiguous writing during the reigns of Elizabeth and James. The prefatory matter in the First Folio is unreliable as testimony and therefore should not be cited as valid evidence that William Shakspere of Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare.

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(Shylock's Venice, cont. from p. 23)

genius…or does it take more than that, namely, living life as well? I think many would agree the latter is true, or at least closer to the truth, even for the greatest literary genius who ever lived. If Will Shakspere was the true author, then we can only guess how this experience and learning were accumulated. That he could filter it into compelling dramatic poetry is doubly surprising. In Elizabethan England, unconverted Jews were outlaws, Christianized Jews were relatively scarce, and they certainly were not suing each other over 3,000 ducats. It is like the entire authorship question in a nutshell—a matter of what is likely versus what is merely possible. By comparison, a 2007 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art spanning the history of the Venetian Republic included a bird's eye view of Venice made by an English artist for a 15th century manuscript of Marco Polo's Travels. One admiring reviewer called the work a "mirage" and "storybook picture" created by someone "who most likely never laid eyes on the city."[25] For Shakespeare's *Merchant*, terms like "mirage" or "storybook picture" do not apply, especially for a reader who has traveled to Venice. Shakespeare gives enough credible information unique to the Veneto that takes the setting far beyond the realm of fantasy.[26] That is part of the reason it packs such a wallop. Truly, as Shakespeare's contemporary Cervantes wrote, the best lies are those having the most truth in them.

Endnotes

[1] See Farina, William, *DeVere as Shakespeare: An Oxfordian Reading of the Canon* (McFarland, 2005), Chapter Nine "The Merchant of Venice."

[2] Then-Lord Chamberlain Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, had a number of interesting connections to de Vere. One was that Carey previously owned King's Place in Hackney where de Vere spent the last eight years of his life from 1596 to 1604. It should be added that recent scholarship by Christopher Paul has called into question the exact year of de Vere's death, otherwise presumed to have occurred in 1604. See "A Monument without A Tomb: The Mystery of Oxford's Death," *The Oxfordian* (Shakespeare Oxford Society), Vol. VII, 2004.

[3] For example, see Chambers, E.K., *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Vol. I (Clarendon, 1930), p. 373.

[4] Chambers, p. 371.

[5] Charles Isherwood, "O Villain, Villain, Loosed in Elizabethan Minds," *New York Times*, February 2, 2007, pp. B1, B6.

[6] Ravid, Benjamin, "The Venetian Government and the Jews," from *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, Benjamin Ravid and Robert C. Davis, eds. (John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 26.

[7] Ogburn, Charlton, Jr., *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, 2nd Edition (EPM, 1992), p. 303.

[8] See Magri, Noemi, "Places in Shakespeare: Belmont and Thereabouts," from *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604*, Richard Malim, ed. (Parapress, 2005).

[9] Pacino later revived his performance as Shylock on Broadway.

[10] Show aired on December 27, 2004.

[11] Some have included, among the British, Edmund Chambers and Hugh Trevor-Roper, among the Italians, Ernesto Grillo and Pietro Rebora, and among the Germans, Karl Elze and Gregor Sarazin.

[12] The Victorian painting by John Faed titled "Shakespeare and His Friends," depicting a somewhat effeminate Bard with his nobleman pals at the Mermaid Tavern, has always been a personal favorite.

[13] A few of these critics, we suspect, have never been to Venice themselves.

[14] See Alexander, Mark André, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Law," *The Oxfordian* (Shakespeare Oxford Society), Vol. VI, 2001.

[15] See Stevens, Justice John Paul, "The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction," Vol. 140, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 1373 (1992).

[16] Justice Scalia is also an Oxfordian. "On this issue, Justice Stevens sees eye to eye with his frequent conservative antagonist, Antonin Scalia…" notes *WSJ* reporter Jess Bravin. See "Justice Stevens Renders an Opinion on Who Wrote Shakespeare's Plays," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2009, p. A1. We would add that the legitimacy of the Oxfordian theory may be the only thing that these two strong-opinioned judicial personalities agree upon.

[17] Pullan, Brian, "Shakespeare's Shylock: Evidence from Venice," from *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity,* Cooperman and Garvin, ede. (University of Maryland Press, 2000), p. 191. Pullan has been writing about the Ribeiro affair for over 30 years. This installment represents a more recent publication.

[18] Pullan, p. 194.

[19] Pullan, p. 202.

[20] Pullan, p. 202. Gaspar Ribeiro should now also (among Oxfordians) supplant slippery English financier Michael Lok as a leading model for Shylock, although there may have been a degree of character amalgamation, a favorite device among talented dramatists.

[21] Pullan, p. 203.

[22] Farina, p. 61. To my amazement, this error has been quoted in Wikipedia, thus proving again that one can write hundreds of good sentences but still be cited for the one or two bad ones that happen to escape.

[23] The gaffe was partly the result of my reading a well-known orthodox commentator who went on and on about the Venetian "Alien Statute" as if it had been a real law. This of course is an explanation, not an excuse; the fault for not checking into the matter further rests solely with myself.

[24] Roth, Cecil, *History of the Marranos* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932), pp. 121-122.

[25] Cotter, Holland, "The Republic of Beauty, Melding West and East," *New York Times*, March 30, 2007, p. B27. The same topographical realism appears in *Othello*, which uses Venice as one of its settings.

[26] Shakespeare's Venice is "a place far richer than a fictional backcloth," concludes Pullan. See p. 202.

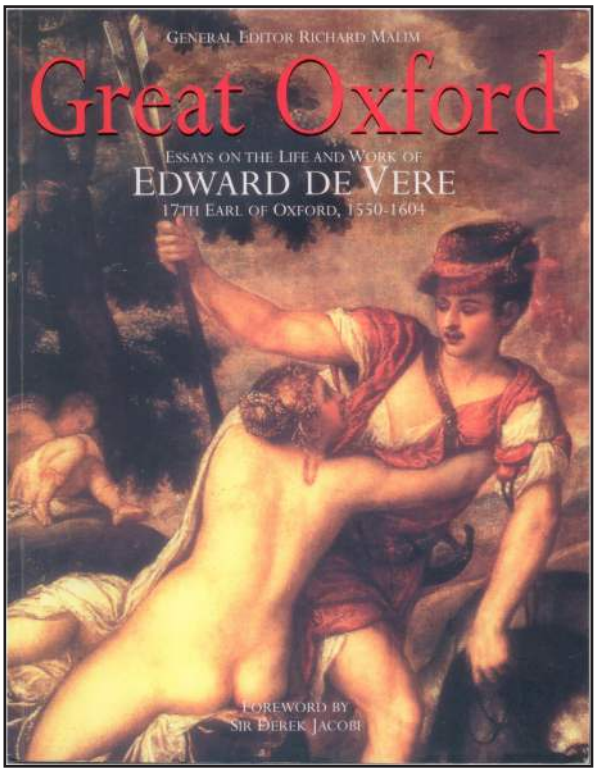
(News, cont. from p. 4)

occasion he also behaviorally telegraphed he despised.

To buttress his claim that the debate was trivial, Crace asserted that the "Shakespeare authorship was a non-existent debate until the 19th century." This is factually false. Contemporary documents and literature characterized the supposed-accepted Shakspere figure as a parvenu, pretender, briber, thief, imposter, and counterfeit. These references did not come to light until English critical historiography found them during episodic searches to solve the Stratford legend's inconsistencies. Bacon was a false start for the true author. The pooh-poohed proliferation of numerous other 'authors' is mainly a phantom fact by status quo scholars, who never had doctrinal freedom to seriously investigate the history.

The public response to Crace's article varied from frivolous posts to outrage. Howard Schumann wrote, "Would you not expect so-called scholars whose entire careers have been based on the orthodox views to champion their point of view?" Heward Wilkinson added, "Is it any wonder that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford was compelled to use a pseudonym out of self-preservation?"

Thus Academe's total empirical knowledge, necessary to quell the Oxfordian initiative, (that the 17th Earl of Oxford wrote "Shakespeare"), is still unable to substantiate the traditional predisposition toward William Shakspere of Stratford. Crace illustrated this general unfamiliarity with the issues, when he wrote that Oxford "died before at least 10 of the plays were performed." Samuel Beckett died before one of his plays was performed, but his authorship was never questioned on such an illogical basis. At present there is no play-script performed after Oxford died, that refers to topics or events following the June 1604 decease date. No play has been proven to be written afterwards. Crace was not informed enough to know he had stated, not a supportable logical fact, but false reasoning in defense of an *a priori* belief.



Crace's evaluation of Charles Beauclerk's five-minute statement amounted to summary dismissal: "Beauclerk made an ineffective case for the Earl of Oxford based largely on an autobiographical reading of Hamlet." Crace never caught that there were so many biographical and topical parallels in those remarks that they could only have been devised by a vengeful, gifted courtier in Elizabeth's reign.

The public response to Crace's article varied from frivolous posts to outrage. Howard Schumann wrote, "Would you not expect so-called scholars whose entire careers have been based on the orthodox views to champion their point of view?" Heward Wilkinson added, "Is it any wonder that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford was compelled to use a pseudonym out of self-preservation?" I responded to Wells's claim in the June 6 debate, that Shakspere's books would have been listed in the will inventory if we *had* the will inventory as follows. "Shakspere's will listed no appurtenances that would go with books—no desks, no bookcases, no cabinets, no inkwells, no supplies, no records, no correspondence, no manuscripts or instructions regarding their disposition, no plays, no poems, no literary matter." As brought out by Bonner Cutting's analysis of the Stratford Will in *Brief Chronicles II*, (http://www.briefchronicles.com/ojs/index.php/bc/article/viewPDFInterstitial/12/50) of a million inventories from that era, few listed books. The evidence for a Shakspere library isn't there. Moreover the dean of English Shakespeare studies doesn't know or care to know it.

Finally, I voiced an Oxfordian moral concern, perhaps not verbalized in this language: "We cannot have a healthy culture when the symbolic giant of our literature is hidden in a centuries-old shadow cast by expedient official histories." In short, political and structural forces have retarded finding who "Shakespeare" was, and they are not especially concerned with finding the truth even now. The recent blog skirmishes simply reflect this impasse between increasingly informed Shakespeare investigators and widespread analytical paralysis in the universities.

—William Ray

In Memoriam: Dr. Noemi Magri

We note with sadness the passing of two longtime Oxfordians, Dr. Noemi Magri and Norma Howe.

Dr. Noemi Magri died May 9 in Mantua, Italy. She received a degree in

From left to right:Jim Kline, Bob and Norma Howe and Lynn Andrews, at the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference. Photo kindness SASC.

modern languages from Foscari University in Venice; she was active for many years in Mantua's Anglo-Italian Society, and taught English language and literature. She is perhaps best known to Oxfordians as the author of five articles in the 2004 book, *Great Oxford*, published by the De Vere Society, all of which focused on Shakespeare's connections to Italy: "The Venetian Inquisition Inquiry Regarding Orazio Cuoco (1577)," "Italian Renaissance Art in Shakespeare: Giulio Romano and The Winter's Tale," "No Errors in Shakespeare: Historical Truth and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," "The Influence of Italian Renaissance Art on Shakespeare's Works. Titian's Barberini Painting: the Pictorial Source of Venus & Adonis," and "Places in Shakespeare: Belmont and thereabouts." She is survived by a brother.

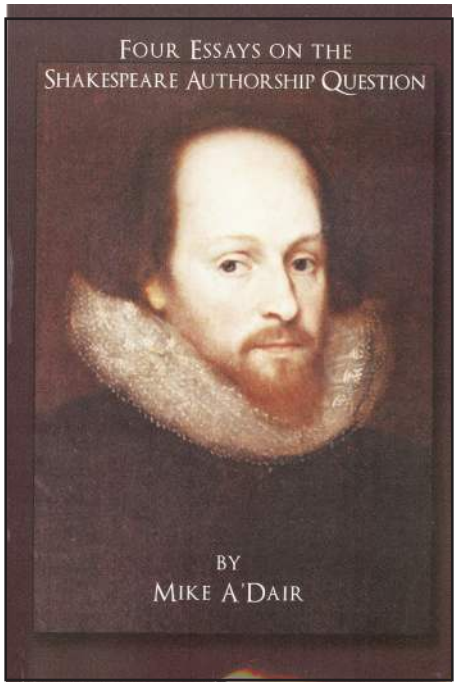
Norma Howe

Norma (Nadeau) Howe died on April 19, 2011, at the age of 81. A native Californian, she and her husband of sixty years, Bob, lived in Sacramento for many years. Bob and Norma regularly attended the annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conferences at Concordia University in Portland, OR, as well as west coast Joint SOS/SF Conferences; they also traveled extensively in Europe. Beyond Oxfordian circles, Norma was best known as the author of eight novels and two stories, all aimed at young adult readers. Her works explored two of her favorite themes, the conflict between faith and reason and the question whether free will exists.

Despite her literary success, Norma seldom accepted invitations to speak about her works. As she herself put it, "I've always believed that if my books can't speak for themselves, nothing else should – least of all me, since I'm extremely opinionated, unbelievably sarcastic, and, worst of all, excruciatingly boring." [Editor's note: Having met Norma several times, she was anything but boring!] In addition to her husband, she is survived by six children.

Adair Volume Available

Mike Adair, a journalist and Shakespeare Fellowship member hailing from beautiful Willitts, CA, has written a valuable introduction to the authorship question. At 93 pages, including annotated bibliography, the clearly written volume is suitable for anyone looking for a brief introduction to the case for de Vere's authorship. Adair identifies 40 intriguing arguments – some standard and some rather more original or unexpected – in support of de Vere's authorship. This reader was especially impressed by Adair's commentary on topical elements in the "apocryphal" *Sir Thomas More,* indicating that this play, mostly in the handwriting of de Vere's secretary Anthony Munday, but also including the famous "hand D" alleged



to be Shakespeare's own hand, was written circa 1580. There are some doubtful or downright erroneous claims in the book, including the idea, convincingly refuted by Robert Brazil, that Oxford "in 1586 changed the crest of his coat of arms, replacing the heraldic boar of the the Vere family with a phoenix, which was the personal emblem of Elizabeth and the family emblem of the Seymour family" (80). Despite such lapses the book generally does a reasonably balanced job summarizing some of the more contentious issues about who gave birth to (or fathered) which bastards, as well as being in most respects an excellent brief introduction to the authorship question.

Authorship Index Available

The Shakespeare Fellowship is pleased to announce that new member Jim Warren has compiled an Index of articles about the authorship issue that might be of interest to SF members. As War-

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(News, cont. from p. 34)

ren explained, "The Index was my way of keeping straight in my mind the wealth of research that has been conducted, the large number of articles and books published, and the conferences and other events held on the authorship issue during the past decade. It will also help to ensure that my own research projects don't duplicate research already completed or currently in progress by others."

"The Shakespeare Authorship Issue: An Index of Articles" contains titles, authors, volume numbers and dates of all articles in *Shakespeare Matters, Brief Chronicles, The Oxfordian* and *The Elizabethan Review*, as well as all articles since 1997 in *The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* and selected articles from the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (from a list provided by Ramon Jiménez). It also includes all articles in the five Anthologies prepared by Paul Altrocchi and Hank Whittemore. The first Section of the publication contains the complete list of articles sorted three ways – by author-title, author-date, and date. Part II includes complete Indexes of each of the above-mentioned publications. A final Section contains a complete list of all book and movie reviews, as well as a list of remembrances of noted Oxfordians.

Warren plans to distribute printed copies of the Index, which runs 300 pages, at the Annual Shakespeare Authorship Research Conference at Concordia University in September and at the Joint SF/SOS Conference in October. He is also willing to send an electronic copy of the Index by email to anyone who would like to have one. Warren can be reached at jwarren1000@yahoo.com.

(First Folio, cont. from p. 30)

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(President, cont. from p. 3)

Following the preview of *Anonymous* during the Concordia conference in September, a number of trustees will convene to complete the work on our organizational response to the "Prince Tudor" narrative central to the plot of Emmerich's film, which represents the Earl of Oxford as Shakespeare. The final text will be posted on-line, published in *Shakespeare Matters*, and presented to the membership at our annual meeting in Washington D.C.

I look forward to the next year as a very exciting time with the publication new Oxfordian titles by Peter Dickson and Katherine Chiljan, as well as Richard Paul Roe's *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, which has already received a starred review by the *Library Journal,* which passed this verdict: "A fascinating look at a largely untouched aspect of Shakespeare's identity and influences. Recommended for Shakespeare enthusiasts and scholars as well as travelers looking for a new perspective,…." Let's take advantage of the "new perspective."

(Gaspar Ribeiro, cont. from p. 17)

[2] Richard Lester, "An Alternative Theory of the Oxford Cover-Up," *The Elizabethan Review* (1990).

[3] Michael Delahoyde, "Music, Monkeys and Publishing in de Vere's Venice," *Shakespeare Matters* (2006).

[4] Richard Paul Roe, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy: Then and Now* (Rosalie Books. 2010). To be released by Harpers in November, 2011.

[5] Ian Haste, "The Name within the Ring: Edward de Vere's 'Musical' Signature in *Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Matters* (2009).

[6] Ren Draya and Richard Whalen, eds. *Othello* (The Oxfordian Series, Lumina Press, 2010).

[7] Gary Goldstein, "Shakespeare's Little Hebrew," *The Elizabethan Review* (Spring, 1999) 70-77 (reprinted in the De Vere Society Newsletter, 2010).

[8] Shaul Bassi and Alberto Toso Fei, *Shakespeare in Venice: Exploring the City with Shylock and Othello* (Treviso: Elzeviro. 2007) 11.

[9] Brian Pullan, "The Inquisition and the Jews of Venice: The Case of Gaspare Ribeiro, 1580-81," *Bulletin of The John Rylands University Library* (1979-80), "The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670" (1983), and "Shakespeare's Shylock" in *The Jews of Italy* (2008).

[10] Bassi and Toso Fei, 162.

[11] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 88.

[12] Shapiro, 199.

[13] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (New York: Norton, 2005) 279.

[14] William Farina, *De Vere as Shakespeare* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. 2006) 60.

[15] *John Gross, Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992) 37.

[16] Brian Pullan, "Shakespeare's Shylock: Evidence from Venice" in *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity* ed. Barbara Garvin and Bernard Cooperman (University Press of Maryland, 2008) 201.

[17] Pullan, "Shakespeare's Shylock," 201. Emphasis added.

[18] Pullan, 201.

[19] Pullan, "The Inquisition and the Jews of Venice," 224.

[20] Pullan, "Shakespeare's Shylock," 198.

[21] Pullan, 199.

[22] *The Merchant of Venice, Arden Shakespeare,* ed. John Russell Brown (1955)

[23] Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550-1670* , 233.

[24] J. Gross, 64-65.

[25] Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London: Methuen, 1968) 82.

[26] Jane Freeman, "'Fair Terms and a Villain's Mind': Rhetorical Patterns in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20.2 (Spring 2002) 158.

[27] John Palmer, *Political and Comic Characters in Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1945,1974), 417.

[28] Palmer, 418.

[29] Kenneth Gross, *Shakespeare Is Shylock* (Chicago: University of Chica Press, 2006) 59.

[30] K. Gross, 62. Emphasis added.

[31] K. Gross, 68.

[32] K. Gross, 115.

[33] K. Gross, 120.

[34] Multiple on-line sources describing the characteristics of *frontotemporal*

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"One sees the limits of the so-called extended mind clearly in the mob-made Wikipedia the perfect product of that new vast super-sized cognition: when there's easy agreement, it's fine, and when there is widespread disagreement on values or facts as with, say, the origins of capitalism it's fine too; you get both sides. The trouble comes when one side is right and the other side is wrong and doesn't know it." — Adam Gopnik, *New Yorker*