



# Shakespeare Matters

“The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship”



SF trustee and longtime member Kathryn Sharpe and Dr. Don Rubin, York University Professor Emeritus of Theatre History, share a comic moment at the Pasadena Conference.

## Huntington Library Tour a High Point of the 8th Annual Joint Conference in Pasadena

by Howard Schumann

An exhibit at the Huntington Library of rare books that focus on Edward de Vere and the authorship question was the opening event of the 8th annual Joint Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and the Shakespeare Fellowship. It was one of the high points of the event that took place at the Courtyard Pasadena Old Town by Marriott in Pasadena, California, from October 18 to 21. The side trip to the Huntington allowed conference participants to view books from the vast collection of one of the most highly regarded research libraries in the world. Of those displayed, fifteen books were dedicated to Oxford, comprising about half of the known total of twenty-eight books that were dedicated to him. Among the items available for viewing were *The Primaleon* by Humphrey Llwyd, a Welsh cartographer, author, and Member of Parliament. The book, thought to have influenced *The Tempest*, was translated into English by Anthony Munday and dedicated by him to Oxford. Another work by Llwyd

(Continued on page 24)

## Q & A with Hank Whittemore: The Southampton Controversy

[Editor’s note: Probably the most controversial issue among Oxfordians is the “PT” theory – did Oxford and Queen Elizabeth have a child together? One of its most passionate advocates is Hank Whittemore, whose 2005 book, *The Monument*, and his 2010 book, *Shakespeare’s Son and His Sonnets*, explain his case in favor of the theory. The principal purpose of this Q & A is to explore some collateral issues raised by the PT theory that, to us, had not been fully explored.]

**Shakespeare Matters:** Do you think Oxford and the Queen knew that their son was being raised as the Third Earl of Southampton?

**Hank Whittemore:** I’m not sure if Oxford would have known until late 1581, after the eight-year-old Southampton had entered Cecil House in London. (If he had been born in May 1574, of course, he would have turned eight in May 1582.) I think the Queen knew. For sure Burghley knew. I believe a deal had been made between Oxford and Burghley: Oxford would return to his wife Anne Cecil, daughter of Burghley; in return, Southampton would be brought to London as a royal ward in Burghley’s custody. Both events occurred virtually at the same time. (The second earl of Southampton was arrested and interrogated in 1581 and died in October after his release from the Tower. It looks like he was driven to his early death at age thirty-six.)

**SM:** When do you think Southampton himself learned his true identity?

**HW:** I believe that Oxford, in his masque that was the origin of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1581, urged the Queen through Oberon: “I do but beg a little changeling boy to be my henchman.” Although Oxford had been banished from the Court, he was back in Burghley’s good graces and would have had the chance to spend time with the boy Southampton, perhaps putting him in plays performed at Blackfriars and the court. Exactly when and how he would have made Southampton aware of his true identity is difficult to hypothesize, but it would seem that part of the deal with Burghley was that Southampton and Elizabeth

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## Letters

To the Editors:

First, I'd like to thank John Shahan for organizing the SAC dinner at the 8th Annual Shakespeare Authorship Conference. Lots of good ideas were proposed. To me, one of the most important was Mark Mendizza's idea of a strategic approach and a unified PR campaign that we could roll out over the next three years, beginning with our response to the book *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, and culminating in an event like the SAC debate John envisions, timed to coincide with the April 2016 Shakespeare celebrations.

Mark has graciously offered to assist in the development of a strategic plan. We've tried to come up with a preliminary set of outcomes toward which we can all work in concert to achieve. Here are some suggested goals with measures toward which the whole movement could work:

1. Increase dramatically the number of signers to Declaration by creating well coordinated campaign to do so.
2. Increase the number of accredited college/high school courses devoted to authorship. Packaging curriculum. Distributing.
3. Increase the worldwide media coverage of authorship in general by creating, sharing and working a media list of responsive journalists/curators/bloggers.
4. Increase the web presence in general of the authorship issue by making sure all existing sites are connected and actively expanding.
5. Increasing the number screenings/sales of *Last Will. & Testament* by encouraging all stakeholders to contact their local schools. Maybe incentivising.

6. Completing and launching *Nothing is Truer than Truth* as a second wave of the educational/general market campaign. I really believe this is important to focus on.

7. Compile a continuing list of public figures who are crossing over and changing the Authorship zeitgeist: Christopher Plummer, Joyce Carol Oates, Vanessa Redgrave.

8. Increasing the overall number of public events devoted entirely or partially to Authorship. I'm thinking of a campaign to get gain some space even in orthodox Shakespeare Festivals.

9. Creating the guerilla marketing campaign that was talked about at our Beckman Brainstorm.

We defer to the existing leadership of the Shakespeare Fellowship, the Shakespeare Oxford Society, the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, the SAC,

the Lone Star Shakespeare Roundtable, and the other established authorship and Oxfordian organizations. It would be great to get some feedback on these ideas and then perhaps we we can create a committee as a starting point. Again, thank you all for your commitment.

Best,

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan  
NOTHING IS TRUER THAN TRUTH  
Controversy Films  
eagandonovan@verizon.net

### **Shakespeare Matters**

Published quarterly by the  
The Shakespeare Fellowship  
Please address correspondence to:

Editorial Offices:  
P.O. Box 66083  
Auburndale, MA, 02466

Editor:  
Alex McNeil

Design Editor:  
Roger Stritmatter

Contributing Editors:  
Mark Anderson, Lynne Kositsky, Howard  
Schumann,  
Dr. Felicia Londre,  
William Boyle, Richard Whalen.

Phone (Auburndale, MD): (617) 244-9825  
email: newsletter@ShakespeareFellowship.org  
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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**  
P.O. Box 66083  
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*

# Reinventing Ourselves

by Tom Regnier

I'd like to thank the Shakespeare Fellowship for the trust it has shown in me by asking me to serve as its president for the coming year. I intend to prove worthy of that trust. I wish to commend and thank Earl Showerman for the wonderful job he has done as president for the last three years. It is an honor to follow in his footsteps. The Board of Trustees has also welcomed three able new members very recently: Michael Morse, Don Rubin, and William Ray. Along with our other trustees, Earl Showerman (who remains on the Board), Bonner Miller Cutting, Alex McNeil, Ben August, and Kathryn Sharpe, we hope to keep moving the Fellowship forward during the next year. Thanks also to former trustees Ian Haste and Pat Urquhart, who recently completed service on the Board.

Our task of getting out the word on Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare canon requires us to reinvent ourselves constantly to keep up with the latest communications technologies. We are now looking into improving our website, creating a Shakespeare Fellowship Facebook page, and other actions that can take advantage of the many new ways of reaching future Oxfordians. We need volunteers who are skilled in such areas to help us out, so please contact me if you wish to help, or if you have any bright ideas, comments, or criticisms about how the Shakespeare Fellowship can better reach all those potential Oxfordians. Contact me at my e-mail address: Thomas.Regnier@gmail.com.

For the last couple of years, we've been saying words to the effect of, "It's an exciting time to be an Oxfordian." But, even though it's been said, I'll say it again. Oxfordian and anti-Stratfordian films and books keep coming out, in spite of the Shakespeare industrial complex's attempts to torpedo them. At our most recent joint conference with the Shakespeare Oxford Society, we saw the new documentary,

*Last Will. & Testament*, by Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias, a thoroughly professional product that will continue to keep the Oxfordian thesis alive in the public's mind. As if that weren't enough, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan will follow up with

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**We had so many outstanding presentations at our Pasadena conference in October that singling out any particular ones for praise would be unfair to the others....Our 2013 annual conference will be in Toronto, probably in October (exact dates to be determined). It is being organized by one of our new trustees, Don Rubin, who is a theater arts professor at York University in Toronto.**

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her Oxfordian documentary, *Nothing is Truer than Truth*. Attendees of our conferences have seen footage from the film, and it also promises to be a high-quality product that will speak well for the Oxfordian movement.

Although the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) did all it could to squelch interest in *Anonymous*, and was to some degree successful, it will find that the Authorship Question will not die in spite of the SBT's attempt to preempt the debate. The SBT,

in fact, has responded to a challenge from John Shahan of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition to prove, beyond doubt, that the man from Stratford wrote the plays. The SBT plans to publish a book next year called *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*. I expect that Oxfordian and other anti-Stratfordian groups will have a great deal to say in response to show that there is considerable room for doubt.

Please be sure to renew your membership with the Shakespeare Fellowship when you get your renewal notice around the beginning of the year. That way, you'll be assured of staying informed on all the latest books, films, and other news on the Authorship Question through our quarterly newsletter, *Shakespeare Matters*, and our yearly online journal, *Brief Chronicles*.

Please consider giving a gift membership to someone. To encourage that, the Board of Trustees voted to offer new gift memberships for 2013 at a special price – a current member who renews their membership at regular rates will be able to purchase a one-year gift membership for a new member at a reduced rate: only \$30. Full details about new gift memberships will be announced in the 2013 Membership Renewal Letter, which will be sent out in December.

We had so many outstanding presentations at our Pasadena conference in October that singling out any particular ones for praise would be unfair to the others. Instead, I urge you to read and enjoy Howard Schumann's excellent report on the conference in this issue. Our 2013 annual conference will be in Toronto, probably in October (exact dates to be determined). It is being organized by one of our new trustees, Don Rubin, who is a theater arts professor at York University in Toronto. Those of us from the States will need to make sure our passports are up to date well before the conference, so let's not procrastinate on getting them renewed. See you there!

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

### ***Last Will. & Testament* Screened in October; Available Nationwide On Demand; DVD Expected in 2013**

*Last Will. & Testament*, the new documentary film about the Shakespeare authorship question, was shown across America during the month of October leading up to the US premiere at the Austin Film Festival. The film's directors, Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias, attended each event and participated in a Q & A after each screening.

The tour began October 5 in Chicago, as part of De Paul University's School of Cinema & Interactive Media Arts Visiting Artists Series; among those in attendance was leading Stratfordian David Kathman. The next stop was Minneapolis/St. Paul, a place with special meaning for both directors. The film was screened at the St. Anthony Main Theatre, where Laura Wilson Matthias had worked as a projectionist during her college days. Lisa Wilson was able to recognize retired University of Minnesota Professor James Norwood for his contributions to Shakespeare authorship studies and his efforts in influencing her career; "James Norwood not only introduced me to the greatest literary mystery of all time, he gave me my life's work," she noted. "The opportunity to publicly honor my friend and mentor was a deeply moving experience."

The tour then headed west to Ashland, Oregon, where Shakespeare Fellowship President Earl Showerman had organized two screenings. Showerman noted that, "150 Shakespeare fans, including students and six Shakespeare instructors received the film with great enthusiasm and the post-screening Q & A was animated." He went on to say that "although two Shakespeare authorship joint conferences have been held in Ashland within the past seven years, neither event produced the public reaction and engagement attendant to these screenings. If nothing else, *Last Will. & Testament* has artistically legitimized the work I have done in our region to promote the inquiry into the Shakespeare mystery, for which I am extremely grateful."

On October 14 the film was screened in Kansas City, Missouri, at a special symposium honoring Mark Twain and local Oxfordian and academician Felicia Londré. Londré and Wilson were able to establish a co-sponsorship between The University of Missouri - Kansas City Theatre Department and the local branch of the English Speaking Union. Jeff Schnabel, president of the ESU of Kansas City, observed that the Q & A session "generated numerous insightful questions from a well-informed audience. Many in the audience . . . seemed eager to learn more." Among those in attendance was Dr. Thomas Canfield, a lecturer in Theatre, Humanities and English at UMKC and dramaturg at the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival, who later wrote to Lisa



**Laura Wilson Matthias (left) and Lisa Wilson introduce *Last Will. & Testament* outtakes at 2012 Joint SOS-SF Conference.**

Wilson that "There is no doubt in my mind that it would have been impossible for the man from Stratford to have written the poems and plays, and I am hungry for more information on the Oxford candidacy. I am discovering, as you did long ago, this will be a lifelong endeavor."

Five days later the film was screened at California Institute of Technology, coinciding with the Joint Conference of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society taking place in Pasadena. About 150 persons attended the evening event, including members of the LA production team who edited *Last Will. & Testament* throughout 2011. Joining the Wilsons for the Q & A session was producer Aaron Boyd. The three panelists recalled the previous screenings, and noted that an attempt to have an event at Notre Dame University had been squelched when a university representative communicated with Stanley Wells, Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, who (even though he's featured in the film) expressed his wish that it not be shown. Discussing Roland Emmerich's 2011 film, *Anonymous*, Lisa Wilson remarked that his greatest achievement was putting the true Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth "in the same room" – i.e., making the point that Shakespeare's works all have a political dimension to them.

Laura Wilson Matthias shared how challenging it was to edit *Last Will. & Testament*, noting that 252,000 words of interviews were recorded, but only 11,000 made the final cut, and that less than one per cent of the "awe-inspiring locations" made it to the screen. Fortunately, they were able to share a bit of the extra footage with the Conference attendees on the following morning

(see separate article elsewhere in this issue). And, in case you're wondering why there's a period in the film's title, they explained that, too – it signifies that this is the end of the line for Stratford Will, and it's time for the testament of the real Shakespeare.

The Wilsons were unable to stay for the remainder of the Conference, as the final stop of their October tour was on Sunday, October 21, at the Austin (Texas) Film Festival, for the official US premiere. The film had been selected for showing months earlier, as one of the first ten films chosen to be screened. Two screenings were held, followed by engaging Q & A sessions. Wilson recalled that “on the second night, Ben August's bronze of

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**Ben August's bronze of Edward de Vere adorned stage left and the 5-pointed Texas star atop the proscenium arch shone for England's star of poets.” Oxfordian John Lavendoski, who was in attendance, noted that the Q & A's were “superb. . . especially the nature of the questions asked. While most of the attendees were complete newbies to the authorship question, this film elicited deeply thought-provoking questions . . . which I would previously have imagined only a very knowledgeable SAQ researcher would ask. To my mind this was clear evidence of the educational power of this film – its ability to bring casual viewers up to speed on the central themes . . . in less than ninety minutes!”**

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Reflecting on the official “opening night,” the two directors commented: “So many thoughts and feelings flow through you as you sit in the back row of your own film. We can't imagine there's ever been a director who didn't want to return to the editing room just one more time to get it right for the people they honor. Still we can't help feeling we've opened another door on the truth behind Shake-speare. Thank you to everyone in the Shakespeare Authorship community who helped make this dream come true.”

As for the film's future prospects, Laura Wilson Matthias noted that, as of October 23, 2012, *Last Will. & Testament* is available via VOD (video on demand) through many outlets, including broadband internet (Amazon, iTunes, Blockbuster, CinemaNow, Play Station, Vudu, XBOX and Zune), US cable and satellite providers (including Verizon, RCN, Insight, Mediacom, Suddenlink, Blue Ridge Communications, Charter Communications and DIRECT TV), and Canada cable and satellite (COGECO, MTS, Rogers, Shaw and TELUS). The film is expected to be available in DVD format sometime in 2013.

The directors are also at work on more public screenings of *Last Will. & Testament*, slated for 2013. If you are interested in arranging a screening, contact the directors through their web site: [www.lastwillandtestamentthemovie.com](http://www.lastwillandtestamentthemovie.com).

They are also organizing a comprehensive sponsorship campaign to fund new SAQ research, programming and worldwide educational outreach. For more information, contact their production company, 1604 Productions, at 401-782-7585 or through the above web site.

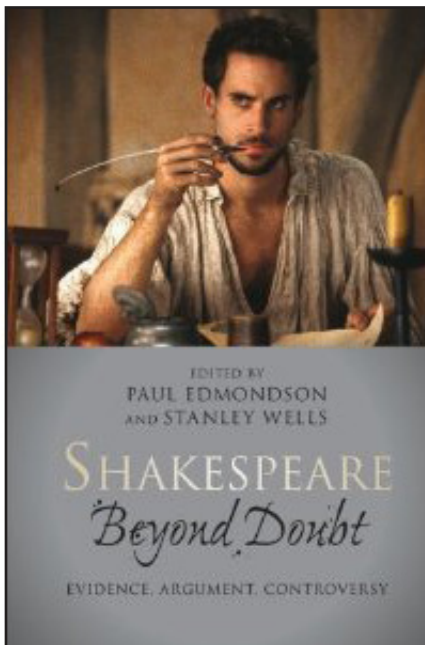
### **Shakespeare Beyond Doubt – O Really?**

Cambridge University Press recently announced that in April 2013 it plans to publish *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, edited by Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Both the title of the book and the fact that it includes a chapter on the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt suggest that it is being written in response to the Declaration. Twenty-two scholars, mostly English professors, are named as contributors. Sixteen of them were also contributors to the SBT's "60 Minutes with Shakespeare," launched as part of its response to the 2011 movie *Anonymous*. The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition took the lead in rebutting all of the "60 Minutes" in *Exposing an Industry in Denial* (available at the SAC website at [DoubtAboutWill.org](http://DoubtAboutWill.org)).

John Shahan, SAC chair, said that “we could not be more pleased that the SBT finds it necessary to take this additional step. As the title of my presentation at the recent Joint Authorship Conference in Pasadena says, the SAC has the SBT ‘right where we want them.’”

A glance at the book's table of contents shows many familiar names. The chapter on Oxford's candidacy is supplied by none other than Alan Nelson, author of *Monstrous Adversary*, so it promises to be “fair and balanced,” of course. The book will include an “Afterword” by James Shapiro. For further information, go to the Cambridge Press web site: [www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge).

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### **Brief Chronicles Volume 3 Printed**

We are pleased to announce that *Brief Chronicles* Volume 3 (2011) has been printed. Several copies were made available for purchase at the Joint SF/SOS Conference in Pasadena. A substantial number of copies will be sent to selected theater department academics in colleges and universities in the US and Canada. The remainder of the copies will be made available for purchase by members; full details will be announced in the 2013 Membership Renewal Letter, which will be sent to all members in December.

### **Nothing Truer Than Truth Moves Forward**

Controversy Films director Cheryl Eagan-Donovan has received a grant from The De Vere Society to assist in the completion of the documentary film *Nothing is Truer than Truth*. Based in England, The De Vere Society is dedicated to the proposition that the works currently attributed to Shakespeare were written by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. *Nothing is Truer than Truth* is currently in post-production and scheduled for release later this year. The project is sponsored by The Independent Feature Project New



SOS Treasurer Virginia Hyde and SAC Chair John Shahan use a handheld device to read from the table of contents of *Shakespeare: Beyond Doubt*. A SAC sponsored dinner at the SF-SOS joint conference in Pasadena considered strategic futures for the anti-Stratfordian movement. “The energy was like the Occupy Movement,” remarked one enthused participant — “especially among the older members!”

York and tax deductible donations may be made at <http://market.ifp.org/newyork/fiscal/DonateNow.cfm>. The film trailer and excerpts may be viewed at: <http://www.indiegogo.com/NOTHINGISTRUERTHANTRUTH?a=289012&i=emal>.

### **The Roundtable Remembers Barbara Crowley (1924 – 2012)**

We at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable will long remember Barbara Crowley as one of our most thoughtful and devoted Oxfordians. Many of us over the years did not realize that there would simply have been no Roundtable without her!

Barbara was part of our first authorship seminar in 1984, which was inspired by my interest to make a documentary film involving Charles Champlin, then Arts Critic of the LA Times, Ruth and MD Miller, Richard and Jane Roe and Barbara and John Crowley, among others. We all met for six sessions where Shakespeare was put on trial, so to speak. Each session was devoted to a different candidate who was presented by an expert, who was then cross-examined

by an attorney.

At the end of those sessions, the group continued to meet and discuss the question at the homes of either the Roes or the Crowleys. The following year, I thought I had enough research to make my documentary, but Barbara had other ideas. She suggested we form an official educational organization, and as a corporate attorney, she would file the necessary legal documents. She told me I should be in charge and keep organizing meetings and sending mailings, but I made every effort to get out of it. However, she insisted over my doubts, and the rest is our history. I had no idea until years later what a great gift Barbara had given me. The Roundtable took us to many places and brought us many extraordinary people, so I am forever grateful to her for making my life a better one; but most of all, for insisting that we form a non-profit educational organization so others could benefit as well.

Over the years, she never stopped coming up with new ideas and new people to support the Roundtable. We attended most of the authorship conferences over

*(Continued on p. 14)*

## Book Review

***The Truth About William Shakespeare:  
Fact, Fiction, and Modern Biographies***

by David Ellis (Edinburgh University Press, 2012)

Reviewed by Bonner Miller Cutting

Chalk it up to the miraculous that this book was written and published at all. David Ellis is an emeritus professor of English Literature at the University of Kent, which leaves one to wonder why a man with his impressive -- and surely comfortable -- position in an academic environment would take on the thorny subject of the nonsense found in biographies of William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon. Nothing in the book is likely to astonish those of us accustomed to the issues involved in the Shakespeare

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**Nothing in the book is likely to astonish those of us accustomed to the issues involved in the Shakespeare Authorship Question, but the candor in Ellis' discussion of Shakespearean biography makes this book newsworthy, if not rather shocking.**

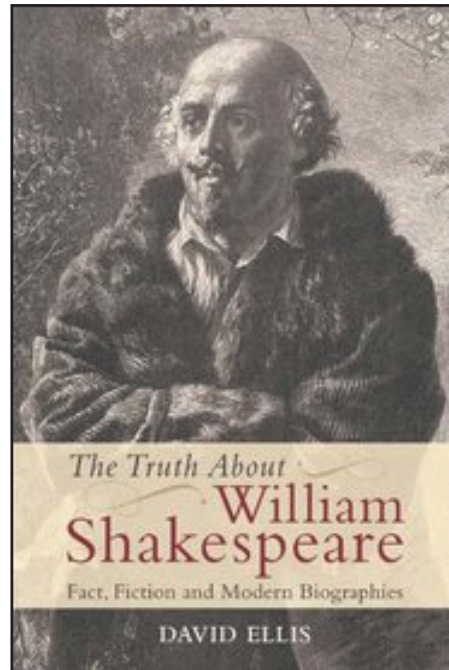
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Authorship Question, but the candor in Ellis' discussion of Shakespearean biography makes this book newsworthy, if not rather shocking. In successive chapters, Ellis systematically deals with what is known, or rather unknown, about Shakespeare's life, examining his boyhood, marriage, theater activities, patronage, friends, politics, money, love life, retirement, death, and, not inconsequentially, the post mortem.

Ellis makes many scholarly observations, yet in 177 concisely written pages he deconstructs the methodology of Shakespearean biography with a straightforward vocabulary, avoiding the polysyllabic lan-

guage that is standard fare in professorial musings on Shakespeare. But then he is writing to clarify, not obfuscate, and the result is a highly accessible and enjoyable book.

He focuses primarily on six Shakespearean biographers: Peter Ackroyd, Jonathan Bate, Katherine Duncan-Jones, Stephen Greenblatt, James Shapiro and



Rene Weis. He occasionally turns to the wily A. L. Rowse and the resourceful Germaine Greer, and ventures into the historical accounts of Samuel Schoenbaum, E. K. Chambers, and James Halliwell-Phillips. These are all astute choices, displaying Ellis' command of the subject matter, as well as the matter at hand: the investigation of the strategies applied by biographers to construct a narrative of the life of William Shakespeare when so little is known about him. In his chapter "How to make bricks without straw," Ellis defines the methods applied liberally by his colleagues in order

to accomplish this goal.

According to Ellis, there are four main techniques: (1) the use of disclaimers; (2) argument from absence; (3) using historical background as a "stand-in" for lack of biographical information; and (4) inferring the details of the writer's life from his writing. He considers the first

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**In his chapter "How to make bricks without straw," Ellis defines the methods applied liberally by his colleagues in order to accomplish this goal. According to Ellis, there are four main techniques: (1) the use of disclaimers; (2) argument from absence; (3) using historical background as a "stand-in" for lack of biographical information; and (4) inferring the details of the writer's life from his writing.**

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two techniques to be minor, and the latter two of major import, perhaps because historical background and inference of life from the literary work give biographers an "inexhaustible supply" of material to fill up otherwise empty pages. A fine example of a "history book disguised as

*(Continued on page 8)*

biography” can be found in James Shapiro’s *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. Ellis calls inference the “simplest and perhaps crudest method for helping the biographer to make bricks without straw.” He notes:

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**Along with exposing the vacuous biographical tactics, Ellis makes additional observations that show that he is mindful of the difficulties inherent in the authorship question. He notes that “chronology of composition is a remarkably tricky business in Shakespeare studies.” In his discussion of Shakespeare’s supposed friendship with the printer Richard Field — a supposition that traditional biographers use to explain how the Stratford man could have had access to books — Ellis remarks that Richard Field is not mentioned in the Stratford man’s will, another striking observation. With so much X-ray vision into the weaknesses of the traditional narrative, it is odd that Ellis sticks to the doctrinaire position on the standard interpretation of Greene’s *Groatsworth of Wit*. Also, he seeks to put forth a plausible relationship between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson which, in turn, might explain Ben Jonson’s introduction to the First Folio. In Jonson’s posthumously published *Timber: or Discoveries*, Ellis finds a biographical “diamond buried in a heap of glass beads...”**

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To understand how the life of any author is made manifest in his writing, the biographer needs to know both a great deal about that life and the particular circumstances in which individual works were composed. To say these cri-

teria are not met in the case of Shakespeare would be the understatement of the year.

But, of course, the most salient feature of any Shakespearean biography is the use of disclaimers. Somewhat surprisingly, Ellis categorizes the use of “weasel words” as minor, though he has no qualms using this derogatory term in his discussion. No sugar coating here. However, it is puzzling that he attaches only minor significance to weasel words, because they permeate every nook and cranny of every biography ever written about Shakespeare. Ellis shows how these qualifiers, when skillfully placed, are a safety valve leading to what is called “plausible deniability.” Better yet, these small but ubiquitous qualifiers can subtly change the tone of a biography “from the conditional to the assertive.”

Shakespearean biographers often resort to a tactic that Ellis calls an argument from absence. “This consists of making the lack of information with which Shakespeare biographers have to deal work for them, in turning a negative into a positive.” This tactic applies to many deficiencies: why Shakespeare left no trace of legal difficulties in connection with his writings, or why he doesn’t reveal his religious leanings. It also explains how easily bogus stories slide into place, such as the deer poaching incident from his early life, or accounts of the theatrical roles he might have played. The biographer can argue that no one ever disputed these assertions!

Along with exposing the vacuous biographical tactics, Ellis makes additional observations that show that he is mindful of the difficulties inherent in the authorship question. He notes that “chronology of composition is a remarkably tricky business in Shakespeare studies.” In his discussion of Shakespeare’s supposed friendship with the printer Richard Field -- a supposition that traditional biographers use to explain how the Stratford man could have had access to books -- Ellis remarks that Richard Field is not mentioned in the Stratford man’s will, another striking observation. With so much X-ray vision into the weaknesses of the traditional narrative, it is odd that Ellis sticks to the doctrinaire position on the standard interpretation of Greene’s *Groatsworth of Wit*. Also, he seeks to put forth a plausible relationship between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson which, in turn, might explain Ben Jonson’s introduction to the *First Folio*. In Jonson’s posthumously published *Timber: or Discoveries*, Ellis finds a biographical “diamond buried in a heap of glass beads” and concludes that Jonson “*must have* liked Shakespeare a good deal” (italics added). This is not saying much, and in doing so, the professor himself falls into the trap of the delicate disclaimer.

Despite such lapses, this is a book crammed with perspicuity. As Ellis gives one example after another of “speculation wildly out of control,” there is scarcely a paragraph that will not provide the reader with an opportunity for a wry smile, or maybe a hearty laugh. But what does it mean? In his last chapter, “Final thoughts,” Ellis shows, in no uncertain terms, that he understands the significance of the problems that he has addressed in the preceding chapters:

In the financial world, unreasonable expectations have eventually to be paid for, but in the world of letters, there is no obvious cost beyond a general lowering of intellectual standards and the degradation of the art of biography.



*(Whittemore, cont. from p. 1)*

Vere would be married at some point, perhaps around 1590. Oxford may have tried to educate Southampton along those lines; in any case, he came out swinging in the private sonnets (later numbered 1 to 17), lecturing him to perpetuate his bloodline and demanding of him: "Make thee another self for love of me." By then Southampton certainly knew his true identity.

**SM:** If Oxford is in favor of Southampton marrying Elizabeth Vere, Burghley's granddaughter, doesn't that suggest that she is not Oxford's biological daughter?

**HW:** If Oxford had been misled in 1576, thinking he was not the father, his anger toward his wife Anne Cecil is understandable. But if he came to believe that he really was the father, carrying on the separation for five more years would have been unreasonable. It seems he never did believe her or forgive her. Part of the deal he and Burghley negotiated in summer 1581 appears to be that Oxford would not only return to his wife but also "publicly" recognize the girl as his own. If that was part of the price Oxford had to pay to get the boy Southampton into London, he would have agreed to it.

If he finally concluded that Elizabeth Vere was indeed his natural child, it's difficult to see why he retained Hamlet's speech to Polonius about Ophelia: "Let her not walk i' in the sun. Conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't." Why would he retain that gratuitous insult, which he knew would make us think he was referring to Anne's conception of Elizabeth Vere? So yes, his favoring of the marriage does suggest she was not his biological daughter, so that he was not promoting incest between two half-siblings.

On the other hand, it appears he felt that the Queen could name Southampton as her successor only with Burghley's support, which was contingent upon Southampton marrying the chief minister's granddaughter and producing a child (preferably a male heir), to ensure an alliance with the Cecil family. That goal would have been Oxford's top priority, outweighing all other concerns, even the possibility of half-sibling incest. Perhaps ironically it's later in that same scene that Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

**SM:** Let's suppose Southampton did agree to marry Elizabeth Vere, thereby gaining the political support of the Cecils, and let's suppose the Queen did want to name him as her successor. When and how would this have been engineered?

**HW:** By way of background, let's look at the biography of Henry Fitzroy (1519-1536) who (and I quote Wikipedia) was "the son of King Henry VIII of England and his teenage mistress, Eizabeth Blount, the only illegitimate offspring whom Henry acknowledged:

"When Henry VIII began the process of having his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled, it was suggested that FitzRoy marry his own half-sister Mary in order to prevent the annulment and strengthen FitzRoy's claim to the throne.... At the time of Fitzroy's death an Act was going through Parliament which disinherited Henry's daughter Elizabeth as his heir and permitted the King to

designate his successor, whether legitimate or not."

Queen Elizabeth would have been as committed to providing for a Tudor succession as her father had been. She certainly considered herself as divinely ordained with royalty and absolute rule as her father had considered himself. In that context, we can conclude that the older generation (the Queen, Burghley and Oxford) would not have had reservations about naming her child as successor, whether he was legitimate or not. Elizabeth could do as she wished.

I believe this was what they were preparing by 1590, that (1) Southampton would enter a marriage alliance with William Cecil and his family; (2) he and his wife Elizabeth Vere would produce a child to solidify the alliance; and (3) at some point, the Queen and Burghley would announce that she and Oxford had been privately betrothed back in 1573, before Oxford had consummated



his marriage, and that Elizabeth had given birth to a royal son who, for the sake of the country, was placed in the Southampton household. It was a Catholic household over which the Crown had gained virtually complete control.

And, according to the Henry Fitzroy precedent, the matter of the apparent half-siblings would not have been an issue.

(Of course, Southampton rejected the wishes of the older generation, and one reason may well have been the possible incest factor. A greater reason, in my view, was that he believed it was far better for him to form an alliance with Essex in direct conflict with the older generation, Oxford included.)

I believe Oxford had been given a promise back in 1572-1574. The evidence suggests to me that he and Elizabeth had been privately betrothed by Archbishop Parker (as good as being married) and that he held onto that promise regarding their son all the way to the end.

I see Oxford as totally committed to Southampton becoming king. His reasoning, in my view, was that he and Elizabeth were the biological parents, and that Southampton was the lawful issue

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Whittemore, cont. from p. 9)

of Her Majesty's body, which trumps all other qualifications for being her successor. She could explain that she had kept this a secret during the 1570s and 1580s for the sake of the country, when she had to seriously consider a marriage alliance with France and the nation faced war with Spain. Now, in the early 1590s, it's time to face her responsibility to name a successor.

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**Some of the surface events that converged in the early 1590s were: (1) the public dedication to Southampton by Burghley's secretary, John Clapham; (2) the private procreation sonnets Oxford wrote to Southampton; (3) Oxford's adoption of the pen name "William Shakespeare" with two public dedications to Southampton (*Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*), elevating him in the public mind, but without directly saying why; (4) the 36 lines spoken by Venus to Adonis, mirroring the theme and words of the private procreation sonnets; (5) the suggestiveness of the *Venus and Adonis* dedication, with the word "heir" and the imagery about yielding a harvest, and the story in the poem itself, perhaps telling the truth about what had happened between Elizabeth and Oxford, resulting in the birth of a purple (royal) flower and Venus crying out, "Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right."**

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Her Catholic subjects would have been happy about it; in addition, Southampton, a young English nobleman, was a royal ward in the custody of Burghley, architect of the Protestant reformation. What better choice?

The stumbling block was that Elizabeth would not or could not make any such announcement without Burghley's support. I

believe she wanted to, but that even with Burghley's support her reluctance had hardened over time – with the Vavasour affair and Oxford having an illegitimate son in 1581, and with his return to Anne Cecil to attempt to beget an heir to his earldom. By the end of that decade, much water had passed under the bridge.

All of it came to a crunch in the early 1590s. Things had to be decided, otherwise factions would develop and the country could find itself in civil war, especially if the Queen suddenly died. Here it seems the older and younger generations parted ways. The older generation would have agreed to go through with naming Southampton regardless of all the perceived problems.

Some of the surface events that converged in the early 1590s were: (1) the public dedication to Southampton by Burghley's secretary, John Clapham; (2) the private procreation sonnets Oxford wrote to Southampton; (3) Oxford's adoption of the pen name "William Shakespeare" with two public dedications to Southampton (*Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*), elevating him in the public mind, but without directly saying why; (4) the 36 lines spoken by Venus to Adonis, mirroring the theme and words of the private procreation sonnets; (5) the suggestiveness of the *Venus and Adonis* dedication, with the word "heir" and the imagery about yielding a harvest, and the story in the poem itself, perhaps telling the truth about what had happened between Elizabeth and Oxford, resulting in the birth of a purple (royal) flower and Venus crying out, "Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right"; and (6) the sudden rise of Southampton, including (as John Rollett has shown) public references to him as possessing special or royal stature.

The evidence is that Oxford and Burghley were united in this effort to persuade Southampton. The public campaign was indirect, but astute readers would grasp its meaning. And, sure enough, Southampton's stature grew – but not because of his pretty face and long hair!

In the early 1590s the young nobles thought both Burghley and Elizabeth would die soon. Essex had become the most popular nobleman in England, with more public support than the Queen; there was widespread dissatisfaction over the Cecil-run government. Southampton had every reason to believe he should reject the older generation's plan, which he did. He had good reason to believe there was a better way and an approach to succession that was far less of a compromise. But I don't believe he had a clear idea of what would happen. It was an age when they lived very much in the moment – except for Robert Cecil, who stayed several moves ahead.

Essex and Southampton and other young nobles had high ideals, the kind once held by Oxford himself. Their belief in honor and courage was so strong that they could well justify the use of force, military force, if it came to that. (And to do that they needed King James on their side; they needed to check any show of force that he might make, but they would not put him on the English throne if they could help it. James wanted peace with Spain; they wanted anything but peace with Spain.)

I believe the Shakespeare authorship issue grew out of the succession crisis of the early 1590s, with Oxford adopting the pen name to lend support to Southampton from behind the scenes,

culminating in the use of *Richard II* to inspire and instruct the 1601 conspirators – the goal being to get to Elizabeth and persuade her to deal with succession and name Southampton as heir apparent. (Whether that was Essex's goal is unknown.)

I'm sure Oxford lived in dread all during the 1590s up until February 8, 1601, when his worst fears were confirmed. Even then, it appears in the post-rebellion sonnets that he kept on believing it was possible for Southampton to succeed the Queen, but only if she raised her hand and named him.

(Meanwhile, Oxford would have given up all hope of publicly marrying Elizabeth when he returned to Anne Cecil in late 1581 and they began trying to produce an heir to his earldom. In the early 1590s, however, he was a widower and perhaps he thought again about marrying the Queen.)

**SM:** As you noted, Southampton refused to go along with the plan to marry Elizabeth Vere (and paid a steep financial price for it). You're saying that Southampton didn't relinquish any expectation of succeeding Elizabeth -- in other words, that he felt that he could defy the Cecils' wishes and still become King Henry IX? **HW:** I think he felt if he accepted the older generation's plan he would be only a puppet king, under Cecil control. Essex was enormously popular and both Elizabeth and Burghley would probably die soon, in which case Essex would be kingmaker.

**SM:** And in 1593 Oxford adopts the Shakespeare name to promote Southampton's public stature?

**HW:** Yes. Oxford will support him one way or another, although he must fear the worst. The appearance of "Shakespeare" grew out of the succession crisis. Oxford is breaking from the Cecils to support the possible succession of his royal son. In a way this is a classic story that Oxford was actually living; his break with the government, which he had supported so loyally, cost him everything.

**SM:** The decade drags on. Elizabeth does nothing to name a successor. There is no rapprochement between Southampton and the Cecils. The elder Cecil dies in 1598, and it is business as usual with Robert Cecil as Elizabeth's principal adviser.

**HW:** Once Burghley dies the gloves come off. The earls know that Robert Cecil will be ruthless. Oxford arranges the "Comparative Discourse" to be inserted in Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, published in 1598. "Shakespeare" suddenly becomes the author of twelve plays and his name starts to appear on quartos of the plays. "Shakespeare" is associated with Southampton and is trying to prepare the public for various ways of dealing with, and accepting, the inevitable succession.

**SM:** Let's get to the events of February 1601. Do you think the Essex Rebellion was actually planned by Essex and Southampton, harboring a realistic expectation that they could reach the Queen and get her to agree with them, or do you think it may have been concocted by Robert Cecil with the specific aim of sidelining those two troublemakers once and for all?

**HW:** This is a great question and I'd have to say both. The earls

did want to get to Elizabeth and have her call a Parliament on succession. But there's evidence that Cecil had agents in their midst, that he found ways to ignite their fears and caused them to act before they were ready. He knew in advance everything they might do and lured them into his trap. Paul Hammer has discovered that Essex and Southampton had planned the actual "rebellion" to take place the following week.

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**SM:** In addition to having extraordinary creative talent, Oxford also seems to have a good sense of realpolitik. Do you see him as having concluded by 1601 that Elizabeth would never name a successor, and that the only chance to influence the succession was for Essex and Southampton to try to reach her directly (realizing that even this ploy had only a slim chance)?

**HW:** Yes. From the tone of the Dark Lady sonnets, which I believe are written to and about Elizabeth, she had made a promise

(Continued on page 12)

(Whittemore, cont. from p. 11)

to name Southampton and he continued to think she might be moved to keep it. The end of that sequence is Sonnet 152; in that verse he holds nothing back. "In act thy bed-vow broke," he tells her; it's not about a woman cheating on her husband or whatever. She broke her promise to him about their son. She broke "two oaths" – one to him, one to Southampton. "And all my honest faith in thee is lost," and so on, right to the final line, in which

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**Until the Queen's death, Robert Cecil was also walking the high wire. Two long, dangerous years of secret, treasonous correspondence with James. Even after the Queen died and James was proclaimed, there was a protracted period of waiting for Elizabeth's funeral while the new king was slowly making his way south. James was so afraid that he didn't dare get to London before the Queen's body was safely stowed. He demanded that Southampton travel north to see him and proclaim his loyalty in person. Southampton was very popular and Oxford must have had ways of getting the truth out even if both he and Southampton were killed. The royal history plays of Shakespeare were populated by dangerous individuals, and so was the contemporary royal history that they were living.**

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he confesses that she made him "swear against the truth so foul a lie." This is serious stuff, the final cry of a man dedicated to truth but ultimately forced to betray himself.

**SM:** With the arrests of Southampton and Essex on February 8, 1601, it's all but over. As you argue in *The Monument*, Oxford does what he can to save Southampton's life, as chronicled in the 100-sonnet sequence (27-126), which remains a private document for another eight years. Does he, however, publicly note the end

of the Tudor dynasty in "The Phoenix and the Turtle"?

**HW:** Yes, definitely, soon afterward in 1601. It demonstrates that, in one sense, Oxford knew it was all over when the rebellion failed. He would keep holding out hope, but it's over: "Leaving no posterity,/ 'Twas not their infirmity,/ It was married chastity." Sounds like the paradox of a Virgin Queen who bore a son, but could not acknowledge him. "Truth and beauty buried be" -- Oxford and Elizabeth, their union and the future of the dynasty, gone.

**SM:** In negotiating (presumably with Robert Cecil) to spare Southampton's life, we picture Cecil as holding all the cards, and you state in *The Monument* that Oxford's end of the bargain was (a) to relinquish any claim to the throne on behalf of Southampton, and (b) to relinquish any claim of authorship of the works attributed to Shakespeare. However, might Oxford have held a strong card of his own – the threat to go public with the true story of Southampton's parentage? If so, he must have had a mechanism to get that news out even if something happened to him.

**HW:** Sure. Until the Queen's death, Robert Cecil was also walking the high wire. Two long, dangerous years of secret, treasonous correspondence with James. Even after the Queen died and James was proclaimed, there was a protracted period of waiting for Elizabeth's funeral while the new king was slowly making his way south. James was so afraid that he didn't dare get to London before the Queen's body was safely stowed. He demanded that Southampton travel north to see him and proclaim his loyalty in person. Southampton was very popular and Oxford must have had ways of getting the truth out even if both he and Southampton were killed. The royal history plays of Shakespeare were populated by dangerous individuals, and so was the contemporary royal history that they were living.

**SM:** This brings us to the end game, that is, the deaths of Elizabeth in 1603 and Oxford a year later. Do you think the Sonnets can be read to suggest that he never completely gave up his hope that Southampton might be acknowledged?

**HW:** Yes, I do. Right up to the end, he must have thought she could change her mind.

**SM:** Specifically, do the "will sonnets" reflect a hope that Elizabeth might change her will (her last will and testament) to provide for Southampton?

**HW:** I agree that he seems to be saying this in Sonnet 135, for example. First he plays upon "will" for "Will Shakespeare" – a name he had adopted several years earlier, but now in 1601 it's a mask being glued to his face by the government (which means Elizabeth, whether or not she was in control during those last two years; he seems to think she was). He also plays upon "will" for the Queen's royal will. And yes, there is a suggestion that he is asking her to add a codicil to her will ("Add to thy will") in line 11.

**SM:** Even if that is so, Oxford must have realized that Robert Cecil would have access to such a will.

**HW:** At some point Oxford could fight back only as an artist who took the truth and used it to create a kind of dream life for

the stage and in print. He used allegories, myths and words with multiple meanings. In that realm, whether Cecil had access to her will or not is beside the point. Truth is truth, as he told Cecil, and nothing you do can make it untrue.

**SM:** It is curious that no will was ever found for either Elizabeth or Oxford.

**HW:** Yes, it certainly is. It should raise a red flag. If she wanted so much for James to be king, why not put it in her will? Obviously she would not and did not.

**SM:** Were the Dark Lady sonnets them-

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selves (or any of them) actually delivered to Elizabeth, or are they too venomous? Is Oxford expressing his rage and disappointment only on paper?

**HW:** He was venting, but also recording the true history that he experienced. But I find it hard to believe he sent them to her. On the other hand, she certainly knew of Sonnets 138 and 144, which had been printed in 1599 in slightly different forms.

**SM:** In *The Monument* you maintain that part of the bargain Oxford made with Robert Cecil to spare Southampton's life was that Oxford's identity as "Shakespeare"

would never be revealed. That implies that, if circumstances had been different, Oxford would have revealed his literary identity. The need for a literary "cover" is one of the central tenets of most Oxfordians' beliefs. Even putting aside the PT theory, if it had been publicly known that a top nobleman had written all this, wouldn't it have been embarrassing to many in Elizabeth's court and in foreign courts? Do you think that Oxford intended for his identity to be revealed after his death, not during his lifetime, or do you think that if Southampton had become king, Oxford would have revealed it, and everybody would have lived happily ever after (including all those whose egos had been bruised)?

**HW:** I think Oxford had expected to be credited with his work at some point after his death. This was not a meek or humble man worrying about offending people. He was committed to the truth. The bargain he had to make, which included working behind the scenes to support James, shamed him deeply. These people, mainly the Cecil faction, ruthlessly tore apart Oxford's world, starting with the nobility itself. They made sure to bring about the deaths of Norfolk, Mary Queen of Scots and the Earl of Essex, to name just three victims. They tore the truth from its roots, yanked it loose and planted another dynasty. Oxford would not have worried about offending them.

He left it to Southampton to break the agreement if he wished. I don't know whether Southampton wanted to cause an uprising by publishing the sonnets in 1609. It may be that the quarto was suppressed by the government, or it may have been a limited printing meant for private friends to hide away in their libraries. In any event, it vanished in its intended form for longer than a century.

If, instead, plans had been made for Southampton to become king, most of the sonnets would never have been written, since most grew out of the completely opposite outcome. Oxford would not have needed to adopt "Shakespeare" as a pen name to support Southampton. He would not have inserted additions to the plays, to preserve the truth, the way he did. I think Oxford would have revealed himself as the writer of the plays and the

English people would have learned more of the truth and, ironically, appreciated more about the greatness of Elizabeth's rule and reign.

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**SM:** Do you think Southampton himself arranged for the publication of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*?

(Continued on page 14)

(Whittemore, cont. from p. 13)

**HW:** Yes. Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn wrote in *This Star of England* that Southampton would have considered it a “sacred trust.” I agree with that.

**SM:** If so, that amplifies the meaning of “begetter” in the dedication.

**HW:** Yes. Ironically, it supports the notion that the “begetter” was the one who procured the sonnets for publisher Thorpe, in this case Southampton, who was also the “begetter” who inspired them, as Oxford writes in Sonnet 78: “Yet be most proud of that which I compile,/ Whose influence is thine, and borne of thee.” (Oxford is

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tern which reflects the letter  
counts in “Edward de Vere.”  
The man who took pains to  
create a signature looking  
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and a coronet would have  
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construct that dedication.**

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actually confirming that he is the one “compiling” or arranging and numbering the sonnets.)

**SM:** Speaking of the dedication, who wrote it?

**HW:** My guess is that Oxford wrote and “constructed” it while Southampton was in prison, when, as a convicted traitor, his noble title was forfeited and he became “Mr.,” a commoner. The use of “Mr. W.H.” points to the prison time period, which is the heart of the sonnets, and to the reversal of Southampton’s name and rank. Southampton was also an “adventurer” who, even while he was in the Tower, secured financing for the 1602 Gosnold voyage, which discovered Cape Cod.

**SM:** Does it contain a hidden message? John Rollett came up with the 6-2-4 pattern, revealing “These Sonnets All By Ever,” but that doesn’t explain the rest of the message, which would require adding “The Forth” to the first five words.

**HW:** It seems to me that Rollett came close to the answer, starting with the 6-2-4 pattern which reflects the letter counts in “Edward de Vere.” The man who took pains to create a signature looking simultaneously like a crown and a coronet would have taken even greater pains to construct that dedication.

**SM:** Do you think the Southampton PT theory has set back the progress of the Oxfordian movement?

**HW:** To me that’s an ironic view, because I see it as providing the only answer to the authorship question that makes sense. In my view, Oxford’s relationship with Southampton, that of a father and his son whom he regards as heir to the throne, is the reason he adopted “Shakespeare” for his greatest works. That reason was political, just as so many of the plays are political.

**SM:** Do you recognize a bisexual story in the sonnets?

**HW:** The sonnets are neither sensual nor erotic, certainly not like some passages in *Venus and Adonis*. By category they are “love” poems, but in my view Oxford is creating a double image, so these little poems carry much heavier freight than any bisexual interpretation can carry.

(Barbara Crowley, cont. from p. 6)

the years, and she was always behind the scenes encouraging others in her optimistic and quiet ways. She was particularly pleased when Mark Rylance told us that he modeled The Shakespeare Authorship Trust in London after our eclectic and open-minded Roundtable. And, like John Shahan’s Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, she wanted to get the question accepted everywhere.

Barbara’s father was the author and social scientist S. Colum Gilfillan, himself a longtime Oxfordian and head of one of the early Oxfordian societies. She loved to tell the story about how her father wanted her

to read Dorothy Ogburn’s book about the authorship, but like a lot of young people then and now, she didn’t want listen to the older generation; Barbara confessed at first she had no interest. However, when she actually sat down and read that book, she had to admit that she thought her father was absolutely right! Fortunately, he lived long enough so they could share their special interest.

Barbara was raised in Hyde Park, Chicago, attended U. High (University of Chicago Laboratory Schools), and earned a BA in Psychology at the University of Chicago in 1944, where she met and married John Crowley. John and Barbara maintained a partnership throughout their marriage, with Barbara playing the part of First Lady of Pasadena when John was mayor for two years. Barbara believed her biggest accomplishment in life was her six children. A loving mother, she respected their differences and encouraged them to pursue their own interests. As they grew up, she began her second career as an attorney. She attended Loyola Law School, where she was one of the few women in her class. Barbara’s sense of civic responsibility motivated her to be an active participant in her local community. She generously gave her time and energy to many organizations including the Pasadena PTA, Descanso Gardens Guild, Women at Work, League of Women Voters, University of Chicago Alumni and Los Angeles Beautiful, to name a few. But her primary interest lay in the Shakespeare authorship question. Thrilled by this real-life mystery, she studied and championed it throughout her life. There are so many of us who will miss her and treasure our memories.

— Carole Sue Lipman, President,  
Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable

## Book Review

**Agincourt: A Novel**

by Bernard Cornwell  
(HarperCollins, 2008)

Reviewed by Richard Desper

According to Bernard Cornwell, “The battle of Agincourt (Azincourt was and remains the French spelling) was one of the most remarkable events of medieval Europe, a battle whose reputation far outranks its importance ... it’s certain that Hastings, Blenheim, Victoria, Trafalgar, and Waterloo were more influential on the course of history, yet Agincourt still holds its extraordinary place in English legend.”

Nearly 600 years later, we know of Agincourt because it formed the keystone of an English heritage, told in a play about the life of an English king by Edward, Earl of Oxford, and published under his pseudonym, “William Shakespeare.” “Shakespeare’s” efforts at telling us how it happened and what it meant have provided one of the finest works for the English stage.

The play itself is a masterful treatment, but is limited in scope by the available time and space of the English stage. It leaves us with many questions. Cornwell’s historical novel affords us a deeper knowledge of how it happened and what it meant, following the actions of the principals: royals, nobles, and soldiers, who found themselves in northern France in the autumn of 1415.

Cornwell does a masterful job in the portrayal of his principal characters. Henry V is King of England by right of blood, by right of arms, and by choice of God, who, in Henry’s mind, spared him at the 1403 battle of Shrewsbury, where an arrow from one of Hotspur’s archers dealt him a near-mortal facial wound. Henry, perceiving himself as God’s favored, shows a heavy hand against the religious dissident Lollards in a scene graphically portrayed, and counts on God’s support in asserting his

family’s claim to the throne of France. It was now 78 years since the beginning of the off-and-on Hundred Years War, fought essentially over English efforts to assert this claim.

The novel’s actual lead characters are two commoners. The first is Nicholas

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Hook, yeoman archer of outstanding skill, but enmeshed in a feud with hometown enemies. The second is Melisande, the illegitimate daughter of a French lord. Hook becomes an outlaw through the machinations of his hometown nemesis, the corrupt priest Sir Martin.

Nicholas and Melisande meet by chance at the 1414 siege of Soissons, a fortress city on the River Aisne. Soissons had been occupied a year earlier by troops of the Duke of Burgundy in a family

quarrel with his first cousin, King Charles VI of France. The garrison holding the city includes some 300 English longbow archers, one of whom is young Nicholas, who had chosen exile with a company of mercenaries as an alternative to outlawry. Responding to his cousin, the French king has Soissons besieged in by a French army. As the defenses of the town crumbled, most of the English archers took refuge in the town’s cathedral and negotiated surrender with a promise that they would be spared. After they laid down their arms, the French reneged and proceeded to massacre them. Moreover, the people of Soissons were treated as a defeated enemy, subject to rape and slaughter, even though they had been French up to the city’s capture a year earlier. The fall of Soissons became known in medieval history to the disgrace of French chivalry, and formed the background for events of the following year.

As for Nicholas, however, he never reached the cathedral, having diverted himself to rescue a young nun (Melisande) from rape. After witnessing the massacre of the English archers, the two fled to Calais, the one English stronghold in France. The English commander heard their story and sent them across the channel to the court of the King. Henry V received them and arranged for Nicholas to join a company of archers being raised for his planned invasion of France the following year.

At this point two more characters appear in the story. The first is a historical person: Sir John Cornewaille, a Knight of the Garter, a distinguished military leader and expert at arms. Nicholas joined his company. The next is Seigneur de Lanferelle, created by the author as Cornewaille’s French counterpart, the two being highly regarded in the tournaments

*(Continued on page 16)*

*(Agincourt, cont. from p. 15)*

of their respective countries. Furthermore, Lanferelle is father to Melisande. He had placed her in the nunnery in Soissons against her wishes in an effort to make her future secure; as she was born out of wedlock, he could not hope to secure her future with a suitable marriage.

Henry's army sailed to France in August 1415, landing near the small port town of Harfleur at the mouth of the Seine. When the king of France sent no army to support Harfleur, leaving the town to defend itself, the English presumed that the city would surrender within a week. However, the town held off the English,

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**The rain was a major boon for Henry: the next morning the French, most of them wearing heavy armor, faced a bog which would greatly hamper their movements. The large majority of the English were lightly-armored longbowmen, positioned behind their sharpened stake barricades between and at the flanks of the English men-at-arms, across the lower end of the field.**

**The French suffered from one major weakness: they had no single acknowledged leader on the field. After waiting four hours for a French attack, and knowing that his archers were out of bowshot from the French and that his men had to advance to Calais or starve, Henry had his men pick up their sharpened stakes and move forward, closer to the enemy.**

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rebuilding their walls at night after the English cannons had blasted them by day. After a month they parleyed for peace terms. Henry acceded to a three-day truce, during which Harfleur would send a small group into the French countryside to see whether their country was sending a relief force. When their hopes for rescue were dashed, they surrendered.

Henry's plan had originally been to capture Harfleur within a week, then to march further into Normandy, threatening Rouen or even Paris, hoping to force the French to take the field. History favored the English and their archers in the open field. However, Henry's army had suffered before Harfleur from dysentery and

from battle wounds. Also, the sunny days of summer were over and the roads could turn into a quagmire at any time. Henry had to act quickly, so he decided to march across the French countryside to Calais, his stronghold on the Channel, to show the world that the French couldn't stop him. Perception was reality, even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Henry and his "Band of Brothers" left Harfleur, looking for a battle between archers and knights. Cornwell gives us a fascinating discovery of the various implements and tactics of 15<sup>th</sup> century warfare, discussing the bodkin, the English armor-piercing arrowhead, versus the crossbow bolt, a missile which could slightly outdistance the arrow but took longer to reload. The march to Calais would require a crossing of the river Somme, but a small French force opposed them at each ford. The fords were narrow, and with the English crossing a few hundred at a time, the defenders would have a decided advantage. As days were added to the trip, English food supplies dwindled. Eventually, Henry outmaneuvered the covering force. By this time, however, scenting the possibility of a victory, the French had assembled a large army astride the only possible roadway, just a day or two from Calais, near an old castle called Agincourt.

Henry's army came to this point exhausted and hungry, knowing it was do or die against the opposing force, which greatly outnumbered them. The English had Henry, but the French were led by three royal dukes, cousins to King Charles VI, and two able military leaders, the Marshal of France and the Constable of France. The French king and his son, the Dauphin, were absent from the field, knowing the disastrous effects the capture of one or both of them would entail.

As the English camped overnight, a torrential rain fell on the field, just recently plowed for winter wheat. The rain was a major boon for Henry: the next morning the French, most of them wearing heavy armor, faced a bog which would greatly hamper their movements. The large majority of the English were lightly-armored longbowmen, positioned behind their sharpened stake barricades between and at the flanks of the English men-at-arms, across the lower end of the field.

The French suffered from one major weakness: they had no single acknowledged leader on the field. After waiting four hours for a French attack, and knowing that his archers were out of bowshot from the French and that his men had to advance to Calais or starve, Henry had his men pick up their sharpened stakes and move forward, closer to the enemy. The English were out of formation, moving forward with their gear, and their defensive stakes were useless at the moment. This was the time for a French attack. But the French had no one in charge and no one ordered an attack. The French watched while the English marched up the field, pounded their stakes in position, and reformed.

Henry finally got the attack from the French. Apparently by chance, some of their horsemen charged forward from the flanks, provoking clouds of English arrows. With this the first wave of French men-at-arms slogged forward in their heavy armor, going knee- and hip-deep into the mud. The footing was terrible for both sides, but the French were much more handicapped

*(Continued on page 32)*

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## Book Review

### *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare": The Literary Life of Edward de Vere in Context*

by Richard Malim (McFarland & Company, 2012)

Reviewed by Earl Showerman

Richard Malim's book, *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare,"* is a superb addition to the growing list of Shakespeare authorship titles published in recent years. Malim's primary focus is on the singular role Oxford appears to have played in the English literary revolution that commenced in the mid-1570s, following his return from Italy. Employing dense, intertextual analyses supported by ample endnotes, Malim proposes a radical reversal of the historic assumptions of who influenced whom in the decades before the publication of *Venus and Adonis* and the appearance of Shakespeare's quartos in the early 1590s. Malim argues convincingly that John Lyly, Edmund Spenser, Phillip Sidney and Christopher Marlowe were actually the "children of the revolution," one set in motion by the genius of "Shakespeare."

The 300+-page volume has eight chapters and several valuable appendices, including a brilliant critique of the traditional biography in "William Shakespeare: The Irrelevant Life." Thirty-two pages of detailed endnotes insure the reader can follow up on the author's primary sources. Particularly important are Malim's insightful analyses of George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) and Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), offering new evidence from both attesting to the theatric pedigree of Edward de Vere and debunking the Statford actor-writer myth.

Chapter 1: "English Literature 1530-1575" begins with a quote from *The Triumph of the English Language*, "Seldom indeed has the spirit of an age changed so quickly as that which viewed the vernacular as inherently rude and uneloquent. The suddenness with which writers began to recognize the eloquent nature of the mother tongue enables us to date the turning point not earlier than 1575 nor later than 1580." While there was an outpouring of Latin and Greek translations during this early period, the terms commonly used to describe English poetry and prose before 1575 included "barbarous," "rude," "base" and "unpolished." Malim describes the prevailing contemporary cultural bias in English criticism against French and Italian influences, with the exception of the poet Petrarch, who "introduced the Italian language into literature readily understandable and appreciated by his countrymen, thus much influencing these story-writers following him, and the whole of European literature, including English."

Chapter 2: "The Life 1550-1575" reviews the early education of Edward de Vere in the household of Sir Thomas Smith, who was

compared to Plato by a contemporary and reckoned by many to be the best scholar at Cambridge University. In his description of Oxford's studies at Cecil House, Malim argues that de Vere must have studied the Greek Bible, which would help explain why he attended the Greek Church during his sojourn in Venice. Malim

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**In his description of Oxford's studies at Cecil House, Malim argues that de Vere must have studied the Greek Bible, which would help explain why he attended the Greek Church during his sojourn in Venice. Malim pays particular attention to variations in a poem by Ronsard, originally published in 1565, that prophesies great things for English literature. The parallels between Oxford's difficult early relations with Anne Cecil and Bertram's abandonment of Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* are well developed, and a number of early topical allusions are presented, including references to Cambridge jargon in several plays.**

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(Continued on page 18)

(*Making of Shakespeare, cont. from p. 17*)

gold bell and chain in *The Comedy of Errors*. The importance of other works, including George Gascoigne's *A Hundred Sundrie Flowers* (1573), Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567), and Richard Edwards' *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1573) and *Palamon and Arcite* (1566), is emphasized. Malim suggests Oxford was an anti-Catholic spy, and offers a proposed sequence of the apocryphal history plays including *Edmund Ironside*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *Edward III*, *Thomas of Wood-*

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**Chapter 5: “The Revolution in the Theatre” begins by suggesting that the opening of the Theatre in Shoreditch in 1576 was the “Bastille moment” for the revolution, followed a year later by the opening of the Curtain theatre. Malim offers an extended commentary on Stephen Gosson’s *The School of Abuse* (1579), which was dedicated to Phillip Sidney and in which Gosson complained bitterly of the effect of plays on contemporary behavior. Malim writes, “From Gosson’s point of view, these plays, being the work of the devil, must have been very superior productions: the devil would deploy only the most sophisticated and damaging weapons.” Malim concludes that by 1582 a “highly advanced, sophisticated repertoire of plays” was in production, a full decade before Marlowe and “Shakespeare” appeared on the scene.**

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*stock*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard III*.

Chapter 3: “Oxford in Italy” is rather brief; Malim starts by presenting evidence of Oxford’s familiarity with foreign languages, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian and Spanish, music, and law, before reciting details of Oxford’s travels through Italy as summarized by Phillip Johnson. Malim also cites the

work of the late Noemi Magri in establishing a number of Italian topicalities, which appear in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and lists the many untranslated Italian literary sources that Shakespeare employed.

Chapter 4: “The Revolution in English Literature” is another short chapter noting the dramatic change in the perception of English as a suitable language for poetry and prose in the mid-1570s. Malim quotes Holinshed’s *Chronicle* (1577) to support his contention that the vernacular had developed remarkably in just a few years: “... there was no speech under the sun spoken in our time, that hath or can have more variety of words, copiousness of phrases, of figures or flowers of eloquence, than hath our English tongue.” Malim quotes others, including Henry Peacham, George Pettie, Richard Mulcaster, Thomas Nashe, George Puttenham and Francis Meres, to establish that by 1590 a major literary revolution had occurred, one fueled by the Earl of Oxford.

Chapter 5: “The Revolution in the Theatre” begins by suggesting that the opening of the Theatre in Shoreditch in 1576 was the “Bastille moment” for the revolution, followed a year later by the opening of the Curtain theatre. Malim offers an extended commentary on Stephen Gosson’s *The School of Abuse* (1579), which was dedicated to Phillip Sidney and in which Gosson complained bitterly of the effect of plays on contemporary behavior. Malim writes, “From Gosson’s point of view, these plays, being the work of the devil, must have been very superior productions: the devil would deploy only the most sophisticated and damaging weapons.” Malim concludes that by 1582 a “highly advanced, sophisticated repertoire of plays” was in production, a full decade before Marlowe and “Shakespeare” appeared on the scene.

Chapter 6: “The Life 1576-1590” is an extended discussion of the myriad literary sources connected to the Earl of Oxford, with brief commentaries on all 38 Shakespeare plays as they relate to topical events during this period. Starting with Gabriel Harvey’s “Speculum Tuscanismi” and quoting from the works of George Chapman and John Soothern, Malim paints Oxford’s literary reputation in truly glowing colors. He then focuses on the multiple Shakespeare plays that appear to reflect Oxford’s marital crisis in the late 1570s and his concerns over the legitimacy of his first daughter, Elizabeth Vere. Malim produces what may be new evidence of Oxford’s early theatrical career, citing Gilbert Talbot’s comments on a 1579 production of *Murderous Michael*, a play the author argues reappeared in print under the title *Arden of Feversham* (1592). Importantly, *Arden* had several murderous characters, including George Shakebag and Black Will, who was “in trouble over the Gad’s Hill incident, alluded to in *Famous Victories* and *1 Henry IV*.” Malim then outlines the importance of specific works by John Lyly, Anthony Munday, and Thomas Watson, which were dedicated to Oxford. Malim takes his cue from Eva Turner Clark in presenting an array of speculations regarding early dating and alternative titles to virtually all the plays in the canon. Nonetheless, he reveals an extensive array of credible early topicalities, allegorical possibilities, and rare sources.

Perhaps the most original contribution Malim makes here is his extended intertextual analysis of the rhetorical figures described in George Puttenham’s *Arte of English Poesie* (1589),

including more than twenty examples of rhetorical figures that suggest Puttenham was influenced by early “Shakespeare.” Malim suggests that Edward de Vere was both a leading actor as well as writer of dramas performed at court from 1580 onwards, and that these dramas were rewritten and given new titles for the public stage. Further, he believes the later dramas, particularly *Hamlet*, reflect an evolving attitude toward the representation of actors on the stage; the buffoons of Pyramus and Thisbe become the “the creators and guardians of history” of Prince Hamlet’s Mouse Trap. Malim considers this as evidence that “Oxford is seeking to glorify the stage to raise the status of the profession and to justify the apparent disgrace of his own appearances.”

Chapter 7: “The Life 1590-1604” begins with an analysis of Thomas Nashe’s preface to Robert Greene’s *Menaphon* (1589), with its reference to “whole Hamlets” and “handfuls of tragical speeches,” as well as Nashe’s role in the Pamphlet Wars. Malim considers that Oxford had a nervous breakdown early in this period and that his late tragedies, which generally end in calamity, reflect a far more skeptical view of the world than the comedies and romances of the 1580s. In his extended treatment of the sonnets in relation to the narrative poems, Malim challenges a homoerotic interpretation, concluding that the “Southampton” sonnets reflect the “richly obsessional outpourings of a besotted but concealed father frustrated by his inability to claim his relationship with his splendid son.”<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 8: “Aftermath” begins by suggesting that the publication of the “Good Quarto” of *Hamlet*, imprinted with the Royal Arms just months after the death of Oxford, was a unique signal of royal recognition, and that the Christmas revels of 1604-05 bore all the signs of a farewell “Shakespeare-fest,” during which seven plays penned by Oxford were performed along with Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour* and his satiric send-up of the Stratford man, *Every Man Out of His Humor*. Malim emphasizes the singular importance of Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat English Gentleman* (1622), where Oxford heads the list of great poets and “Shakespeare” is not mentioned. Malim states that the “only logical conclusion is that Peacham knew that Shakespeare was Oxford’s pseudonym, and there was no need to mention that secondary name.” Malim includes a brief description of the politics behind the publication of the First Folio in 1623 in the context of the Spanish marriage crisis and the literary losses associated with the closure of the theaters in 1642. He then traces the threads of poetry and criticism that have enhanced the claims of William Shakspeare and helped to expunge Oxford as poet and dramatist

from the canonical record.

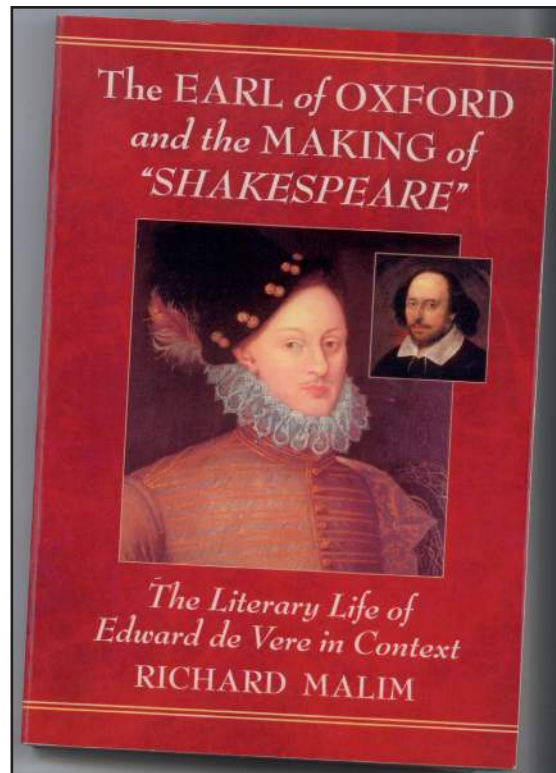
Richard Malim’s previous contribution as general editor of *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward De Vere* (Parapress, 2004) was a prelude to *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of “Shakespeare,”* and is another ambitious work that deserves the attention of literary scholars and lovers of Shakespeare. His early dating speculations and theory concerning Oxford’s acting career are radical departures from convention, but he has compiled a detailed literary biography that shines new light on

the mystery of Shakespeare’s identity. I found his tendency to refer to alternative pages in his own text for explication to be a stylistic distraction, but his prose is clear and his logic is credible. I was a bit disappointed that he failed to mention important new findings reported in recent issues of *Shakespeare Matters* and *Brief Chronicles*<sup>2</sup> that could have strengthened specific elements of his text. Nonetheless, this is an outstanding contribution to Shakespeare studies and to the other recent authorship titles published by McFarland & Company.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Malim does not cite the previous work of Hank Whittimore, Charles Beauclerk, Paul Altrocchi, Paul Streitz, Helen Gordon or Elizabeth Sears, all of whom have all proposed arguments that the Earl of Southampton was Oxford’s bastard son by Queen Elizabeth. Implicit in Malim’s commentary is the suggestion rather that Mary Brown, the Countess of Southampton, was Henry Wriothesley’s natural mother by the Earl of Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> A few of the *Shakespeare Matters* articles that are available free online and could have enhanced Malim’s core arguments include: “From a Never Writer....News: The Famous Poet ‘Shakes His Spear’” (2006), “Songs in Shakespeare” (2009), and “Shakespeare’s Plutarchan Nomenclature” (2009). *Brief Chronicles* articles that would have strengthened Malim’s case (all from volume I, 2009) include “Shakespeare’s Will... Considered Too Curiously,” “Edward de Vere’s Hand in *Titus Andronicus*,” “Francis Meres and the Earl of Oxford” and “Shakespeare’s Many Much Ado’s: Alcestis, Hercules and *Love’s Labour’s Wonne*.” Malim also fails to cite the research of Stephanie Hughes on Sir Thomas Smith, and makes no mention of *De Vere as Shakespeare* (2006) by William Farina or *The Shakespere Controversy: An Analysis of the Authorship Theories* (2009) by Warren Hope and Kim Holston, earlier Oxfordian titles published by McFarland & Company.



## Book Reviews: Shakspeare's Data and Deification

Reviewed by William J. Ray

1. Robin Fox, *Shakespeare's Education: Schools, Lawsuits, Theater and the Tudor Miracle* (Laugwitz Verlag, Buchholz, Germany, 2012).

2. Anthony J. Pointon, *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare: The Theft of William Shakspeare's Identity* (Parapress, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, United Kingdom, 2011).

3. Julia Thomas, *Shakespeare's Shrine: The Bard's Birthplace and the Invention of Stratford-upon-Avon* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2012).

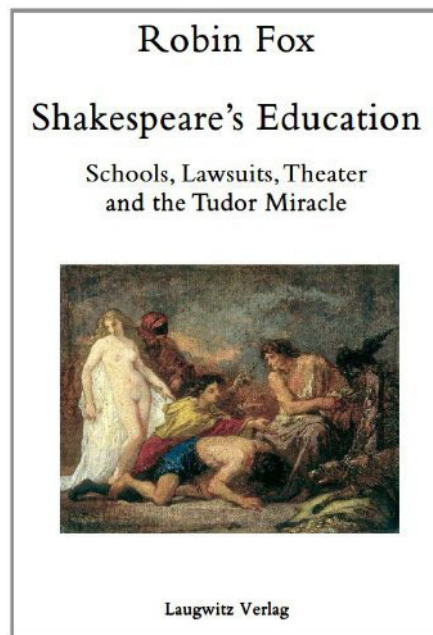
The first of the three books shows a master's knowledge of the Elizabethan educational policy vis-a-vis Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. The second skillfully analyzes the circumstances which he experienced as shown from the historical record. The third demonstrates the mytho-material process by which Shakspeare's home in Stratford gradually and comfortably transmogrified during the Victorian era into a secular manger of national Genius.

Robin Fox is renowned as an anthropologist. In contrast to the specialized vocabulary which is the academic's priestly right, *Shakespeare's Education* is written in a relaxed, unassuming style. Fox tells us his own education in Shakespeare, the work and person, and something of his journey to doubting the traditional attribution.

As a memoir of pre- and post-War Britain, the book is reminiscent of Oliver Sacks's *Uncle Tungsten*, Robert Byron's *Road to Oxiana* and Henry Green's *Pack My Bag*. Fox also draws upon his own 2004 book, *Participant Observer: Memoir of a Transatlantic Life*. He experienced Hamlet, for instance, as a needlessly histrionic personality, who nevertheless was able to bend others to his will—incidentally, an excellent model for success in any of the

social sciences.

Somewhere towards the end of one's excursion through *Shakespeare's Education*, one realizes this is the definitive statement to date on whether Shakspeare had sufficient learning to write the Shakespeare canon. Apparently not. Moreover, Fox spends a good deal of the book show-



ing perfect congruences with another Elizabethan's education, that of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.

Fox's argument is informed by his publications in *The Oxfordian*: "Shakespeare, Oxford, and the Grammar School Question" (2009) and "A Matter of Pronunciation" (2010). He includes chapters showing the effects of Oxford's education and the works—in particular *Timon of Athens*—that seem to follow effortlessly from his particular education in the 1560s. The book's Appendix is a brief book review. Notes, acknowledgments and an extensive

bibliography round out the work of 182 pages.

Like some other thinkers who found no grounds to connect Shakspeare and Shakespeare, Fox points out blatant anomalies, such as Rosenkranz and Guildenstern, names easily available from Peregrine Bertie's letters in the Cecil library, and thus accessible to Oxford, but inaccessible to an unlettered tradesman. There are thousands of such curiosities.

Fox's substantial contribution to the field is his thorough familiarity with the 16<sup>th</sup> century "Great Transformation" involving the English Grammar Schools, perfect empirical documentation for Max Weber's theory of the rise of the mercantile class. This transformation began under Henry VII and was essentially completed during the reign of James I. The grammar schools trained the "New Men," administrators of the State and private property, as well as the educators and parsons who formed the backbone of the Anglican system.

Fox rightly notes that the main mover of the shift away from feudalism, Henry VII, is not exalted in the Shakespeare canon. That would be mandatory hagiography if a burgher wrote Shakespeare, but its absence becomes understandable if a holdover from feudal England were telling the tale. A believer in the medieval Great Chain of Being would have nothing good to say about the Great Transformation. Rather, Sonnet 125 conveys lordly contempt for the coming age of Materialism and Progress.

By the same token, were Shakspeare of Stratford the genius who wrote *Venus and Adonis*, one would expect him to have been extolled as the paragon of the successful Grammar Schools. Fox found no note or notice that this happened, even though, at least in theory, any Grammar School student with thousands of hours of Latin could have created Ovid-like poetry in an English idiom.

Rather than go into speculations about the possibilities of Man, Fox proposes that Edward de Vere, Lord Oxford, perfectly fit the background and training needed to have written the epic poem and its successors. And, of course, Oxford received precisely the Grammar School education that a Stratford phenom would have had. The same learning applied to high and low. Ironically, this national policy of education was led by Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishops Cranmer and Parker, William Lyly, Thomas More—right down to Cheke, Ascham, William Cecil, and William Adams, the latter group of New Men who were known by and who knew the young Oxford. According to Richard Malim, Ronsard was an observer at the scene and prophesied that Oxford would bring this transformation to its literary, linguistic height—that apotheosis being later called the English Renaissance of 1580-1604.

Fox finds the grammatical and literary imbroglios of the time replicated in the early Shakespearean plays, something eminently possible for Oxford, since men involved with the educational policy were his tutors—Sir Thomas Smith, Laurence Nowell, and Arthur Golding. Not so for a Stratford boy, no matter how enlightened. This is circumstantial evidence joined to textual interpretation, but closely united and very persuasive. The simplest textual reference is to *Love's Labors Lost*, where we find Holofernes the Pedant and his arch remarks regarding English, Latin and Greek pronunciation. Whether the butt of the LLL characterization is Mulcaster, Don Antonio Perez, or Gabriel Harvey, or all of them, this issue was topical if the play was written in the 1570s, yet it would have been out of style under its traditional dating, offered to fit with rumors of Shakspeare residing in London.

The last fifty pages of the book contain downstream demonstrations of Oxford's extensive education, as opposed to Shakspeare's hypothetical education. These sections include Oxford's lawsuits, the embittered character of Timon, the financial shakedown that was wardship, specifically designed to decimate Oxford's medieval holdings and stature, the famous Harlackenden case, resolved now after hundreds of years, and the disposal of the

young Lord's property account-book as part of the coup. All reflect on an education doubly reflected in the Shakespeare plays.

The Appendix is a book review Fox wrote (of Marcus Nordlund's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Love*), which announced Fox's authorial doubts to the readership of a conventional journal (*The Evolutionary*

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*Review*). The journal printed it because Robin Fox wrote it, not as an editorial change in the understanding of the historical Shakespeare. Fox did not push his point. He told it like it is and invited the readers to investigate. *Shakespeare's Education* is likewise a tour de force of clarity, candor, and wisdom.

[*Shakespeare's Education* may be ordered via [www.elizabethanreview.com](http://www.elizabethanreview.com) in North America, and via [www.laugwitz.de](http://www.laugwitz.de) in other parts of the world.]

2. A.J. Pointon's approach to "Shakespeare's" identity is a scholarly reductio ad absurdum, with the novel twist that during all these years Shakspeare of Stratford has been the victim of an enormous misrepresentation. Why? Because he has been maligned as someone he wasn't and never pretended to be. Infamation of character. This leaves us one Stratford burgher Shakspeare and one loaded name, "Shakespeare," a completely unrelated entity. Shakspeare is the story in *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare*; Oxford gets only a couple of pages.

There are no footnotes, but knowledgeable readers will recognize that Pointon's statements are factual. While it makes for easier and more enjoyable reading, Pointon's style is open to the charge that the text is not tied sufficiently to the existing record, i.e., that it has no credibility. The book answers such a charge quite early with a list of twenty-six documents proving that Shakspeare was the family name through four generations, up to 1617. The list follows Chambers's and Schoenbaum's. In all but one case, Edmund Shakespeare's burial record, the Shakspeare family used the short-a, i.e., Shak/spere, spelling (Edmund was baptized Shakspeare.)

There is no documentary cause to muddle the two names, and never has been. Thus, by the twenty-fourth page Pointon buries one of the primary tenets of Stratfordiana—that Elizabethan orthography had no importance, hence, the great Shakespeare was born and raised in Stratford, treat it as fact. Assuming that as a fact, they are one and the same person. Pointon inflicts the unkindest cut of all upon this historical error, showing it to be the result of bias and its crippled partner, sloppy reasoning. The Shakspeare-equals-Shakespeare notion contravenes recorded fact.

There are a total of seventeen critical topics about Shakspeare in the study. Education was central. His early background did not relate to literacy skills, the threshold

(Continued on page 22)

(Data and Deification, cont. from p. 21)

of authorship credibility. Therefore artistic sensibility never applied. These were implied *a priori* instead.

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**From Pointon's research, Shakspeare's religion appeared to be closer to Puritanism than to Catholicism, as frequently and vociferously touted in recent conventional scholarship. The Catholic question is more properly a harmless status quo foray into historical research. While it inquires into Shakspeare, the preferred author source, it conveniently travels not one inch further than religious belief. As literary biography it is a false goal anyway, since Roman Catholicism finds little support within the Shakespeare canon. One would have to produce special pleading that "Shakespeare" was such a genius that he didn't let his core belief enter into a million words of literature.**

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conveniently travels not one inch further than religious belief. As literary biography it is a false goal anyway, since Roman Catholicism finds little support within the Shakespeare canon. One would have to produce special pleading that "Shakespeare" was such a genius that he didn't let his core belief enter into a million words of literature.

Continuing with Pointon's outline, Shakspeare's concentration on business did not have anything to do with writing. We know nothing of his computational skills, which likely were very competent. It has never been established that Shakspeare could not read and write. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* suggests that he had crude Latin skills.

Shakspeare's testimony in the Belott-Mountjoy case (1612) does not buttress the Stratfordian truism that he, "Shakespeare," was the most acclaimed playwright of the time. On the contrary, the episode damns the purported Magus of heroic virtue as the associate of London lowlifes. He couldn't state his age with specificity. Not a proof, but possible material for a *New Yorker* cartoon. An expert witness, he couldn't remember what year he first suggested the original deal for the disputing parties. He couldn't sign his name clearly. Yet he had to have almost completely memorized Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

The Shakespeare authorship controversy is a carnival arcade of absurdities, and Pointon enjoys every opportunity to highlight them.

Shakspeare's relentless march to wealth receives incontrovertible support from the record. Most scholars agree on this. With enough detail, his remarkable career could be an anecdote in someone's Everyman-biography of the upwardly-mobile post-Feudal mercantilist. The Stratford will summarizes that ambition, except for the absence in it of any connection between the material livelihood and books, plays, and writing. In this area of investigation, Pointon relies upon Diana Price's estimable examination of the contemporary record, using direct, painstaking comparison with lesser but similarly placed writers.

The issue of Shakspeare as an actor is

one of the weakest in the Oxfordian challenge to his authorship of the canon. By the same token, it is the glue that pulls together the "player" Shakspeare and the writer "Shakespeare." Whatever one concludes is conjectural. But Pointon uses reasonable inferences to achieve his points, as opposed to the assumptions, contrary to type and evidence, that typify the other side of the argument. It is elementary logic to support one's initial assumption instead of reasoning backwards from a pre-established result. For instance, Shakspeare's purchase

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of the Blackfriars Gatehouse can be used to buttress a Catholic sympathy. But Pointon notes that the previous government investigations did not seem to continue after Shakspeare made the purchase. "It was a bit late in his life to put himself at risk by getting involved with anti-Catholic forces in London" in 1613. The subtext is that Shakspeare had no interest in religious politics anyway. "The purchase looks most like an opportunistic, theatre-related project," Pointon concludes. The Burbages bought property in the theater districts. Shakspeare saw the opportunity for gain. None of them was Catholic.

In addition to any other historiographic problems with traditional Shakespeare scholarship, the guild's petulant refusal to study the surrounding history and events ultimately forecloses any opportunity to understand who did the writing. Anyone busy swinging a Blackfriars Gate property deal and paying off its mortgage within six months is not about to be collaborating with John Fletcher revising *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

We encounter here as in much elsewhere in the field a closed horizon to anything but the story told us as trusting children in grade school: Shakespeare left home, went to London, and wrote thirty-seven plays. As myth, it is comforting, not unlike Grimm's Fairy Tales. As literary-historical inquiry, it is calcified doctrine that turns the principles of human creativity into an incomprehensible, warped comedy.

Pointon's capable examination of the documents and history of Stratford's Shakespeare may join the growing shelf of volumes that only the newly enlightened will think to read. If that happens, it would be unjust. His explanation that a real person's identity was posthumously stolen is highly defensible as a link in the success of the identity hoax. The book should see deserved general attention after the cultural pivot toward a new, well-grounded historical perception. Pointon indicated what the new perception would be: the heretofore sanctified First Folio was a major Jacobean political fraud, slavishly adopted from tradition, generation after generation, among elite educational institutions.

3. I have added Julia Thomas's *Shakespeare's Shrine* to this review sequence, not only because it is an entertaining treatment of the Victorian glorification of "Our Shakespeare," but because it shows that possibly hoodwinked institutional scholars still contribute valuable knowledge to the Shakespeare saga. We suffer false confidence to assume that favored theories are anything other than approximate, post facto constructs. Their relative value as Knowledge depends upon how much of the

known facts they explain and tie together more completely than before into a clearer configuration.

From the Oxfordian point of view, that commercial and promotional interests engaged the mass belief tendencies of the English nation-state's growing population may simply outline a particularly splendid example of human gullibility in the modern age. As Thomas points out,



"The Birthplace [capital B] acted as a catalyst for imagining Shakespeare as a real historical being, whose childhood took place within its walls." The increasing body of Oxfordian studies leading to serious doubt that the Stratford resident did the wondrous and surpassing, does tend to put Victorian faith in their literary exemplar into a dubious light.

That dubiety does not discount the informative history of how it all came about. As Pointon stressed, there were already suspicions in the 1700s that Shakespeare (of Stratford) did not do all the writing by himself. But the dissemination of the plays and its accompanying authorial vacuum led to emotional momentum: the

compelling need, patriotic, dramatic, and economic, to reify the fractured impressions of the forgotten Stratford corpse into a secular Saint.

To some extent the anecdotal details of the Stratford bamboozle are already in the public domain. Ambassador John Adams described Stratford as a dirty country village, incapable of producing a great mind. Washington Irving visited the sordidly mercenary "birthplace" and heard testimony at the Trinity Church that there was no body under the Shakespeare gravestone. There is a story that not long after, P. T. Barnum attempted to buy the biggest house in town as Shakespeare's Birthplace, and the English objected that if there was a secular shrine to build, they could do it themselves.

Thomas says that this didn't happen, that instead it was the prospect of Barnum moving in that motivated English supporters to buy a Stratford property. But she records Barnum threatening to bring in General Tom Thumb as competition to spoil the Stratford Shakespeare project's chances. There must have been some pecuniary background for his threat.

Despite the scuffling details of getting the Shakespeare Birthplace shrine going, it was the achievement of both London backers and locals to impart to Stratford a certain civilized respectability in later decades, by producing not only the Elizabethan-themed real estate attraction, but also by propounding an idyllic rural country genius narrative to give that contrivance the effect of actual biography. Their mythic mass belief overcame the facts, which soon emerged and thus found no welcome. The Stratford Shakespeare narrative is still giving the facts a good run for public trust. It constitutes a rich study in cultural anthropology, or, put a little differently, in what happens to the hominid herd instinct once the mounted rustlers slap leather.

(Joint Conference, cont. from p. 1)

was the *The Breuiary of Britayne*, dedicated to Oxford in praise of his learning. Also displayed was the *Historiae Philippicae* of Marcus Justinus, translated by Arthur Golding and dedicated by him to Oxford.

That dedication gives evidence of de Vere's close relationship with Golding, the translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a key source of Shakespeare's knowledge of classical mythology. Another Golding translation on display was *Commentaries on the Psalms of David* by Jean Calvin. One book not dedicated to Oxford was *The paradise of daynty deuises*, an anthology that includes several poems signed "E.O." that have been ascribed to Oxford, while others in the work have been attributed to him.

During the four-day weekend, familiar and first-time presenters spoke on a wide range of topics that included the experience of a York University Professor in offering a course on the authorship question, a history of Shakespeare on film, and a presentation of the Oxfordian documentary, *Last Will. & Testament*.

#### First Day: Thursday, October 18

The first presenter was long-time Oxfordian (and *Shakespeare Matters* editor) Alex McNeil. His presentation, "Who Was Shakespeare?" was aimed at those who are new to the debate and also to those who could benefit from a refresher course. He started with an overview of Will Shakspeare's actual biography, sources, and general themes, noting that the biography contains no record of education, no letters written by him, only one letter written to him, and only two contemporaneous records that anyone spoke to him, one concerning a land matter and one concerning his 1612 deposition. Shakspeare left no books or manuscripts in his will, nor did it contain a provision for the Stratford Grammar School or for the education of his young granddaughter. No one dedicated any books to him nor did he dedicate anything to another writer. McNeil then contrasted that biography with that of Edward de Vere and its intimate connection to the plays and poems of William Shakespeare.

Film director and author of the historical novel *Or Not To Be*, Lynda Taylor, spoke on "The Hallowed Visage

of Shakespeare," focusing on two post-humous Shakespeare images: the Martin Droeshout engraving in the First Folio and the image of William Shakespeare on the Stratford Monument. Taylor pointed out that the image on the Shakespeare Monument was originally shown to be carrying a sack of grain, but was later altered to show the subject as a writer with a quill pen in his hand.

Since Droeshout was a master engraver who had to complete nine years

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of training to become a member of the Guild, Taylor concluded that the Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare with two left arms, an oversized head, a protruding forehead, and a mask was not the product of an incompetent artist but a deliberate attempt to show him as a front man for the true author. It has generally been assumed by traditional scholars that Droeshout worked from an existing image. No original painting, however, has ever been found, though some have erroneously declared

the Flower, Chandos, and Cobbe portraits to be of Shakespeare.

Taylor asserted that, after its restoration, the Ashbourne painting, once thought of as being William Shakespeare, was deemed to be a true image of The Earl of Oxford. Prof. Stanley Wells, Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, however, lauds this image as a true likeness of the man known as Shakespeare. In none of these paintings, however, is there any authentication of either the artist or the sitter and no evidence exists that the great author ever sat for a portrait. Taylor concluded that the two accepted images of Shakespeare cannot be trusted to be a true likeness of the poet.

Poet, novelist, and author Helen Heightsman Gordon spoke on the topic, "The Film *Anonymous* – its Challenges and Opportunities." Gordon told the conference that reviews of Roland Emmerich's *Anonymous* were "sabotaged" by critics and academics even before it was released. Though critics assailed the film for "distorting history," they failed to understand that Emmerich juggled facts in order to enhance the drama (as William Shakespeare did in his history plays), but that its underlying assumptions were correct.

Gordon said that the most controversial aspect of the film was the dramatization of the Prince Tudor theories - the idea that Oxford and Queen Elizabeth had a love-child who was brought up as Henry Wriothesley, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, and the more questionable idea that Edward de Vere was the son of the union between Princess Elizabeth and Thomas Seymour. In rejecting the second theory, Gordon argued that, in the film, this notion was a lie told by Robert Cecil to upset Oxford. She added that Elizabeth may have had a child with Seymour, but it was more likely to have been Edward Manners, the Earl of Rutland.

Gordon also raised the question of whether the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex could have been the son of Elizabeth and her long-time lover, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. She compared likenesses of Southampton and Essex with those of the Queen, showing similarities of facial characteristics and hair. She also noted the family resemblance between Elizabeth, Oxford, and Southamp-



ton. She concluded by discussing issues of Southampton's paternity, the attempt by William Cecil to have Southampton marry Elizabeth Vere, and the Rosicrucian symbols evident in portraits of Southampton.

### Second Day: Friday, October 19

The opening speaker on Friday morning was producer Jennifer Newton, who discussed "The Shakespeare Underground," an online podcast series she created that brings the work of anti-Stratfordian scholars to the public in an accessible audio format. Newton noted that while there are some great film and video surveys, there is little multimedia devoted to a deeper look at the authorship question. Newton talked about the first year of this project and the opportunities and challenges that new media offer to those with an independent perspective to share.

As of this date, available podcasts include a discussion by Tom Regnier on "Shakespeare's use of the law in *Hamlet*," Earl Showerman on the courtship of Queen Elizabeth and Alencon, the Duke of Anjou, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Richard Whalen discussing the commedia dell'arte and its relationship with *Othello*, Bonner Cutting on Shakespeare's Will, and Sabrina Feldman on the Shakespeare apocrypha. Prof. Roger Stritmatter commented that "these podcasts are really a treasure of professional production values that we all should celebrate and promote. Jennifer not only knows who to interview, but how to do it."

During his lifetime and for many years afterwards, William Shakespeare was credited with writing not only the Bard's canonical works, but also a series of "apocryphal" plays and "bad quartos."



**Fellowship member Jennifer Newton (Seattle) unveiled her "Shakespeare Underground" project, a regular web podcast series that has already featured Shakespeare Fellowship scholars Bonner Miller Cutting (The Shakspeare will), Tom Regnier (Shakespeare and the law), Earl Showerman (Shakespeare and the classics), and Sabrina Feldman**

Physicist Sabrina Feldman, author of *The Apocryphal William Shakespeare*, addressed the question whether William Shakespeare actually wrote the apocryphal plays attributed to him. Stylistic threads linking these lesser works, she stated, suggest that they share a common author or co-author who wrote in a coarse, breezy and very funny style.

Feldman suggested that the unnamed author of the apocrypha was prone to pilfering lines from other dramatists, consistent with Robert Greene's 1592 attack on William Shakespeare ("shake-scene") as an "upstart crow." The anomalous existence of two separately authored bodies of work attributed to a single man, she continued, suggests that William Shaksper of Stratford served as a front man for the true Bard, while composing his own plagiaristic, crowd-pleasing plays for the London stage.

If true, Shaksper may have written the following apocryphal plays: *The Taming of A Shrew* (distinct from the Bard's *The Taming of The Shrew*), *Fair Em*, *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, *Lochrine*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *The London Prodigal*, *The Puritan*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *Mucedorus*, *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, and *The Birth of Merlin*. He may also have adapted the bad quartos of

*Henry VI Part Two*, *Henry VI Part Three*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Hamlet* from the Bard's original manuscripts; and contributed material to the co-authored works *Pericles*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Henry VIII*, and *Cardenio*.

Feldman concluded by emphasizing that scholars who believe that William Shakespeare was *not* the main author of the apocryphal plays and bad quartos must assume that a host of fraudulent actors, stationers, and publishers (some of whom had otherwise excellent reputations) deliberately misled the English reading public by falsely attributing works to William Shakespeare that he didn't

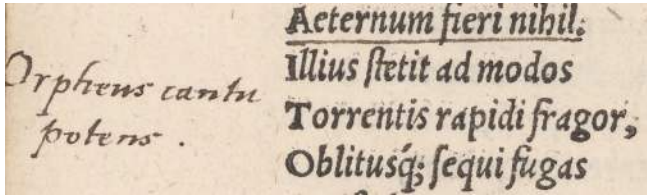
actually write over a period of decades.

Roger Stritmatter, Assistant Professor of English at Coppin State University in Baltimore, discussed "In the Margins: Handwriting Analysis, Intertextuality, and the Authorship Question. Is this 1563 edition of *Seneca's Tragedies* annotated by the 17th Earl of Oxford?" His talk centered on a small book containing ten tragedies of Seneca published in 1563. It has 94 separate marginal annotations in Latin and Greek in a 16<sup>th</sup> century italic hand (at least seventeen are in Greek or contain Greek), as well as several hundred underlined passages. Stritmatter analyzed the annotations to ascertain whether the handwriting matched that of Edward de Vere.

Noting that the "a's," "d's," and "g's" do not, on superficial view, match Oxford's, Stritmatter said that "all handwriting displays variation, that samples by a single individual show varying degrees of both similarity and difference and that samples from a population of individuals trained in the same copybook style also show similarity." He showed that the variant forms of the Seneca annotator actually do fall within the range of variation seen in Oxford's known handwriting samples.

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A note in a copiously annotated copy of Seneca's *Ten Tragedies* (Basil, 1563) reads "Orpheus, in singing potent." Is this another book annotated by the 17th Earl of Oxford?

According to Stritmatter, it is important to study the range of variation when undertaking handwriting analysis and to distinguish between "natural variation" that result from differences within a hand from "systematic variation," denoting the presence of more than one hand.

Failure to account for natural variation within a hand results in "overfitting," which occurs when a statistical model describes random error or noise instead of the underlying relationship. The importance of sample size can readily be illustrated with samples from Oxford's hand. The first sample he presented was a comparison between a 1601 letter and one from 1584. In looking at the "d's" in both documents, the range varies from a "neat" d with a straight back, formed in two strokes, to a "scribble" d formed in one stroke with a back that curves strongly to the left.

When such variant forms are considered the apparent differences between the annotator's handwriting and Oxford's known hand disappear. Stritmatter said that Shakespeare knew Seneca's style enough to imitate him. He also declared that there are strong links between the writing of Seneca and that of Edward de Vere, citing passages from Oxford's poem "My Mind to Me a Kingdom is," that mirror Seneca's phrase, "It is a vast kingdom to be able to cope without a kingdom." and Oxford's 1573 preface to *Cardanus Comforte*.

The Conference then welcomed Shakespeare Fellowship President and retired physician Earl Showerman, who spoke on the subject, "Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge: Reflections from the ER." Showerman discussed a number of medical topics that are reflected in Shakespeare's plays, including toxicology, infectious diseases, fainting, near-death, sudden death, resuscitation, psychophysiology, and mental illness. According to Showerman, there are over 700 medical references in the 38 Shakespeare plays that display a sophisticated knowledge of anatomy, physiology, surgery, obstetrics, public health, aging, forensics, neurology and mental disorders.

The author was arguably familiar with the Hippocratic Corpus, the Latin translation of the *Asclepius*, and a variety of medical texts that included detailed descriptions of anatomy, forensics, organ function and infectious diseases, especially syphilis in all of its stages. Dr. R.R. Simpson stated in *Shakespeare and Medicine* (1962) that "No aspect of the study of Shakespeare shows more clearly his inspired poetic eye and mind...than the clinical descriptions 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."

The claim of Edward de Vere as the playwright and poet of the Shakespeare canon is greatly enhanced by the medical knowledge displayed in the plays. Oxford's education, literary patronage, access to medical texts, and relationship to empiric practitioners within his family circle, make his candidacy more compelling than ever. [For further information on Shakespeare's medical references, see "Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge: Reflections from the ER" by Earl Showerman in the Summer 2012 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.]

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Founding director of York University's graduate program in Theatre Studies, Professor Don Rubin spoke about his attempt to persuade his department to approve a course on the authorship question. "Every time I tried to share this knowledge," Rubin stated, "people would roll their eyes with incredulity." Immediately put on the defensive, he began hearing pejorative words from his colleagues such as "conspiracy," "crazy," and "out of touch with reality." Some in the department told him that no one would sign up for such a course.

As a result of the setback, Rubin concluded that being taken

seriously was a public relations issue, one that required him to “lower the volume” and pose the course as a question rather than a statement in support of one candidate. Framing it as an inquiry into the authorship debate, he suggested the course discuss alternative authorship candidates, present several sides of the debate includ-

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ing the point of view of Stratfordians such as James Shapiro, and close with a day-long symposium.

The course was eventually approved as a fourth-year elective, a one-term course with an allotted fifteen places. Confounding expectations, thirty students showed up and twenty-five completed the course.

The class included lectures, discussion groups, and videos on all aspects of the question. Among the subjects covered were the facts of William Shakspeare’s life, the poem *Venus and Adonis*, and the First Folio. As an assignment, each student was given five of Shakespeare’s Sonnets and asked to identify the type of person that had written them.

In the last third of the course, the class read Mark Twain’s “Is Shakespeare Dead” and Mark Anderson’s *Shakespeare by Another Name*. They also heard a guest lecture by Bonner Cutting on Shakespeare’s Will and saw the film *Anonymous*. The final day-long symposium attracted eighty people and featured prominent spokespersons for each major candidate. Rubin concluded his talk by saying that the subject of Oxford in academia needs to be presented in an accessible, non-confrontational way. Attacking William of Stratford head-on, he said, “is not the right spin. It is too negative for most people that are not familiar with the issue.”

The next presenter was author John Hamill, former President of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and an environmental scientist for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in California. Hamill declared that the Sonnets are the most controversial works in the Shakespeare canon and addressed the question as to who was the “Rival Poet” of the Sonnets. Sonnets 1-126 are addressed to the “Fair Youth” who many scholars, both Stratfordian and Oxfordian, identify as Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton. According to Hamill, this would suggest that both Shakespeare and Southampton must have been bisexual.

Sonnets 78-86, however, discuss a “Rival Poet” who was vying for the affections of the Fair Youth. Hamill asked the question, “If this is so, then who was the ‘Rival Poet’? Who was the man who captured Southampton’s affections and attention? Of whom was the author of the Sonnets jealous?” He noted that many names have been suggested, including most of the major poets of the time such as Edmund Spenser, George Chapman or Christopher Marlowe. Hamill asserted, however, that when we look at the biography of Southampton, only one name comes up, that of Robert Devereux, 2nd

Earl of Essex.

Hamill pointed out that in the 2011 movie *Anonymous*, the Earl of Essex and Southampton are portrayed as constant companions, but it is never clearly explained if they were just friends who enjoyed each other’s companionship. Though Essex was depicted in *Anonymous* as being completely heterosexual and many times in other films as the secret lover of Queen Elizabeth, a review of the known relationship between Essex and

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Southampton demonstrates an intimate connection between them.

As a result, some observant scholars, including Mark Anderson, Peter Moore, William Farina, and Richard Malim, have proposed that if Southampton was the Fair Youth of the Sonnets, the Rival Poet must have been Essex. Because of the ho-

(Continued on page 28)

(Joint Conference, cont. from p. 27)

moerotic nature of the love triangle, and the treasonous outcome of the relationship between Southampton and Essex, Oxford was compelled to write about this affair in code. The speaker concluded by declaring, "We owe it to each of them - Oxford, Southampton and Essex, to tell their true stories."

In a lighthearted vein, the conference received a surprise visit from none other than Mr. Charles Dickens, who temporarily "borrowed" the body of well-known Shakespearean actor and Fellowship member Michael Dunn. Giving us the "dickens," Dunn showed us the lighter side of codes, cryptos, wizards, and guns that still smoke four centuries later! He told us that his status as a ghost allowed him to penetrate the internet and uncover a secret cryptogram that told the story of a secret message.

"Who is the message for?" he asked. "Do they know how to read it? Why must it be secret?" Apparently, in an attempt to save his son from death, an old man made a bargain. To protect his son, he had to forswear all claims to the throne and agree that all royal heirs should be removed. Dickens assured us, however, that it was only a story. In the second part of his presentation, Dunn reenacted his acclaimed melodrama "Dethroning a Deity," quoting the famous Dickens remark that the life of Shakespeare was a great mystery and that "I tremble everyday that something will turn up."

Asking for reassurance that the mystery of Shakespeare's identity will never be solved, Dickens told us that Shakespeare was a "sublime empty canvas, an unpainted Sistine Chapel that invites us to come and paint. Is our Shakespeare," he asked, "a secular deity like Bacon or a Christ-like figure like the Stratford man who comes complete with his own dogma, miraculous stories, a *tabula rasa* in which anyone can write, or is he a traitor, murderer, drinker, defaulter, insubordinate, plagiarist, deadbeat, arrogant rebuffer of the Queen, and lowlife dullard like Edward de Vere?"

Sylvia Crowley Holmes, a world-traveling choral singer who also sings frequently with The California Philharmonic Chorale, and Betzi Roe, daughter of Richard Paul Roe (*The Shakespeare Guide*

to Italy) and the director of the Coronado School of the Arts, entertained the conference with an exquisite performance of Elizabethan music and dance. Holmes and four dancers from the Coronado School performed "If ye Love Me" by Thomas Tallis, Shakespeare's Sonnet #2, "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow," Sonnet #129, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame," John Bennet's, "Weep, O Mine Eyes," and others. The final song,

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**Bonner Miller Cutting's talk  
focused on the mystery surrounding the remarkable  
1635 portrait by Sir Anthony  
Van Dyck known as "The Celebrated Family Piece." a huge  
(11 by 17 feet) painting now displayed in the Double Cube  
Room at Wilton House, the  
ancient manor of the Earls of  
Pembroke. This portrait has  
been called "a school unto itself" among the masterpieces  
of Van Dyck, and the family,  
represented in ten life size figures, is considered to be the  
most brilliantly painted family  
in English history.**

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"What if a Day?" was a moving tribute to Sylvia's mother, Barbara Crowley, who died in August [see remembrance of Barbara Crowley, elsewhere in this issue].

On Friday evening, there was a special screening of the new documentary film, *Last Will. & Testament*, on the nearby campus of California Institute of Technology [see separate article in this issue].

**Third Day: Saturday, October 20**

On Saturday morning, directors Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias presented outtakes from the Shakespeare authorship documentary, *Last Will. & Testament* (First Folio Pictures) and never-before-seen footage from their 1604 Productions' archive. The presentation featured sixteen short films created especially for the conference by the filmmakers, including behind-the-scenes footage shot on the set of Anonymous (Sony Pictures), seventy LWT interview soundbites, new images of J. Thomas Looney, a rare on-camera interview with Charlton Ogburn Jr. (1997), Oxford's letters, and two dozen locations filmed during the making of *Last Will. & Testament*.

Bonner Miller Cutting, an independent scholar from Houston, addressed the subject, "A Countess Transformed: How Lady Susan Vere became Lady Anne Clifford." Her talk focused on the mystery surrounding the remarkable 1635 portrait by Sir Anthony Van Dyck known as "The Celebrated Family Piece." a huge (11 by 17 feet) painting now displayed in the Double Cube Room at Wilton House, the ancient manor of the Earls of Pembroke. This portrait has been called "a school unto itself" among the masterpieces of Van Dyck, and the family, represented in ten lifesize figures, is considered to be the most brilliantly painted family in English history.

The Countess in question is the woman in black, sitting to the left of Philip Herbert, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke. According to an official catalog of the family, she is the Earl's second wife, Lady Anne Clifford. The reason given for that identification is that Philip was married to her when the portrait was painted. Cutting argued, however, that the sitter is not his second wife, who had been put out of the house by Pembroke before the portrait (after only four and one-half years of marriage), but is an extant portrait of his first wife of twenty-five years, the deceased Lady Susan Vere, the third daughter of Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.

According to Cutting, there are ample reasons for the Susan Vere identification: the angry break-up of the marriage between Pembroke and his second wife, 18<sup>th</sup> century historical identifications, the sitter's lack of resemblance to Lady Anne's established

portraits, the bleak, funereal pose and fictionalized aspects of the sitter as rendered in the thin paint by Van Dyck (all suggesting that the figure was deceased), and “plain common sense.” Citing Dr. Alexander Grosart’s comment about Edward de Vere: “An unlifted shadow somehow lies across his memory,” Cutting concluded that the gradual disappearance of Countess Susan from the annals of the Pembroke family and the concurrent elevation of Lady Anne Clifford indicate that this shadow has fallen on de Vere’s third daughter as well.

Author and editor, Professor Jack Shuttleworth, who is completing the Oxfordian edition of *Hamlet*, presented a paper titled, “Six Easy Pieces: Oxford’s Imprint on *Hamlet*.” The talk focused not on the obvious allusions to Lord Burghley and his daughter as Polonius and Ophelia but, in this most personally intense of all Shakespeare’s plays, how the author, consciously or not, reveals himself in unobtrusive ways. According to Shuttleworth, Shakespeare’s use of rare words from Montaigne, his specific language in narrating the pirate episode, the detailed allusions to travel, and the often-ignored conclusion all point directly to the Earl of Oxford as the author.

Declaring that Shakespeare repeats words not as just as a dramatic moment, but as an allusion to experience, he noted that the phrase from Act V, Scene 1 “To o’ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head of blue Olympus.” was the first to describe mountains as being blue and had to have been seen directly in Greece. Likewise, in Act 4, Scene 6, the phrase, “Ere we were two days at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase...They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy,” has no dramatic purpose in the play and puzzles traditional scholars. Any number of plot devices, he said, “would have worked as well and “to understand its inclusion requires a factual connection.” According to Shuttleworth, the evidence presented individually can be explained away or ignored (as it has been by traditional scholars), but cumulatively and collectively, it is as certain as a distinct thumbprint in identifying the author.

Author of the book *The Man Who Was Never Shakespeare*, A.J. (Tony) Pointon spoke at lunchtime on the subject, “Jonson,

Shakespeare, and Shaksper.” He began by quoting the statement of Professor David Ellis in his 2005 book *That Man Shakespeare* that “Shakespeare and Jonson were the two greatest playwrights of their age. Since (sic) they must have known each other, it is natural to be curious about the nature of their relationship.” According to Dr. Pointon, both Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians have to believe that Ben Jonson knew Shakespeare by sight or sound, as poet/playwright and actor/businessman, but the evidence is nonexistent.

The interest in Jonson for those who “know” Shakespeare and Shaksper were different people might be expected to be found in three areas: (1) his peculiar contributions to the First Folio, the Stratford Monument, and the creation of the

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orthodox theory; (2) his harsh attitude to Shakespeare as a critic; and (3) the evidence that he did not know Shakespeare personally. Jonson, they claim, had to know that the portraits of Shakespeare by Droeshout in the First Folio and the likeness on the Stratford Monument showed two different men, but the likelihood is that he may actually not have known either of them.

Though in *Timber* (which he gave the subheading “*De Shakespeare nostrat*”) Jonson said that “I loved the man, and do honor his memory on this side idolatry as much as any,” he said nothing to distin-

guish Shakespeare in appearance, features, attitudes to friends or rivals, or difficulties experienced in his life. Pointon pointed out that Dryden, who was only six when Jonson died, wrote “I admire Jonson, but I love Shakespeare,” no one has proposed that meant he knew Jonson or Shakespeare personally, rather than their work.

Anti-Stratfordians claim that Jonson criticized Shakespeare for stealing other people’s work in his satire *The Poetaster*, first performed in 1601, and referred to Shakespeare as “The Poet Ape” in his *Epigram 56*, defining someone who passes off the writing of others as his own. They also refer to Sogliardo in Jonson’s play *Every Man out of His Humour* as mocking the motto on Shaksper’s coat of arms, “not without right,” referring to it as “not without mustard.” These assumptions, however, are without merit. One can now be confident, Pointon asserted, that Jonson’s Poet-Ape was actually John Fletcher, so many things fit him, as shown by Claire Asquith and others.

Likewise, the two men attacked by Jonson in *Poetaster* openly identified themselves – Dekker and Marston – and wrote their own rebuttal of Jonson’s attack in their play *Historio-Mastix*. As far as the alleged mocking of Shakespeare’s coat of arms, we know that the Arms were not issued before the play *Every Man out of His Humor* because, when William Shaksper’s father John died in September 1601, he did not qualify to have the title “Gent.” after his name in the burial register. In the First Folio, Jonson mixes praise of the works with criticism, but does not come out of it very well, and one can feel sure he never discussed Shakespeare’s writing with him. The speaker concluded his talk by saying, “We have nothing reliable to show Jonson knew Shaksper or Shakespeare, and it is not for want of searching.”

Screenwriter and director of the Oxfordian documentary *Nothing is Truer than Truth*, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan spoke about “Harvard and Homophobia: Edward de Vere as Shakespeare.” She discussed two key events that took place in 1920: The book *Shakespeare Identified* by J. Thomas Looney, and a secret court at Harvard that was formed to investigate charges of

(Continued on page 30)

*(Joint conference, cont. from p. 29)*

homosexual activity among students and faculty. As a result of this inquiry, eight students, a recent graduate, and an assistant professor were expelled or had their association with the university severed. Several students committed suicide. In 2010, a petition to grant honorary degrees posthumously was rejected.

Eagan-Donovan corresponded with modern culture guru Marjorie Garber, interviewed maverick ART Director Diane Paulus, met with Pulitzer prize-winner Stephen Greenblatt, renowned language and cognition expert Steven Pinker, and talked with the world's foremost authority on the Sonnets, Helen Vendler, but it soon became obvious to her that Harvard's resistance to the idea of de Vere as Shakespeare continues today. Unfortunately, she said, homophobia is also still alive at Harvard and much of the opposition to the Oxfordian point of view is based on his sexuality. "A bisexual Shakespeare", she concluded, "fits no one's agenda."

Katherine Chiljan, author of the book, *Shakespeare Suppressed*, spoke about Shakespeare's portrayal as a "gentleman-monster" on the title page of the First Folio. She posits that Droeshout's image of a man with an oversized forehead and a large head out of proportion with the body was invented and intentionally odd, being a key part of the hoax to put the Shakespeare authorship on the Stratford Man. A monstrous-looking Shakespeare, a freak of nature, would perhaps be the easiest way to explain how the uneducated Stratford man obtained the extraordinary knowledge that is displayed in Shakespeare's works.

Called "lifeless in expression," the picture has no adornments, unlike portraits of other poets. Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton, for example, were depicted wearing laurel leaves, a sign of poetic victory. Droeshout's image of a gentleman of means, indicated by the large collar, suited the Stratford man's social status, thus the depiction of the gentleman-monster. Chiljan cited evidence that suggests this false image of Shakespeare was planned at least three years before the Stratford man's death.

The final presenter of the day was John Shahan, founder and chairman of

the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and principal author of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt, who talked about the obstacles Oxfordians face in convincing the public of the true identity of William

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**According to Shahan, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) is the main obstacle to public acceptance of the true author; he called the SBT a "self-interested, corrupt, quasi-religious institution, [dominated by] authoritarians with a clear conflict of interest." SBT Chairman Prof. Stanley Wells called the Oxfordian hypothesis "a psychological aberration filled with ignorance, folly, and a desire for publicity" and Professor Stephen Greenblatt compared teaching alternative points of view on the authorship question to teaching intelligent design along side of evolution. Change, Shahan asserted, will not come from academia, noting that it took the church 350 years to admit that Galileo was right.**

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Shakespeare. Though some people, he stated, have the point of view that English professors will either do enough research to recognize our argument as valid, or will die off and a more enlightened generation will take its place, there is no

substitute for an "aggressive, sustained campaign."

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Since the issue has been delegitimized, Shahan said that we need a better strategy and should focus on the Shakespeare persona rather than on the merits of any individual candidate. We should legitimize the issue by challenging claims that there is no room for doubt. The SAC enlisted twelve authorship organizations to rebut the SBT's "60 Minutes with Shakespeare" webcast. It has set a goal of having 3,000 signers of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt by April, 2013, and has challenged the SBT to write a counter-declaration.

**Fourth Day: Sunday, October 21**

The first speaker on Sunday morning was Rose Bruce, a senior at Laurel High School in Viroqua, Wisconsin, and an actress who has performed with the Young Shakespeare Players in Madison. She is also a student of astrology; the subject of her talk was "Shakespeare's Sacred Celestial Science." Bruce began with a quote from Dante that "Astrology is the noblest of sciences," then provided the conference with a brief history of astrology, noting that it is ingrained in our culture as demonstrated by the fact that the days of the week are named after planets, and that ancient sites such as Stonehenge and the Pyramids may have an astrological basis.

Many world leaders believed in astrology and employed astrologers, including

Egyptian pharaohs, Queen Elizabeth I, Ronald Reagan, popes and monarchs, and even Adolf Hitler. Influential astrologers during the Tudor period included Giordano Bruno, Johannes Kepler, Tycho Brahe, Thomas Smith and Thomas Fowle (both tutors of Edward de Vere), Robert Fludd, Nicholas Hill (a secretary of de Vere who traveled with him to Italy), Gabriel Harvey, and the famous metaphysician John Dee.

Bruce has researched the astrological natal chart of Edward de Vere and shared her interpretations of its aspects with the conference. With Sagittarius rising, Jupiter rules, a trine with Uranus, and many other aspects of potential genius, the chart, according to Bruce, suggests a person of incredible intellect, literary skill, social consciousness, prophetic insight and charisma.

In 1893, the Detroit Medical and Library Society said, "Shakespeare must have been a neurologist he was so good at it." Prominent neurologist Lance Fogan agrees. In his talk, "The Neurology in Shakespeare," Fogan stated that Shakespeare could have been a Renaissance physician with neurology one of his subspecialties. He described twenty-five different manifestations of neurological ailments in his works including: tremors, paralysis, stroke, liver failure, headache, sleep disturbances, epilepsy, dementia, delirium, hallucinations, incontinence, the effect of alcohol and other toxins, the neurology of syphilis and additional brain function derangements.

Fogan enumerated the occurrences of neurological references in Shakespeare's plays including: Caliban and Prospero in *The Tempest*, Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*, Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, Imogen in *Cymbeline*, the clown in *Othello*, York in *Richard II*, the friar in *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and many others.

Attorney Tom Regnier, author of "Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer?" and incoming President of the Shakespeare Fel-

lowship, revealed his insights into the law in Shakespeare's works based on his experience teaching a seminar on "Shakespeare and the Law" at the University of Miami School of Law. Regnier stated that legal issues appear in almost every Shakespeare play, and discussed legal themes and imagery in such works as *Merchant of Venice*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Henry V*, and *Richard III*, and how the subject of law in Shakespeare relates to the authorship question.

Regnier distinguished between law and equity. It is, he said, the difference between a strict interpretation of the law and the practice of human beings reinterpreting the law in light of changed circumstances. Equity courts, he said, adjust rules, often applying notions of mercy, discretion, natural law, and a loose construction of legal tenets. Citing an example in *The Merchant of Venice*, Regnier pointed out that Shylock, in the famous trial scene, stands for strict legalism, saying "I crave the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond." On the other hand, Portia represents equity and mercy, and Bassanio joins in, making his plea to the Duke on behalf of Antonio says, "To do a great right, do a little wrong."

Since 1899, when Shakespeare first debuted on celluloid, more than 400 silent films, 250 full-length features, and countless television productions, webcasts and digital derivatives have been produced from his work. Hollywood and independent cinema have placed *Othello* on a basketball team, *Macbeth* behind the counter of a fast-food joint, Prince Hal as a male hustler, and Ariel as a robot in a faraway galaxy. James Ulmer, international editor and columnist for the webzine *Cinema Without Borders*, presented a retrospective of how Hollywood has depicted Shakespeare's plays over the years.

Ulmer asserted that today Shakespeare's words and storylines reach most of us through countless cultural refractions that include Youtube videos, "Shake-spawn" or "Shake-slant"

(Continued on page 32)

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*(Joint conference, cont. from p. 31)*

teen pix, episodic television, websites, video games, cartoons and, yes, the rare feature adaptation. As an example of a modern version of Shakespeare, he showed clips from Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet 2000*. Set in the sleek and slippery world of corporate Manhattan, itself a riff on how the media mitigates our view of the Dane, Hamlet's "mousetrap" is an amateur video instead of a play, and Hamlet delivers his "To be or not to be" soliloquy in the Action aisle of a Blockbuster video store.

Ulmer showed clips from the three Golden Ages of Shakespeare in Hollywood including the silent period, the big studio releases of the 1930s, up to modern day adaptations where, according to Ulmer, "the visual trounces the written and spoken word." Included were clips of outstanding actors and directors such as Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Trevor Nunn, Franco Zeffirelli, Ernst Lubitsch, Baz Luhrman, and Kenneth Branagh. Paradoxically, he said, a new digital technology demonstrates a remarkable power to breathe the "fire-new" onto the oldest and most seminal medium of all: theatre. In a digitally broadcast and mediated moment, we witness the stunning, life-like results: a classical actor on a stage, surrounded by an audience in the round....speaking the speech ... and consorting with Shakespeare's ghost.

**Awards**

Shakespearean actor Michael York received a lifetime achievement award donated by Bonner Cutting, saying that the award would have "pride of place" on his personal desk. Ben August donated a bronze statuette which went to John Shahan for his work on the SAC and the "60 Minutes" rebuttal coordination. Shahan was lauded by outgoing Fellowship President Earl Showerman as a man whose long-term vision and short-term strategy has truly made a difference. Accepting the award, Shahan said that he was "thrilled and delighted to be in the company of those who preceded me."

**Media Panel**

A media panel consisting of actor Michael Dunn, director Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, journalist James Ulmer, and Jennifer Newton, creator of "The Shakespeare Underground," discussed new media, focusing on the question "Where do we go from here?" Ulmer suggested the use of video games and digital media that encourage interactivity. Newton agreed, citing social media as a tool for communication. Dunn suggested that we "go viral" to get media attention and Eagan-Donovan said that we should allow students to become characters in a video game.

**Next Year's Conference**

To conclude the conference, York University Professor Don Rubin outlined

*(Agincourt, cont. from p. 16)*

than the English and suffered very heavy losses. The French crossbowmen were carrying deadly weapons, but to no effect. They had been placed to the rear of all the horsemen and men-at-arms. Although they could outrange the English archers, they couldn't see any targets upon which to loose their arrows.

Eventually, the French sent a herald to parley for a truce. The English could march unopposed to Calais, and the French could deal with their dead on the battlefield. The English could do the same, of course, but that task was much lighter for them. Henry had his signal victory, but the war would not end for another five years, when the Treaty of Troyes named him the successor to Charles VI on the French throne. His marriage to the French Princess Catherine would supply Henry with an heir for the French throne.

As for Nicholas and Melisande, they would return to London with the victorious army. The feud which had hounded Nicholas was over. There would be a national celebration in London, marked by church bells, a grand parade of heroes and of prisoners, followed by singing, feasting, and appropriate prayers of thanksgiving.

Bernard Cornwell offers great insight into the events described most masterfully but in less detail by the playwright of *The Life of Henry the Fifth*. Cornwell has fleshed out the story. The result is one which is most entertaining for those with an interest in Henry V and Agincourt.

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