



# Shakespeare Matters

“The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship”



## Watch Out: Leda Zakarison has O-philia.

[Editor’s note: Michael Delahoyde, who serves as managing editor of our academic journal, *Brief Chronicles*, and who teaches the Shakespeare course mentioned below at Washington State University, passed along this paper from one of his students. We are grateful.]

## O-philia

by Leda Zakarison

I’m one of those people who should love Shakespeare. I fit the bill perfectly for a teenage Shakespeare fanatic – I read books, speak French, and participate in class discussions. I’ve always bought into this notion, too. I liked the idea of sitting in a corner of the library, sipping fancy tea and pondering *Hamlet*. And yet, try as I might, I could never really get into Shakespeare the way I was “supposed” to. I tried every angle of Shakespeare study – I read the plays in class, watched the movies, got myself those read-along guides, even played Juliet in a class production. I could understand the plots, the things you write about in 9<sup>th</sup>-grade book reports, but Shakespeare didn’t come alive for me the

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## Shakespeare’s Medical Knowledge: Reflections from the ER

by Earl Showerman, MD

When I retired from practicing emergency medicine eight years ago, I turned my attention to the Shakespeare authorship challenge. Over the intervening years, the medical textbooks and journals in my library have been replaced by volumes of Shakespeare, Renaissance history, literary criticism, Greek and Latin classics, authorship titles, and back issues of the *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Brief Chronicles*, and *The Oxfordian*.

My medical career did not exactly prepare me for the journey ahead, although certain developed habits of mind have helped with my interpretation of Shakespeare and his critics, namely a healthy skepticism for unsupported narratives and an aversion to premature judgment. Emergency physicians are known for their willingness to make important clinical decisions rapidly, sometimes with little or no information. This requires a cultivated self-doubt, because initial impressions may be misleading. Skepticism also applies to the adoption of new, evidence-based practices based on peer-reviewed literature, combined with the empirical knowledge gained through experience and continuing education. The eminence-based practices taught by esteemed medical school professors proved, in many cases, to be misguided.

Last year I was invited to speak on my Shakespeare research to a group of emergency physicians attending a medical conference at Yosemite National Park. At the same time, I had just read about recent research by Dr. Kenneth Heaton on Shakespeare’s unique representation of psycho-physiological symptoms, such as fainting, hyperventilation, vertigo, and sensory disturbances, conditions that commonly present to the ER. Thus was my topic for the medical conference determined by serendipity.

To prepare, I reread Dr. Frank Davis’ superb *Oxfordian* article, “Shakespeare’s Medical Knowledge: How Did He Acquire It?” (2000). Dr. Davis has spoken on the importance of Shakespeare’s medical knowledge at several authorship conferences. His article is available online at the Shakespeare Oxford Society website, and clearly shows how the playwright’s impressive medical knowledge challenges the assumptions of orthodoxy.

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## From the Editor

**M**y father, Don McNeil, attended Hamilton College in the late 1920s. For his natural science course requirement, he took geology (mainly because it didn't have any labs). Recalling the course years later, he told me that his professor had mentioned the "Wegener Hypothesis," as it was then known, the new and highly controversial theory that the Earth's continents were not fixed, but drifted. A recent magazine article about Wegener reminded me of my father's college days. The organized resistance to Wegener also reminded me of the resistance to the Shakespeare Authorship Question, so I thought I'd highlight some of the parallels.

As related by Richard Conniff in "When the Earth Moved" (*Smithsonian Magazine*, June 2012), Alfred Wegener (1880-1930) was not a geologist. He was hardly even an academic; his specialties were meteorology and astronomy, and he was an unsalaried lecturer at Marburg University in Germany. In 1910, while browsing through an atlas, he noticed (as had others previously) that Brazil's east coast looked like it meshed with Africa's west coast. He cut out maps of the continents, stretched them and pasted them together, and then assembled evidence that plants and animals "on opposite sides of the oceans were often strikingly similar."

He also observed "how geological formations often dropped off on one side of an ocean and picked up on the other." Wegener concluded that, at one time, the continents had been joined together, and had separated and moved over time. He called his theory "continental displacement," and first presented it publicly in a lecture to the Frankfurt Geological Association early in 1912. A book, *The Origin of Continents and Oceans*, followed in 1915, which was published in English in 1922.

Wegener was lambasted from continent to continent. At the time, virtually all geologists were certain that the continents and oceans were permanent features of a solid Earth. German critics derided his "delirious ravings" and "moving

crust disease and wandering pole plague." English scientists blasted him for "distorting the continents to make them fit" and

**The American establishment, headed by father and son University of Chicago geologists Thomas C. and Rollin T. Chamberlin, ranted about this example of "Germanic pseudo-science" and, dismissing Wegener for not being a professional geologist, called it wrong "for a stranger to the facts he handles to generalize from them."**

for "not describing a credible mechanism powerful enough to move continents." The American establishment, headed by father and son University of Chicago geologists Thomas C. and Rollin T. Chamberlin, ranted about this example of "Germanic pseudo-science" and, dismissing Wegener for not being a professional geologist, called it wrong "for a stranger to the facts he handles to generalize from them." Somewhat prophetically, the younger Chamberlin summed things up thusly: "If we are to believe Wegener's hypothesis we must forget everything which has been learned in the last 70 years and start all over again."

Criticism died down by the end of the 1920s, not because Wegener's theories had gained any ground, but because the establishment had succeeded in marginalizing him. As Conniff writes, "Geologists largely chose to forget Alfred Wegener, except for another flurry of attacks on his

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### *Shakespeare Matters*

Published quarterly by the  
The Shakespeare Fellowship  
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Subscriptions to *Shakespeare Matters* are \$50 per year (\$25 for online issues only). Family or institution subscriptions are \$75 per year. Patrons of the Fellowship are \$100 and up. Please send subscription requests to:

**The Shakespeare Fellowship**  
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Auburndale, MA 02466

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

## Parting is such Sweet Sorrow

For the past three years, it has been my privilege to serve as president of the Shakespeare Fellowship. Our organization's achievements during this period have been noteworthy, primarily because of the efforts of our publications editors, Roger Stritmatter, Alex McNeil, Gary Goldstein and Michael Delahoyde, who have provided readers with superb, timely research, reviews, and news items for both *Shakespeare Matters* and *Brief Chronicles*. The commitment and generosity of our patrons and members has also enabled us to provide thousands of university English, history, and theater arts faculty copies of *Brief Chronicles*, arguably the best peer-reviewed publication in authorship studies today. Clearly, this has been an auspicious period of fulfilling the mission of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

The continued activism of our trustees is also remarkable. I have been most impressed by the scholarly papers and podcasts of Tom Regnier, who will succeed me as president, and Bonner Cutting, who has done an outstanding job in renewing the high school Shakespeare Authorship Essay Contest. In addition, our nominating committee has recruited new trustees who are committed patrons, researchers and educators, so I believe the Shakespeare Fellowship, our band of theater lovers, scholars and educators, will continue to gain momentum in the challenge to orthodoxy.

We are also proud of the consistent quality of the educational conferences we have cosponsored with the Shakespeare Oxford Society, now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year. Our 2012 joint conference in Pasadena will feature the screening of Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Mathias' First Folio Pictures production, *Last Will. & Testament*. Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's Controversy Films project, *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, will also be screened.

Professor A.J. Pointon, author of *The*

*Man Who Was Never SHAKESPEARE: The Theft of William Shakespeare's Identity*, will be our featured banquet speaker. Andrew Waugh, writing for the online *Wall*

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*Street Journal*, included this book among the best of 2011: "In 2010, I was convinced by James Shapiro's *Contested Will*, which argued that anti-Stratfordians were all barmy romantics. This year A.J. Pointon, in his clearly articulated counter-treatise,

*The Man Who Was Never SHAKESPEARE*, convinces me that Mr. Shapiro and his fellow Stratfordians are the ones who are really off their heads."

Professors Roger Stritmatter, Ren Draya, Helen Gordon, and Don Rubin are also scheduled to speak in Pasadena. Other presenters will include John Shahan, Chairman of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, Katherine Chiljan, author of *Shakespeare Suppressed*, and Sabrina Feldman, author of *The Apocryphal William Shakespeare*. Dr. Lance Fogan and I will speak on Shakespeare's medical knowledge, and conference organizers Bonner Cutting and John Hamill will also present papers. Jennifer Newton, creator of *The Shakespere Underground*, will demonstrate her podcast internet site, and movie reporter and film festival judge James Ulmer will present a program on the history of Shakespeare in film. The program will also include performances of music, song, and dance by Oxfordian artists Alan Green, Sylvia Holmes, and Betzi Roe.

There will be plenty of authorship books on display, and Eddy Nix, of Driftless Books and Music, has promised to bring selections from his wonderful collection of antiquarian treasures. Meeting writers, editors, and booksellers, along with other colleagues, is one of the best reasons to attend our annual joint conferences. These occasions are the high point of the year for many dedicated Oxfordians, so I encourage members who have never been to one of our educational conferences to come to Pasadena in October.

Recently I was invited by Tyrone Wilson, a company member of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, to speak on the authorship question to his Elderhostel class at Southern Oregon University. As has been my experience with other gath-

[A registration form is available on p. 32 of this issue].

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

## ***Last Will. & Testament* to Be Screened at Austin Film Festival**



On August 28 the Austin Film Festival & Conference announced that *Last Will. & Testament* was one of the first ten films selected to be screened at this year's festival, which will take place from October 18 to 25 in Austin, Texas.

Directed by Laura Wilson Matthias and Lisa Wilson, the 84-minute documentary about the Shakespeare Authorship Issue was screened at this year's Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. It won rave reviews from everyone in attendance.

Of the first ten films selected for the 2012 Austin festival, three are documentaries: besides *Last Will. & Testament*, the others are *Rising from Ashes*, about the Rwandan cycling team, and *Spinning Plates*, about three restaurants.

The Austin Film Festival & Conference was founded in 1993 specifically to focus on writers' creative contributions to film.

## **Come to the Huntington Library in October**

Some great things are in store for the attendees of the SF/SOS Joint Conference to be held in Pasadena, CA, October 18-21. The trip to the Huntington Library, scheduled from 1:00 – 2:00 on Thursday afternoon, October 18th, is not to be missed! The Huntington is one of the most prestigious research libraries in the world. Please join us for this special tour, and be sure to arrive at the conference in plenty of time to register and get to the Huntington on Thursday afternoon!

The staff of the Huntington will put on display a dozen or so rare books from the Huntington's collection, a collection described as "nothing short of extraordinary." Of course, the books chosen for presentation will be significant in Shakespeare studies and relevant in the authorship question.

The Huntington Library, a private, non-profit institution, was founded in 1919 by Henry E. Huntington. It is often dubbed "the library of last resort," with over six million books and manuscripts stored in its archives. Qualified scholars come from around the world to conduct advanced research in fields of specialization. Although the library itself is not open to the public at large, its treasures — such as the Ellesmere manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a Gutenberg Bible, and early editions of Shakespeare's quartos — are sometimes exhibited.

The time at the Huntington Library on Thursday afternoon will be much too short, and attendees may want to return either before or after the conference to tour the Botanical Gardens and the Huntington Art Gallery.

## **Site of Curtain Theatre Rediscovered**

It was widely reported in the news media in June that the location of the historic Curtain Theatre in London had been rediscovered. While preparing a site for redevelopment in October 2011, a construction crew unearthed some foundation walls and called in the Museum of London Archeology (MoLA). The MoLA team quickly established to its satisfaction that it had indeed found what remains of the Curtain Theatre.

The Curtain was built in 1577. The Curtain and the Theatre (built a year earlier) are believed to be the first two buildings built in London for the specific purpose of presenting plays. The Curtain was dismantled by 1628, and its exact location became lost. The site is on what is now known as Hewett Street in the Shoreditch area of East London, only a short distance from the site of the Theatre.

So far, the MoLA team has found parts of the gravel-lined

*(Continued on page 6)*

## The Pasadena Shakespeare Authorship Conference October 18-21, 2012



**The Huntington Library: One of the Exciting Features of this Year's Annual SF-SOS Joint Conference.**

The eighth annual joint authorship conference of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society will convene in Pasadena, California, October 18-21, 2012, at the Courtyard Pasadena Old Town by Marriott. For special conference room rates, call 888-236-2427 or reserve rooms on line at: <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/laxot-courtyard-los-angeles-pasadena-old-town/>. Please complete the registration form on p. 32 to let us know that you are coming.

Our 2012 program will feature the screening of two recently released Shakespeare authorship documentaries. Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias are 20-year veterans of the Shakespeare authorship challenge. Their First Folio Pictures' *Last Will. & Testament* documents the life of Edward de Vere, and makes an artistically and intellectually compelling case for Oxford's authorship of the works of Shakespeare. Shot in numerous locations in the US, UK and Germany, and five years in the making, the film provides as a factual complement to Roland Emmerich's feature

film, *Anonymous*. The filmmakers will participate in a panel discussion and share outtakes from their production.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's Controversy Films project, *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, is based on Mark Anderson's book, *Shakespeare By Another Name*. Filmed on location in Venice, Padua, Brenta, Mantua, and Verona, the project retraces Edward de Vere's Italian journey and visiting the sites of the Shakespeare plays set in Italy.

A. J. (Tony) Pointon, author of *The Man Who Was Never SHAKESPEARE: The Theft of William Shakespeare's Identity*, will be our featured banquet speaker. Professor Pointon is the former Director of Research at the University of Portsmouth, and is the founder and National Secretary of a union of lecturers in higher education.

Other speakers include Professors Roger Stritmatter, Ren Draya and Don Rubin, as well as John Shahan, Katherine Chiljan, Bonner Cutting, John Hamill, Helen Gordon, Lance Fogan, Jennifer Newton, Sabrina Feldman and Earl

Showerman. The program will also include music, song, and dance performances by artists Alan Green, Sylvia Holmes, and Betzi Roe.

Please join us also for the special Thursday afternoon Huntington Tour, and be sure to arrive at the conference in plenty of time to register and get to the Huntington.

Information on the conference program, registration, theatrical productions, and special events during the conference will be posted periodically on the Shakespeare Fellowship and Shakespeare Oxford Society websites. During the joint conference, the Pasadena theater company, A Noise Within, will be producing George Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and the Long Beach Shakespeare Company will produce *Hamlet*.

The conference will convene at 1:00 PM on October 18 and adjourn at 2:00 PM on October 21. The annual meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Society will be on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and the Shakespeare Fellowship annual meeting will be on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

[A registration form is available in this issue, p. 32].

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yard, where spectators would have gathered, and some foundation walls. Few small artifacts have been found, other than bits of clay pipes; in contrast, the excavation of the Rose some years ago unearthed hundreds of small items. The archeologists

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**To non-Stratfordians, it was interesting also to see the media reporting as fact which Shakespeare plays were performed or had their premieres at the Curtain. Most outlets recited, of course, that *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V* were first seen there. It was also interesting to see the reports of Will Shakspeare's own appearances on that very stage. The *Economist* dutifully reported that "the Bard himself performed there in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*," while the web site archeology.co.uk went even further, stating that Shakspeare trod the Curtain's boards, "with a playlist recording his appearance as Kno'well" in the Jonson play.**



expressed hope in being able to locate the actual stage area, however.

The Curtain is of particular interest to the Shakespeare world because "Shakespeare's" acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, used it for about two years between 1597 and 1599. According

to tradition, James Burbage, who had built the Theatre, dismantled it quickly and began plans to erect the Globe Theatre across the Thames. While the Globe was being built, the Lord Chamberlain's Men used the Curtain as their stage.

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#### **A Biblical Source for "Ignoto"?**

Many of us agree with J. Thomas Looney that "Ignoto" was one of Edward de Vere's pen names. It seems likely to me that he borrowed it from the Latin Vulgate translation of Acts 17:23. This verse contains St. Paul's description of coming across an altar "unto the unknown god" in Athens. Here's the verse in the Geneva translation: "For as I passed by, & behelde your devocions, I founde an altar wherein was written, UNTO THE UNKNOWNEN GOD, Whome ye then ignorantly worship, him shewe I unto you." In Latin, "unknown god" is "Ignoto deo."

So de Vere is identifying himself with that unknown god-- rebranded by St. Paul as the Judeo-Christian God-- in his pseudonym Ignoto. There is the additional hint that de Vere hoped, in choosing "Ignoto" as a pen name, that he too-- like the "unknown god"-- would one day be correctly identified by some latter-day St. Paul, such as Looney himself.

But there is more! I had noticed that Acts 17:28 (that is, five verses below the one I just quoted) reads "For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as also certeine of your own Poetes have said, For we are also his generacion." A

Genevan marginal note offers this gloss on "Poetes"-- "As Aratus and others." The italicized phrase is the fifth line of the poem "Phaenomena," by Aratus. This illustrates, by the way, the quality of the scholarship of the Geneva Bible printed marginal notes. (Aratus was a popular Greek poet of the third century BCE.)

Is it common for secular poets to be quoted in the New Testament? I posed that question to Professor Bart Ehrman, a leading New Testament scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He said Acts 17:28 is the only such instance of which he is aware.

Here's one more thing that may be significant about Acts 17:28-- based on my concordance, I just discovered that it is the only occurrence of the word "Poet/s" in the Geneva Bible. This may be yet another reason that de Vere, fond as he was of his Geneva Bible, decided to borrow Ignoto as one of his pen names.

— Richard Waugaman

#### **Controversy Films Launches Indie Go Go Campaign**

Controversy Films director Cheryl Eagan-Donovan just launched a new Indie Go Go campaign for finishing funds to bring *Nothing is Truer than Truth* to festivals, art house theaters, colleges, and television audiences around the world. The film is currently in post-production and scheduled for release later this year.

The production team at Controversy Films is working around the clock to finish editing for the special preview rough cut screening at the Shakespeare Fellowship SOS Joint conference in Pasadena on Saturday, October 20th. Editor Trina Rodriguez is an accomplished producer, whose most recent film *High Tech Low Life* premiered at The Tribeca Film Festival in April and has gone on to win several awards. For that project, Trina and *Nothing is Truer than Truth* co-producer Steve Maing edited more than 600 hours of footage down to a compelling 85 minute film that will screen on PBS next year. Trina is a graduate of The New School's Documentary Studies program. Her short film *Our Lady Queen of*



**A Reconstructed view of Castle Hedingham as it once looked.**

*Harlem* screened at MoMA's Documentary Fortnight and is being distributed by Third World Newsreel. She works as a freelance editor and producer in New York City.

*Nothing is Truer than Truth* focuses on the fourteen-month period when Edward de Vere escaped the confines of life at Elizabeth's Court and traveled the Continent from his home base in Venice, gathering the material for the great canon that would become known as the works of Shakespeare. The film provides a behind-the-scenes look at the cities and landmarks referenced in the Shakespeare plays and visited by Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, during his continental tour in 1575-76.

To view the film trailer and excerpts, follow the project, and contribute, go to: [www.indiegogo.com/Nothing is Truer Than Truth](http://www.indiegogo.com/Nothing_is_Trueer_Than_Truth).

### **On the Trail of Edward de Vere**

Next summer, Oxfordians will have the unique opportunity to make a pilgrimage to England to visit several sites connected to Edward de Vere. With the gracious help of Bonner Miller Cutting (whose mother's work in progress, *Oxfordian Odyssey*, served as the template), American Oxfordian Ann Zakelj approached London-based Pax Travel with the idea. Philip Dean, Pax's owner-manager, enthusiastically accepted the challenge and has fashioned an itinerary which will delight the most ardent of Oxford's fans. Information on the basic eight-day tour, along with info on an optional four-day add-on, is available on the Facebook page "On the Trail of Edward de Vere" and on Pax Travel's web site: <http://www.paxtravel.co.uk/>.

Highlights of the June 18-25, 2013,

basic tour include: London, Tilbury Juxta Clare, Castle Hedingham, Great Canfield Castle, Hill Hall at Theydon Mount, Hatfield House, Lavenham, Wyvenhoe, Colchester, Cambridge and Earls Colne. The June 25-28 add-on venues include: Burleigh House, Bosworth Field, the Cotswolds, Salisbury and Hampton Court.

Cost for the basic tour (excluding airfare and based on double occupancy) is approximately \$1,500 US for the basic tour and about \$890 for the add-on.

Zakelj reports that feedback from Facebook Oxfordians has been very positive. Please consider joining the "happy few" who have already expressed an avid interest in following in the footsteps of Edward de Vere! For more information, contact Ann Zakelj at [ankaaz@aol.com](mailto:ankaaz@aol.com).

# Shakespeare and the Occult: A Path to Edward De Vere

by Howard Schumann

According to the scientific/materialist paradigm of our time, the only true reality is the one we can detect with our five senses. Believers and practitioners of the occult are usually dismissed as heretics, blasphemers aligned with the devil, or just simply crackpots. In the Elizabethan era, however, belief in the occult was virtually universal. The Renaissance era saw the emergence of new ideas and a deep curiosity about anything mystical. It was the age of Nostradamus, when the Renaissance fusion of Christianity and Hermetic Philosophy (a set of beliefs based primarily upon the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus) was accompanied by a strong belief in magic, astrology and alchemy.<sup>1</sup>

References to the occult pervade the works of many writers of the time, including William Shakespeare. While the plays are filled with occult references, there is no evidence that William Shakespeare of Stratford was ever involved with such practices or had ever read about the subject. On the other hand, there is considerable evidence that Edward De Vere was a patron of the well-known occultist and philosopher Dr. John Dee and was himself a practitioner of the occult arts.

Much of the content and story lines in Shakespeare's plays involve supernatural themes. According to Martin Ebon in *They Knew the Unknown*, "Shakespeare gave dramatic form to the dreams, legends, claims and counterclaims of supernatural derring-do that abounded during his lifetime,"<sup>2</sup> and many of the ideas of the Rosicrucians and Freemasons are reflected in his plays and poetry. While it is clear that Shakespeare respected the supernatural, according to Ebon, "that does not stop modern critics from rationalizing Shakespeare's beliefs as damaging to the proper appreciation of the plays." Ebon takes the opposite view, asserting that "Only by accepting the psychic content of the plays are we free to enjoy them in the spirit in which they are written."<sup>3</sup>

Ebon notes that Shakespeare had certainly studied the witchcraft literature, probably including a book that stands out for its objective criticism of irrational witch hunters, Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Edinburgh, 1584).<sup>4</sup> Scot's work was intended not only as a sensible argument disputing the existence of witches, but also as a reaction to and a protest against the increasing persecution of innocents by a superstitious clergy. Scot's book was the first major effort to denounce the ringleaders behind the witch hunts, and the first book in English to actually discuss the alleged methods of witchcraft.

Astrology fascinated many prominent Elizabethans, including Queen Elizabeth I, who relied on John Dee, the greatest astrologer of the era, together with his associate and skryer Edward Kelley. Shakespeare makes over one hundred references to astrology in the plays, and many events in them are said to be favored or hindered by the stars.<sup>5</sup>

In *The Psychic World of William Shakespeare*, Sherman

Yellen asserts that Shakespeare "believed in prophecy, witchcraft, astrology, magic and ghosts," and credits him for originating research into psychic phenomena: "In Shakespeare," he says, "England may be said to locate its first psychic researcher."<sup>6</sup> Yellen says that Shakespeare "respected the supernatural in a manner unlike that of his contemporaries," so that "the dignity with which he regarded the psychic raises it above the level of superstition at all times." He also observes that Shakespeare's ghosts show similarity to those which were reported to psychic

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research societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--those seen by one person only and who share characteristics that cross both national and historical boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

This may be one reason, he suggests, for the universal appreciation for Shakespeare, whose work "derives from the common heritage of ghost-lore which makes the plays immediately understandable to all people at all times." In his article in the *Occult Review*, "Shakespeare and the Occult,"<sup>8</sup> C. Sheridan Jones notes that Shakespeare's plays are unintelligible without insight into occult thinking. He points out that many of them abound with excursions into the realm of the supernatural, including



ghosts, witches and sprites, yet questions must be asked as to Shakespeare's attitude toward the occult. Were the ghosts, witches, and fairies merely stage devices used to heighten the dramatic effect, or did they provide a significant clue to the poet's beliefs? To answer that question, we must take a closer look at the plays.

### The Occult in the Plays

In Shakespeare's plays, magic draws upon the supernatural elements of the mythic and fairy world, but it is also a simpler, more natural force-- the magical power of love, the magical beauty of the morning dew, the magical effects of poetry and art. *Richard III* invokes dark forces of the supernatural while *A Midsummer*

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***A Midsummer Night's Dream* uses theatrical magic to create a mysterious, mystical atmosphere. Shakespeare populates the woods outside of Athens with mischievous good-hearted fairies, who mistakenly create unnecessary conflict, but then make amends. Shakespeare uses magic to confuse the characters, and then to resolve their bewilderment. Each character experiences the magic differently. Bottom finds his wondrous dreams to be magical, while the lovers, arguably the most impacted by magic, remember it only as a bad dream.**

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*Night's Dream* employs them in a light comedy. Villains or misguided men ignore the supernatural at their peril, as does Edmund in *King Lear*, Iago in *Othello*, and Cassius in *Julius Caesar*. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, an entire scene (V.1) is devoted to revealing the Rosicrucian connection to those initiates in possession of the keys. It closes with a remark addressed to Goodman Dull, a representative of the unperceiving multitude, that during the entire scene he has not spoken a word. "No," comes his response, "nor understood none neither."<sup>9</sup>

The plays also contain numerous clues to Shakespeare's ideas. Take, for example, in *As You Like It*, the famous phrase, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts" (II. 7). The playwright seems to be saying that the roles we play are an essential part of life, but not who we really are. He implies that life has no intrinsic meaning beyond our ability to create it.

### Hamlet

In *Hamlet*, the ghost of Hamlet's father haunts the castle. He tells Hamlet that he was poisoned by his brother, Claudius, as he slept in his orchard. The ghost makes the demand for revenge of his "foul and most unnatural murder." Though the ghost is the only supernatural element in the play, he plays a pivotal role in the motivation of the protagonist. Hamlet agonizes, wavering between his desire to believe that the spirit is really his father and the need to test the ghost's story against the worldly realities and reason (I.5). Thus he uses the "play within a play" to catch the conscience of the king. This works dramatically, according to Ebon, so that "doubts of the supernatural are overcome, and in the end we know that the assertions of the ghost are correct."<sup>10</sup> Hamlet justifies his trust in his father's ghost by explaining to his best friend Horatio, who is still a graduate student, that "there are more things in heaven and earth ... /Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

### A Midsummer Night's Dream

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* uses theatrical magic to create a mysterious, mystical atmosphere. Shakespeare populates the woods outside of Athens with mischievous good-hearted fairies, who mistakenly create unnecessary conflict, but then make amends. Shakespeare uses magic to confuse the characters, and then to resolve their bewilderment. Each character experiences the magic differently. Bottom finds his wondrous dreams to be magical, while the lovers, arguably the most impacted by magic, remember it only as a bad dream. Here, Shakespeare suggests that the world of the magical fairies is not separate from the natural world, but a part of it. Animal spirits interact with human characters. In Act II, scene 2, Puck invokes a charm to protect the sleeping Titania from tiny creatures common in England, all harmless, though considered repugnant. His incantation creates a spell to protect her from some woodland pests:

Weaving spiders, come not here;  
Hence, you longlegged spinners, hence!  
Beetles black approach not near;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

The spider's connections with creation and illusion are ancient and myriad; the Greeks saw the spider as feminine and associated her with the Fates. Indians associated her with Maya, the weaver of illusion. Scandinavians associated her with the Norns, the women who wove the threads of life, and Native Americans believed that the Spider wove the first alphabet. Some Native American tribes believed the spider was the weaver who created the world, seeing her as a symbol of creative female energy.<sup>11</sup>

The play displays the author's knowledge of Greek mythology through characters such as Theseus and Hippolyta. Theseus, the duke of Athens, was the mythical founder-king of Athens, and his bride Hippolyta, in Greek mythology, was an Amazonian queen.

(Continued on p. 10)

(*Shakespeare and the Occult, cont. from p. 9*)

She owned a waist belt that signified her authority as queen of the Amazons. It had been given to her by her father, Ares, the god of war. Two other characters, Oberon and Titania, resemble the Greek gods Zeus and Hera. The mischievous Puck can be compared to Eros, the Greek god of sexual love and beauty, whose golden arrows affect human emotions, as does the flower that Puck puts on characters' eyes.

*Midsummer* owes a large debt to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which was translated into English by Arthur Golding, the uncle of Edward de Vere. Golding served as Edward's Latin tutor, companion, and adviser for some time after the twelve-year-old peer became a royal ward in the household of William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's trusted advisor. Just as Ovid made use of a story within a story, Shakespeare uses the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe as a play within a play for entertainment at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. Jeremy McNamara says the fairies are modernized gods: "Like Ovid's gods, Shakespeare's fairies are menacing and powerful, with a control over nature and men, even if here they are ultimately more benign."<sup>12</sup>

One early 20th century delineator of classical mythology, Robert Kilburn Root, says that the whole character of Shakespeare's mythology is essentially Ovidian and that "Shakespeare himself has shown that he was proud to be Ovid's successful ape."<sup>13</sup> *Metamorphosis*, a theme central to Ovid, is clearly represented by Bottom's transformation into an ass. "Man is but an ass if he go about t'expound this dream," Bottom says, unable to fathom the magical happenings that have affected him as anything but a dream.

Shakespeare is also interested in the mysterious workings of dreams, in which events occur without explanation, time loses its normal sense of flow, and the impossible occurs as a matter of course; he seeks to recreate this environment in the play through the intervention of the fairies in the magical forest. Hippolyta's first words in the play set forth the dreamlike theme: "Four days will quickly steep themselves in night, / Four nights will quickly dream away the time." Various characters mention dreams throughout. At the end of the play, Puck extends the idea of dreams to the audience members themselves, saying that, if they have been offended by the play, they should remember it as nothing more than a dream.

### *Macbeth*

Brian Levack of the University of Texas recognizes the dramatic potential of occult imagery: "Ever since classical antiquity, dramatists have used the theme of witchcraft in their literary works. The human exercise of mysterious or supernatural evil has always appealed to audiences and offers the dramatist numerous possibilities for character and plot development."<sup>14</sup> Whether "evil witches" and witchcraft had any objective validity, or were simply social constructs, they were part of the Elizabethan culture, and Shakespeare's audiences were certain of their existence.

*Macbeth* is filled with references to the supernatural: witches, visions, dreams, ghosts, sleepwalking, and possibly telepathy.

Though earlier plays such as *Richard III* also reflect the dark side of the supernatural, *Macbeth* is generally considered the darkest of Shakespeare's plays. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare turned from the genial depiction of the supernatural in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to a growing recognition of the hidden evil in men. However, the "wyrd" sisters might not be as sinister as they seem. Though modern translations refer to them as the "weird" sisters, meaning odd and strange, the original meaning of the word "wyrd" or "weyard" was simply "those who control fate."

The play opens with thunder and lighting, which establishes

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the mood of darkness is, but quickly proceeds to what author Richard Whalen has called "a bitter burlesque of witchcraft," which alternates between the traditional view of witchcraft as prophecy, and of a witchcraft of dancing and playfulness. Some film versions of the opening scene, unfortunately, omit the playfulness and depict only ugly creatures of malign intentions. Although Shakespeare's tragedy does not include any description of the witches, their portrayals in the 16<sup>th</sup> century would most likely have reflected the prevailing attitude of the time.

The witches plan their next meeting and agree to meet Macbeth upon the heath "When the battle's lost and won." They depart, mysteriously chanting, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," which is a major theme of the play. They are saying good is bad and dark is light, which is part of the confusion that causes Macbeth's downfall. Banquo says, "What are these / So withered, and so wild in their attire, / That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth / And yet are on 't?" (I.3).

Gender stereotypes also come into play. Lady Macbeth's assumption of the presumed male qualities of aggressiveness, ambition, and cruelty leads her to madness. The witches can be seen as androgynous villains, leading the gullible Macbeth astray through his manly hubris. The witches' words are ambiguous. Macbeth construes their meaning to suit himself, perhaps being unconsciously motivated to follow his deepest desires, however evil they may be.

Shakespeare's work shows a profound understanding of human nature, which he reveals in part by having his characters motivated by their beliefs in the supernatural. Psychiatrist and author Dr. Jan Ehrenwald posits in the *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*<sup>15</sup> that "the witches grasped Macbeth's repressed wish by telepathy, so their prophecy is a reflection of his own secret hopes and ambitions, of his own unformulated sinister designs. . . although the answer is dressed up in the garment of prophecy." According to Ehrenwald, this scene was "a classical instance of telepathy, such as had occurred in innumerable instances in legend and history."

To me, however, Ehrenwald's interpretation seems dubious, considering the witches' later prophecies in Act IV, scene 1. In my view, despite Macbeth's attempt to prevent the realization of the witches' supernatural predictions, he came to accept them as fated or predestined to occur, not as wish fulfillment. At the banquet in Macbeth's castle, Macbeth is haunted by the ghost of Banquo, which is invisible to the other guests. Shortly following Macbeth's change and the banquet scene, Hecate,<sup>16</sup> a Greco-Roman goddess associated with magic and evil powers, appears and plans to meet the witches again so they can deceive Macbeth further. With her great wisdom and powerful occult magic, she intends

By magical sleights,  
Shall raise such artificial sprites  
As by the strength of their illusion  
Shall draw him on to his confusion  
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes'bove wisdom, grace, and fear:  
And you all know security  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.  
(III.5)

The most famous witch scene is, of course, Act IV, scene 1, the "Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble" scene, where the three witches obtain the approval of Hecate. From here on, Macbeth and his wife are stricken with insomnia and extreme paranoia. Meanwhile, the dark elements

guiding Macbeth celebrate their victory. He believes the witches' prophecies and plans to fulfill the rest of their predictions even if he must influence the outcome himself. This also shows the beginning of the confusion that plagues Macbeth throughout the play. In referring to the words "mortals," it is now clear that Hecate and the other three witches are supernatural forces or demigods working under the powers of darkness.

### Owl Symbolism in *Macbeth*

The owl symbolizes dark forces. Before Duncan's assassination, animals such as the owl and the falcon emerge from the

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night and act "unnatural even like the deed that's done" (II.4). In Act II, scene 2, Lady Macbeth waits anxiously for Macbeth to return from killing Duncan, the King of Scotland. She interprets the symbol for us: "It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman, which gives the stern'st good-night." The owl is a bellman because, according to superstition, the hoot of the owl portends death; thus, when owls scream and crickets cry, it portends evil and ominous doings.

In Greek mythology, Athene, the goddess of wisdom, honored the owl by making him her favorite night creature (*Athene noctua*). As her symbol, the Owl was a protector, accompanying Greek armies to war, and providing ornamental inspiration for their daily lives. If an owl flew over Greek soldiers before a battle, they took it as an omen signifying victory. The owl was also deeply connected with magic and shamanism in ancient Greece.

(Shakespeare and the Occult, cont. from p. 11)

### The Tempest

*The Tempest* is set on a remote island, most likely in the Mediterranean between Italy and Africa. Living on the island are Prospero, a sorcerer, the monster Caliban, the young prince Ferdinand, and Miranda, a beautiful young lady, as well as mythological deities, including Ceres, goddess of agriculture, Iris, goddess of the rainbow, and Juno, queen of the gods. Ariel is a “spirit of the air” who once served a witch, Sycorax, but now serves Prospero.

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**Those who marvel at the vast erudition shown in the works of William Shakespeare can find a ready explanation in the life of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, who is presumed by many modern Shakespeare lovers as the man who used the pen name of “William Shakespeare.” In contrast to the Stratford resident with a similar name, Oxford had access to many private libraries. His connections with the secret societies of Rosicrucians and Freemasons also enabled him to interact with the finest minds in England – astrologers, physicians, alchemists, poets, and dramatists—in meetings where freedom of speech and freedom of religion were guaranteed by the sworn oaths of the initiates.**

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By using the occult powers derived from his books, the magician Prospero has rescued Ariel from a spell imposed by Sycorax and is eager to remind him of the favor.

Prospero calls on Ariel to use his magic powers to protect him from enemies making plots against his life, and to create the storm in Act I. Ariel’s power allows him to change his appearance and travel instantly to any part of the island. These powers help Prospero bring to the island the men that he has harbored a grievance against for twelve years. Although he seeks revenge initially,

Prospero’s salvation is his transformation from a flawed revenge seeker to a healer, one who has learned to use his power to benefit others. According to Helen Heightsman Gordon, “Prospero represents the possibilities that a future humanity can become more compassionate through a sort of Rosicrucian enlightenment.”<sup>17</sup>

Author Charles Beauclerk analyzes philosophically, “Prospero/Shakespeare is the literary champion of the occult Neoplatonists, a magus transformed from a warrior prince to a seer, the personification of the idea that the cosmos is the self-expression of the soul.”<sup>18</sup> Sherman Yellen comes to the conclusion that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare’s “final reconciliation with the supernatural,” whereby “the ultimate act of magic is the renunciation of magic.”<sup>19</sup> Renouncing his powers, he is able to discover who he really is and connect with his true self.

The famous line, “We are such stuff that dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep” (IV.1), seems to be asking as Poe did many years later, “Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream?”<sup>20</sup> or is life an illusion from which we wake up into a truer reality? “According to all mysticism, occultism and ancient authentic religions, we are gods lying on a log beside a stream in heaven, resting and dreaming this dream of life. And when we awake, we’ll have realized that life was but a dream.”<sup>21</sup>

### The Resources Available to Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford

Those who marvel at the vast erudition shown in the works of William Shakespeare can find a ready explanation in the life of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, who is presumed by many modern Shakespeare lovers as the man who used the pen name of “William Shakespeare.” In contrast to the Stratford resident with a similar name, Oxford had access to many private libraries. His connections with the secret societies of Rosicrucians and Freemasons also enabled him to interact with the finest minds in England – astrologers, physicians, alchemists, poets, and dramatists—in meetings where freedom of speech and freedom of religion were guaranteed by the sworn oaths of the initiates. Rosicrucians at that time were keenly interested in scientific investigation unhampered by religious dogma, including occult subjects such as alchemy and attempts to communicate with the dead.

### John Dee

John Dee<sup>22</sup> was an English mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, occultist, navigator and consultant to Queen Elizabeth. He collected the largest library in England and one of the best in Europe, particularly on scientific and philosophical subjects. He was a prime instigator of the Hermetic revolution in the arts. Many Shakespeare scholars have speculated that the character of Prospero is based on Dee, who, like Prospero, also believed that matter is only an illusion.

Dee devoted much of his life to the study of alchemy, divination, and Hermetic philosophy, making a notable effort to communicate with angels, to learn the universal language of creation, and bring about the unity of all mankind. Beginning in the early 1580s, Dee, along with his “scryer” or clairvoyant Edward Kelley,<sup>23</sup>

conducted a series of experiments in communications with angelic intelligences.

Dee's work, particularly his *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564),<sup>24</sup> had a major influence on Rosicrucian philosophy, and the Rosicrucian text *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* is clearly echoed in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>25</sup> During her entire reign Elizabeth repeatedly sought Dee's advice and accepted him as an occult teacher. He says, for instance, that he revealed to her the sacred mysteries of his *Hieroglyphic Monad*. The Queen is known to have sought his good "intelligence"; based on the horoscope he cast for her, she selected January 15, 1559, as the day of her coronation. Dee's position on the Elizabethan espionage ladder is very near the top, and appropriately, he is nearly invisible except in his own writing.

In *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, the same collection that includes Kelley's poem "Concerning the Philosopher's Stone," we find an important clue. Ashmole's commentary on Dee's and Kelley's continental adventures contains a description of Kelley's transmutation, performed to "gratify Master Edward Garland and his Brother Francis." The Garland name appears in the same collection of Danish documents that contains the original of Kelley's poem and both brothers turn up in Dee's diary; indeed Dee refers to several "Garland" brothers — Francis, Edward and Robert — and a fourth "Garland," Henry, who seems to have been a relative or another member of the brotherhood.

None have ever been positively identified. No extant archival records show payments or letters to or from any of these men, yet Dee clearly presents them as being courtiers. In fact, all of the references to a "Garland" connected to John Dee or Edward Kelley have as their source the writings of John Dee. Could *Francis, Edward, and Robert* refer to Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere, and perhaps Robert Dudley? Could *Henry* be Henry Wriothesley, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton? Inasmuch as members of the Rosicrucian and Masonic societies called each other "brother" or "brethren," it is tempting to assume that all the "Garlands" were members of those secret societies in which new ideas could

be freely discussed without retribution or fear of persecution.

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in the magazine *Atlantis Rising* (May/June 2009). That agreement, however, "raises the vexing question of the issue of Shakespeare's identity; and, while it doesn't prove that the Bard was really someone else (Bacon, or de Vere or even Marlowe), it does suggest that [the author of the Shakespeare canon] had some kind of secret life, one that brought him into contact with a mentor

who could provide him with sources from Holinshead to Agrippa. If we follow the trail of Shakespeare's esoteric themes and their sources, we come to the conclusion that only one library, one knowledgeable teacher, could have provided the necessary range of subjects: that of Dr. John Dee."<sup>26</sup>

### Dee and Oxford

One of the key arguments made by supporters of Francis Bacon's candidacy for the authorship of Shakespeare's works is that he was a student of the occult. Bacon supporter Richard Dawkins says Shakespeare shows knowledge of ancient mystery schools: "The worlds of Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Cabalistic and Christian philosophy are represented in the plays and the nature and working of the gods, goddesses and spirits are based on esoteric principles taught in these various Mysteries." Bacon was known to be a Rosicrucian, and certainly he had the intellect and education to qualify him, although his scientific writings do not show the wit and playfulness that characterize Shakespeare's works.

What is not acknowledged, however, is that Edward de Vere has equal, if not more compelling, qualifications. Oxford's biographer Bernard M. Ward states: "In 1570, Oxford, according to several reports, became interested in occultism, and studied magic and conjuring, having made the acquaintance of the mathematician and astrologer John Dee that winter, who he wrote 'favourable letters' to. The letters have not survived, and are only known through Dee's reference to them in a book published in 1590."<sup>27</sup> Alan H. Nelson acknowledges that "Dee knew Edward de Vere! It's contained in a letter written by Dee in 1590." Nelson also acknowledges that "de Vere was deeply involved in the occult around 1570 [when he was 20 years old]." <sup>28</sup> William Farina, in *De Vere as Shakespeare*, describes Oxford as being a patron of John Dee.<sup>29</sup>

But did Dee know the Stratford resident with the similar name? Scholar Joy Hancox, as cited by Bridges and Burns, concluded that Dee was the most likely channel for the sophisticated geometry

(Continued on p. 14)

(*Shakespeare and the Occult*,  
cont. from p. 13)

of the original Elizabethan theaters. She ponders the lack of connection: “we can place Dee and Shakespeare roughly in the same milieu, that of the Burbage’s and the Globe Theatre. However, even though Dee was in London during Shakespeare’s meteoric rise to fame in the early 1590s, and kept many journals and diaries of visitors and events, there is no mention of the name Shakespeare. If Dee knew Shakespeare,

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then he knew him under another name and from very different circumstances.”<sup>30</sup>

#### **Shakespeare, the Rosicrucians, and the Freemasons**

Modern Rosicrucians claim that: “No one familiar with esoteric doctrines can have any question as to Shakespeare’s familiarity with the wisdom of the Illuminati.”<sup>31</sup> Shakespearean scholar Teresa Burns in her article, “Francis Garland, William Shakespeare, and John Dee’s Green Language,” asserts emphatically, “we cannot properly understand the Shakespearean corpus without reading the works as initiatory texts whose mythical and po-

litical allusions carry automatic references to the Kabala, precessional astronomy, geomancy, and sacred geometry.”<sup>32</sup>

Helen Heightsman Gordon in *The Rose+Croix Journal*,<sup>33</sup> summarizes Rosicrucian historians’ observations of Shakespeare: “Historians such as Frances Yates, Manly P. Hall, and Arthur Waite have detected in Shakespeare’s works an underlying optimism and faith revealing the influence of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry.” Drawing upon the work of Frances Yates, Gordon goes on to say that “These philosophical movements were spreading throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, although public manifestos were not issued until the eighteenth century. I believe Shakespeare participated in both groups, interacting with the finest minds in England, such as the astrologer-magician Dr. John Dee, the poet Edmund Spenser and the scientist-philosopher Francis Bacon. These stimulating contacts shaped Oxford’s humanistic views and therefore gave birth to the wisdom so apparent in Shakespeare’s works.” An ardent Baconian, W. F. C. Wigston called the Bard “phantom Captain Shakespeare, the Rosicrucian mask.”<sup>34</sup>

As for Shakespeare’s connection to Freemasonry, one of the lines from the printed Masonic Fellow Craft ritual states, “We are all traveling upon the level of time to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.”<sup>35</sup> Compare this with Hamlet’s soliloquy: “that the dread of something after death, the undiscover’d country, from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will” (III.1). The similarity indicates a connection between Shakespeare and Freemasonry. Freemasonry is older by far, but not all of its historical records are extant.

In his works, Shakespeare used Rosicrucian and Freemason imagery as symbols that were probably intended as clues to reveal his true identity. In *Macbeth*, we are introduced to three witches who utter the words “fair is foul, foul is fair.” Author James Shelby Downward<sup>36</sup> has pointed out that this is a well known principle of alchemy -- that just as lead can be transformed into gold, the reverse can also occur. The ostensibly noble Macbeth and his wife can be transformed into serial

murderers by greed and ambition.

Perhaps the most intriguing parallel between Shakespeare’s work and Freemason ritual deals with death and resurrection—the murders of Hiram Abiff in Masonic ritual and Banquo in *Macbeth*. (In Masonic ritual, Hiram Abiff is not a worker of brass as in Scripture, but rather the Grand Master at the building of Solomon’s temple who was murdered, buried, and resurrected.) In *Macbeth*,

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when Macbeth hires a pair of assassins to exterminate Banquo and Fleance, this pair mysteriously transforms into a trio. To the uninitiated this might seem like a discrepancy. However, after all the evidence presented so far, it becomes apparent that Shakespeare is purposely waving a red flag in order to attract the audience’s attention to this “irrelevant” detail.

Both the number three and the concept of alchemy play an integral role in the story of Macbeth’s downfall. The relevance of the number three can be inferred from its recurrence in Masonic ritual, for example,

three original Grand Masters, three assassins, and a total of thirty-three degrees in the Masonic hierarchy. In *Macbeth*, three knocks are continually repeated until the porter allows entrance to Macduff, the future murderer of Macbeth (II.3). The number three appears again in relation to Hecate's appearance in Act III, scene 5.

In classical mythology, Hecate has three roles, some infernal, some divine. She is Diana on Earth, Luna in Heaven, and Hecate in Hell. The melding of the positive and the negative are common elements of both alchemy and the Masonic Brotherhood, as Grand Commander Albert Pike has written, "Man is a free agent, though Omnipotence is above and all around him. To be free to do good, he must be free to do evil. The Light necessitates the Shadow,"<sup>37</sup>

Other examples from the plays include (note that the Plumb, Square, and Level are working tools of a Fellow Craft Mason):

-- Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring  
(*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, V.5)

-- Is there no young squarer that will make a Voyage with him....?  
(*Much Ado about Nothing*, I.1)

-- I have not kept my square, but that to come shall all be done by Rule.  
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.1)

--They never meet, but they do square.  
(*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.1)

--I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock, Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry  
(*All's Well that Ends Well*, II.1)

--Doth any name particular belong/Unto the lodging where I first did swoon? 'Tis call'd Jerusalem, my noble lord.  
(*2 Henry IV*, IV.5)

--And he that speaks doth gripe the hearer's wrist, Whilst he that hears makes fearful action.  
(*The Tempest*, IV.1)

--What! My old Worshipful Master!  
(*The Taming of the Shrew*, V.1)

-- If circumstances lead me, I will find/ Where truth is hid, though it

were hid indeed/ Within the centre.  
(*Hamlet*, II.2)

--And from the cross-row plucks the letter G.  
(*Richard III*, I.1)

--To use it for my time: I am a brother/ Of

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gracious order, late come from the See/In special business from his holiness.  
(*Henry V*, I.2)

--You have made good work,/You and your apron-men; you that stood so up much.  
(*Coriolanus*, IV.6)

--Pray you, without any more virginal fencing, will/You use him kindly? He will line your apron with gold.

(*Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, IV.6)

-- [Flav.] Speak, what trade art thou? [Carpenter] Why, sir, a carpenter. [Mar.] Where is thy leather apron, and thy rule?

(*Julius Caesar*, I.1)

### That Shadow of Thine

Helen Heightsman Gordon relates an incident when Thomas Vavasour, a relative of Oxford's lover Anne Vavasour, began a challenge to de Vere with these two sentences: "If thy body had been as deformed as thy mind is dishonourable, my house had yet been unspotted, and thyself remained with thy cowardice unknown. I speak this that I fear thou art so much wedded to that shadow of thine, that nothing can force to awake thy base and sleepy spirits."<sup>38</sup> It is not clear what the phrase "that shadow of thine" means. There is, however, a possibility that "shadow" refers to darkness or shady practices. De Vere was accused of dabbling in the world of alchemy, astrology, spirits, séances, communication with the dead, magic, secret societies, and the like. Gordon explains the meaning of certain symbols appearing in a portrait of de Vere: "In one of three famous pictures of de Vere, he wears a black robe with a lacy ruff revealing his aristocratic status. He carries a prayer book or Bible, with a red ribbon as bookmark. The skull beside him on a red cloth indicates a familiarity with Freemason rituals in which a skull is used to remind initiates of their mortality."<sup>39</sup>

Secrecy, however necessary it may have been, was usually considered suspect, and those secret societies who kept membership anonymous were nevertheless thought to keep "Books of Shadows" or rosters of their members. John Lyly, who was secretary to de Vere, seems also to have been accused of "black arts" by Gabriel Harvey. In 1582, Lyly ended a letter to Burghley with a strange postscript: "Loth I am to be a prophitt, and to be a wiche (witch) I loathe. Most dutiful to command, John Lyly."<sup>40</sup> We know that early in his life de Vere was familiar with Freemason symbols because in 1573 a poem of his was published with the title "Labour and its

(Continued on p. 16)

(*Shakespeare and the Occult*,  
cont. from p. 15)

Reward," included in Thomas Bedingfield's "Englishing" of *Cardanus Comforte* (1573, 1576).<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that the author of *Hamlet* reverently read *Cardanus Comforte* which is the basis of some of his best lines at Elsinore (*Hamlet*, III.1).

The poem begins:

The labouring man that tills the fertile soil,

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**These last four lines appear to contain several remarkable references to freemasonry: halls, high degree, compact, and paper walls and the puzzling phrase linking the "mason poor" with "high degree."**

**It's doubtful this could be mere coincidence, and Thomas Vavasour's reference to "that shadow of thine," and "thy base and sleepy spirits" seems most likely to be a comment on de Vere's involvement in the world of the occult.**

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And reaps the harvest fruit, hath not indeed  
The gain, but pain; and if for all his toil  
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed

After a few more metaphors, he says:

The mason poor that builds the lordly halls,  
Dwells not in them, they are for high degree;  
His cottage is compact with paper walls,  
And not with brick or stone, as others be.

These last four lines appear to contain several remarkable references to freemasonry: halls, high degree, compact, and paper walls and the puzzling phrase linking

the "mason poor" with "high degree." It's doubtful this could be mere coincidence, and Thomas Vavasour's reference to "that shadow of thine," and "thy base and sleepy spirits" seems most likely to be a comment on de Vere's involvement in the world of the occult.

Another name that occurs frequently in accounts of Elizabethan occultists is Sir Edward Dyer,<sup>42</sup> an English courtier and poet. The English antiquarian Anthony Wood says that many thought Dyer to be a Rosicrucian, and that he was a firm believer in alchemy. He had a great reputation as a poet among his contemporaries, but very little of his work has survived. George Puttenham, in the *Arte of English Poesie*, speaks of "Maister Edward Dyar, for Elegie most sweete, solemne, and of high conceit."<sup>43</sup>

One of the poems once generally accepted as his is "My Mynde to me a kingdome is,"<sup>44</sup> which Steven May considers to be possibly written by Edward de Vere,<sup>45</sup> indicating the strong possibility of a connection between de Vere and the Rosicrucian Dyer. Interestingly enough, his first patron was Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, who seems to have thought of putting him forward as a rival to Sir Christopher Hatton for the Queen's favor. He is mentioned by Gabriel Harvey, along with Sir Philip Sidney, as one of the ornaments of the court. Sidney, in his will, bequeathed his books in equal numbers to Fulke Greville and Dyer.

Although nothing would have prevented William Shakespeare of Stratford from taking an interest in the occult, he would have had to use books from private libraries, because there were no public libraries in Elizabethan England. And there is no evidence that he knew any owners of large personal libraries such as John Dee, William Cecil, Philip Sidney, or the Countess of Pembroke. Neither do we have evidence that William of Stratford had any connection to Rosicrucians or Freemasons. But we do know for that Oxford was a devotee of the occult and that the author William Shakespeare exhibited vast knowledge of occult practices. Whichever way the pursuit of truth may lead us, Shakespeare's use of the occult seems to hold promise as a fruitful line of inquiry for contemporary

scholars of any persuasion.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Elizabethan Period*, <[http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-](http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-period.htm)

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[period.htm](http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-period.htm)>

<sup>2</sup> Martin Ebon, *They Knew the Unknown*, Signet 1972, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Id. at 33.

<sup>4</sup> Id. at 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Elizabethan Astrology*, <<http://www.elizabethan-era.org.uk/elizabethan-astrology.htm>>

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**(From the President, cont. from p. 3)**

erings of "seniors," this group of theater patrons was completely fascinated by the authorship question. Perhaps, as Aristotle suggested, one must achieve a certain age and cultural maturity before historical, artistic, or philosophic principles can be fully appreciated. One thing is certain, in the 25 years I have followed the authorship challenge nothing satisfies me so well as the intense, honest efforts of gifted and dedicated colleagues, those who have devoted themselves through study, writing and art, to revealing the origins of Shakespeare. No mystery could truly be more compelling or more controversial.

— Earl Showerman

*(Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge, cont. from p. 1)*

Dr. Davis reviewed three comprehensive texts that have examined Shakespeare's remarkable understanding of medicine: those by Dr. J.C. Bucknill (1860), Dr. R.R. Simpson (1959), and Dr. Aubrey Kail (1986). Noting that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the "vast majority of medical works were published in Latin or Greek," Davis describes the primacy of Galen's methods among English physicians, who lagged far behind the revolutionary medical discoveries being made in Italy, especially by the renowned medical faculty at the University of Padua, whose famous English graduate, William Harvey, was the first to describe the circulation of blood. Davis reports how Simpson systematically identified 712 medical references in the plays, and how more recently Dr. Frank Miller claims to have identified nearly double that number, "a dazzling array." Shakespeare's medical allusions refer not only to Galen's doctrine of the humors, but also to contemporary texts on anatomy, physic, infectious disease, psychology, Paracelsian alchemy, Hippocratic principles, and Hermetic traditions.

In *Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare* (1860), Dr. John Charles Bucknill wrote "... it would be difficult to point to any great author, not himself a physician, in whose works the healing art is referred to more frequently and more respectfully than in those of Shakespeare." Dr. Bucknill was superintendent of a 600-bed psychiatric hospital in Devon and a founding editor of the journal *Brain*. He dedicated his book to Lord Campbell, the Lord Chancellor, who earlier wrote *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements Considered* (1859). Bucknill's volume is still available and includes many detailed commentaries on Shakespeare's medical allusions, as well as presenting the first attempt to identify the sources of Shakespeare's 'physic.' Bucknill concludes that the poet-playwright must have been "a keen observer of men and an insatiable devourer of books."

A century later, Dr. R.R. Simpson published *Shakespeare and Medicine*, in which he claims Shakespeare not only had "an astute knowledge of medical affairs but also a keen sense of the correct use of that knowledge." Like Bucknill, Simpson agrees

that the playwright was "not only well-acquainted with the medical knowledge of his day, but also with the literature." With transparent admiration, Simpson concludes:

No aspect of the study of Shakespeare shows more clearly his inspired poetic eye and mind...than the clinical de-

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scriptions to be found in his writings. The accuracy of his observation, his apt use of words, and the clinical picture he leaves in the mind of his audience, or his reader, are not only unsurpassed, they are not even approached in clinical value in any medical writings, however erudite.

Dr. Simpson asked the obvious question raised by Bucknill: "Where did Shakespeare obtain all this medical knowledge?"

By meticulously charting specific medical allusions in the plays against traditional dating, Simpson determined that at least two-thirds of them were written before the marriage of Susanna Shakspeare to Dr. John Hall in 1607. This effectively rules out Shakspeare's relationship with the Stratford physician as a primary source of his medical intelligence. Ironically, Dr. Hall's copious Latin clinical notes, which were translated and published posthumously, do not mention his famous father-in-law.

In *The Medical Mind of Shakespeare* (1986), Dr. Aubrey Kail expresses similar admiration for Shakespeare's achievement, asserting that the plays display "a profound knowledge of contemporary physiology and psychology" and that Shakespeare "employed medical terms in a manner which would have been beyond the powers of any ordinary playwright or physician." Waxing poetic, Kail writes:

He exhibited the feelings associated with the tragedy of suffering and the influence of sympathy upon the patient, the relationship between hope and prognosis, the value of mirth, the evils of alcohol, the pangs of insomnia and the benefits of sleep, and, finally, the attributes of death.

Shakespeare scholar Carolyn Spurgeon also recognized the uniqueness and sensitivity of the playwright's imagery of sickness and the action of medicines on the body. In *Shakespeare's Imagery* (1952), she notes that Shakespeare was ahead of his time about the virtues of temperate living and avoiding overindulgence, and that his "understanding of the influence of mind on body is what, however, puts him nearest modern expert opinion."

The research published in the *British Medical Journal* (2006) and *Medical Humanities* (2011) by Dr. Kenneth Heaton extends this tradition of admiration for Shakespeare's uniquely nuanced representation of the relationship between mind and body. Heaton describes the remarkable frequency with which Shakespeare depicts episodes of sudden death from high emotion (10), fainting (18), hyperventilation (11), vertigo, hyper- and hypo-sensitivity, temporary deafness, and physical collapse

associated with grief. Heaton found no other playwright of the Elizabethan age who employed psycho-physiological phenomena with such frequency or variety, concluding that “Shakespeare was exceptional in his use of sensory disturbances to express emotional upset.”

Dr. Davis is a retired neurosurgeon, so it is not surprising that he would take note of the importance of Shakespeare’s

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knowledge of neuroanatomy. Shakespeare refers to the *pia mater*, the ultrathin, innermost membrane surrounding the brain and spinal cord, in three plays: *Twelfth Night* (1.5.123), *Troilus and Cressida* (2.1.77), and *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (4.2.70-1).

More striking to me as a neurosurgeon is his acquaintance with the relationship of the third ventricle to memory. In

*Loves Labour’s Lost*, the pedant Holofernes states, “these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*.” A possible source might have been Vicary’s *Anatomy of the Body of Man* (1548), which refers to the third ventricle as the ‘ventricle of memory.’

Dr. Davis also compared the medical content of fourteen plays by ten other Renaissance playwrights. He found, as did Dr. Heaton, that Shakespeare’s medical references “far outnumbered those of his fellow writers.”

Dr. Davis expresses agreement with those who maintain that the author was familiar with the theory of the circulation of blood many years before William Harvey’s published report. Citing a passage from *Julius Caesar* that refers to “the ruddy drops that visit my sad heart,” Davis argues that there are “at least nine significant references to the circulation or flowing of blood in Shakespeare’s plays.” I have no quibble with this observation, but I submit that “flow” and “circulation” are not identical, as the later term implies knowledge of a capillary bed connecting the arterial and venous systems. In this particular case, I agree with most Shakespeare scholars that playwright’s references to the heart and the arteries do not support his having anticipated Harvey’s discovery, which was announced in 1616.

Bucknill and Simpson suggest that Shakespeare was familiar with the several *Hippocratic Aphorisms*. A passage from *Richard II* proclaims that spring was the best season for bleeding patients, reflecting the forty-seventh aphorism. Shakespeare scholar F. David Hoeniger, in *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (1992), has also noted allusions to Hippocrates’ aphorisms, including several to the sixth: “For extreme diseases extreme strictness is most efficacious.”

Humphrey Llwyd’s posthumously published work, *Treasury of Healthe* (1585), was the first English translation of the *Hippocratic Aphorisms*. Llwyd dedicated the volume to William Cecil, the Earl of Oxford’s guardian and father-in-law. Hoeniger has also suggested that Shakespeare likely knew passages from Hippocrates’ *Prognostic*, and he speculates that Peter Lowe’s *Whole Course of*

*Chirurgerie* (1597), which included the first English translation of the *Presages of Hyppocrates*, was the author’s source.

Several years after he published *The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare*, Dr. Bucknill wrote *The Mad Folk of Shakespeare: Psychological Essays* (1867), in which he took particular note of Shakespeare’s unique representations of mental illness:

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**Bucknill was a world-renowned psychiatrist and humanist. His observation that Shakespeare took a particular interest in neurologic and mental illnesses is supported by the sheer number of characters who commit suicide (Romeo, Juliet, Brutus, Mark Antony, Cleopatra), or suffer from epilepsy (Othello, Julius Caesar), alcoholism (Falstaff), melancholia (Hamlet, Jaques, Antonio) madness (Lady Macbeth, Ophelia), visual and auditory hallucinations (Macbeth) and dementia (King Lear, King John, Shylock).**

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That abnormal states of mind were a favorite study of Shakespeare would be evident from the mere number of characters to which he has attributed them, and to the extent alone to which he has written on the subject. On no other subject, except love and ambition, the blood and chyle of dramatic poetry, has he written so much. On no other has he written with such mighty power.

(Continued on page 20)

(*Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge, cont. from p. 19*)

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In "Shakespeare's Shylock and the Strange Case of Gaspar Ribeiro" (*Shake-*

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**Shakespeare alludes to a number of infectious diseases, including plague, malaria, smallpox, leprosy, measles, rabies and tuberculosis, but no infection captured his attention quite like syphilis, the *Morbus Gallicus*, commonly referred to as the "French pox" or the "Neopolitan disease."**

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*peare Matters*, Summer 2011), I reviewed the evidence that Shakespeare's Jew was based on a Marrano moneylender in Venice who was arguably demented and that his repetitive speech patterns tended to confirm this association. In *Shylock Is Shakespeare* (2006), Professor Kenneth Gross also examined the psychological factors behind Shylock's rhetoric of repetition, which, Gross argued, is the key to appreciating Shylock's deep emotional disturbance: "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. There is a curious kind of dementia in his speech." It is no wonder that psycho-

analysts from Sigmund Freud to Richard Waugaman have been drawn to Oxford, so rich are the possibilities of connecting Shakespeare's texts to the biography of the leading authorship candidate of the past century, Edward de Vere.

Shakespeare alludes to a number of infectious diseases, including plague, malaria, smallpox, leprosy, measles, rabies and tuberculosis, but no infection captured his attention quite like syphilis, the *Morbus Gallicus*, commonly referred to as the "French pox" or the "Neopolitan disease." In *Shakespeare and the New Disease: The Dramatic Function of Syphilis in Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure and Timon of Athens* (1989), Greg Bentley demonstrates how Shakespeare repeatedly employed an "image cluster" around the manifestations of syphilis to define the major themes of these three plays, "sexual commercialism, slander, and usury, respectively." Bentley argues that the image of syphilis serves as a weapon of dramatic satire essential to the theme, unity, and design of these three plays. It provides what Bentley calls the ultimate "word picture," one that satirizes "the physical, moral and spiritual degeneration of English society."

In *Troilus and Cressida*, Thersites' disease-inspired curses, start with the "rotten diseases of the South," and end the "incurable bone-ache, and the reviled fee-simple of the tetter," which are both descriptions of the manifestations of secondary and tertiary syphilis, the "new disease," later known in medical circles as the "great imitator." Timon's pox-inspired rant delivered to Timandra and Phrynia, Alcibiades' prostitutes, is especially prodigious in its imagery:

Consumption sow In hollow bones of man,  
strike their sharp shins,  
And mar men's spurring. Crack the lawyers  
voice,  
That he may never false title plead,  
Nor sound his quilllets shrilly. Hoar the flamen  
That scolds against the quality of flesh  
And not believes himself. Down with the nose,  
Down with it flat, take the bridge quite away  
Of him that, his particular to foresee,  
Smells from the general weal. Make curled-pate  
ruffians bald,  
And let the unscarred braggarts from the war  
Derive some pain from you.

*Timon of Athens* (4.3.153-64)

In *Shakespeare's Physic* (1989), John Crawford Adams writes of this passage: "The destruction and deformity of bones..., the hoarse voice from laryngeal involvement, the destruction of the bridge of the nose, and the loss of hair – all classic features of syphilis – are so accurately described here that one feels that Shakespeare must have taken expert medical advice."

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, syphilis-laced imagery defines Bottom's

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choice of beards for his performance as Pyramus: "I will discharge it in your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow," to which Quince replies, "Some of your French crowns have no hair at all; and then you play barefac'd ...." "French crown" puns on French royalty, French money, and it is the standard Elizabethan term for the annular cluster of red syphilitic tubercles that form over the forehead, temples and scalp.

There is a more nuanced topical

allusion compassed by the “barefac’d... French crown.” Roger Stritmatter has reported on the research of Eva Turner Clark and Marion Taylor positing that Bottom is a satiric parody of Francois Hercule de Valois, the Duke of Alencon, aka “Monsieur,” Elizabeth’s final suitor

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**His lack of a beard was a matter of genuine concern to the English court. The Duke was reportedly scarred from childhood smallpox and was young enough, at seventeen years, to be beardless when the marriage negotiations were begun in 1572. Catherine de Medici wrote letters to the English ambassadors stating that Alencon was growing a beard, which did much to hide the imperfections of his pock-marked face. According to Martin Hume in *The Great Lord Burghley*, “The talk of Elizabeth’s marriage to Alencon was drawn out with a thousand banalities as to the possibility of secret meetings between the lovers, the depth and number of pock holes on the suitor’s face...”**

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during a protracted decade-long negotiation. Alencon was slanderously alleged to have had syphilis by John Stubbs in *A Gaping Gulf* (1578). His lack of a beard was a matter of genuine concern to the English court. The Duke was reportedly scarred

from childhood smallpox and was young enough, at seventeen years, to be beardless when the marriage negotiations were begun in 1572. Catherine de Medici wrote letters to the English ambassadors stating that Alencon was growing a beard, which did much to hide the imperfections of his pockmarked face. According to Martin Hume in *The Great Lord Burghley*, “The talk of Elizabeth’s marriage to Alencon was drawn out with a thousand banalities as to the possibility of secret meetings between the lovers, the depth and number of pock holes on the suitor’s face...” Thus, Shakespeare cleverly combines allusions to both the “French pox” and to smallpox in the same line. This underlines the biting, allegorical humor in Francis (Francois) Flute’s claims “I have a beard coming” and Quince’s comment to Bottom that Pyramus is a “sweet-fac’d man.”

As for Shakespeare’s knowledge of Galen’s classical doctrine of the four humors, Falstaff’s inspired discourse of the effects of “sherris-sac” comprises, in Dr. Adams’ opinion, a veritable tutorial on Renaissance concepts of physiology:

A good sherris sack hath a two-fold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain; dries me there all the foolish and dull and curdy vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble fiery and delectable shapes, which, delivered o’er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second property of your excellent sherris is, the warming of the blood; which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice; but the sherris warms it and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme: it illumineth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage; and this valour comes of sherris.

*2 Henry IV* (4.3.95-111)

Another detailed discourse that could serve as a script for a modern crime scene investigation is Warwick’s description of the murdered Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*. Dr. Bucknill notes here that Shakespeare “describes the signs of a violent death, and especially of a death by strangulation, with a particularity which shows that the poet, whatever he might know of ‘crowner’s quest law,’ was not ignorant of crowner’s quest medicine”:

But see, his face is black and full of blood,  
His eye-balls further out than when he lived,  
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man; 1855

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**Thus, Shakespeare cleverly combines allusions to both the “French pox” and to smallpox in the same line. This underlines the biting, allegorical humor in Francis (Francois) Flute’s claims “I have a beard coming” and Quince’s comment to Bottom that Pyramus is a “sweet-fac’d man.”**

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His hair uprear’d, his nostrils stretched with struggling;

His hands abroad display’d, as one that grasp’d  
And tugg’d for life and was by strength subdued

Several scholars have argued that Shakespeare’s representation of the murder of King Hamlet may have been influenced by a passage from Pliny’s *Natural History*, which describes the mental derangements caused by the oil of henbane poured into a victim’s ear. The “cursed hebonen” was a folk name for henbane, a poisonous plant with anti-cholinergic effects known to cause hallucinations. Simpson considered henbane sufficiently toxic to cause clinical manifestations not unlike King Hamlet’s grisly description.

(Continued on p. 22)

(Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge,  
cont. from p. 21)

Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
And in the porches of my ears did pour  
The leperous distilment; whose effect  
Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
That swift as quicksilver it courses

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**What neither Simpson nor Hoeniger include in their commentaries on this passage is the topical connection between King Hamlet's poisoning and the assassination by poison in 1538 of Francesco della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, the patron of Castiglione and Guilio Romano. Urbino was reportedly killed by a poison rubbed in his ear by his barber by order of his nephew, Luigi Gonzaga. Thus, we have the probable origin of the title of Hamlet's "Mousetrap."**

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through  
The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
And with a sudden vigour doth posset  
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;  
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,  
All my smooth body.

*Hamlet* (1.5.59-73)

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tion by poison in 1538 of Francesco della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, the patron of Castiglione and Guilio Romano. Urbino was reportedly killed by a poison rubbed in his ear by his barber by order of his nephew, Luigi Gonzaga. Thus, we have the probable origin of the title of Hamlet's "Mousetrap," the *Murder of Gonzago*.

The remarkable topicality of Shakespeare's toxicology is again apparent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Oberon's use of magical eye drops to cause Titania to fall in love with Bottom is an allusion to the Duke of Alencon's ambassador, Jean Simier, who notoriously gave Queen Elizabeth love potions that made her look fifteen years younger and act inappropriately coquettish with both Alencon and Simier. Oberon refers to them as the "meddling ape" or "busy monkey" that Titania must pursue with the "soul of love" when she awakens.

A discussion of Shakespeare's medicine should rightfully include the possibility of Hermetic influence in the playwright's depictions of resurrection and resuscitation. In *Tragedy and After: Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe*, Ekbert Faas recognizes that Hermione's resurrection in *The Winter's Tale* is depicted as a kind of Hermetic magic. Faas suggests that Shakespeare used imagery and dramaturgy of magic derived from the *Asclepius* dialogue of the Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus, who is credited as author of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which inspired the Florentine Neo-Platonists:

This may or may not be a direct allusion "to the famous god-making passage in *The Asclepius*." But the notion, reported in the Hermetic text, of how the old Egyptian priests, frequently to the accompaniment of music, used to infuse their statues of the gods with life, was widely enough known to be recognized by at least some members of Shakespeare's audience.

In *Majesty & Magic in Shakespeare's Last Plays*, Francis Yates argues that these Hermetic dialogues had a great influence in the Renaissance and were associated with the magical-religious teachings of Giordano Bruno. Suggesting that the "life-infusing" magic of the statue scene

may be seen as a metaphor for the artistic process, Yates concludes that Shakespeare was not only familiar with the *Asclepius*, but also found it profoundly important that "Paulina's daring magic, with its allusion to the magical statues of the *Asclepius*, may thus be a key to the meaning of the play

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**A discussion of Shakespeare's medicine should rightfully include the possibility of Hermetic influence in the playwright's depictions of resurrection and resuscitation. In *Tragedy and After: Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe*, Ekbert Faas recognizes that Hermione's resurrection in *The Winter's Tale* is depicted as a kind of Hermetic magic. Faas suggests that Shakespeare used imagery and dramaturgy of magic derived from the *Asclepius* dialogue of the Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus, who is credited as author of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which inspired the Florentine Neo-Platonists.**

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as an expression of one of the deepest currents of Renaissance magical philosophy of nature."

When Lord Cerimon resuscitates Queen Thaisa in *Pericles*, his invocation begins, "Apollo, perfect me in the characters..." and ends with "Asclepius guide us," mirroring the Hippocratic Oath: "I swear by Apollo, Asclepius, Hygeia and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods..." Cerimon calls for fire and "the rough and woeful music that we have"... "The music

there!" followed almost immediately by "I pray you, give her air. Gentlemen, this queen will live."

Cerimon cites a previous case, "Death may usurp on nature many hours,/And yet, the fire of life kindle again,/The o'erpressed spirits. I heard of an Egyptian/That had nine hours lain dead, who was by good appliance recovered." There can be little doubt that Cerimon's "Egyptian" points to Hermes Trismegistus, the mysterious Alexandrian whose *Corpus Hermeticum* included the *Asclepius* along with a collection of Greek texts written most probably during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. *The Corpus Hermeticum* was translated into Latin by the Italian scholar Ficino in 1471, and was considered to reflect the apex of pagan philosophy during the Renaissance with passages on Gnosticism, astrology, alchemy and magic, including the re-animation of sacred statues. Francis Yates concluded, "Let us rest content with the high probability that Shakespeare knew the god-making passage of the *Asclepius*..." Yates also reveals that Ficino and other Renaissance writers mistakenly believed that the *Hermetica* predated Plato, and that Hermes Trismegistus was perceived to be a contemporary of Moses.

Faas argued that in Cerimon, "we find Shakespeare raising the Renaissance mage to the stature of a demi-god," and Aubrey Kail wrote, "Shakespeare's greatest tribute to the medical profession is stated by Cerimon." Many other writers have acknowledged the remarkable medical ethic of Cerimon's discourse:

I hold it ever  
Virtue and cunning were endowments greater  
Than nobleness and riches. Careless heirs  
May the two latter darken and expend:  
But immortality attends the former,  
making the man a god. 'Tis known, I ever  
have studied physic, through which secret art,  
By turning o'er authorities, I have,  
Together with my practice, made familiar  
To me and to my aid the blessed infusions  
That dwell in vegetatives, in metals, stones;  
And can speak of the disturbances  
That nature works, and of her cures;  
which doth give me  
A more content in course of true delight  
Than to be thirsty after tottering honor,  
Or tie my pleasure up in silken bags,  
To please the fool and death.

*Pericles* (3.2.25-41)

Hoeniger adds admiringly, "There is no other speech like his devoted to medical art in the whole range of Elizabethan, Jacobean or Caroline drama. Cerimon exemplifies the Hippocratic ideal in medicine." In *Shakespeare the Magus* (2001), Arthur Versluis similarly concludes that

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**In his chapter, "The She-Doctor and the Miraculous Cure of the King's Fistula in *All's Well that Ends Well*," Hoeniger explores in depth the Paracelsian elements of Helena's extraordinary cure of the French King. Helena, an "empiric" practitioner, uses Paracelsian phrases such as "manifest experience," "general sovereignty" and "faculty inclusive." Bearing a "sanctified" remedy, and referring to herself as God's "minister," she accomplishes in a mere two days what the King's physicians found hopelessly incurable. Her prescription is "fortified by divine grace."**

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"... *Pericles* is finally a play of healing, not of loss; it is the play of Asclepius: it reveals the heart of medicine, of healing not just individual suffering, but our state in the cosmos."

Elements of Paracelsian alchemy in Shakespeare are discussed by Hoeniger in *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, although the author

expresses doubts about Shakespeare's knowledge of Paracelsism. Nonetheless, Hoeniger cites a number of examples of alchemical imagery. First, Shakespeare refers to the rival theories "both of Galen and Paracelsus" in *All's Well* (2.3.11). In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the passage, "The poisonous simple sometime is compacted/ In a pure compound: being so applied, / His venom in effect is purified" (II. 530-32), has "a marked Paracelsian ring." In addition, Hoeniger reviews W.A. Murray's article, "Why was Duncan's Blood Golden" (1966), to explore Shakespeare's use of Paracelsian images in Macbeth's description of the murdered Duncan, "His silver skin laced with his golden blood" (2.3.108). Murray argues that this image is a specific reference to the *tincture* or *electrum*, the everlasting perfection of alchemical gold. Hoeniger also notes that in *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Lawrence refers to the "powerful graces that lie in herbs, plants, stones," and he grows a flower in which "Poison hath residence, and medicine power" (2.3.20), both clearly reflecting Paracelsian teachings.

In his chapter, "The She-Doctor and the Miraculous Cure of the King's Fistula in *All's Well that Ends Well*," Hoeniger explores in depth the Paracelsian elements of Helena's extraordinary cure of the French King. Helena, an "empiric" practitioner, uses Paracelsian phrases such as "manifest experience," "general sovereignty" and "faculty inclusive." Bearing a "sanctified" remedy, and referring to herself as God's "minister," she accomplishes in a mere two days what the King's physicians found hopelessly incurable. Her prescription is "fortified by divine grace."

The attitude that medicine is a holy calling and the conviction that some virtuous practitioners were particularly favored by God in their skill, discoveries and cures were widespread among religious-minded physicians, surgeons, and women in Shakespeare's time. Their heaven-sent cures revealed God's love of humanity in new telling ways. When God created the earth, man, and woman, he hid in nature all sorts of herbal, animal and mineral remedies whose gradual discovery and application by virtuous doctors or more simple folk served to demonstrate anew the mystery

(Continued on p. 24)

**(Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge,  
cont. from p. 23)**

and power of his grace. This conviction was asserted with vigor by Paracelsus and his followers, who claimed that their methods and remedies were Christian, not pagan or infidel like those of traditional Greek and Arabic medicine.

Further discussion of Paracelsian influence on Shakespeare is found in Charles Nicholl's *The Chemical Theatre* (1980), in which over 100 pages are devoted to an explication of alchemical imagery as the dominant motif in *King Lear*, as well as being found in *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *The Merry Wives*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Nicholl finds the most technical of Shakespeare's distillation metaphors is in Lady Macbeth's assurance that "Memorie, the warder of the braine,/ Shall be a fume, and receipt of reason/A lymbeck only." Nicholl notes that the "'receipt' is the receiver at the bottom of the still, where the pure distillate collects as it condenses." The romance of Imogen and Posthumous in *Cymbeline*, Nicholl concludes, is Shakespeare's nuanced dramatization of the "*coniunctio* found in alchemical allegories."

On his blog, Hank Whittemore recently wrote of Stratfordian Stephen Booth's edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, which included an illustration of the title page of *The New Jewell of Healths* by the surgeon George Baker, published in 1576. "Editor Booth presents an illustration of this important book in connection with Sonnet 119, which builds upon metaphors and analogies from alchemy and medicine: "What potions have I drunk of siren tears, /Distilled from limbecks fowl as hell within...."

Whittemore continues, "'Shakespeare' knew all about the 'distillations' of waters, oils, balms and so on as set forth by Dr. Baker, whose book has been long considered a key source for the Bard's interest in alchemy as well as the full range of medical knowledge at the time. And it just so happens that Dr. Baker, who would become surgeon to Queen Elizabeth, was the personal physician of Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and that he dedicated *The New Jewel of Health* to Oxford's wife Anne Cecil. In fact Baker

dedicated his first book, *Olenum Magistrale* (1574) to Edward de Vere and, later on, dedicated his *Practice of the New and Old Physic* (1599) to the earl as well." Now we are getting closer to the source!

In *Shakespeare and the Practice of Physic* (2007), Todd Pettigrew observes that some of "Shakespeare's plays draw considerable dramatic power from questioning and challenging the conservative narratives of the medical establishment,"

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and that Shakespeare's medical practitioners often subvert the Galenist orthodox policies of the Royal College of Physicians. This should not be surprising given the number of medical sources used by Shakespeare that have been proposed by these physicians and Shakespeare scholars.

The list could arguably include: *The Corpus Hippocraticum*, *The Corpus Hermeticum*, Thomas Elyot's *The Castel of Helth* (1539), Thomas Vicary's *Anatomy of the Body of Man* (1548, 1577), George Baker's *Newe Jewell of Health* (1576), Thomas Gale's *Galenic Treatises* (1567),

John Bannister's *Comendious Chyrurgerie* (1585), Timothy Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), John Hester's *Keye of Philosophie* (1596), Peter Lowe's *Whole Course of Chirurgerie* (1597), Pliny's *Natural History* (1601), Rabelais, and Paracelsus. It is of no small significance to Oxfordians that several of these works were dedicated to members of Edward de Vere's immediate family.

Dr. Frank Davis' article concludes by establishing many links between the Earl of Oxford and Elizabethan medical practitioners and writers. Citing Stephanie Hughes' work on Oxford's tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, Davis notes that Smith's great library had over 1,000 books, with many titles on diseases, alchemy, and therapeutic botanicals. His medical books included multiple editions of Galen, a Paracelsus, and books on veterinary medicine, pharmacology and healing plants, including Dioscorides' *Materia Medica*. Dr. Davis concludes, "It is evident that Smith was particularly interested in the theories attributed to Paracelsus regarding the use of distillates of herbal waters," and that he was also an "avid gardener who devoted much of his time to raising plants for the purpose of distilling into tonics and medicines." Smith's first biographer, John Strype, wrote of him in 1698:

He bore a great part, both in the university, the church and the Commonwealth... the best scholar of his time, a most admirable orator, linguist and moralist...an ingenious poet,... of exquisite skill in the Civil Law, in Astronomy, in natural philosophy, and Physic....

In a recent *De Vere Society Newsletter*, editor Elizabeth Imlay reported on marginal notations and illustrations in a medical book from Smith's collection. One image shows a figure with facial and scalp tubercles with a handwritten label underneath, "Morbus Gallicus." The annotator is illustrating lesions that Thersites would later call the dread "fee-simple of the tetter," the "French Crown" alluded to by Peter Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

William Cecil, Oxford's guardian and father-in-law, had a magnificent library



with around 2,000 titles, including 170 to 200 books on alchemy and medical topics. In addition to Humphrey Llwyd's Hippocrates translation, the collection included many rare editions, including a 1545 Paris edition of *de Dissectione Corporis humani*, a 1502 Venetian edition of

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*Anatomia Human Corporis*, and a 1578 Florentine edition of *Medicina se Palpitatione*. Oxford lived nearly a decade under Cecil's care until his marriage to Ann Cecil. In the 1580s, Oxford lived at Fisher's Folly, very near to Bethlehem Hospital, London's

primary institution for the insane.

Hoeniger provides a fascinating association that connects the Earl of Oxford to empiric family medical practitioners: "In Shakespeare's time, the mother of Francis Bacon, daughter of Sir Anthony Coke, and also Lady Burleigh, wife of the great statesman, were among the women similarly knowledgeable in medicine." More recently, Oxfordian Ron Hess, author of *The Dark Side of Shakespeare* (2003), forwarded me further evidence of Cecil family practitioners. In his draft article, "Oxfordian Musings on Medical Matters," Hess includes text of a book of "Phisicke and Chirurgery" owned by William Pickering, which begins with the title, "*Acoppye of all suche Medicines wherewt the noble Countesse of Oxenford most charitably, in her owne person, did manye great and notable Cures upon her poore Neighbors.*" Hess concludes that Ann Cecil, like her mother and aunt, was an "empiric" practitioner, like Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*. George Baker, dedicated his *Newe Jewell* to Ann in rather grand language:

The *New Jewel* will make the blind to see and the lame to walk. The *New Jewel* will make the weak to become strong, and the old crooked age appear young and lusty. This *New Jewel* will make the foul seem beautiful, and the withered faces show smooth and fair. Yea, it will heal all infirmities and cure all pains in the whole body of man.

Baker was known to embrace alternative medicine without abandoning traditional science. He served as Master of the College of Barber-Surgeons and wrote for John Gerard's *The Herball or General History of Plants* (1597).

Baker also notably referred his patients to the apothecary John Hester. Hoeniger writes of Hester: "...from about 1570 to 1593, John Hester ran one of the largest apothecary shops in London. Early in his life, he had decided against a university education so that instead, he could study 'minerals, herbs, and flowers' as well as chemical distillation. Under the influence of Continental followers of Paracelsus, he published a number (10) of their tracts in translation, with long lists of new recipes."

John Hester's first translation project was the Paracelsian text, *Phioravantes Discourse on Surgery* (1580), which was dedicated to the Earl of Oxford.

The claim of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, as the playwright and poet behind the Shakespeare canon, is greatly enhanced in light of the Renaissance medical knowledge displayed in the plays. Oxford's access to the source texts, his family of medical practitioners, and his patronage of medical writers speaks volumes about

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his interest in medical matters.

Dr. Frank Davis' article concludes by noting that Oxford assumed the identity of a 'physician' in his prefatory letter to Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comfort*: "I prefer my own intention to discover your volume before your request to secret the same. Wherein I may seem to you to play the part of the cunning expert mediciner or physician." Dr. Davis has proven himself to be the first "cunning expert" when it comes to explicating the importance of Shakespeare's medicine in the context of the authorship question. Oxfordian physician colleagues like Paul Altrocchi and Richard Waugaman have also

(Continued on p. 26)

(Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge, cont. from p. 25)

proven themselves expert in discovering "new jewels" of medical wisdom that challenge Shakespearean orthodoxy.

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(O-philia cont. from p. 1)

way I thought it should.

I never identified with his characters, never had an insight about humanity while reading his plays. I felt like there was an impenetrable glass wall between Will and me. I could see the depth in his words, but I couldn't figure out how to get to it, to really understand. I blamed my problems mostly on the oldness of the plays; I told myself I just didn't "get it" because the language was so archaic, the contexts were too ancient for me to understand. The plays were just big, dusty, outdated books to me.

Yet I continued to be obsessed with trying to adore the Bard. So, in the fall semester of my senior year at Pullman High School, I found myself at Washington State University in English 205: Intro to Shakespeare. Upon reading our first play, *Twelfth*

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*Night*, I found I could indeed understand the words; I was even getting some of the wordplay and hidden meanings by myself. But there was still something very two-dimensional about it all. I honestly couldn't imagine the words to be stemming from anything greater than some character's mouth. There was no context behind them for me.

But then I met the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere. He was, in my mind, everything I expected Shakespeare to be: well-educated, interested in poetry and art, connected to the court, a bit rash, and somewhat mysterious. Okay, so my vision of de Vere sounds more like the perfect 16<sup>th</sup>-century boyfriend. But you have to understand how much this guy changed my life (or at least my Shakespeare studies). The concept that Shakespeare was, as the movie *Anonymous* bills him, "a fraud" opened up an infinite

number of doors for me. Suddenly, it was acceptable to question Shakespeare, to look critically at his works, to do my own reading about him. Being allowed to question Shakespeare's authorship allowed me to question other elements of the work. It freed me from the need to sheepishly copy down and parrot back whatever my teachers told me "the point" of a play was. It was like the first time your parents are wrong about something, the first time you realize that hey! maybe the planets *don't* really revolve around the Earth. It opened up myriad possibilities for my further studies.

My love of Oxfordian studies (or O-philia, as you might call it) wasn't fully cemented until I read *Hamlet*. I figured that *Hamlet*, being the most alluded to and most revered of Shakespeare's works, would prove especially frustrating for me because in the past I couldn't seem to grasp any of Shakespeare's larger meanings. I tried to read the play before but always stopped, frustrated, somewhere in the middle, unable to figure out what Shakespeare was getting at. I just couldn't understand the character's motives or mindsets at all. The essential problem, I realized, was not the Bard's, but my own. I have been raised thinking that empathy was everything. I was taught that there are *always* two sides to every story, and that it was my job to learn both. At my church, context is always contemplated – we constantly discuss the time in which Jesus was living, the mindset of early Christians, and the other cultures the Israelites were surrounded by. It's hard for me to understand people fully unless I know where they're coming from. Needless to say, trying to analyze Shakespeare with only the scantest bit of knowledge of his life was nearly impossible for me. I mean, you're talking to a girl who reads that little inside back flap of books so she learn about the author before she starts reading. And before this year, I had no inside book flap whatsoever for the Bard.

Approaching *Hamlet* with my new Oxfordian mindset was a whole different story. Now I had context. I had backstory. I knew about the author's childhood, his wife, his relations with the Crown, his areas of expertise. I could understand a little bit more about how Oxford's mind might have worked, what internal conflict he might have been struggling with as he wrote, his

struggles with questions of identity and reputation. And, in turn, I gained insight into Oxford's mind by reading his works. Being able to place *Hamlet* in time transformed his story from a random, tedious contemplation of mortality into a journey into the multifaceted world of a troubled, brilliant mind. Knowing that the ideas of the play were stemming from a tangible

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person's experience, that the pain and joy expressed were someone's real, deep-felt emotions brought the play to life for me. All those things I had been searching for in my Shakespeare studies finally fell into place. *Hamlet*'s last words entreating Horatio to "draw thy breath in pain/to tell my story" (V.ii.344-45) are perplexing and a bit trou-

bling when taken at face value: why would someone who exerts a great deal of effort to convince people that he's crazy have last words that are so focused on reputation? Even I was a bit upset that a character who spends as much time in self-reflection as *Hamlet*, who seems to understand life so well, would have such a superficial last request. But if you look at *Hamlet* as essentially Oxford's autobiography, pair this perspective with the preoccupation with reputation seen in *Othello*, and add a bit of an idea about Oxford's mindset (he was hiding the secret that could have cemented his deserved place in history), suddenly *Hamlet*'s words make perfect sense. They are, perhaps, Oxford's own personal entreaty to make *his* story, *his* secrets known. The Oxfordian context makes these lines even more heartbreaking than they are when taken at face value. With my Oxford knowledge in mind and my *Hamlet* text in hand, I was finally able to break down that barrier of understanding that lay between "Will" and me.

In everything we do, there's that "aha" moment – the moment we finally stay up on our bike, that  $e=mc^2$  finally makes sense, that we figure out what really happened in the War of the Roses. For a very long time, I was looking for that "aha" moment to occur for Shakespeare and me. It wasn't until I learned about the Earl of Oxford that that happened. Though I'm nowhere near the most prolific Shakespeare scholar out there, I'm finally able to come to some conclusions on my own, to divine those long-sought hidden meanings without having to rely on a professor or Sparknotes. I can now empathize with Shakespeare's characters, feel their sorrow and joy with them. And, most importantly, I'm finally beginning to love Shakespeare the way I always aspired. And for that, I will always be grateful to Edward de Vere.

(From the Editor, cont. from p. 2)

Wegener himself was not daunted by the criticism. Instead, he refined his ideas to address some of the valid points raised by his opponents. Responding to those who faulted him for not offering a plausible mechanism for continental drift, he proposed six mechanisms, “including

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**The parallels between acceptance of continental drift and acceptance of an authorship question are obvious. It was an outsider who first proposed the idea. The outsider was blasted by the establishment, which insulted him (the ad hominem attack), dismissed him for lack of relevant academic credentials, accused him of distorting and cherry-picking the facts, and, after marginalizing him, chose to ignore him. In Wegener’s case, it took the arrival of a new generation of geologists – presumably one whose careers weren’t completely tied to the validity of the old theory – to effect the change in thinking.**

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one that foreshadowed the idea of plate tectonics.”

As we all know, Wegener was right – the continents were bunched together at one early time, and they do in fact “drift.” Unfortunately, Wegener did not live to see himself vindicated, as he died while on a meteorological expedition in Greenland in 1930. It was not until the mid-1960s

that the theory of continental drift became generally accepted by the scientific community.

What caused the shift within the scientific community? As author Conniff tells us, it was two things – the dying off of an older generation of geologists and the coming of age of a younger generation, and a steady accretion of observational data (primarily about the seafloor).

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Of course, it only took about 50 years for Wegener’s theory to gain general acceptance, whereas it’s now been 92 years since J. Thomas Looney published *Shakespeare Identified*. But perhaps we shouldn’t start our measuring in 1920, because the authorship debate didn’t really heat up until the 1980s.

I write about this mainly to remind ourselves that we need to be invested in the authorship issue for the long haul. There will be no “paradigm shift” among mainstream Shakespeare academics anytime soon – the vast majority of them have too much invested in maintaining the status quo. The Stratfordian scenario works for them – hey, even if it’s not right, it’s at least plausible. It will take the continued accretion of first class works of scholarship (such as Kevin Gilvary’s *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays*, Richard Roe’s *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* and Katherine Chiljan’s *Shakespeare Suppressed*, to name only three) providing important pieces of evidence, and it will take the arrival in academia of a new generation of professors who have grown up with at least some awareness of, and a more open mind toward, the authorship issue.

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To set the record straight – if it needs to be set straight – the two “News Notes” which appeared on page 26 of the Spring 2012 issue of *Shakespeare Matters* were indeed bogus; that’s why they bore the dateline of April 1. There is no Professor Lamont Dupont, no Southeast West Virginia State U., and “Old McDonald Had a Farm” probably dates no earlier than the late 1800s, so the “E-I-E-I-O” refrain in the song does not mean, as Prof. Dupont posited, that “I am E-O.” Or does it? Similarly, there is no Professor Penrod Knough, no Southwest North Dakota Technical College, and no evidence that the eggs of Queen Elizabeth I were harvested for implantation into other women. No evidence that we know of. . . .

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#### Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

In her article, “She Will Not Be a Mother,” in *Brief Chronicles III* (2011), Bonner Miller Cutting creates a new PT Theory, Theory III. PT I was the assertion by Charlton and Dorothy Ogburn, followed by a more extensive work by Elisabeth Sears, that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was actually the son of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and Queen Elizabeth. The assertion in my book, *Oxford: Son of Queen Elizabeth I* (Institute Press, 2001), that Oxford himself was the son of Elizabeth, born on July 21, 1548, in Cheshunt, was then called PT Theory II. Cutting now asserts that there is good reason to believe that Queen Elizabeth had a child in 1548, but that it was not Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford – hence, PT Theory III. Cutting writes:

As aficionados of television crime shows are aware, it takes three components to make a circumstantial case: motive, means and opportunity.... these three elements are here in abundance, and add up to a compelling circumstantial case that Elizabeth had a child with the Admiral.

She further states:

when the facts are looked at systematically, there is a compelling circumstantial case for the likelihood that the Princess had a child as a result of the Seymour affair; yet there are equally compelling circumstances that this child was not the Earl of Oxford. . . . However, a scenario in which this putative child might have been placed as a changeling into the Oxford household presents insuperable obstacles.

Unfortunately, Cutting does not hazard a guess as to who this royal child might be, nor does she consider that the child might have been miserably destroyed. The world awaits her assertion as to her suspect as the changeling royal for PT Theory III.

While Cutting has read my book, as evidenced by citations to it, she seems to have not understood key components of the argument for Oxford as the son of the Queen. First, she says, "In closing, Sir Anthony Denny is the linchpin of the story."

This is not the case. Elizabeth resided at Denny's residence from May to December 1548, but Cutting presents no compelling evidence that Denny was anything more than a housekeeper. On the other hand, my book presents compelling reasons why William Cecil should be considered the "linchpin," the mastermind behind concealing the pregnancy and hiding the child, who would grow up as Oxford.

William Cecil had a strong relationship with Queen Katherine Parr and would have been a trusted friend in time of need. He had provided an introduction to the Queen's second book, *The Lamentations of a Sinner*, and, like Parr, was a strong Protestant. Most important, he was the secretary to the Lord Protector, Edward Seymour, in 1548. Thus, any directions given by William Cecil were coming from a man of authority, who might be presumed to be acting at the direction of the Lord Protector.

Cutting pointedly ignores the fact that on August 2, 1548, Princess Elizabeth appends a postscript to William Cecil, "I pray you further this poor man's suit," and signed it "your frende Elizabeth."

As aficionados of television crime shows know, this places William Cecil if not at the scene, at least in the neighborhood. Why Elizabeth should address a commoner in such an affectionate manner has never been adequately explained.

Second, Cutting also misses the point made in my book that John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, was forced into a marriage on August 1, 1548, to a woman he had never met, Margery Golding, the half-sister of Arthur Golding, who reported to William Cecil. She omits the fact that the banns of marriage had been announced between the 16th Earl and a Dorothy Fosser. Despite

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this, he indeed married Margery Golding. The only plausible explanation for this unlikely, hasty coupling is that he was forced into it.

Third, for some strange reason, Cutting assumes that Elizabeth gave birth in September 1548. This is the scenario presented by Charles Beauclerk in his 2010 book, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*. This can only be done by ignoring the bizarre marriage of John de Vere, which makes no sense unless it was to provide a home for the putative child. The date of the marriage -- August 1 -- means that a child of Elizabeth had to have been born earlier. The idea that

such a marriage would be consummated a full month before the expected birth is unlikely, given the rigors of childbirth and the high rate of infant mortality.

Allowing ten days to insure that the child indeed survived and for arrangements to be made to transport Margery Golding to Belchamp, we arrive at a date of July 21, 1548, for the birth of Elizabeth's child. Because of the midwife's report of the room being lit by candles, the birth took place in the dark of night on a summer day, when nights were short. Cutting is unduly dismissive of this hearsay report, which gives some explicit details of the birth. True, it is from an ardent Catholic from the court of Mary, but would anyone expect such a report to come from the loyal Protestants surrounding Elizabeth?

Fourth, Cutting makes a case that Oxford was born in April 1550, not in 1548, because it was in 1550 that William Cecil and the Council gave John de Vere a gold christening cup in honor of his supposedly newborn son. The difference of eighteen months is an "insuperable obstacle" for Cutting:

This explanation (that Oxford had been born earlier) does not take into account the physiological difference that eighteen months makes in a child's growth, and this discrepancy could be difficult to work around.

The gift only recognizes that a christening took place, not when it took place. Further, the 16th Earl was not at court at the time and the child was not subject to any rigorous inspection. If this is Cutting's only objection to Oxford being the son of Elizabeth, she is standing on very weak ground.

Further, Stephanie Hughes provides some evidence that July 1548, not April 1550, is the correct date of Oxford's birth. Although Hughes is an outspoken opponent of any of the PT theories, she writes:

According to Dewar, it was during this period that the four-year-old de Vere was placed in his care. After describing the events of May and then July of 1554... "At the same time, Edward de Vere, only son of the Earl of Oxford,

(Continued on p. 31)



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*(To the editor, cont. from p. 29)*

Mary's Great Chamberlain, was placed in Smith's household." Hughes further observes:

Although, to us, four may seem young to be sent to live outside the family, much less embark upon studies with a

**one can argue that the facts are correct but that the conclusion drawn from them is not. For example, as aficionados of crime stories know, a substitute killer can brought to light. The case can be made by the defense that John did not do the killing and his friend Jack was the culprit. This appears to be Cutting's approach. Proposing that child was placed somewhere else, without identifying any likely suspects, is not a very robust refutation of the current PT II theory.**

tutor, Cambridge University historian K.B. McFarlane informs us that the nobility of the late feudal period routinely placed young children outside the home with tutors, family members, trusted retainers and in convents; sometimes

children were as young as five.

Age five yes, but not as young as age four! If, however, Oxford had been born in 1548, he would be only a few months shy of six years of age in the spring of 1554, an appropriate age to be sent off to a tutor. Hughes is providing the physiological evidence that Cutting seeks.

There are two ways to refute a historical argument. First, one can illustrate that key facts in the narrative are false. Cutting has not done that. Indeed, she agrees to a great many of the known facts while deliberating ignoring others.

Second, one can argue that the facts are correct but that the conclusion drawn from them is not. For example, as aficionados of crime stories know, a substitute killer can brought to light. The case can be made by the defense that John did not do the killing and his friend Jack was the culprit. This appears to be Cutting's approach. Proposing that child was placed somewhere else, without identifying any likely suspects, is not a very robust refutation of the current PT II theory. Cutting has presented Oxfordians with no "Jack." She names no alternative Prince Tudor to replace Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford as the son of the Queen. Nor has she convincingly made a case that the difference of eighteen months was an "insuperable obstacle" to maintaining the deception that Edward de Vere as the son of John de Vere.

In short, PT Theory II (Oxford as the son of Queen Elizabeth) remains unbreached.

Paul Streitz

Author: *Oxford: Son of Queen Elizabeth I*

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