

Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice
of the
Shakespeare
Fellowship"

Vol.3:no.4

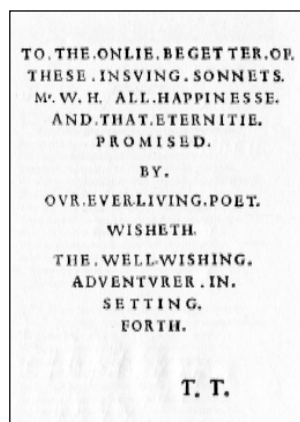
"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments..."

Summer 2004

With the *Sonnets* now solved...

is the debate resolved?

By William Boyle



The notoriously enigmatic dedication seems to cry out cipher (and there is one there), but in the end the Sonnet solution is revealed only when individual words and phrases are viewed in their correct historical context.

In the 395 years since the 1609 quarto of *Shake-speares Sonnets* was published more than 1,800 books have been written about them. The biggest problem in achieving an understanding has been that most of the authors have had the wrong Shakespeare, which immediately precluded ever determining the actual circumstances under which they were written. Even among Oxfordians (who assume of course that they *do* have the correct author) the Sonnets have been a contentious conundrum, with various Oxfordian authors over the years going in various directions searching for the ever-elusive "correct" answer to the Sonnet enigma.

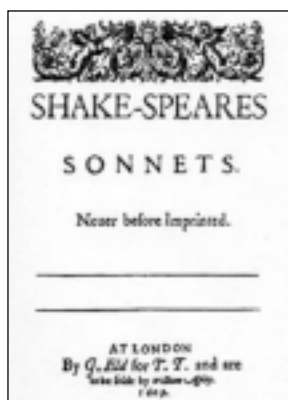
It has occurred to me in recent years that there is perhaps something that almost everyone involved in Shakespeare studies (Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians alike) could agree on—first, that there must be a correct answer to the enigma, and, second, that it must be comprised of three components: 1) the correct author, 2) the correct Fair Youth and Dark Lady, and 3) the correct context of time and circumstance that led to their creation. Most of us are quite familiar with the debates over Who is the author?, Who is the Fair Youth? and Who is the Dark Lady? But this last component—What is the correct context?—has eluded everyone who has ever tackled the Sonnets. Many commentators and theorists have gone right from the Who into *creating, rather than finding*, a historical context into which the Who might fit.

However, I now believe that this heretofore elusive historical context has been found, and that with it in place reading and understanding the Sonnets is transformed. It is a theory that was

(Continued on page 11)

A year in the life 1601: "authorize thy trespass with compare..."

By Hank Whittemore



The most famous title page in literary history, announcing to the world the poetry with which Shakespeare both unlocked his heart and told his story. In fact, these poems are more like letters that can be read to help write history.

This column ordinarily looks at contemporary events of a given year in the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and the present chapter focusing on 1601 is no exception. This time, however, we also draw upon the collection entitled *Shake-Speares Sonnets*, first printed in 1609, as a genuine historical and political document that complements and supplements the official record. In doing so the column introduces some of the themes and data compiled in my forthcoming book *The Monument*, a new edition of the Sonnets that sets forth (for the first time, we believe) a coherent explanation of the form and content of the 154 consecutively numbered verses.

Some of the themes are these:

- The Monument: The Sonnets comprise a "monument" of verse written and constructed by Oxford for Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, to be preserved for posterity.
- The Living Record: The monument contains "the living record" of Southampton in the form of a diary of real events unfolding in real time by the calendar.
- The 100-Sonnet Center: The carefully designed structure contains a sequence of precisely 100 sonnets (27-126) positioned at the exact center.
- The Entrance: Oxford explains his form and structure in a pair of unique instructional sonnets (76-77) at the exact midpoint of the central 100-sonnet sequence, serving as the entrance into the monument.
- The Invention: Edward de Vere records this chronicle by

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Letters:

To the Editor:

Perhaps as a result of terrorist (Stratfordian?) infiltration, my article entitled "My Turk: Why the Nickname?" published in the Spring 2004 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*, was the original version first editorially accepted in 2002, rather than the 2004 version revised in the light of Robert Brazil's article on the same topic, "Oxford and the Turk," published in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* in the winter of 2003.

For completeness' sake, you may want to print the following excerpt from my overlooked 2004 article which comments specifically on Brazil's hypothesis first put forward by the Senior Ogburns in 1952:

Did "Turk" derive from "Torc"?

In their epic tome, *This Star of England*, the Senior Ogburns state on page 819 that de Vere was nicknamed "Boar" after his family rebus when he became obstreperous, and that the Queen often called him her Turk:

Partly, no doubt, to tease him for his attractiveness to women and his high-handed ways; partly as a pun on the Gaelic word, Torc, meaning Boar.

This latter explanation was recently resurrected and favored by Robert Brazil. The following reasons are offered against such an interpretation:

1. All nicknames used by Queen Elizabeth had obvious derivations which were easily decipherable and well known to court personnel.
2. Gaelic, or Old Irish, was not a language heard at Court or familiar to Courtiers or Maids of Honor. The Queen and de Vere spoke many languages but not Gaelic. To use an obscure old Celtic word "torko" or old Gaelic word "torc" as a nickname for a favorite courtier was not the Queen's manner.
3. The Irish were looked down upon and despised by English nobility as a lowly, inferior society of peasants. It would hardly be appropriate to use an Irish nickname for England's Premier Earl,

her genius-playwright who, under her own stimulation, brought lasting glory to her realm.

4. The word "Turk" carried an implication of duplicity, brutality and being an "infidel." If the nickname was derived from the Gaelic word "torc," why change it to "My Turk," conveying a very different and uncomplimentary meaning? Why not "My Torc"?

Paul H. Altrocchi, MD
Kaneohe, Hawaii
10 July 2004

Our apologies to Paul for this mix-up. We did indeed inadvertently use an earlier draft of his article and not the revised version sent to us in January 2004—Ed.

To the Editor:

Congratulations to Chuck Berney for his perception in recognizing the huge building blocks of metaphor in *Hamlet*. ("In Search of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern," *Shakespeare Matters*, Spring 2004).

Oxford had already demonstrated this architecture earlier in *Comedy of Errors* in which every character and event is an idiom in the Church controversy. We also

see the huge design in *The Winter's Tale*. Here the "marriage" of Poetry and Drama must be recognized by the English court in the face of the repressive Puritans in order that the burgeoning English language, literature and culture might live!

On and on it goes from play to play—it is only for us to practice a wider vision in order to recognize the enormity of the structures Oxford created.

Pidge Sexton
St. Louis, Missouri
25 June 2004

To the Editor:

Thank you for your coverage of my participation at the Portland conference in your Spring 2004 issue. One minor correction: I am the Director of the Chicago Oxford Society and Marion Buckley is the President.

Also, who took that awful photo of me? Bill Boyle, I bet.

Bill Farina
Chicago, Illinois
12 June 2004

I had a long talk with my camera, and neither of us knows what happened—Ed.

Shakespeare Matters

Published quarterly by the
The Shakespeare Fellowship

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The Shakespeare Fellowship

Subscriptions to *Shakespeare Matters* are \$40 per year (\$20 for online issues only). Family or institution subscriptions are \$45 per year. Patrons of the Fellowship are \$75 and up. Send subscription requests to:

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

The Society was founded and incorporated in 2001 in the State of Massachusetts and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state. It is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit (Fed ID 04-3578550).

Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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

From the President

“Who will believe my verse?”

I think you'll find this issue of *Shakespeare Matters* especially interesting. Hank Whittemore has made what may be a real breakthrough in analyzing Shakespeare's Sonnets, arguing powerfully that they were published in correct order, that they have a sequential structure, and—perhaps most importantly—that they relate directly to very real events in the lives of Edward de Vere and Henry Wriothesley. Hank lays out his case in his “A Year in the Life” column, and Bill Boyle (removing his editorial hat to write personally) amplifies it in his accompanying article.

Is Hank Whittemore's interpretation the only plausible one? Of course not. Does it deserve careful scrutiny and thoughtful criticism? Of course it does. Will it prove to be the “correct” interpretation? Only time will tell. In the meantime, we welcome your comments—pro and con—on this topic.

Reading those two lead articles prompts me to look back 395 years. As we all know, between Oxford's death in 1604 and the publication of the First Folio in 1623, virtually no new “Shakespeare” material appeared in print, except during one brief period. Between 1608 and 1609 not one, but four noteworthy publications appeared:

- *Shake-speare's Sonnets*, with its cryptic dedication
- a new quarto of *Richard II*, the first to include the deposition scene
- *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, the only authentic Shakespeare play not included in the 1623 Folio
- *Troilus and Cressida*, in two versions, the latter containing the mysterious epistle from a “Never writer to an Ever Reader”

I can't help wondering whether one person or group of persons orchestrated this sudden burst of activity. In the case of *Troilus and Cressida*, it appears that the first copies of the play did not contain the epistle; perhaps someone realized the omission and yelled “Stop the Presses!” so that the all-important preface could be quickly inserted. But who? Southampton? Pembroke and Montgomery? Oxford's daughters? Ben Jonson? None of the above?

Back to Hank Whittemore's view of the sonnets. If he is correct, then the most important point to realize is one that the writer repeatedly tells us about his entire body of work—that he's expressing the truth, and that he hopes we will come to understand that. The poet's uncertainty about posterity's ability to understand is nowhere better expressed than at the start of Sonnet 17 (an aptly numbered place for such a thought, if ever there was one):

Who will believe my verse in time to come. . .

It's time for us Oxfordians to answer, “We do.”

Alex McNeil

From the Editor

Can literature be evidence?

Our two lead articles in this issue really lead right to the heart of the single most important question in the Shakespeare authorship debate: can literature—plays and poems in this instance—be used as evidence?

This has always been a hotly debated topic within the authorship movement, and that has always struck us as somewhat peculiar because, without the evidence of the plays and poems of Shakespeare, there would be no authorship debate. The works themselves are the *primary* evidence in the whole matter. Everyone who has ever become interested in this issue did so because they had that familiar moment when they said to themselves: *these works* could not have been written by *that man*.

Where the debate gets interesting is in considering just what kind of evidence the works are. We are all familiar with the debate over the education and station in life of the probable author, with the works forming the basis of theories pointing to someone, 1) highly educated, and 2) in or connected to the Elizabethan Court.

However, beyond these broad general categories things get more complicated. If a character in a play says something, is that the same thing as the author saying it? And if the “I” in a poem says something, is that the same thing as the author saying it? This is where there is indeed legitimate concern about where to draw the line between fact and fiction.

With a new theory of the Sonnets being published and promoted in these pages, we are undoubtedly journeying into new territory. A core principle of the “Monument theory” is that the sonnets were designed to be “testimony,” a “living record” of the lives of the Poet and the Fair Youth. The sonnets are cited in this issue as if they were personal letters, with all the evidentiary value that personal letters have in writing history.

We fully understand that this is controversial—and risky. So we invite our readers to let us know what they think of the “Monument theory,” and what they think of the proposition of using the Sonnets as historical testimony.

Conference 2004

Don't miss the 2004 Conference in Baltimore this October 7-10, 2004. There is already an impressive lineup of speakers and performances.

The long list of confirmed speakers include Dr. Daniel Wright, Dr. Charles Berney, Dr. Ren Draya, Dr. Kevin Simpson, Dr. Alan Nelson, Dr. Roger Stritmatter, Tim Holcomb, K.C. Ligon, Terry Ross, Bill Boyle, Charles Boyle, Ken Kaplan, Hank Whittemore, Stephanie Hughes, William Niederkorn, Ron Hess, Michael Dunn, Marty Hyatt, Dick Desper, Andy Hannas, Barbara Burris, Ron Halstead, Thomas Hunter, David Yuhas, Gordon Cyr, and Thomas Regnier.

The conference will also feature performances of *Julius Caesar* by the Baltimore Shakespeare Festival, and *Shake-speare* by Kinetic Energy Theatre of Sydney, Australia.

Accommodations at the Doubletree Inn are \$134/night. Call 800-222-8733 to book rooms at the conference rate.

Visit the Fellowship's website (www.shakespearefellowship.org) for the latest information on speakers and accommodations, and to register online.

400th anniversary of Oxford's death noted by media in US, UK

The 400th anniversary of Edward de Vere's death on June 24th received media coverage in both the US and UK. The De Vere Society (England) press release generated stories in the BBC and Reuters, among others, while a Shakespeare Oxford Society press release calling for a "silent standing ovation" alerted the US media.

In the Boston area the 17th Annual Oxford Day festivities highlighted the occasion, celebrating both his birthday and commemorating his death. Chuck Berney was the featured speaker—his paper asking whether the Earl of Leicester was a serial murderer can be found on page 22. Betty Sears was formally presented with the Fellowship's Lifetime Achievement Award that she couldn't be in Carmel to accept last fall. Special events were also held on the following day to publicize the authorship debate and Oxford. This year's topic was interpreting the sonnets, featuring a panel with Joe Eldredge, Bill Boyle and Hank Whittemore comparing Michael Wood's recent efforts in his TV documentary vs. Whittemore's new Monument theory.

In addition, in the days leading up to the June 24th anniversary, there were several talks given by Fellowship trustees—Chuck Berney at the Newton Public Library, and Sarah Smith (joined by Richard Whalen) at the Brookline Public Library.

One of the more unusual commemorations was made on the radio by Fellowship President Alex McNeil. McNeil is one of the hosts of "Lost and Found" on WMBR-FM in Cambridge, MA, an all-volunteer station owned by MIT. "Lost and Found" is de-



Fellowship President Alex McNeil shows off the Oxford Day birthday cake—which this year also commemorated Oxford's death 400 years ago.

voted to semi-obscure rock 'n roll music of the 1960s and early 70s. On his June 25th program, McNeil led off his show by announcing the recent anniversary of Oxford's death, then played a short set of pop music with Shakespearean connections: "Farewell Love Scene from Romeo and Juliet," a selection from the 1968 Zeffirelli film which was released as a single (remember 45s?) and actually reached the Billboard pop charts; "Just Like Romeo and Juliet" by Michael and the Messengers; "To Be Or Not to Be," a soul ballad by Otis Leavill; "Ophelia" by the Band; a commercial jingle for Falstaff beer performed by Cream; and Henry Mancini's "Love Theme from Romeo and Juliet (A Time for Us)," also from the 1968 film. McNeil reports that one long-time listener phoned in during the tribute to admit that he, too, was already an Oxfordian.

Nominations to Board of Trustees

The Shakespeare Fellowship Nominating Committee (Alex McNeil, Earl Showerman and Lori DiLiddo) has nominated three persons, each to serve for a three-year term commencing in October 2004. They are Charles V. (Chuck) Berney, Ted Story and Michael Brame.

Berney and Story currently serve as Trustees and are being renominated for second terms. Michael Brame is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Washington in Seattle; he and his wife, Prof. Galina Popova, are the authors of three Oxfordian books and have contributed

frequently to *Shakespeare Matters*.

The Nominating Committee has also nominated Chuck Berney to serve as Fellowship President for a one-year term commencing in October.

Fellowship members may also nominate persons for Trustee and President by petition; any such nominations must be made by August 25, 2004.

Anyone who would like further information about this process should contact Fellowship President Alex McNeil by telephone (617-244-9825) or by email: mcneil301@comcast.net.

Donate to SF Foundation

Early in 2002 the Shakespeare Fellowship Foundation was established with a \$6000 grant from an anonymous benefactor. This is a trust, handled by an investment firm, and is separate from the Fellowship itself, which is a corporation (each has its own tax-exempt status). The mission statement of the SFF is "to aid and assist ... research, support activities and efforts toward the objective of establishing once and for all the true and correct identity of the author of the enormous literary works known to the world as 'Shakespeare'."

For the past two years the SFF has remained quiescent; Fellowship activities have been so well run that there has been no need to tap its resources (the exception was our first conference, which did incur a substantial loss, but this was made up by a few generous donations). Recently a Fellowship trustee, sensing the potential in a growing SFF balance, contributed \$1000 to this fund. A campaign is now being waged to secure further donations from other board members. Fellowship members are invited to participate in this activity by donating to this cause. The goal is to achieve a Foundation balance large enough so that the income could provide significant support for Fellowship activities (such as providing the prize money for our hugely successful essay contest), or alternatively, to help found an Oxford library. Trustee Lynne Kositsky has pointed out that a gift to the Foundation is a gift that keeps on giving. "A gift given today will not only benefit us, but also our children and grandchildren who pursue the authorship question," she noted. "It can fund special research projects, help us start a journal, publicize Oxford as author, and much more."

Donations can most conveniently be made by writing a check to the Shakespeare Fellowship with 'Foundation' or 'SFF' in the memo slot, and sending it to Box 561, Belmont MA 02478.

Conference 2004

Visit the Fellowship web site for the latest information on scheduled events or to register:

www.shakespearefellowship.org/Conference2004.html

The Nelson dilemma

By R. Thomas Hunter, Ph.D.

What should Oxfordians do about Prof. Alan Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary*?

Do we make a concerted effort to organize work by Oxfordians to correct its egregious errors or do we ignore it, as has been suggested, because to give it any more attention is only to raise it to a prominence which it does not deserve?

It is ironic that Oxfordians may be responsible for buying most of the 500 copies which Nelson, at the Edward de Vere Studies Conference in Portland (OR) in April, reported sold and that these sales could stir interest by a respected academic publisher like the Chicago University Press to consider the book.

One would think that such a possibility would not be likely, that any academic would immediately see *Monstrous* for what it is, a flagrantly biased presentation which contorts logic and fact to make a point. Not so in today's academic publishing world. Liverpool University Press accepted it without a quibble, according to Nelson, who told the Portland conference that the publisher had considered the manuscript so clean that it didn't need any editing. In the finished product, the lack of editing is too often embarrassingly apparent, not to mention the lack of concern for sound and objective scholarly practice.

While speedier publication and reduced editing—or no editing at all—might appear to be wonderful news for authors, it is a direction which bodes ill for readers. With regard to de Vere studies, it puts the responsibility on Oxfordians. We will either accept that responsibility or we will not. In Nelson's case, the alternatives are more complicated because of existing relationships between Nelson and many Oxfordians, but, relationships or not, *Monstrous Adversary* must be confronted if we are to move forward.

The dilemma

The best expression of the practical dilemma involving Prof. Nelson occurred during the much criticized *Monstrous Adversary* segment of the Portland conference this April when Nelson arose to protest the survey of the Oxfordian response to his book as an attack on his professionalism. I believe that Prof. Nelson's objection

to these reactions to his book provided this issue with its focal point. Yes, the comments which Nelson was hearing ultimately did question his work in his specialty as a paleographer. That Oxfordians were demonstrating flaws in the book's writing and logic was one thing, but they were also

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demonstrating errors in Dr. Nelson's area of expertise upon which many had relied and which heretofore had gone unquestioned. Ongoing analysis by Nina Green, for example, had by the time of the Portland conference laid open many areas of the book to serious question in terms of what the documents cited in the book said and meant. Although Nelson was copied on each item, he had not answered any, nor has he yet. More recently, in an e-mail exchange with this writer, Green states, "The long and short of it is that Alan hasn't responded to a single one of the messages I've sent or copied to him."

So here is the credentialed Prof. Nelson, a thoroughly likeable and engaging academic, who has generously shared his findings and resources with Oxfordians whose cause he diametrically opposes and who, in *Monstrous*, he regards as no bet-

ter than amateurs, and who is also, as a member of the Shakespearean establishment, seen by many Oxfordians as a resource and perhaps even—for some—as an entrée into the mainstream. But this same amiable professor has produced a work demonstrably full of errors of logic and fact. What does an Oxfordian do?

Dialogue's end

It would seem to me that the only true and honest answer for Oxfordians must be to continue to disassemble *Monstrous* point by point, to demonstrate its errors fully for the record, and to make this record available for public reference.

The necessity of doing so is evident in the review of *Monstrous Adversary* cited by Nelson in his website from the March 2004 *Choice* (Vol. 41, no. 7) which states, "Thankfully, Nelson (Univ. of California, Berkeley) has not written propaganda for either side but instead produced a meticulously researched and detailed biography, the first since 1928." To the contrary, Dr. Nelson employs practically every kind of propaganda technique known to man, including but certainly not limited to innuendo, smear, hearsay, omission, misrepresentation, guilt by association, and non sequitur. The book is a virtual textbook of propaganda technique.

The fact of the matter is that criticism of Nelson's work, which is not intended to be a personal attack, nevertheless unavoidably becomes criticism of his professional ability to do the work, in particular, *Monstrous*, which is itself a personal attack upon Oxford from first page to last. That is where the dialogue ultimately stops.

Rightly or wrongly, the unlikelihood of frank and open dialogue based on experiences related to me by others who had already met Nelson in various debate formats, had a lot to do with my abandoning the "interrogation" concept at the April conference. Ironically, my brief experience with Nelson that day showed me that he could and did respond to direct questions and that he could be more concise in answering questions than some audience members were in asking them. I would have enjoyed what someone characterized as a Charlie Rose-type give and take but

(Continued on page 6)

Nelson dilemma (continued from page 5)

am still convinced that while possibly more engaging, it would not have been more productive.

Mr. Wytherings, you are a white herring

I take direct evidence for that conclusion from Alan Nelson's own website and the disingenuous way he acknowledges there the whytherings/white herrings fiasco, perhaps the most blatant example of his flawed scholarship, dozens of examples of which Nina Green, Christopher Paul, Robert Brazil, Robert Detobel and others have detailed continuously since the publication of the book. Serious errors have been found in all of the "specializations" which Nelson claims for himself on his website, including "paleography, bibliography, and the reconstruction of the literary life and times of...Renaissance England from documentary sources."

In an errata section devoted to *Monstrous*, Nelson acknowledges that Christopher Paul pointed out his "egregious error in failing to recognize that 'wytherings' is in fact the surname of Anthony Wytherings, who had an office related to the Forest" and that his "interpretation of the letter as humorous and childish rather than serious and evidence of ongoing competition over the Forest is incorrect." He adds that he will "expand on this note in due course," although three months later, he has not.

As it is, his note does not come close to expressing the immensity of the error, the problems it demonstrates with his scholarship, and the credibility it must cost Prof. Nelson in the eyes of the objective, knowledgeable reader, who by now must notice that he is not only willing in passages such as "Whytherings" to commit to an absurd interpretation but that he will also change the document so that it agrees with the misinterpretation. Nina Green, for one, has found many examples of this disconnect between documents in *Monstrous* and their representation and interpretation by Dr. Nelson.

Too good to leave out

Sooner or later the objective, knowledgeable reader must also notice that Nelson is willing to base much of his characterization of Oxford on the inherently tainted, unsupported testimony of his enemies Howard and Arundel. I would have liked to have asked Nelson in a "Charlie

Rose" discussion why he is so willing to use their testimony—rejected by history and by Queen Elizabeth in Oxford's eventual vindication—as authoritative, without any explanation of its historical context or its probable bias.

Daphne Pearson expressed firsthand misgivings with Dr. Nelson's abusive use of scholarly method in an e-mail dated September 24, 2003, concerning his unattributed presentation as fact of Queen Elizabeth's taunting Oxford about his alleged bastardy (see *Monstrous* p. 41): "I think Alan must be using the tainted evidence of the Howard allegations here. He has used it in his *DNB* biography of Oxford and when I taxed him with it, on the grounds that it is not supported by any other evidence he said it was too good a story to leave out. I do not agree with Alan over this and suspect the story was untrue."

Finally, we have Nina Green's announcement on Phaeton on July 3, 2004, that her own translation of the final section of the 16th Earl's Inquisition Post Mortem, "the official government record of the income inherited by Oxford," shows the annual net income inherited by Oxford to be only £1761 10s 9d per annum, barely half the figure of £3,500 per annum claimed by Daphne Pearson in her thesis and adopted by Alan Nelson as a "conservative reckoning" on p. 193 of *Monstrous Adversary*. The significance of this finding cannot be overemphasized for two reasons.

First, it shows that Oxford is much less likely to deserve the reputation of "reckless spendthrift" which historians have bestowed upon him, most recently, of course, Prof. Nelson, who repeats that theme ad nauseam throughout *Monstrous*. Rather, Ms. Green states, the document shows "Oxford's inheritance was a relatively small one, considering that it was an earldom, and because of wardship he had serious cash-flow problems from the start and then was saddled with a crushing debt in the Court of Wards when he came of age. Financially, Oxford didn't stand a chance." This gives us a much different Oxford from the received version.

Even more importantly, Ms. Green provides evidence that Nelson may have already known this information while denying it and supporting the orthodox version of Oxford as a wastrel. She states, "I still have a message from Alan in which he claimed there were no such values to be found in PRO C142/136/12! How Alan could say that after transcribing the document is a mystery."

Indeed, these concerns over Nelson's scholarship, scholarly method, and by implication, scholarly integrity raise real questions as to what extent the work which he has shared with many of us in the past, including documents on his web site, for which he has received our grateful appreciation, has been reliable or itself flawed. There may be a short supply of paleographers, but if errors abound in *Monstrous*, how accurate has his previous work been? Who is checking the expert? Can we afford not to? Doesn't our responsibility as seekers of the truth of authorship require us to check our sources?

For the unsatisfied

But there is more. Ms. Green's announcement begins, "Finally—a level playing field!" Those few words, expressed during the July 4th weekend, can be taken as a kind of declaration of independence from reliance on a resource whose friendship heretofore may have been one of convenience for both sides. It has surely been an uneasy, curious, and to many an inexplicable alliance. We are learning every day more and more about the extent to which it may also be unreliable.

In my opinion, Oxfordians have no choice but to assemble in some format our responses to Nelson's work and to recognize *Monstrous* as an opportunity to take our message to the world, including the many details raised by Nelson which help our cause despite his pejorative spin. In terms of honesty, duty, and our own integrity, we have no choice.

It is safe to say that after the April conference, the public is still unsatisfied. That event may have been a theatrical dud, but to this participant and observer, it framed the conflict which we face, the conflict which has formed from our maturing pursuit of the true author and brought on by the cumulative force of the original work we are doing.

I think of Hamlet's last words to Horatio: "Absent thee from felicity a while, and in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, to tell my story." That may be a romantic characterization of the job at hand, but it is no less accurate. Correcting the record is already a task daunting enough, let alone showing the truth of the monstrous errors recorded by an adversary who would be our friend. Now there is a conflict that is worthy of Shakespeare.

More on *Monstrous Adversary*

Predictably, *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, a Stratfordian quarterly from the English department at Iona College, likes Alan Nelson's book, *Monstrous Adversary*, despite its mind-numbing plenitude of transcripts of Elizabethan documents by and about the Earl of Oxford. Co-editor Thomas A. Pendleton wrote a long review of it, and his conclusion in the first paragraph is that "as one would expect, he [Nelson] finds no substance whatever to the Oxfordian hypothesis." The reader might wonder why then all the fuss.

Richard Whalen, a regular contributor to this newsletter, responded to Pendleton, who in the past has printed his articles about authorship matters and even an extended tribute to Charlton Ogburn, a leading Oxfordian, on the occasion of his death. Whalen has agreed to share his letters and the editors' appended responses.

In his 4,000-word review, Pendleton raises many of the usual Stratfordian objections, but he also raises some provocative points. "Those who want him [Oxford] to be Shakespeare," he writes, "surely will want him to be more admirable." But that's not true. And he says that "it is often supposed that Oxford was highly educated," but he has a confused idea of Oxford's M.A. degrees from Oxford and Cambridge and omits his most important tutor, Thomas Smith. In contrast, he says, "it is quite likely that William Shakespeare [he means the Stratford boy] was actually better educated than Edward de Vere."

Whalen responded with two letters, one to Co-editor Tom Pendleton and one as a Letter to the Editor for publication:

Dear Tom,

Herewith a letter to the editor on your review of Alan's book, plus some attachments for your information/amusement. I have to admit that in a way I'm happy to see you devote so much attention and space to Oxford, even if it's through Alan's myopia. In addition to the points made in my letter to the editor, I offer the following observations:

I'm surprised that you consider the will, the monument and the First Folio as "preeminently" evidence that the Stratford man wrote Shakespeare. The will has nothing literary in it. Nothing. The monu-

ment as originally installed did not depict a writer, and the inscription says nothing about the poems, plays or the theater. The posthumous First Folio never says "Shakespeare of Stratford" or gives birth/death dates; and "Avon" and "Stratford" are in separate, poetic allusions subject to interpretation. Far from being preeminent evidence for the Stratford man, they suggest that he was not the poet/dramatist.

"Those who want

[Oxford] to be

Shakespeare,"

[Pendleton] writes,

"surely will want

him to be

more admirable."

I understand that the Stratfordians are in a difficult position, and I can understand why Alan's closet polemic is appealing. But he gets many of the facts wrong. Nor is he "thoroughly read in Oxfordian researches," as you'll see in the attached reviews I wrote for *Shakespeare Matters*.

Harvey, Digges and Jonson identify Shakespeare as an author? Of course they do, and so do many others, which proves nothing about his identity. Everybody agrees that Shakespeare wrote the great poems and plays. The question is, who was he? Oxford writing under that pen name? Or the man from Stratford with the similar (not the same) name?

It's not true that "nothing he wrote suggests a talent even remotely approaching Shakespeare's." To the contrary, his early poetry is very close to Shakespeare's, as proven by the "Benezet test" found in my book and Ogburn's. Try it.

Does Alan's book "undermine(s) some of the supposedly striking similarities" between Oxford's life and Hamlet. Not at all. He dismisses a few out of hand. See my attached summary of the parallels between Oxford's life and Hamlet with many other striking similarities that you and Alan omit.

Yours,
/s/ Richard

PS: A letter to the editor about a book reviewed by the editor risks rejection, but knowing your usual good humor I still have hope you'll take off your reviewer's hat, put on your editor's hat and deem it worthy of publication even though the reviewer might disagree with it.

Attached to this cover letter was the following letter for publication:

To the Editor
The Shakespeare Newsletter

Your review of Alan Nelson's myopic biography of the earl of Oxford rightly admires his archival research and the hundreds of literal transcriptions that form most of his book. Unaccountably, however, it accepts uncritically Nelson's off-hand inferences about Oxford's personality, which are colored by his naive belief that great writers should be nice people.

This is surprising. The evidence of literary biography suggests the contrary, that artists and writers of genius have often been difficult, eccentric people—egotistical, arrogant, boastful, profligate, unpredictable, subject to mood swings, by turns charming and scornful, cruel and generous, profligate, capable of making great friends and bitter enemies, capable of scandalous behavior, able to distance themselves from their bad behavior and reprove it in their writings.

There are many examples, including Tolstoy, Byron, Proust, Balzac, Beethoven, Van Gogh, Dickens, Wolff, Hemingway, Lowell, even Goethe. Kay Redfield Jamison of Johns Hopkins University, a MacArthur fellow, makes the case most persuasively in *Touched With Fire* (1993). In his *Life of Goethe* (1998), John R. Williams of the University of St. Andrews says that although Goethe has long been uncritically revered as an icon of German culture (shades of William of Stratford), the record shows that he was "often contradictory and perverse, but always complex and subtle...[subject] to extreme mood swings...impulsively generous...[given to] noisy pranks and drunken escapades...sometimes frigid or brutal...[who wrote] brutal character assassinations...also majestic hymns to the glory of God's creation."

Oxford's life fits the pattern. From what we know of it, he was indeed eccentric, difficult and all the rest. Then think of the

(Continued on page 8)

University of Tennessee Law School hosts Shakespeare Authorship Symposium

In June the University of Tennessee Law School hosted a historic development in the authorship controversy. The UT symposium, "Who Wrote Shakespeare: An Evidentiary Puzzle," invited both orthodox and anti-Stratfordian scholars to join in a weekend symposium of lectures and panel discussions devoted to exploring the legal dimensions of the Shakespearean question. The June 4-5 event was the brainchild of the late Professor Jerry Phillips, a University of Tennessee professor of Law and Literature and co-author, with Professor Judy Kornett, of the law and literature textbook, *Sound and Sense*. Phillips had devoted several years to studying the authorship question and was an active and informed reader of all the relevant Oxfordian texts as well as a member of the Shakespeare Fellowship. The 130 conference registrants included lawyers, graduate students, actors, schoolteachers,

and professors from several disciplines. Members of the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society also attended. Participating lawyers were eligible to obtain Continuing Legal Education credits for attendance. Several lawyers were heard by Micki Fox, one of the organizers, to remark that it was the most interesting conference they had ever attended for credit.

Participants and their guests were invited out to dinner the evening of the 3rd, and the mood was friendly and relaxed. This in itself heralded a new beginning; anti-Stratfordians met with Stratfordians, perhaps for the first time, in equal numbers, and were accorded equal respect. The authorship question, in part because of the tone of this conference and its level of intellectual (and social) interaction, is now accepted by many to be a respectable topic of research.

All relevant perspectives were well represented at the conference, which included anti-Stratfordians Diana Price, Gerald Downs, Richard Whalen, Peter Dickson and Roger Stritmatter. Speaking from the orthodox perspective were Alan Nelson, Ward Elliott, UT English Professor Allen Carroll, Daniel Kornstein, and Steven May of Georgetown University. Attorneys William Causey and Don Paine, a Tennessee specialist on Rules of Evidence, addressed the conference on questions of evidence, and William Neiderkorn gave an entertaining paper on the history of the authorship question as revealed in the pages of *The New York Times*.

Who was Shaksper?

Diana Price kicked off with a dynamic presentation, exposing the weaknesses of the official story of the Stratford bard,

More on Monstrous (continued from page 7)

works of Shakespeare, especially *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Pericles*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Troilus and Cressida*. Are these intensely personal plays the work of a nice guy from Stratford? It seems most unlikely.

Far from precluding Oxford as the genius Shakespeare, what we can discern of Oxford's personality, thanks in part to Nelson, makes him eminently qualified to have been the great poet/dramatist. Especially in contrast to the man from Stratford who led a life of "mundane inconsequence," according to another Johns Hopkins professor, the late Sam Schoenbaum (*Lives*, 568).

Perhaps unwittingly, Nelson perfectly captures Oxford as a poet and dramatist of genius. In a flight of imagination inspired by his research, Nelson describes what he calls "perhaps his most characteristic pose: presiding at a well-furnished table, flanked by male companions, high in his cups, firing satiric salvos and witticisms, enlisting his guests in his conspiratorial fantasies. Nothing and nobody was off limits." (203) An Oxfordian could not have said it better.

Yours,
/s/ Richard F. Whalen

Both co-editors responded in their newsletter to Whalen's letter for publication. The first is by Pendleton, who slyly repeats Whalen's rejection of the will, monument and First Folio as relevant evidence:

As I said in my review, the evidence for Shakespeare of Stratford—preeminently the will, the Stratford Monument, and the First Folio—is so abundant as to make the search for a "real" Shakespeare basically pointless. That being said, however, Nelson's biography makes it somewhat less likely that "Shakespeare" was written by the Earl of Oxford than by aliens from Outer Space. We don't after all, know enough about the aliens to disqualify them totally.

And co-editor John W. Mahon adds:

I might note that the evidence suggests that Shakespeare of Stratford was "difficult" in at least some of the ways listed

by Richard Whalen in the second paragraph of his letter. For example, he may have hoarded grain in order to gouge the needy with unconscionable high prices at times of famine. Like his father before him, he may have charged excessively high rates of interest on loans. He could be accused of neglecting his wife and children in order to pursue a theatrical career. If indeed he was born and raised a Catholic, he wasn't willing to risk the consequences of practicing his faith. In *Bingo* (1973), Edward Bond depicts a particularly bitter and unhappy Shakespeare in his last years. It is certainly true that, by comparison to Shakespeare in his last years, the earl of Oxford was an awful human being, but it does not follow that Oxford wrote the plays. And while it may be true that people of genius are often "difficult," it is possible to list at least some people of artistic genius who were decent enough, such artists as Jane Austin, Franz Josef Hayden and Joaquin Sorolla.

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summarizing her 2000 book, *Shakespeare: An Unorthodox Biography*, a detailed comparative study of Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, which confirms the earlier and more impressionistic conclusion of the anti-Stratfordian tradition (e.g. George Greenwood et alia). Price argued that “personal literary paper trails” show that the Stratford man’s authorship is an anomaly from an Elizabethan perspective. Price suggested that William Shakspeare of Stratford was a successful theatrical entrepreneur and manuscript dealer who eventually became known as a “Batillus”—a nickname which refers to the Roman imposter who appropriated verses written by Virgil and tried to pass them off as his own.

Professor Carroll followed Price’s presentation with a detailed but unpersuasive orthodox reading of *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*. Carroll’s 1994 edition of that important book is a standard of Elizabethan scholarship. Inaugurating a rhetorical technique which regrettably became institutionalized among orthodox scholars at the symposium (excepting Professor May), Carroll began his presentation by comparing anti-Stratfordians to special creationists. The relevance of this *ad hominem* premise became apparent when at least some among the audience realized how well the portrait of *Groatsworth’s* “Shakespeare”—who appropriates the literary feathers of other writers and “supposes” he is well able to bombast out a blankverse—matched the portrait sketched by Ms. Price of the Batillus from Stratford.

The legal argument

William Causey and Don Paine discussed the legal doctrine of rules of evidence and raised questions over which rules and standards should apply in the authorship question and on whom the burden of proof should fall. Causey concluded that the standard of evidence relevant to the authorship question was not that of the criminal courts—“beyond a reasonable doubt”—nor that of the standard civil case—“by a preponderance of the evidence”—but that of the intermediate standard of “clear and convincing evidence” which is applied in civil cases in which society has a greater stake. Causey also argued that the burden of proof should

fall upon the Oxfordians as they are the challengers to the official doctrine, and that the standard for arbitration of the dispute should be that of a courtroom. Several audience members, including Shakespeare Fellowship member Thomas Regnier, who has written extensively on the subject of Shakespeare’s knowledge of the law, questioned Causey’s eagerness for legal experts to appropriate and control discussion of the authorship question.

“Causey concluded that

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the authorship question

was not ... ‘beyond a

reasonable doubt’ ... but

... [rather] ‘clear and

convincing evidence.’”

Richard Whalen argued—illustrating his case with examples familiar to readers of *Shakespeare Matters* but new to many of the UT conference attendees—that a preponderance of the evidence clearly supports the “Oxfordian” attribution of the works to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Daniel Kornstein, the Stratfordian lawyer who argued in his book *Let’s Kill All the Lawyers* that the words of Jack Cade (*Henry VI*) quoted in his title must have represented Shakespeare’s true opinion about lawyers, edified the conference with his prosecution of Mark Twain for hypocrisy in *Is Shakespeare Dead?* Readers may remember that Twain reasons that the

sophistication of Shakespeare’s legal knowledge is proof positive of his formal training in the law and then uses this conclusion to develop the “Brontosaurian” argument that Shakespeare was someone other than the Stratford man (perhaps Bacon, but more likely Greenwood’s “great unknown”). Kornstein pointed out that in his preface to *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, Twain—not a lawyer himself—acknowledges the assistance of legal expertise in constructing the novel. To Kornstein this means that Shakespeare could have employed the same tactic without himself being a lawyer and also that Mark Twain, who neglected to mention that Shakespeare himself “coulda-woulda-shoulda” have employed a similar tactic, must be a hypocrite instead of the most astute satirist of the 19th century. To the detriment of his own argument, Kornstein spent three quarters of his time mapping out Twain’s position, and ended up making a stronger case for the anti-Stratfordians than for the traditionalists. Unfortunately the audience was unable to enjoy Mr. Twain’s rejoinder to Attorney Kornstein’s rather tendentious remarks.

The Catholic question

Kornstein’s was the first lunchtime offering. On Saturday, June 5th, Peter Dickson took over the mealtime podium, and spoke about the Catholic Question as it affected the Shakespeare Authorship Question. The contrast was marked. While Kornstein sought to entertain and largely failed, Dickson, as usual, delivered a thoughtful presentation packed with important information and new perspectives which challenged the intellectual horizons of the audience. Readers of *Shakespeare Matters* will already be familiar with Dickson’s important work showing that the timing of the publication of the Shakespeare First Folio in 1623 was influenced by the Spanish marriage crisis and the desire of the “grand possessors”—so they are called in the preface to the 1609 quarto of *Troilus and Cressida*—of the Shakespearean manuscripts to publish a political rebuke to James I which would permanently redefine the nature of the—Protestant—English subject and cancel all fears and

(Continued on page 10)

Tennessee (continued from page 9)

prospects of a counterreformation. For several years Dickson has predicted the current split within Shakespearean orthodoxy—symbolized by the recent angry contretemps between Stanley Wells, high priest of Shakespearean orthodoxy at the Stratford Birthplace Trust, and Michael Wood, author of the revisionist *In Search of Shakespeare*, which secured the endorsement of the BBC for the “Catholic Bard” solution to the authorship question.

The conference also provided a long overdue venue for Shakespeare Fellowship member Ward Elliott to reprise the results of his 1987-94 Shakespeare Computer clinic, in which Elliott, statistician Robert Valenza, and a team of undergraduates crunched numbers until their computers definitively concluded that Oxford was not Shakespeare. It is interesting to note that on his first pass Elliott’s statistics showed that Oxford could fit the profile of Shakespeare, so the professor gamely tried again. Elliott, who has tremendous faith in computers, at length concluded that “Oxford’s poems...are gazillions of times less likely than Shakespeare’s outlier; they are in different galaxies.”

With the sole and distinguished exception of Professor May, the failure of the orthodox team to offer a credible defense of Shakespearean orthodoxy cannot be overstated. In fact, those representing the orthodox view of authorship weakened their own case dramatically through the undisciplined and frequent recourse to arguments *ad hominem* which did little to impress the majority of the audience and not infrequently offended them. Professor Nelson managed to alienate almost the entire audience with his negative remarks about anti-Stratfordians, and his battering away at the Oxfordian case with old and vacuous arguments that lasted his entire hour.

“Anyone,” opined Nelson, “who believes that Shakespeare’s courtroom scenes indicates a knowledge of either Italian or English legal principles and practices of the 16th century ought to have his head examined.” Nelson’s outlandish statement drew gasps from the audience, which was of course largely composed of lawyers. Some of them were familiar with the many astute legal historians whom Nelson—

who appears to have qualifications in neither law nor psychiatry—condemned to the psychiatrist’s couch without blinking.

Oxford’s poetry not Shakespearean?

Professor May delivered an exceptionally forceful and credible critique of the Oxfordian case. Unlike the other Stratfordian presenters, May avoided sweeping ideological attacks on anti-Stratfordians,

***“Stritmatter went
on to show the
necessarily allegorical
nature of Venus and
Adonis, delineating
the main characters ...
as representations of
Elizabeth and Oxford ...”***

and focused on a series of errors or problems which, he alleged, made the Oxford case untenable. Notably, however, May made no attempt to defend the orthodox position.

The first and perhaps most decisive of May’s points was that the supposed stylistic affinity which J. Thomas Looney had documented between Oxford and Shakespeare is not peculiar to those two writers. Many of the stylistic features—for example the use of the *ababcc* stanza—or imagery such as references to women as “haggard hawks”—which Looney believed were idiomatic only to Shakespeare and de Vere—are in fact widely found in Elizabethan literature and hence are not fingerprints of the Shakespearean. Professor May gave examples from Turberville, Grange, Gascoigne, Whetstone, and others to reinforce his argument.

The other points argued by May—that

the case posits an improbable conspiracy of silence, that it is destroyed by a single play dated after 1604, and that Oxford had no motive to conceal his identity of the non-theatrical works—are all familiar to Oxfordians but were delivered with a forceful clarity which the Stratfordian case has rarely enjoyed.

“A life of allegory”

As to the question of the absence of motive for concealment of the authorship of the non-dramatic works, Roger Stritmatter, speaking after May, offered what many regarded as an impressive if not wholly conclusive rejoinder. First demonstrating in his Powerpoint presentation that Elizabethans portrayed themselves allegorically, and that Keats had stated that Shakespeare himself had “lived a life of allegory,” Stritmatter went on to show the necessarily allegorical nature of *Venus and Adonis*, delineating the main characters (Venus and Adonis) as representations of Elizabeth and Oxford, and suggesting that the “purple flower” which “sprung up chequer’d with white” from Adonis’s blood likely represented Southampton, the dedicatee of the poem.

Both days concluded with panels which incorporated all of the day’s speakers with the addition of Gerald Downs, an anti-Stratfordian who made several cogent points.

Well organized and executed, the symposium was a tremendous success. The audience was excited and absorbed, many attendees showing evidence of previous reading on the authorship question, and several approaching the Oxfordians to say that during the conference they had been persuaded of the validity of the Oxfordian case. There was also a high degree of camaraderie; we had dinner with Steven May and William Causey one evening, and exchanged good-natured insults with Nelson, Elliott, and May and their partners the next, as we all “met by moonlight” (and by accident) in a local restaurant and sat at adjoining tables.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the Knoxville Symposium, “Who Wrote Shakespeare? An Evidentiary Puzzle,” will be emulated and repeated in different locales across North America over the next several years.

—LK, RS

Sonnets solved (continued from page one) first postulated by Hank Whittemore in 1999, outlined in his article "Dynastic Diary" in the Summer 1999 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, presented in part at the 1999 Shakespeare Oxford Society Conference in Newton (MA), and again at the Shakespeare Fellowship Conference in Cambridge (MA) in October 2002.

So, while the theory itself has been "out there" and available "piecemeal" for five years, the book Whittemore has been working on has not been ready for publication until now. (See the ad on page 21 for details about *The Monument* and how to order a copy.) To my knowledge, none of the previous 1,800 books on the Sonnets (including those by Stephen Booth, Helen Vendler and Katherine Duncan-Jones) even comes close to the breadth and depth of Whittemore's analysis—an analysis that glosses each and every word in each and every sonnet. And only one—Gerald Massey's 1866 *Shakespeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted*—gets close to the true historical context.

Essex Rebellion is the context

Briefly, his theory is that all 154 sonnets are in authorial order, that nearly all were written or rewritten in the last three years of Oxford's life, that they are addressed to the Fair Youth Southampton and the Dark Lady Queen Elizabeth, and they are concerned almost exclusively with the politics and aftermath of the Essex Rebellion—its purpose, its disastrous failure, the treason trial, Southampton's death sentence, his reprieve from the death sentence, his eventual release from prison and pardon, the poet's observations on their shared guilt and shared shame over Southampton's "crime," the poet's bitter-sweet advice and admonitions on how Southampton should now live his "second" life, and finally—in the Dark Lady sequence—his bitter (without the sweet) rage at their mutual betrayal by Elizabeth. It's all politics, mixed in with the personal views of the writer and expressed through the grand language and philosophy we all know as "Shakespearean."

The "Year in the Life" column in this issue of *Shakespeare Matters* (see page one) incorporates this Sonnet theory into Part I of his analysis and commentary of the year 1601—the year of the Essex Rebellion. Those familiar with previous authorship publications from Whittemore

know that he believes that Southampton was seen by Oxford as a royal son who deserved to succeed Queen Elizabeth. This theory—aka the "Prince Tudor" theory—has been a schism in Oxfordian circles since the 1930s, nearly as old as the movement itself. When "Dynastic Diary" was published in 1999, the opening sentence read, "I wish to present a structure for *Shakespeare's Sonnets* based on the hypothesis that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the son of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth."

In hindsight both Whittemore and I (who was then the editor of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*) agree that this opening sentence was a big mistake, because it actually shortchanged the real nature of his breakthrough theory, waving the red flag of Prince Tudor controversy in everyone's face before delving into what his breakthrough thinking on the *authorial structure* of the 1609 quarto was all about.

The quarto structure is, simply, a *chronological* sequence that tells a story, the most significant sequence being the 100 sonnets from 27 to 126, which turn out to be a *perfect match* with actual historical events as they occurred between Feb. 8, 1601, and April 28, 1603. This middle sequence is both the center and centerpiece of the 1609 quarto. The rest of the structure is comprised of the first 26 sonnets (17 on the Fair Youth and marriage, plus nine others dated 1592-1600), the last 26 (all Dark Lady), plus the final two "Bath" sonnets (153 and 154—which virtually all sonnet commentators have seen as separate and seemingly "added on" for some reason to the sequence of 152). Everything is explained in much greater detail in *The Monument*.

I'd like to explain why I have come to believe that the Whittemore solution to the Sonnets is absolutely correct, and to share some insights into how I have viewed the sonnets over the 25 years I've been an Oxfordian, and how the Whittemore solution has made crystal clear what was once mysterious and opaque.

In short, once one has 1) the correct author (Oxfordians do), 2) the correct Fair Youth and Dark Lady (Southampton and Queen Elizabeth), and, finally, 3) the all-important correct historical context, then reading the Sonnets becomes as clear and uncomplicated as reading a signed, dated letter to a known addressee about the events of the day. In this case, of course,

the "events of the day" are "your crime, your trial, your death sentence, my anguish, my attempts to save you, I have saved you!, she has betrayed us both, and now we both must live in this new post-crime world, and here's my advice on how you should now live your second life." It's that easy.

Language is the key

The key to understanding Whittemore's "Monument" theory of the Sonnets form and content can be found in the language of the Sonnets, and in the extensive research that has been done to gloss each and every word and uncover not just the standard dictionary definitions of these words, but—as no one else has ever done—what these words meant to Shakespeare. And where else to look for what a word meant to Shakespeare than in his plays—specifically, his chronicle plays of English royal history? This may seem like an astoundingly simple proposition, and surely, one may ask, someone, somewhere over the past two centuries had thought to do it. But, so far as we know, no one ever has.

Given this new semantic context, one finds that the language of the sonnets begins to reveal real answers as to the time and place of their references and as to the nature of the relationship between the poet and the youth. The most important observation about the large picture that comes out of this new context and analysis is that the oft-acknowledged wealth of legal terms used in the sonnets can now be seen as directly tied to their primary subject matter—the criminal offense, trial, death sentence, reprieve and release of the Fair Youth. Another well-known sonnet theme—shame and guilt—can now also be seen as direct commentary on the shame and guilt of the youth's criminal offense on Feb. 8, 1601—a shame and guilt that the poet takes to be as much his own as the youth's.

In considering the Sonnets in light of this proposed Essex Rebellion context, I believe that there are two extremely important words to focus on: "trespass" and "fault," words which appear in six of the Fair Youth sonnets—"trespass" twice and "fault" eight times. These words are generally glossed as an "offense" of some sort, usually personal and most likely sexual (e.g., "sensual fault" in Sonnet 35). They have in turn been linked up to words such

(Continued on page 12)

Sonnets solved (cont' from p. 11) as "shame" and "guilt" to help create theories about hot love triangles, bed trysts and homosexual encounters.

Robert Giroux in his 1982 *The Book Known as Q* notes (p. 22) about Sonnet 35 (in which both words appear) that "something serious has occurred, but the language of the poem is unspecific and open to many interpretations." He continues that "it may have been a crisis over the young man's seduction by the poet's mistress." Without the correct historical context Joseph Sobran in *Alias Shakespeare* (1997) also goes astray with his homosexual theory of the relationship between the poet and the youth, though—interestingly—he does make note (p. 201) of the wealth of legal terminology used in the sonnets, but then has nothing to say about why such language might be so prevalent in a series of love sonnets. Joseph Pequigney's *Such is My Love* (1985) is another example of analysis that creates rather than finds a context, resulting in another theory having to do with homosexuality and the "shame" and "guilt" that must go along with it.

But when one looks closely at Elizabethan history and Shakespeare texts, one finds that the words "trespass" and "fault" are both associated closely with "crimes," in particular crimes against the state—treason. Shakespeare especially, in his history plays, uses the words "treason" and "trespass" interchangeably. For example, in *1 Henry VI* (II.iv.92-94) we find

And by his treason stand'st not thou attainted,
corrupted, and exempt from gentry? His
trespass yet lives guilty in thy blood.

Just as important as Shakespeare's usage is the fact that, as documented in Prof. John Bellamy's 1979 *The Tudor Law of Treason*, offenses such as "trespass" had, under a century of Tudor rule, slowly become equated with "treason." On page 20 Bellamy writes about the 1517 riots in London directed against foreigners, which the state then, in acting against some of the rioters, treated as high treason against the king in disposing of the cases (13 were convicted of treason, and then hanged, drawn and quartered). Bellamy notes:

In the fifteenth century disturbances of the

35

N O more bee greu'd at that which thou hast done,
Roses haue thornes, and siluer fountaines mud,
Cloudes and eclipses staine both Moone and Sunne,
And loathsome canker liues in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and euen I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
My selfe corrupting saluing thy amisse,
Excusing their fins more then their fins are:
For to thy sensuall fault I bring in fence,
Thy aduerse party is thy Aduocate,
And gainst my selfe a lawfull plea commence,
Such ciuill war is in my loue and hate,
That I an accessary needs must be,
To that sweet theefe which sourely robs from me,

The words "fault" and "trespass" appearing together in Sonnet 35 are the tipoff to the true historical context of the whole series.

type which occurred in 1517 would probably have been dealt with as riot (which was trespass) ...

The case for the meaning of "fault" is much easier. Southampton himself spoke of his "fault" in writing to the Privy Council begging for mercy sometime in late February or early March 1601, and when King James sent a message ahead to London in April 1603 ordering Southampton's release, he wrote that, "the late Queen our Sister, notwithstanding his fault toward her, was moved to exempt [him] from the stroke of Justice."

Once one understands that "trespass" and "fault" are both words that can refer to treason, then the Sonnets in which they appear are transformed. In particular, reading "trespass = treason" in Sonnets 35 and 120 has enormous significance for understanding the real subject matter of both these sonnets and the entire middle sequence of 100 sonnets. Equally important is how the meaning of other words in other sonnets suddenly becomes clearer.

Foremost among such other words is "misprision" in Sonnet 87, glossed by all commentators for two centuries as a "misunderstanding" of some sort (which is, correctly, one of its definitions and usages). But in the Elizabethan era there existed a legal concept that had been carefully refined over a century of Tudor rule: "misprision of treason." Misprision of treason was defined as a crime just short of treason (i.e., having known of treason and having failed to stop it and/or report it to the authorities). Where a treason conviction meant the death penalty, a finding of "misprision of treason" meant life in prison

and loss of all titles and properties. Again, Bellamy's book is important in understanding how these legal concepts evolved under a century of Tudor rule as the state consolidated its power by expanding the concept of "crimes against the state."

The difference between the two charges (treason vs. misprision of treason) became a subjective life and death, cat and mouse game played between the authoritarian state and its subjects. Two of the most well-known trials of the era have treason vs. misprision of treason at their center: Sir Thomas More in the mid-1530s, and Sir Walter Raleigh in 1603-1604. In both cases charges against each man swung back and forth between misprision of treason and treason, finally ending for both in treason convictions and death.

In the case of Raleigh, he was convicted of treason in 1604, which was then commuted to misprision—prosecutor Sir Edward Coke having said that a conviction for misprision of treason was all he had been going for anyway. Then, incredibly, his original 1604 treason conviction was resurrected in 1618 for the sole purpose of disposing of him as a political sop to King Philip of Spain!

In looking at the Sonnet's story of the Poet Shakespeare/Oxford and the Fair Youth Southampton this gloss is of great significance because the entire meaning of Sonnet 87 really hinges on this one word—misprision. As Tudor law operated, the legal basis for sparing Southampton's life *had to have been* a commutation from treason to misprision of treason—from death to life in prison and loss of all titles and property. Yet there is no official record of such a legal finding, and Southampton's major biographers (Stopes, Rowse and Akrigg) can only say that "he was spared." But it is interesting to note that Rowse does state flatly that "there was almost a conspiracy between the Queen and Cecil to save [him]," and a little later he says, "Southampton's life had really been saved by Cecil" (p. 164, *Shakespeare's Southampton*).

So when Shakespeare writes in Sonnet 87 "thy great gift, upon misprision growing," what he is really saying is that your life has been saved, and now your "great gift"—a second life—must "grow upon"

the foundation of your “misprision of treason” commutation. We should also note here that Shakespeare himself, in Sonnet 68, directly refers to this second life (“to live a second life on second head”). In discussing this interpretation of Sonnet 87 over the past five years with fellow Oxfordians it has been said, in rebuttal, “well, who says ‘thy great gift’ means ‘life?’ Couldn’t it be a reference similar to ‘Thy gift, thy tables’ (Sonnet 122)?”

As it turns out, Sir Walter Raleigh himself used the same phrase in the same circumstances just a few years later. In a 1604 letter to the Privy Council (as cited in Martin Hume’s 1926 *Sir*

Walter Raleigh, p. 199) pleading for his life following his treason conviction (i.e., in effect pleading to get commuted from treason to misprision of treason) Raleigh writes, “For a greater gift none can give, or receive, than life...” It’s enough to make me think that he may have even seen Sonnet 87 or some version of it.

These are just a few observations—based on just three words—on what the Sonnets are really all about; and as can be seen, it’s a story about the real life and death situation of the moment, without even having to consider the more contentious matter of the precise relationship between the poet Shakespeare/Oxford and the condemned youth Southampton.

The case for authorial order

Another important matter in understanding the Sonnets that all commentators have struggled with, and none have solved until Whittemore, is whether they are in authorial order. In reconsidering all these sonnets over the past five years in light of the Monument theory I noted in particular one sonnet sequence that is as meaningless and opaque as can be—until one understands the context within they were written and what historical events are being referenced.

I am speaking here of Sonnets 63 to 67, a sequence which also covers several important moments in my own evolution as an Oxfordian. It was 25 years ago, while reading Sonnet 66 (having just finished reading Ogburn’s 1962 *Shakespeare: the Man Behind the Name*), that I looked up and said, “Oh my God, they’re real!”—an

87

Farewell thou art too deare for my posselſſing,
And like enough thou knowſt thy eſtimate,
The Chaſter of thy worth giues thee releaſing:
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
And for that riches where is my deſeruing?
The cauſe of this faire guiſt in me is wanting,
And ſo my pattent back againe is ſweruing.
Thy ſelfe thou gau’ſt, thy owne worth then not knowing,
O mee to whom thou gau’ſt it, elſe miſtaking,
So thy great guiſt vpon miſpriſion growing,
Comes home againe, on better iudgement making.
Thus haue I had thee as a dreame doth flatter,
In ſleepe a King, but waking no ſuch matter.

The word “misprision” in Sonnet 87 has never been glossed as “misprision of treason” since no one ever had the correct context.

Oxfordian epiphany from which I’ve never looked back.

“They’re real.” Indeed. That describes the entire authorship debate, the plays, the poems, the Hamlet-Shakespeare-Oxford comparisons—all of it. Yet I never understood how real the Sonnets were until April 1999, when Whittemore was trying gamely to explain his new theory to me. For a while I wasn’t getting it, but kept nodding agreeably, figuring sooner or later I would get it or Hank would give up. And then suddenly, we were looking at Sonnet 63 and the lines

For ſuch a time do I now fortify,
Againſt confounding age’s cruel knife,
That he ſhall never cut from memory
My ſweet love’s beauty, though my lover’s
life.

His beauty ſhall in theſe black
lines be ſeen,
And they ſhall live, and he in them
ſtill green.

And just as suddenly I got it. I saw in my mind a picture of Southampton being led to the block, about to have the “confounding [Elizabethan] age’s cruel knife [the headsman’s ax]” cut his “life” [head] off, even as the poet, picturing the same thing and “fortifying” himself through his writing, swears he shall never be cut from memory because “he ... still green” [he shall live forever] in “these black lines” [my verse]. This is certainly not the la-de-da, lovey-dovey stuff that all too many Shakespeare commentators (Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians) usually speak of. This was real life and death anguish as it must have really happened—as both Southampton and Shakespeare must have

experienced it: a day-by-day countdown to his execution.

But only in recent years have I come to appreciate how these sonnets (63 and 66) fall right in line with those surrounding them and form a coherent sequence. In fact the brief sequence from Sonnets 63 to 67 can *only* be understood to make sense if one considers them to document what we know happened in March 1601. Therefore, they *must* be in authorial order, which is the cornerstone of Whittemore’s entire thesis. “How so?” the wary reader may at this point be asking.

Well, the real events of March 1601 were that Southampton was scheduled to be beheaded, and

that at the last moment he wasn’t. Instead he began serving a life sentence, stripped of all titles and property. In Sonnets 63 to 65 we find the same theme of the poet anticipating the youth’s death and swearing he shall live on in my verse. Abruptly, we then come to Sonnet 66, in which the poet now says “I’m so depressed I wish I were dead, but I can’t go, because then *I’d* be leaving *you* behind.” It’s the reverse of what he has just been saying in the previous three sonnets.

Now here’s the kicker. In Sonnet 67 the poet begins by asking

Ah, wherefore with infection ſhould he live
And with his preſence grace impiety,
That ſin by him advantage ſhould achieve
And lace itſelf with his ſociety?

There is no further talk of the youth dying—only talk of *why* should he have to live this way (67), that he has “a second life on second head” (68), that he “dost grow common” (69), that he should be grateful for his great gift [life] and build on it (87), and how he should now live [this second life] (e.g., Sonnet 94). Consider how the actual events of March 1601—the impending doom followed by the sudden moment when he is reprieved—match these sonnets. In real time there had to have been the anguish leading up to the expected execution, followed by mixed feelings of depression (66) and resignation (67) to the reprieve and the new reality of serving a life sentence. Sonnet 67 ends by remarking on “these last [days] so bad.” And what could have been so bad as what the two of them—poet and youth—had just

(Continued on page 14)

Sonnets solved (continued from page 13)

lived through? What other known historical context could even come close to making sense of the emotions expressed in this sequence from Sonnets 63-67?

Sonnets as historical evidence

Next, I want to touch on the historical implications of the Monument theory. Eighty years ago J. Thomas Looney predicted that, if he was right, future scholarship would find new information that would fit the Oxfordian hypothesis and none that would displace it. In that same spirit I believe that the five years spent since the publication of "Dynastic Diary" in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* have proven that point. The book Whittemore is now publishing has greatly enhanced (for both of us) our appreciation of the basic correctness of his thesis, and along with that has come the realization that something we once only suspected is, in fact, absolutely true: the Sonnets are not just poetry. They are the author's message in a bottle to posterity—they are real, they are documentary evidence every bit as important and potent as any letters, any diary, or anything to be found in the Calendar of State Papers. In fact, in some instances the Sonnets provide historical information that exists nowhere else (e.g., "misprision" in Sonnet 87).

For another example, let's take a look at Sonnet 120. Here, even after spending years immersed in this new point of view about the sonnets, and having talked with Whittemore for hundreds if not thousands of hours about them, it was only last summer (2003) that I had yet another Oxfordian epiphany. It came while looking up the word "rascal" in the dictionary on Hank's back porch (another story for another day), and on the opposite page my eyes noticed the word "ransom: payment made for release from captivity." I immediately thought of the couplet in Sonnet 120, and then we both read the entire sonnet together. Remember, in this sonnet the poet recalls "our night of woe" and how he "once suffered in your crime." He concludes with the couplet:

But that your trespass now becomes a fee,
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must
ransom me.

Note that the all-important word "trespass" recurs, referring undoubtedly to the "treason" Southampton committed on

February 8, 1601, a point further reinforced by the poet's bemoaning in the sonnet about "once [suffering] in your crime." So, in keeping with the thesis that everything in the middle sequence of 100 sonnets is real *and* related to the Essex Rebellion and its aftermath, what are we to make of this final couplet? The answer, I think, is obvious. The poet is saying to the youth that your crime has become a "fee" [price] that we *both* must pay—in the form of a ransom, a payment for release from captivity. Such a deal could have only been negotiated with Robert Cecil and approved by the Queen.

It should be noted here that Whittemore's current draft at that time did have the "payment-release" meaning glossed, but for both of us there was a sudden realization that the Sonnet 120 couplet could well be, in itself, the whole authorship mystery encapsulated in two lines. The import of this for both Shakespeare and Shakespeare authorship studies cannot be overstated, because what we then realized was that the "price" [i.e. "ransom," "fee"] that the poet must have paid was not just to give up all title to his works, but in fact, *to give up everything*, even his name and his place in history.

This in turn would then explain the certainty that is spoken of in Sonnets 72 ("My name be buried where my body is") and 81 ("I, once gone, to all the world must die"). This certainty about his anonymity has always been a puzzle, even for Oxfordians. Was it his choice, or someone else's imposed upon him? But now, seen in this new context of a deal to save Southampton—of a ransom paid—then everything becomes clear. It was imposed. His certainty is that of someone who has signed a contract from which there can be no turning back.

As we noted earlier, even orthodox scholar A.L. Rowse concluded that Cecil alone saved Southampton's life. But left out by Rowse (and by Stopes and Akrigg) is any reason why. Just because the kid was young, pretty and had long hair? Because his wife and mother wrote such wonderful, pleading letters? Because Southampton's own letters to Cecil and the Privy Council were so damn good? No good reason for the sparing of Southampton has ever been offered. But, outside of Shakespeare authorship circles, it has never been seen as an important question even to ask—let alone to answer.

It should also be noted here that it is a

well-documented fact that the payment of "ransom and fine" was routine for prisoners in this era as a means to mitigate their sentences or avoid imprisonment altogether. Records show that the majority of Essex Rebellion conspirators did in fact pay "ransoms and fines." Charles Danvers even offered to pay £10,000 to escape his death sentence, but was turned down! But for Southampton there is no record of any ransom or fine paid as part of the process by which he was reprieved from his death sentence. No record, that is, until now, and our new view of Sonnet 120 as historical evidence.

So then, what we have here could well be the literary ground zero of the entire Shakespeare authorship mystery. The mystery is the result of the ransom paid to save Southampton's life—a ransom paid by the poet Oxford/Shakespeare not in cash, but as a political deal. And a deal being a deal, especially in England where under the Official Secrets Act a secret is a secret forever, the mystery about who Shakespeare really was endures to this day.

"Such virtue hath my pen"

But Oxford/Shakespeare had no intention of going quietly into that good night of oblivion. He still had his pen, and I am sure that he spent his final days rewriting and refining much, with a keen eye on his new situation. His top priority would certainly have been writing and carefully planning the sonnet sequence, but I think that an accompanying plan would have been to sprinkle the plays with as many clues, final comments and parting shots as possible (surely he had always been given to name clues and puns, but now that the end was near and—if we are right—a deal consigning him to oblivion was in place, then name clues and puns were all he had left).

Thus it may be, for example, that certain scenes in *As You Like It* (e.g., railing at the interloper William in V.i, or talking with Jacques in III.iii) were either written or carefully rewritten post-1601 to remind posterity that "When a man's verse cannot be understood ... it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room" (Marlowe references aside, might there have been an actual "little room" in March 1601, with just a desperate Oxford and a smug Cecil in it?). Or perhaps he inserted the incredibly inflammatory "Hast thou a daughter" and "Jephthah" ex-

changes with Polonius in *Hamlet* (II.ii), implying that your daughter's pregnancy is like maggots in a dead dog—lovely thought, but had it ever really been performed at court, in front of Cecil and the Queen?). Or perhaps the ultra-bitter dark comedy *Troilus and Cressida* was finished, in which Polonius has now morphed into Pandarus, who has the final line in the play: "I'll... bequeath you my diseases" (perhaps a parting shot at the Cecils—father and son—depicting the father saying to posterity, "Meet my son")?

How he actually spent his final years is pure speculation, but I can't help but think that Oxford—who bragged in Sonnet 107 that "Death [now] subscribed [to him]" because he would live on in his verse—must have been busy putting his affairs and his verse in order—to ensure just that.

A theory in progress

Finally, it is only in recent weeks as I prepared this essay that I had yet again another evolutionary moment in my thinking on the Sonnets and the all important question: "Just how real are they?" Over these last five years Whittemore and I have had innumerable conversations about the implications of his theory and just what the Sonnets are telling us if they are—as contended—historical testimony. It has been an intriguing process of focusing on key words and phrases and mulling on possibilities. So what occurred to me in these recent weeks is one more step on a journey that it is hoped all Oxfordians will soon take—to take the Sonnets as true, historical testimony and to see where that leads. As Whittemore and I have already found, analysis of the Sonnets from this new perspective consistently comes up with significant fits between the text and the known history of the period (e.g., "trespass," "fault," "misprision" and "ransom").

So, in this instance what occurred to me was a possible answer to what the second half of that final line in sonnet 120 ("...yours must ransom me.") might be about, for it does seem to say that Southampton is expected to ransom Oxford. For a while I wondered what captivity was Oxford in that he needed to be ransomed. And then it came to me: he was

120

That you were once vnkind be-friends mee now,
And for that sorrow, which I then didde feele,
Neeedes muft I vnder my transgression bow,
Vnleffe my Nerues were braffe or hammered Steele.
For if you were by my vnkindnesse shaken
As I by yours, y'haue past a hell of Time,
And I a tyrant haue no leasure taken
To waigh how once I suffered in your crime.
O that our night of wo might haue remembred
My deepest sence, how hard true sorrow hits,
And soone to you, as you to me then tendred
The humble falue, which wounded bofomes fits!
But that your trespasse now becomes a fee,
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom mee,

The second and final appearance of "trespass" occurs in Sonnet 120, coupled with the provocative mentions of "fee" and "ransom."

"captive good attending captain ill [i.e., Cecil]" (Sonnet 66), and would remain so until "released." He was a captive of his fate, his anonymity. And a release from that captivity would only come if his verse could someday be understood (Touchstone's line in *AYLJ*), which in turn could only come about if the author's true identity—and true story—became known.

Sending hidden messages

It was the publication of the 1609 quarto that launched what we now know was a carefully crafted message in a bottle to posterity. Without the quarto, the entire state of Shakespeare studies and biography (including the authorship debate) would be vastly different. We must remember that its publication was undoubtedly suppressed and there were no subsequent printings. There was not even any contemporaneous discussion about them, in an age obsessed with discussing who likes which poet and poetry. Only 13 copies survived, and without them all we'd know of Shakespeare's sonnets would be the 1640 John Benson version, which in effect butchers the original and obliterates what we now know was the carefully planned structure of the whole. Without the 1609 quarto there would be no such thing as *Shakespeare's Sonnets* as we know them.

The quarto was published in spring 1609 (registered on May 20th), almost simultaneously with the quarto of *Troilus & Cressida*. Both works contain enigmatic introductions with "never" and "ever" in play (the "Never Writer to an Ever Reader" in *T&C* and the *Sonnet* dedication—

correctly deciphered by John Rollett—revealing the hidden message, "These sonnets all by ever"). But what good are hidden messages unless they are sent?

Even with the political risks that had to have been involved in defying the "grand possessors," I have now come to think that Southampton must have been behind the publication of both; it was the "fee" he knew he had to pay to release the poet and his verse from oblivion, the ransom that had to be paid in exchange for the ransom paid to save his life.

Further, if the theory about there being a deal to save him is correct, then his fulfillment of the request to "ransom me" (cf. Hamlet to Horatio: "tell my story") would be more than just taking a risk—it would be actually violating that deal. But duty called, just as it had once called Hamlet to release his father from purgatory.

Whittemore notes in *The Monument* (citing Akrigg's *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, p. 144-145) that in the summer of 1609 King James, while visiting Southampton at Beaulieu, apparently panicked and guards were called out. One of the first known instances of a James "panic" occurred on June 24, 1604—the day of Oxford's death—when Southampton and other Essex Rebellion survivors were arrested, held overnight, and then released the next day, with no official record as to why they were arrested in the first place. These two "panics" provide uncanny parallels in considering to what extent political danger may have surrounded the Southampton-Shakespeare-Oxford connections.

After 1609 there were no new Shakespeare publications for 14 years. And when the First Folio was published in 1623, it made no mention of *any* Shakespeare poetry, and certainly not the 1609 quarto of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. *Troilus and Cressida* only made it in at the last minute and is not listed in the table of contents. The Folio is full of obfuscation about the true author, where 14 years earlier both 1609 publications cried out, "It was eVer."

It's taken 400 years—perhaps longer than anyone back then would have dared guess—but we are now close. With the mystery of the Sonnets now solved, that ransom will soon be paid in full, and Oxford shall at last be released.

Year Life (cont'd from p. 1)
an "invention" or special language (created in response to a repressive regime that has "tongue-tied" his art) that acts to conceal yet reveal the true story being told.

- Love and Time: The key words of the invention, which convey one image on the surface while simultaneously recording the progress of an entirely different topic, are "Love," representing Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and "Time," representing Elizabeth Tudor, Queen Elizabeth I of England.

- The Timeline: The chronological timeline of Southampton's living record is literally the ever-dwindling organic Time left in the life and reign of the Queen, leading to her death and the royal succession (the way time itself was measured in regnal years and other writers, including Oxford, referred to "her Majesty's time"), followed by the days leading to Elizabeth's funeral that brought the Tudor dynasty to its official conclusion.

The opening Fair Youth series (1-126)—in which "time" appears on 78 occasions (but nowhere in the final 28 Sonnets)—is divided into two distinct parts. The first segment (1-26) spans the years 1590-1600 and comes to an abrupt end; but the second segment (27-126), which is also the 100-verse sequence at the center of the monument, comprises the heart of *Shake-Speares Sonnets*. This is where the real action is. Here, in effect, is a book of 100 chapters beginning with Sonnet 27 on February 8, 1601 (in response to Southampton's immediate imprisonment for the Essex Rebellion), and continuing to Sonnet 125 upon the funeral of Elizabeth on April 28, 1603 (when the Tudor dynasty officially ended), with Sonnet 126 in farewell.

Precedents for a 100-sonnet sequence include the 100 poems scattered within the anonymous collection *A Hundredth Sundry Flowres* in 1573, with which Oxford has been associated, and the 100 consecutively numbered verses of *Hekatom-*

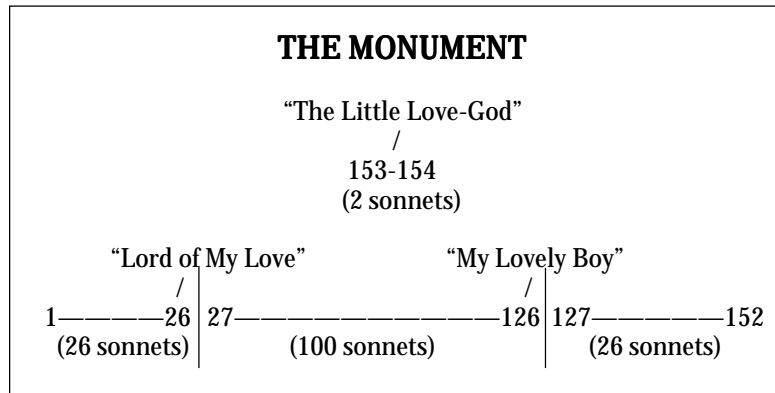


Figure 1

pathia or *The Passionate Century of Love*, which Thomas Watson dedicated to Oxford in 1582.

This extraordinary 100-verse core sequence is itself divided into two parts:

- The Prison Years: The first 80 sonnets (27-106) cover the two years and two months that Southampton spent in the Tower of London, from the night of February 8, 1601 to his last night of confinement on April 9, 1603.
- The Final Days: The final 20 verses (107-126) commence with the liberation of Southampton by King James on April 10, 1603 (107), and continue—with exactly 20 sonnets for 20 days—until the "envoy" of Sonnet 126 that abruptly follows the Queen's funeral on April 28, 1603.

In terms of the monument as a whole, the sequence of 100 chronological verses begins to emerge when Sonnets 153-154 about "The Little Love-God" are recognized as the epilogue or prologue of the collection. The remaining 152 sonnets contain the Fair Youth series (1-126) and the Dark Lady series (127-152), with Sonnet 126 to "My Lovely Boy" as the "envoy" ending the first series. But the structure of the monument also includes Sonnet 26 to "Lord of My Love" as an envoy, so that Sonnets 26 and 126 bring discrete segments to their conclusions. The result is a three-part design (Figure 1) that includes the 100-sonnet central sequence; and a closer view (Figure 2) shows how these 100 verses are divided into two sections of 80 and 20 sonnets.

All 80 "prison" verses (more than half the total of 154 sonnets!) are addressed to Southampton in the Tower for two years and two months. Oxford undoubtedly drew

upon and/or revised some previous writings, but nonetheless fashioned and arranged them to correspond with Henry Wriothesley's imprisonment. From the night of the Rebellion onward, setting down the most intense outpouring of sustained poetical confession the world has known, he tried to make sure future generations would be able to comprehend his role and how—by

paying "ransom" for the life, freedom and pardon of Southampton—he agreed to bury his identity as Shakespeare.

Beginning with Sonnet 27 on the night of February 8, 1601, Oxford wrote 60 sonnets (27-86) matching the first 60 days of Southampton's incarceration, when the younger earl faced trial for high treason, was sentenced to death, withstood a fearful waiting period, learned that his life was spared, and finally faced a future of perpetual confinement in shame and disgrace so long as Elizabeth remained alive. (The 60 day-by-day sonnets recall the 60 consecutively numbered verses of *Tears of Fancy* attributed to Watson in 1593, wherein No. 60 is a revised version of Oxford's early Shakespearean sonnet "Love Thy Choice," written circa 1573 to express his loyalty to the Queen.) The remaining verses (87-106) cover the next two years of confinement ending with Sonnet 106 on April 9, 1603, when Oxford sums up the long dark prison segment as "the Chronicle of wasted time."

This 80-sonnet prison section begins with the failed revolt and includes the two subsequent anniversaries, thereby covering the "three winters" noted in Sonnet 104:

27	Essex Rebellion	Feb 8, 1601
97	First Anniversary	Feb 8, 1602
104	Second Anniversary	Feb 8, 1603

Immediately following the prison segment is Sonnet 107, known as the "dating" verse because of its topical allusions. Here Oxford celebrates the liberation of his "true love" after he had been "supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" in the Tower. Now at the peak of his artistic powers and maturity, 53-year-old Edward de Vere opens Sonnet 107 with a single, sweeping sentence of four lines:

THE 100-SONNET CENTER

Sonnets 27-126

Southampton's
Imprisonment
Feb. 8, 1601

/

27

(80 sonnets)

Last Night
In the Tower
Apr. 9, 1603

/

106

Southampton's
Liberation
Apr. 10, 1603

/

107

(20 sonnets)

Elizabeth's
Funeral
Apr. 28, 1603

/

125-126

Figure 2

Not mine own fears nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to
come
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.

Southampton has gained his liberty because of the recent death of Elizabeth, known as Cynthia or Diana, goddess of the Moon, whose mortal body has succumbed although her eternal self, as a divinely ordained monarch, will endure. The Queen's death on March 24, 1603, has led to the swift proclamation that James of Scotland will be crowned King of England amid domestic peace rather than the civil war around succession to the throne that had been so widely predicted and feared:

The mortal Moon hath her eclipse
endured,
And the sad Augurs mock their own
presage,
Incertainties now crown themselves
assured,
And peace proclaims Olives of endless age.

But the most rewarding result is that, on orders sent by James five days earlier from Edinburgh to London, 29-year-old Southampton has walked back through Traitor's Gate into the sunshine of restored freedom and honor.

"My love looks fresh," Oxford declares of Henry Wriothesley, while claiming his own triumph over death through this private diary:

Now with the drops of his most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and death to me
subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor
rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless
tribes.

Finally Oxford reaffirms his commit-

ment to preserve Southampton within this monument of verse. Recalling the late Queen as a "tyrant" who had kept the young earl as a prisoner, he alludes to plans for Elizabeth's body to be laid temporarily near the great brass tomb in Westminster Abbey of her grandfather Henry VII, who founded the Tudor dynasty in 1485:

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass
are spent.

All events recorded in the 100-sonnet sequence lead up to, and then away from, the high point of Southampton's liberation on April 10, 1603.

In 1866 Gerald Massey offered the first persuasive identification of Southampton as the poet's "true love" of Sonnet 107:

We may rest assured that Shakespeare was one of the first to greet his 'dear boy' over whose errors he had grieved, and upon whose imprudent unselfishness he had looked with tears, half of sorrow, and half of pride. He had loved him as a father loves a son ... and he now welcomed him from the gloom of a prison on his way to a palace and the smile of a monarch.¹

Most scholars continue to agree with the dating in relation to Elizabeth's death and the accession of James in the spring of 1603. G. P. V. Akrigg recalls in 1968 how H. C. Beeching proclaimed 107 the only verse "that can be dated with absolute certainty" and declared it must belong to 1603. Akrigg recounts his own experience of coming to the "sudden complete conviction" that it refers to spring 1603 "almost as if it had the date visibly branded on it," adding: "This is what Shakespeare had to say to Southampton upon his release from imprisonment."²

More recently editor John Kerrigan in 1986, noting the poet's joyous statement

that his love "looks fresh," comments further:

In the light of the secondary sense of My love looks fresh, it is remarkable that one of the first acts of the newly-crowned King was to release the Earl of Southampton – often thought the addressee of Sonnets 1-126 – from the prison in which he had languished ever since his participation in the ill-fated Essex rebellion of 1601. If Wriothesley was indeed, to some emotional extent, the you and thou and love of Sonnets 1-126, both he and the poet's affection for him would have been refreshed and renewed by the events of 1603 ... On the basis of allusions, in short, 1603 seems the obvious date—with all which that implies for the dating of the sequence.³

Editor G. Blakemore Evans writes in 1996 that "the majority of recent critics strongly favors 1603 as the most likely date," adding: "Indeed, the case for 1603 (or a little later) is so brilliantly presented by Kerrigan that one is dangerously tempted to cry 'Q. E. D.'"⁴

Kerrigan's final words are emphasized to show how close he comes to perceiving the chronological framework revealed by the structure and language of the monument. One thing this view of 107 "implies for the dating of the sequence [i.e., the Fair Youth series of 1-126]" is that the diary must extend at least to April 10, 1603; but a far more crucial implication, once these sonnets are viewed as chapters of a cohesive narrative story, is that all the preceding 80 verses have been recording events during Southampton's incarceration and leading up to this dramatic high point when he gains his freedom from the Tower.

Another implication is that, just as only Henry Wriothesley can be the Fair Youth of the Sonnets, the powerful, deceitful, tyrannical Dark Lady who held him captive during 1601-1603 can only be Oxford's
(Continued on page 18)

Year in the Life (continued from page 17) and Southampton's sovereign Mistress, Queen Elizabeth I of England. In addition, as no other writers in England were seeking or competing publicly for Southampton's attention during his imprisonment, the so-called Rival Poet of the Sonnets can only be the printed name "Shakespeare" with which Henry Wriothesley was uniquely associated.

This column narrows the focus to key events of 1601 within just the first 20 entries (27-46) during Southampton's captivity, with the diary of the Fair Youth series (Figure 3,) contributing to the evidence:

January 9: Southampton Attacked

Lord Gray, supporting Secretary Robert Cecil, attacks Southampton in the street. The earl draws his sword in combat, but his houseboy has a hand lopped off.

February 2: Southampton Leads

A committee at Drury House headed by Southampton plans a palace coup to remove Cecil from power and gain access to Elizabeth.

February 3: Southampton Demands

When others question the plans to seize the Court at Whitehall, Southampton shouts back: "Then we shall resolve upon nothing, and it is now three months or more since we first undertook this!"⁵

February 6: Shakespeare's Company

Conspirators bribe the Lord Chamberlain's Men into staging *Richard II*, to rouse support by showing how King Richard handed over his crown in 1399 to Bolingbroke, who became Henry IV of England. Essex and Southampton intend to remove Cecil and gain access to Elizabeth, now in her 68th year.

February 7: *Richard II* Performed

Shakespeare's acting company stages the play at the Globe as followers of Essex and Southampton cheer the scenes of an English monarch losing his crown. Oxford may have added the powerful deposition scene (not printed until 1608) to help their cause, as Massey in 1866 suggested that "at the pressing solicitations of Southampton, the drama of King Richard II was altered by Shakespeare on purpose to be played seditiously, with the deposition scene newly added!" The evidence, he argued, is that "if Shakespeare was not hand-in-glove with the Essex faction, he fought on their side pen-in-hand."⁶ In the new scene Richard gives up the throne with Bolingbroke in his presence, which is what Essex and

Southampton hope to persuade the aging Elizabeth to do:

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,
With mine own hands I give away my crown,
With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,
With mine own breath release all duteous oaths.⁷

It appears informers for Cecil helped get *Richard II* performed on this day, to trigger the revolt prematurely.⁸ Now the Secretary sends an emissary ordering Essex to face the Council at Court, sending him into confusion even as he refuses. During dinner with Southampton and others, the earl expresses confidence that the Sheriff of London will supply a 1000 men in support, but this appears to be disinformation planted by a Cecil agent.⁹

February 8: The Rebellion

The revolt begins after the Crown sends officials to Essex House and the conspirators hold them captive, already an offense against the state. Essex sets off in panic to find the Sheriff along with Southampton and 300 men, insufficiently armed, who follow him through the streets as he cries: "For the Queen! For the Queen! A plot is laid for my life!" Confused citizens stay behind windows and doors; none of the Sheriff's support emerges; and well-prepared agents under Cecil's orders already enter the city gates proclaiming Essex and his cohorts as traitors.

With all routes to the Palace blocked, and after fighting with bloodshed, Essex returns home to find the Crown prisoners have been released. Government officials surround the house and demand surrender.

"To whom should we yield?" Southampton retorts. "Our adversaries? That would be to run upon our ruin! Or to the Queen? That would be to confess ourselves guilty! But yet if the Lord Admiral will give us hostages for our security, we will appear before the Queen! If not, we are every one of us fully resolved to lose our lives fighting!"

At ten this evening Essex and Southampton fall on their knees and deliver up their swords. They are taken first to Lambeth and then carried by boat to the Tower after midnight; and Oxford records in Sonnet 27 that, in the darkness, his thoughts "intend a zealous pilgrimage" to

Southampton, who appears in "my soul's imaginary sight" as a "shadow" transformed into "a jewel (hung in ghastly night)" that "makes black night beauteous, and her old face new."

So begins the 100-sonnet sequence, the first 60 verses corresponding with the first 60 days and nights of Southampton's imprisonment, as Oxford indicates this pace in 28 by recording that "day doth daily draw my sorrows longer" and "night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger." Identifying with the younger earl's plight, he records in 29 that he himself is "in disgrace with Fortune [the Queen] and men's eyes" in the same way Southampton is suffering in the Tower.

February 11: Summons to the Sessions

Oxford records in 30 that the Privy Council will summon him to the Sessions or treason trial of Essex and Southampton, to sit as highest-ranking earl on the tribunal of peers who will judge them:

When to the Sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past...

(*"Summon a session," King Leontes commands in The Winter's Tale, 2.3.200, calling for a treason trial, and referring to it in 3.2.1 as a "sessions"*)

Southampton, facing death, is "precious friends hid in death's dateless night" and in 31 he becomes "the grave where buried love doth live." The first words of the next verse to him ("If thou survive") indicate his expected execution while 33 refers to the "stain" he has brought upon himself.

Oxford records his personal sorrow in 34, writing of Southampton as the sun that dries the "rain" (tears) on "my storm-beaten face" but "cures not the disgrace" of the crime, for which he, Oxford, will pay by sacrificing himself (i.e., his identity) in the spirit of Christ paying with his life for the sins of mankind:

Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss,
Th'offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's loss.¹⁰

(*Southampton writes to the Privy Council*)

soon after the trial as "a poor condemned man who doth, with a lowly and penitent heart, confess his **faults** and acknowledge his offences to her Majesty." He refers to his "sins" as an "offender" and adds that his soul is "heavy and troubled for my offences.")¹¹

Oxford follows with the particular information that a "rich" price or fine will be paid to "ransom" the younger earl for his "ill deeds" against the state:

Ah, but those tears are
pearl which thy love
sheeds,
And they are rich, and
ransom all ill deeds.

(John Chamberlain will write in May: "There is a commission to certain of the Council to **ransom and fine** the Lords and Gentlemen that were in the action" of the Rebellion.)¹²

Oxford accuses himself in 35 of "authorizing" Southampton's "trespass" or treason by "compare" or by dramatizing the deposition of Richard II:

All men make faults, and even I, in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing these sins more than these
sins are.

(In his letter to the Council noted above, Southampton refers to his "faults"; when James orders him released in April 1603, the king notes that "the late Queen our Sister, notwithstanding his **fault** toward her, was moved to exempt [him] from the stroke of Justice." The plays of royal history are filled with "fault" for treason: "Their **faults** are open," the King declares of traitors in Henry V, 2.2.142, adding: "Arrest them to the answer of the law." (Trespass and treason are equated, as in: "And by his **treason** stand'st not thou attainted, corrupted, and exempt from gentry? His **trespass** yet lives guilty in his blood" – 1 Henry VI, 2.4.92-94; the Oxford English Dictionary for "trespass" cites "offence, sin, wrong, a fault." The Tudors including Elizabeth had expanded treason to cover "rebellion of all types," Bellamy writes in The Tudor Law of Treason, so that even "assemblies of a riotous nature became synonymous with treason."¹³ (Southampton in his letter to the Council

THE FAIR YOUTH SERIES

Golden Time	Sonnets 1-26	26 Sonnets
Sonnet 1	Marriage Proposal Begins	1590
Sonnet 25	Irish Military Campaign	1599
Sonnet 26	ENVOY to Southampton	1600

The 100-sonnet sequence

Prison Years	Sonnets 27 – 106	80 Sonnets
Sonnet 27	Rebellion & Prison	Feb 8, 1601
Sonnet 105	Death of Elizabeth I	Mar 24, 1603
Sonnet 106	Last Night in the Tower	April 9, 1603
Final Days	Sonnets 107 – 126	20 Sonnets
Sonnet 107	Southampton's Liberation	April 10, 1603
Sonnet 125	Funeral of Elizabeth I	April 28, 1603
Sonnet 126	ENVOY to Southampton	April 29, 1603

Figure 3

refers to his "sins"; and before submitting to the axe at his execution, Essex will call the Rebellion "this my last **sin**, this great, this bloody, this crying, this infectious **sin**..."¹⁴

Oxford goes on to record that behind the scenes he is counterbalancing the younger earl's "sensual fault" or willful, riotous crime with "sense" or lawful reason. First he must do his duty to the state as an "adverse party" or judge at the trial, which will mean finding him guilty and condemning him to death; but he is also his "advocate" or legal defender entering a "lawful plea" or argument (to Cecil) on Southampton's behalf and against himself:

For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea
commence

(William Cecil Lord Burghley had equated "sensual" with "willful" in writing of Catholic traitors: "Ifavor no **sensual** and **willful** Recusants." The second line above is glossed as "Your legal opponent is also your legal defender" by Duncan-Jones. "I never did incense his Majesty against the Duke of Clarence, but have been an earnest **advocate** to plead for him" – Richard III, 1.3.85-87)¹⁵

February 17: Indictments

Indictments are produced accusing Essex of attempting to usurp the Crown and charging him and Southampton with conspiring to depose and slay the Queen

and to subvert the government.¹⁶ Oxford in 36 announces terms of the "ransom" he will pay to save Southampton from execution:

I may not ever-more acknow-
ledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should
do thee shame

Because he has linked Henry Wriothesley (and him alone) to "Shakespeare" by the public dedications of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *Lucrece* in 1594, he must sever all ties to him and never claim credit for works attributed to Shakespeare. On

the eve of the trial, Oxford likens himself in 37 to a "decrepit father" looking upon "his active child" and tells Southampton, using his own lameness as metaphor:

So I, made lame by Fortune's
[Elizabeth's] dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and
truth.

February 19: The Trial

Oxford sits silently on the tribunal as Attorney General Edward Coke prosecutes for the Crown with vicious help from Francis Bacon, during a daylong travesty of justice the outcome of which has been preordained.

When J. Thomas Looney presented his evidence in 1920 that Oxford wrote the Shakespeare poems and plays, this historic event took on huge significance:

It is clear, from the point of view of the problem of Shakespearean authorship, that the famous trial of the Earl of Essex assumes quite a thrilling interest. Standing before the judges was the only living personality that 'Shakespeare' has openly connected with the issue of his works, and towards whom he has publicly expressed affection: Henry Wriothesley. The most powerful force at working in seeking to bring about the destruction of the accused was the possessor of the greatest intellect that has appeared in English philosophy: one to whom in modern times has actually been attributed the authorship of Shakespeare's plays – Francis Bacon. And sitting on the benches amongst the judges

(Continued on page 20)

Year in the Life (continued from page 19)

was none other, we believe, than the real 'Shakespeare' himself, intent on saving, if possible, one of the very men whom Bacon was seeking to destroy.¹⁷

For students of Oxford ever since, however, the 80-sonnet "prison sequence" has remained in a limbo of obscurity, mainly because the "three winters" of Sonnet 104 have seemed to suggest a three-year relationship between Oxford and Southampton beginning just before or after *Venus and Adonis* in 1593. Once this huge block of verses is positioned within Southampton's confinement during 1601-1603, however, a window is opened and any previous perception of the poet and his subject matter is transformed. In terms of the authorship question, acceptance of this chronology of the Sonnets is equivalent to placing the poet as directly involved in the trial and confirming Oxford as Shakespeare.

Now the historical record illuminates the sonnets while the sonnets illuminate the same history. The events on the calendar and the "numbers" of the sonnets need no rearrangement; when these two fixed entities are brought into alignment, they combine to produce the story of what happened as Elizabeth's life and reign dragged to their bitter end with Southampton a prisoner referred to as the commoner "Mr. Henry Wriothesley" and in legal terms as "the late earl." Here is the explanation for the terrible wave of emotional darkness abruptly descending upon the verses at Sonnet 27 and continuing all the way to the triumph of Sonnet 107.

Here, too, is the reason for the torrent of legal terms relating to crime, treason, disgrace, trials, imprisonment, royal pardon and much more. An alphabetical sampling would include:

Absence of Your Liberty, Accessory, Accusing, Action, Adverse Party, Advocate, Arrest, Attaint, [convict], Attainted, Bail, Bars, Blame, Confess, Confine, Commits, Crime, Defendant, Defense, Excuse, False [false-traitor], Fault [crime], Faults, Gate, Gates of Steel, Guard, Guilt, Empanelled [a jury at a court], Imprisoned, Judgment, Key, Lawful Plea, Lawful Reasons, Laws, Locked Up, Misprision [of treason], Offence, Offender, Pardon, Plea, Plea Deny, Plead, Prove, Purposed Overthrow, Quest [jury], Ransom, Releasing, Repent, Revolt, Sessions [trial], Summon [to trial], Suspect [suspect-traitor], Term of Life, Trespass [treason], Up-Locked, Verdict, Wards [guards]...

Henry Wriothesley's confinement in the Tower also explains the prolonged "absence" of Oxford and Southampton from each other:

Things Removed (31), *O Absence* (39), *When I Am Sometime Absent From Thy Heart* (41), *Where Thou Art* (41), *Injurious Distance* (44), *Where Thou Dost Stay* (44), *Removed From Thee* (44), *Present-Absent* (45), *Where Thou Art* (51), *The Bitterness of Absence* (57), *Where You May Be* (57), *Where You Are* (57), *Th'imprisoned Absence of Your Liberty* (58), *Where You List* (58), *Thou Dost Wake Elsewhere* (61), *All Away* (75), *Be Absent From Thy Walks* (89), *How Like a Winter Hath My Absence Been From Thee* (97), *This Time Removed* (97), *And Thou Away* (97), *You Away* (98)...

Oxford is forced to find Southampton guilty and condemn him to death. Reacting to the "pain" of the trial in 38, he refers to "these curious [anxious] days" being recorded:

If my slight Muse do please these
curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the
praise.

The sacrifice of his link to Southampton proceeds in 39 with instructions to "let us divided live." By his crime the younger earl has stolen himself from both England and Oxford, who tells him in 40: "I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief." He warns him in 41 that "still temptation follows where thou art" [in the Tower] and to avoid those who would "lead thee in their riot even there" by urging new revolt. (Bellamy notes how Attorney General Coke's success "in getting various popular riots and assemblies classified as treason brought the Tudor era to a close with the establishment of a markedly royal interpretation of the scope of treason").¹⁸

Oxford reminds him in 42 that for now he is stuck with Elizabeth as his sovereign and that he himself had "loved her dearly" or served her with devotion, but now his "chief wailing" or sorrow is that she has Southampton in her prison fortress:

That she hath thee is of my wailing
chief,
A loss in love that touches me more
nearly.
("Wailing Chief" echoes "the common term 'chief mourner,' the nearest relative present at a funeral"—Booth; i.e., anticipating Southampton's execution.)¹⁹

"All days are nights to see till I see thee," he writes in 43, again reflecting the daily pace of his diary (and the daily nature of Southampton's prison life), "and nights bright days when dreams do show thee me."

February 25: Execution of Essex

Essex is beheaded and Oxford writes to Southampton in 44 of their "heavy tears, badges of either's woe." If he could do so, he would fly with his thoughts to "the place" where Southampton is confined:

As soon as think the place where he would
be

And although his reference to "the place" might appear to be a casual one, in fact he uses a term commonly employed to signify the Tower:

"You both shall be led from hence to **the place** from whence you came"—the Lord High Steward to Essex and Southampton at trial's end; "The safety of **the place** under my charge"—John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower; "Because **the place** is unwholesome"—King James, ordering Southampton's release; "I do not like the Tower, of any **place**"—Richard III, 3.1.68

Meanwhile Oxford notes in 45 that messengers are riding back and forth between the Tower and his home [in Hackney] to bring news of Southampton's health battles, which, according to the Council, "he hath had before his trouble":²⁰

By those swift messengers returned
from thee
Who even but now come back again
assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me.
("Whereas we do understand that the Earl of Southampton, by reason of the continuance of his quartern ague, hath a swelling in his leggs and other parts"—the Privy Council to John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower, March 22, 1601)²¹

In Sonnet 46 Oxford pulls out all stops to convey the nature of this private diary as a document of contemporary political history. He recreates the trial itself, writing how his heart "doth plead" while "the defendant doth that plea deny," but a "quest" or jury will be "impaneled" in a courtroom [actually in a private room of the Palace] and "by their verdict" the outcome will be "determined." As we shall see in our next column, he will promise Southampton in 49 to literally "guard the lawful reasons

on thy part"; he will pledge in 57 to "watch the clock for you"; and, in 58, suffering through this "imprisoned absence of your liberty," he will assure Henry Wriothesley that, by agreeing with the ransom to be paid for his life, "to you it doth belong yourself to pardon of self-doing crime." Oxford is working with his brother-in-law Robert Cecil, who now has all power over the government, to produce a "better judgment" in the form of "misprision" of treason, whereby once James is crowned Southampton will gain his release from the Tower along with a royal pardon for his crimes. The announcement that his "great gift" of life will grow anew is to be made in Sonnet 87:

So thy great gift upon misprision
growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.

This column will continue the story in upcoming editions of *Shakespeare Matters* while further describing elements of the solution to the Sonnets as set forth in *The Monument*. Meanwhile we are reminded of a prediction by Hyder Rollins in 1944:

The question *when* the sonnets were written is in many respects the most important of all the unanswerable questions they pose. If it could be answered definitely and finally, there might be some chance of establishing to general satisfaction the identity of the friend, the dark woman and the rival poet (supposing that all were real individuals); of deciding what contemporary sources Shakespeare did or did not use; and even of determining whether the order of Q is the author's or not. In the past and at the present, such a solution has been and remains an idle dream.²²

We also recall Sir George Greenwood's declaration of 1908: "The real problem of the Sonnets is to find out who 'Shakespeare' was. That done, it might be possible to make the crooked straight and the rough places plane—but not till then." And to this we add his further comment that, by the same token, "If we could only know who wrote the Sonnets we should know the true Shakespeare."²³

Endnotes:

¹ Massey, Gerald, *Shakespeare's Sonnets Never Before Interpreted* (London, 1866), 79.

² Akrigg, G. P. V., *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 255.

³ Kerrigan, John, *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* (London: Penguin, 1986; reprinted in Penguin Classics, 1999), 317 (emphasis added).

⁴ Evans, G. Blakemore, *The Sonnets* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996-98), 216-17.

⁵ Camden, William, *Annales of Elizabeth R* (hypertext edition by Dana F. Sutton, University of California Irvine, <http://e3.uci.edu/~papyri/camden/>; "Anno Domini 1601," 5.

⁶ Massey, op. cit., 107; and in *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets Unfolded*, 1872, the new Supplement to the 1866 edition, p. 51.

⁷ The first quarto of *Richard II* was registered in 1597. The deposition scene (IV.1.154-318) was printed first in the fourth quarto in 1608. Most editors use the scene as it appears in the Folio of 1623.

⁸ The culprit appears to have been Lord Monteagle, who arranged for the *Richard II* performance but was never put on trial; Massey, Supplement, op. cit., 51.

⁹ The agent may have been Sir Henry Neville. See Camden, *Annales*, op. cit., 17, recounting that Neville was "shunning the name of an Informer" while among the conspirators at Drury House.

¹⁰ In Sonnet 34 the second "loss" is usually emended to "cross."

¹¹ Stopes, Charlotte Carmichael, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton* (New York: AMS Press, 1969, reprinting the 1922 edition), 225; Salisbury Papers, Vol. XI, p. 72.

¹² Stopes, 233; (D. S. S. P., CCLXXIX, 91).

¹³ Bellamy, John, *The Tudor Law of Treason* (Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), 81.

¹⁴ Akrigg, op. cit., 127.

¹⁵ The O. E. D. cites Burghley's "sensual and willful Recusants" from 1584; Duncan-Jones, Katherine, editor, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (England: Thomas Nelson, 1997; Arden edition), Sonnet 35, p. 180.

¹⁶ Also indicted on the same charges are Rutland and Sandys; see Akrigg, op. cit., 120.

¹⁷ Looney, John Thomas, "Shakespeare" Identified in *Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975, for Minos Publishing Co., Jennings, LA), 332.

¹⁸ Bellamy, op. cit., 48 (emphasis added).

¹⁹ Booth, Stephen, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 202.

²⁰ Stopes, op. cit., 245.

²¹ Stopes, op. cit., 224.

²² Rollins, Hyder Edward, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, (Philadelphia & London: J. B. Lippincott, 1944), 53, with my emphasis added to "when."

²³ Greenwood, Sir George, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, 1908, pp. 83 & 36.

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Leicester's Commonwealth: Portrait of a serial killer?

By C. V. Berney

Who was Leicester? Oxfordians know him chiefly as the model for Claudius in *Hamlet*. He was born Robert Dudley in 1532 or 1533 (if the latter, he was the same age as Elizabeth). His grandfather, Edmund Dudley, was beheaded by Henry VIII for "constructive treason." His father, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, was beheaded in 1553 for his attempt to make Lady Jane Grey queen rather than Mary Tudor (Lady Jane was married to his son Guilford). Robert Dudley, for his part in this conspiracy, was committed to the Tower in July 1553. He was arraigned, attainted and sentenced to death in January 1554, but was released and pardoned in October of that year. He and his brothers served with distinction at the battle of St. Quentin in Picardy in 1557; perhaps as a reward for that service he was restored in blood.

Some sources say Dudley first met the Princess Elizabeth when he was 16, during the reign of young King Edward. He married Amy Robsart, the daughter of a provincial knight, in 1550. Elizabeth's confinement in the Tower (March-May 1554) overlapped with Dudley's, and there is a tradition that he sent her flowers during this time. At any rate, Elizabeth was strongly attracted to Dudley, and one of her first acts after her coronation was to make him her Master of Horse. The two spent much time together, and the rumor was that Dudley wanted to marry Elizabeth, thus fulfilling the family dream of putting a Dudley on the throne. An obstacle to this union was, of course, the existence of his wife Amy. She was found at the base of a stairway with her neck broken in September 1560. The Court and the diplomatic world were scandalized; on hearing the news, Mary Stuart was reported to have laughed shrilly and to have exclaimed "The Queen of England is going to marry her Horsekeeper, who has killed his wife to make room for her!" A jury declared the death an accident, but the scandal effectively prevented any marriage between Elizabeth and Dudley.

Elizabeth created Dudley Earl of Leicester on 29 September 1564, and tickled his neck during the ceremony.

What was *Leicester's Commonwealth*? It was a book purporting to be a record of a conversation between a Lawyer, a Gentleman, and a Scholar that made scandalous accusations against the Earl of Leicester. Among other things, it accused him of being responsible for the deaths (usually by poisoning) of at least eight persons. It was printed in France in 1584 and distributed surreptitiously in England. Although banned by the government, it was widely read. It set the tone for the view of Leicester taken by early historians such as Camden and Naunton, but modern historians tend to give Leicester a pass, rarely if ever concluding that he killed anyone. The book itself is customarily described as "this outrageous document,"¹ "the scurrilous libel,"² or an "infamous tract."³ The latter characterization is by Alison Weir, who goes on to describe it as "a virulent attack on Dudley

made by an anonymous Catholic writer."

The authorship of *Leicester's Commonwealth* has been a subject for speculation since it was first published. Contemporary opinion was that it was by the Jesuit priest Father Parsons. The editor of the modern edition of the book, Dwight Peck, suggests that it "was written chiefly by Charles Arundell, probably with the assistance of all or some of the group comprising Lord Paget, Thomas Fitzherbert, William Tresham, Thomas Throgmorton, and possibly still others . . ."⁴

Knowledge is power, and our knowledge of the details of Oxford's life gives us the godlike power to leap over centuries of puzzlement in a single bound. Historians have praised the skill of the author:

It was in fact such a masterpiece of character assassination, and so brilliantly written, that many people were convinced of its veracity.⁵

Artistically . . . it constitutes something of a minor masterpiece. Its language is often vigorous and engaging, in places . . . with . . . a delightful quality of outrageous humor. . . . it is not too much to say that the participants here take on something of the personalities expected of characters from the stage.⁶

A French edition, described by Peck as "an extremely close and accurate translation," came out in 1585. Peck considers the author of the French edition to be the same as that of the original English edition of the previous year. This author "mentions further translations into Latin and Italian shortly to appear (but which, so far as is known, never did) . . ."⁷

I'm not going to tell you who the author of the *Commonwealth* was, but if you can think of an Elizabethan courtier capable of writing masterpieces in English, who was also fluent in French, Latin and Italian, and whose characters come to life on the stage, you may be on to something.

Was Leicester a serial killer? The FBI defines a serial killer as someone who kills at least three people over an extended period of time. As we mentioned, the *Commonwealth* attributes at least eight deaths to Leicester:

Amy Robsart (1560)
Lord John Sheffield (1568)
Cardinal Châtillon (1571)
Sir Nicholas Throckmorton (1571)
Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex (1576)
Alice Draycot (1576)
Lady Lennox (1578)
Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex (1583)

[Some people would add Edward VI (1547) and John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford (1562) to this list, but they are not mentioned in the *Commonwealth*.]



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester

In some ways, the most interesting case on this list is the first one, Amy Robsart, Dudley's first wife, who was found dead with a broken neck at the base of a stairway. I will not discuss it in detail, but will refer you to Alison Weir, who devotes 20 pages to it.⁸ Weir's thesis, which both Sarah Smith and I find persuasive, is that Amy's death was arranged by William Cecil as a preemptive strike to prevent Dudley from marrying Elizabeth. The manner of death is significant here—the broken neck immediately suggests foul play, whereas if she had been poisoned, a death from natural causes could have been claimed. As it was, a jury returned a verdict of "death by mischance," clearing Dudley, and we too will give him a pass.

Our program now will be to examine the three cases about which the most is known and see if we can reasonably determine Leicester to be guilty. If we do so in all three cases, we can conclude, using the FBI criterion, that he was in fact a serial killer.

Case 1: Lord John Sheffield. In 1562 John Sheffield, 2nd Baron of Butterwick, married the beautiful Douglass Howard (her father was William, Lord Howard of Effingham). In 1565 she met Dudley (now Leicester) during a visit to Belvoir Castle. A contemporary account relates that Leicester, "being much taken with her perfection, paid court to her and used all the art (of which he was master enough) to debauch her." A modern historian writes

By the time the visit to Belvoir had ended, Douglass was much in Leicester's thrall and fearful her husband would discover her infidelity. To reassure her, Leicester allegedly wrote that he was aware of what an obstacle the unsuspecting husband was "to the full

fruit of their contentment" and told the unhappy woman "that he had endeavored by one expedient already, which had failed . . ." to dispose of Sheffield. But, he said, he would try once more, and "doubted not would hit more sure."⁹

According to some accounts, Douglass dropped this letter and it was found by Sheffield's sister, who warned him about the conspiracy. He immediately set out for London to apply to Parliament for a divorce. He died 10 December 1568, at the age of 30. In May 1573 Leicester married Douglass in a secret ceremony at Esher, which he later repudiated as having no legal force. Three months later, Douglass gave birth to a son, who was given the name Robert Dudley. By July 1575 Leicester had grown tired of Douglass, and was actively courting Lettice Knollys, who was then married to the Earl of Essex, Walter Devereux.

Alison Weir recounts the events described above, and then (referring to the alleged poisoning of Sheffield) writes

No other evidence corroborates this tale, and as Leicester was invariably accused by his enemies of poisoning those about him, even such a friend as Throckmorton, little credence can be given to it.¹⁰

I'm having a little difficulty understanding her logic here. Perhaps it would help if I restated it as a formal PROPOSITION.

PROPOSITION: Because Leicester was invariably accused by his enemies of poisoning those about him, he is innocent of the death of Sheffield.

Since the opposite of "enemies" is "friends" and the opposite of "innocent" is "guilty," we are immediately able to deduce:

COROLLARY 1: If Leicester were invariably accused by his *friends* of poisoning those about him, he would be *guilty* of the death of Sheffield.

But this is an absurdity: friends don't accuse friends of poisonings. Any person who does so is automatically an enemy. Let's try again.

COROLLARY 2: If Leicester were *never* accused by his enemies of poisoning those about him, he would be *guilty* of the death of Sheffield.

This result seems counterintuitive, to say the least, seeming to require an unusual degree of incompetence (or politeness) on the part of Leicester's enemies. Weir presumably believes that if Leicester's enemies claim that he poisons 75% of the time, then he is 25% likely to have murdered Sheffield, and if they claim he poisons 25% of the time, his guilt in the Sheffield case is 75% assured. If you're ever on trial for murder, try to pack the jury with as many modern historians as you can get.

Case 2: Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. *Leicester's Commonwealth* gives what sounds like an eyewitness account of Throckmorton's death.

... wherefore understanding that these two knights [Cecil and Throckmorton] were secretly made friends, and that Sir Nicholas was like to detect his doings (as he imagined), which

(Continued on page 24)

Leicester (continued from page 23)

might turn to some prejudice of his purposes (having conceived also a secret grudge and grief against him, for that he had written to her Majesty at his being ambassador in France that he had heard reported at Duke Memorance's table that the Queen of England had a meaning to marry her horsekeeper); he invited the said Sir Nicholas to a supper at his house in London and at supper time departed to the Court, being called for (as he said) upon the sudden by her Majesty, and so perforce would needs have Sir Nicholas to sit and occupy his Lordship's place, and therein to be served as he was; and soon after by a surfeit there taken he died of a strange and incurable vomit. But the day before his death, he declared to a dear friend of his all the circumstance and cause of his disease, which he affirmed plainly to be of poison given him in a salad at supper, inveighing most earnestly against the Earl's cruelty and bloody disposition, affirming him to be the wickedest, most perilous and perfidious man under heaven. But what availed this, when he had now received the bait?¹¹

There is a book entitled *Assassination at St. Helena Revisited* that gives a detailed account of Napoleon's death by poisoning at the hands of an agent of the French royal family. An appendix lists 32 symptoms of chronic and seven symptoms of acute arsenic intoxication. "Violent vomiting" is one of the latter.¹²

The Dictionary of National Biography gives the following account of Throckmorton's death:

... He died in London on 12 February 1571. Shortly before, he had dined or supped with the Earl of Leicester at Leicester House. According to the doubtful authority of Leicester's 'Commonwealth,' his death was due to poison administered by Leicester in a salad on that occasion... Leicester, it is said, had never forgiven Throckmorton for his vehement opposition to the earl's proposed marriage to the queen. No reliance need be placed on this report. Throckmorton had continuously corresponded on friendly terms with Leicester for many years before his death, and they acted together as patrons of Puritan ministers... Cecil wrote to Sir Thomas Smith of their markedly amicable relations on 16 October 1565, and described Throckmorton as 'carefull and devote to his Lordship.'¹³

It may be that Throckmorton was "carefull and devote" to Leicester, but I don't think that rules out the possibility that Leicester killed him. I remember in high school I read a story—I forget the name—about an Italian nobleman who had a grudge against a fellow citizen. For years he feigned friendship with the man, waiting for his chance, until finally he lured him into a vast array of underground catacombs on the pretext of sampling an especially rare cask of Amontillado sherry. Then he did something really awful to the man. I forget what it was. Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? Not the *DNB* biographer.

Case 3: Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex. Appendix D of Dwight Peck's edition of *Leicester's Commonwealth* gives a succinct account of the death of Essex.

Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex, went into Ulster with a military force in 1573. His wife Lettice Knollys was involved with Leicester, at first as early as 1565 and then again in her husband's absence, as (probably) during the Kenilworth festivities of 1575; she married him in 1578. Whether Essex sought revenge upon Leicester for "begetting his wife with child in his absence" may be doubted, but they were hostile toward one another, and this may have been part

of the reason; on 5 December 1575, Antonio de Guaras wrote from London, during Essex's return, that "as the thing is publicly talked about in the streets there is no objection to my writing openly about the great enmity which exists between the Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex, in consequence, it is said, of the fact that whilst Essex was in Ireland his wife had two children by Leicester." Essex's Irish failures brought him home in 1575, but he was soon forced to go back, largely, according to Camden, because of Leicester's influence in Council... In late summer 1576 he was in Dublin, preparing to come home again; there he became ill and, after three week's languishing, died on 22 September.¹⁴

The "three week's languishing" requires that Leicester have an agent in Essex's household, in a position to administer moderate doses of arsenic over that period of time. Essex's "yeoman of the cellar" was Roland Crompton. After Essex's death, Crompton was given a position in Leicester's household.

The Dictionary of National Biography sums up the matter as follows:

A report that Essex had been poisoned caused Sir Henry Sidney to order an investigation immediately after the earl's death. The rumour proved groundless; the post-mortem examination showed no trace of poison.¹⁵

Weir agrees:

After Essex died on 22 September, Sir Henry Sidney, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, ordered an immediate post-mortem, but, as he reported in detail to the Council, there was no evidence of foul play, nor did the doctors who attended Essex believe that he died of anything other than natural causes.¹⁶

Both Weir and the *DNB* neglect to mention that Sir Henry Sidney was in fact Leicester's brother-in-law, having married Mary Dudley on 29 March 1551. Peck is honest enough to inform the reader of that relationship, but it doesn't shake his confidence in Leicester's innocence.

Henry Sidney, despite his obvious connection with Leicester's interests, was apparently a man of very great honesty, and in the absence of harder evidence than we now have, his report should be believed.¹⁷

It is touching to see such wonderful faith in the essential goodness of mankind; these three historians are gleaming candles of innocence in a cynical world.

If we are to exonerate Leicester as the above historians have done, we must be convinced of two things: (1) that the medical science of the time was capable of detecting poison if it were there, and (2) that Henry Sidney reported the result truthfully. The interaction of these two conditions gives rise to three possibilities:

(i) The post-mortem was accurate and Sidney was honest. In this case we have to join our benevolent historians in exonerating Leicester.

(ii) The post-mortem was inaccurate, failing to detect poison that was actually present, and Sidney reported this result truthfully. This would count against Leicester.

(iii) The post-mortem was accurate and detected poison, but Sidney

reported this result untruthfully. This would also imply Leicester's guilt.

If the post-mortems of 1576 were 50% accurate and the chances of Sidney ratting on his brother-in-law are 50-50, then each of these possibilities is equally probable, but since two of them point to Leicester's guilt and only the first exonerates him, we have a 2-to-1 indication of his culpability. But can we do better in estimating the odds?

Medical science in the Elizabethan era. In 2004 we are used to precise medical analyses. When the *DNB* says "the post-mortem examination showed no trace of poison," the image that leaps to mind is a white-coated technician with spectacles and a clipboard reporting "We ran the Krogheimer test for arsenic; it showed less than 5 parts per billion, normal for someone living in Dublin. Antimony and mercury levels were below the detectable limit. And we did the Fitzeau procedure for alkaloids, which also came out negative." This is the sort of thing that could lead to the unbounded confidence in the post-mortem that our historians display. The reality was quite different.

John Hall was the son-in-law of Will Shaksper (the Stratford guy, not the playwright). He was a physician, and a highly regarded one. When he died, the inscription in the burial register read "Johannes Hall, medicus peritissimus"—most skillful doctor. We can assume he was on the cutting edge of the medical practice of his time. (I emphasize he was not personally involved in any of the post-mortems discussed here.) Charlton Ogburn has given us an example of his technique:

A seventy-year-old whom Dr. Hall treated was "oppressed with Melancholy, and a Feaver with extraordinary heat." The doctor applied "Radishes sliced besprinkled with Vinegar and Salt" to the soles of the patient's feet to draw back the "Vapours," which caused "starting and fear."¹⁸

One can only speculate about the Elizabethan procedure for determining if a corpse was poisoned. Perhaps cucumber slices were placed between the toes of the deceased, and if they turned blue the test was positive.

The poisoning of Napoleon is instructive. Because of the political sensitivity of the case, the post-mortem was carried out by several doctors, each of whom concluded that he had died of natural causes. Yet when the body was exhumed 20 years later, it was in a state of perfect preservation. It was so loaded with arsenic the poor germs never had a chance to initiate the processes of decay. The authors cite a similar case:

In all, d'Aubray's illness lasted eight months. The Marquise de Brinvilliers [his wife], whose crime was discovered, admitted she had poisoned him 28 to 30 times. . . . Yet at the post-mortem examination, the doctors had judged that Monsieur d'Aubray had died a natural death.¹⁹

The post-mortems of Napoleon and d'Aubray were carried out over two centuries after that of Essex—yet after two centuries of medical advances, not only were both wrong, but both were stunningly wrong. I can only conclude that post-mortems in 1576

were meaningless. And there is a human factor at work here—in politically sensitive cases such as these, where the possible suspect is a powerful nobleman known for his vindictive nature, it would be an audacious physician indeed who would return a finding of death by poison.

Sidney's honesty. Let's review the case against Leicester. In 1576 he had been having carnal relations with Essex's wife for perhaps 11 years. Essex knew about it and vowed revenge. By pulling strings, Leicester had Essex shipped back to Ireland, but Leicester knew he would eventually come back to London. So Leicester had two strong motives for getting rid of Essex: (1) continued access to Lettice, and (2) self-preservation. That Leicester had formed a relationship with Essex's "yeoman of the cellar" is implied by the fact that Crompton joined his staff shortly after Essex died. Two other people (Robin Hunnis and Alice Draycot) who were dining with Essex were also afflicted, Draycot to the point of death. I would say the circumstantial case against Leicester is quite strong. Peck, however rejects it because of his faith in Henry Sidney's "very great honesty."

How far was Sidney willing to go to advance his brother-in-law's interests? An earlier incident may suggest an answer. In late 1560, Robert Dudley had still not despaired of persuading Elizabeth to marry him, in spite of the scandalous death of his wife Amy Robsart. He believed that if he could persuade Philip of Spain to support the union then Elizabeth would agree. Rather than approaching the Spanish ambassador himself, he sent his brother-in-law. The ambassador reported the interview as follows:

[Sidney] began by beating about the bush very widely, but at last came to his brother-in-law's affairs and said that as the matter was now public property, and I knew how much inclined the Queen was to the marriage, he wondered that I had not suggested to Your Majesty this opportunity for gaining over Lord Robert by extending a hand to him now, and he would thereafter serve and obey Your Majesty like one of your own vassals.²⁰

For a British subject to promise to serve and obey the Spanish king "like one of his own vassals" sounds to me very much like treason, yet honest Henry Sidney was willing to make that proposal to advance his brother-in-law's interests. If by some miracle the commission looking into Essex's death had decided that he had been poisoned, would Sidney have reported that to the Council? You be the judge.

Epilogue: the death of Leicester. I must confess it was not without a rush of grim satisfaction that I read the following account of Leicester's death.

Leicester withdrew from London at the end of August. While on the way to Kenilworth he stopped at his house at Cornbury, Oxfordshire, and there he died of 'a continual fever, as 'twas said,' on 4 Sept. 1588, aged about fifty-six. Ben Jonson tells the story that he had given his wife 'a bottle of liquor which he willed her to use in any faintness, which she, not knowing it was poison, gave him, and so he died' . . . Bliss, in his notes to the 'Athenæ Oxon.' . . . first printed a contemporary narrative to the effect that the countess had fallen in love with Christopher Blount . . . gentleman of the horse to Leicester; that Leicester had taken Blount to Holland with the intention of

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Poison Power:

Natural Death or Murder Most Foul?

By Paul H. Altrocchi, MD

Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides. — King Lear I, i, 282

Cicero, who lived from 106 to 43 BC, was ancient Rome's most eloquent orator and a highly effective trial attorney. He had the gift of being able to view history, law and human nature from the mountaintop, leaving to posterity some succinct general truths. One saying attributed to Cicero relative to identifying the perpetrator of a crime is *cui bono*—"To whom the good?" Who benefited most from the crime?

Although *cui bono* does derive from Cicero's writings, Cicero himself credited the pithy maxim to a famous contemporary judge, Lucius Cassius:

L. Cassius ... in causis quaerere solebat, "cui bono" fuisset. Sic vita hominum est, ut ad maleficium nemo conetur sine spe atque emolumento accedere.

"When trying a case Lucius Cassius never failed to inquire, 'Who gained by it?' Man's character is such that no one undertakes crimes without hope of gain."¹

This paper describes three cases of sudden death hundreds of years ago in which the concept of *cui bono* helps shed light on the likely perpetrators. Each victim was an important person, and each, sooner or later, was suspected of being poisoned.

We start off with a case important to world history, relevant to Oxfordians only for the intriguing lessons it teaches which are applicable to certain unsolved deaths of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.

Case 1 Deadly concoctions on a sainted isle

History declares that Napoleon (1769-1821) died of stomach cancer on the lonely Atlantic island of St. Helena where he spent five and a half years in exile at the unkind suggestion of the British, his conquerors at Waterloo, after being responsible for only

a mere million deaths, or perhaps two million.

Throughout his time living at Longwood House on St. Helena with French companions and servants, Napoleon experienced a vast array of symptoms, some mild, some severe to the point of prostration. They included thirst, constipation, lassitude, headaches, abdominal pain, nausea, numbness and weakness in the legs, pain in the extremities, increase in weight both from fat and fluid, loss of body hair, sensitivity to light, decreased hearing, painful urination, muscle cramps, and bleeding swollen gums.²

His French and British physicians were diagnostically puzzled, never thinking of poison on such a remote, lovely island. Napoleon himself wondered about poisoning by his British captors, but it never occurred to him that a member of his French entourage might be the culprit. By remarkable detective work, it has now been proven that Napoleon was chronically poisoned by arsenic and finally polished off by mercuric cyanide.³

*In vino veritas*⁴

Arsenic's noble qualities as a poison include lack of taste, color or odor and easy solubility in food and drink. In addition, low doses of arsenic cause symptoms which mimic natural diseases, thus qualifying as a form of French artistry if properly done. The victim appears to have a chronic illness while his resistance is being destroyed, and he is in pain and misery from multiple symptoms.

This method of low dose, chronic poisoning can be traced far back in history to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Mineral poisons like arsenic were unknown, but plants such as aconite, hemlock (the choice of Socrates for his self-poisoning), and poppy were described by Theophrastus in the fourth century BC and by Quintilian and Plutarch in the first century AD.⁵

In 54 AD, the ruthless Agrippina used slow poison to get rid of a bothersome

impediment, her husband the Roman Emperor Claudius, so her fiery son Nero could take over as Emperor. On the ascendant path to Roman power, Domitian in 81 AD enlisted the aid of the lowly *tepus marinus*, the venomous sea hare, to assist Emperor Titus into the afterlife.⁶

The use of poison lessened over succeeding centuries until Italy introduced the concept of poisons for disagreeable husbands in the 1600s. France, with its usual creative flair, added tiresome relatives, unpleasant wives, political opponents and tedious lovers as candidates for poisoning.

For death by acute poisoning, two options headed the list:

(1) High doses of arsenic which cause severe pain, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle spasms, very low or zero blood pressure and swift death.

(2) A one-two sequence of bitter almond extract containing cyanide, and a liquid containing mercury. Encountering hydrochloric acid in the stomach, these two ingredients combine to form extremely lethal mercuric cyanide, causing massive gastrointestinal hemorrhage, then being absorbed rapidly into the blood stream leading to quick death.⁷

The Bourbon monarchy, which had been displaced by Napoleon's successful revolutions more than once, the last time following Napoleon's successful escape from the island of Elba,⁸ was taking no chances this time. Louis XVIII placed his secret poisoner Count Charles Tristan de Montholon as aide-de-camp, assigned to attend to Napoleon's special needs, including fine wine.⁹ Everyone at Longwood House, Napoleon's Court of Exile, ate the same food but only Napoleon drank the special vintages set aside for this pious humble Corsican.

For years Montholon added varying small doses of arsenic to Napoleon's wine,

causing fluctuating symptoms. The ups and downs of his clinical course correlate well with the level of arsenic in his hair, now well proven by analysis of hair samples sent by Napoleon as mementos to his admirers in dated letters.¹⁰

This detailed research was initially carried out by Sten Forshufvud of Sweden using the most advanced sequential nuclear activation tests for hair arsenic levels.¹¹ In succeeding decades, additional hair samples were analyzed at several international laboratories, making the case airtight.¹²

The *coup de grace* was carried out to perfection. For his thirst, Napoleon was given a solution of specially imported bitter almonds containing cyanide in the form of a sweet syrup called orgeat or *eau de fleur d'oranger* with an orange flavor. He was then given calomel, a mixture of mercury and tasteless sublimate to overcome the constipation caused by arsenic.¹³ In the stomach, the deadly corrosive poison mercuric cyanide was formed, leading to Napoleon's rapid demise.

Since both "medications" had been approved by his attending French and British physicians for bona fide symptoms, no one suspected poisoning.

At autopsy, Napoleon's stomach was severely ulcerated by the mercuric cyanide, showing no evidence of cancer.¹⁴ But for political reasons the official report of the British and French stated that he died of stomach cancer like his father. Despite abundant evidence to the contrary in the autopsy report and the documented arsenic hair analyses, French and English historians to this day perpetuate the stomach cancer myth.¹⁵

Cui bono?

The English did not benefit from Napoleon's death. In fact, they were criticized widely for allowing the still popular, charismatic Napoleon to die on such a relatively disease-free remote island. Sir Hudson Lowe, Governor of St. Helena, was so verbally abused that he was denied a pension and had to retire to a small town to live out his days under an assumed name.¹⁶

Then, *cui bono*? Clearly the Royal Family of France which had repeatedly received the Napoleon boot out of power. The secret of this almost-perfect crime lasted for 140 years, from 1821 to 1961 when compelling research provided the



Napoleon: his death by poisoning was not solved for 140 years.

solution.

Some lessons from the case of Monsieur le General

1. A successful crime may be solved by a later generation. Oxfordian sleuths should not be deterred by the ancientness of an unexplained death.

2. A special constellation of circumstances, not often encountered, made the case of Napoleon very documentable:

(a) In chronic arsenic poisoning, arsenic remains in hair indefinitely.

(b) It was the custom of famous people in those days to send locks of hair to their admirers in letters which were dated.¹⁷

(c) Modern quantitative sequential nuclear activation tests along the length of a hair give a daily documentation of arsenic exposure.¹⁸

(d) A precise daily diary of Napoleon's symptoms was kept by his loyal valet, Louis Marchand, and later published, yielding a perfect fit between daily symptoms and daily level of arsenic.¹⁹

3. Undeniably proving a case of historical murder does not change many minds of conventional wisdom devotees, especially ideationally-blocked professors and policy-blocked politicians. As predicted by paradigm shift theory, Napoleon "experts" have concentrated on refuting the powerful evidence of arsenic poisoning rather than accepting it. As George Orwell said, "A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing."

Case 2 - Sudden death at Bergen op Zoom

Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, after considerable tumult in his life, was living happily in semiretirement at his manor house of Titchfield with his wife, three daughters and two sons. With Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, Southampton still led the House of Lords conservative faction devoted to maintaining traditional English cultural values, including Church of England Protestantism. They opposed the weak, foppish King James I and his chief counselor and homosexual lover, the powerful Earl of Buckingham, who were scheming an alliance with their Catholic enemy, Spain, through marriage between Prince Charles and King Philip IV's sister.²⁰ When Charles and Buckingham were rebuffed, Buckingham convinced James I to declare war on Spain and form an alliance with the Dutch in 1624. Buckingham immediately pressured Southampton and Henry de Vere to form battle regiments. Southampton's 19-year-old son, James, was already in the Netherlands learning military procedure under Horatio Vere.²¹ Southampton was reluctant to be called upon militarily again, at the age of 51, especially for a war which was mainly due to Buckingham's political rashness and stupidity. But he loyally acceded to his monarch's official wishes, gathered a fighting regiment, and arrived in Holland in early August 1624. As Southampton biographer G.P.V. Akrigg says:

"This was an age when armies lost more men from sickness than from wounds. In November, Southampton's regiment in its winter quarters at Roosendaal was afflicted by the dreaded fever. Both Southampton and his son caught the contagion."²²

The only description is by Arthur Wilson²³ who witnessed Southampton's death:

"This winter quarter at Rosendale was also fatal to the Earl of Southampton and the Lord Wriothesley his son. Both being sick there together of burning fever, the violence of which distemper wrought most vigorously upon the heat of youth, overcoming the son first, and the drooping father, having overcome the fever, departed from Rosendale with an intention to

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Poison Power (continued from page 27)

bring his son's body into England, but at Bergen op Zoom he died of a Lethargy in the view of the relator, and were both in one small bark brought to Southampton."²⁴

The 19-year-old heir, James, died on November 5 and the father on November 10. No autopsy was done on either one and they were buried at Tichfield. An "Inquisition Post Mortem" was carried out in January 1625.²⁵ This was not a coroner's inquest, but a survey of Southampton's landed holdings to see what portion was due the Crown as income until the heir came of age.²⁶

Was Southampton poisoned?

The Duke of Buckingham was assassinated in 1628 by a disgruntled disabled war veteran. After Buckingham's death, George Eglisam, a Scottish Physician to the Royal Court, in petitions to King Charles I and both Houses of Parliament, accused Buckingham of having prepared a "murder list" and poisoning all on that list including King James, Southampton, and the Marquess of Hamilton.²⁷ Eglisam was also on the list.

The petitions were published in "The Forerunner of Revenge" in 1642:

"Wherein are expressed diverse actions of the late Earl of Buckingham, especially concerning the death of King James and the Marquess of Hamilton, supposed by poison Of all murders, poisoning under trust and profession of friendship is the most heinous."²⁸

This is Eglisam's sole mention of Southampton:

"For my Lord Duke of Lenox, who was crossed by Buckingham, with his brother and the Earl of Southampton, now dead, and one of the roll found of those that were to be murdered, well assured me that, where Buckingham once misliked, no apology, no submission, no reconciliation, could keep him from doing mischief."²⁹

Preliminary conclusions concerning Southampton's Death

What are the facts? Few would argue that:

- (1) There was an epidemic fever among the British troops in Holland, most likely a viral influenza.
- (2) 19-year-old James Wriothlesley

died of influenza as part of that epidemic without a single symptom to suggest poisoning.

(3) Henry Wriothlesley had the same illness but conquered the fever and recovered. Poison does not cause fever.

(4) Southampton died suddenly a few days later of a "lethargy," a non-diagnosis. Uncomplicated viral influenza does not follow a double-humped course, i.e., recovery and then relapse.

"Poisoning takes

clever planning, the

right circumstances,

trained personnel

and proper timing."

Secondary bacterial pneumonia would cause high fever, and Wilson states that Southampton had overcome his fever. Akrigg wonders about a heart attack³⁰ and so does this author—in someone weakened by influenza, under the great stress of his heir's sudden death, fighting a useless war contrived by inept political leaders.

Poisoning takes clever planning, the right circumstances, trained personnel and proper timing. When Southampton suddenly got sick in Holland, none of these criteria were present. Arthur Wilson was with Southampton when he died and he records no suspicion of an unnatural death, poisoning or otherwise. In sum, there is nothing to suggest poisoning except the words of Eglisam who disliked Buckingham and was on his "hit list."

Some lessons from Bergen op Zoom

1. There is a Latin motto, *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*—"After this, therefore because

of this." This is a warning against the false idea that, because one event follows another they are causally linked. E.g., a man dies of a heart attack while eating a steak; therefore the steak caused the heart attack. Because Buckingham hated Southampton, had placed him on a murder list, and had poisoned at least one other person, does not mean that Southampton's death during a flu epidemic was due to poisoning when there is no primary evidence to suggest poisoning.

2. Occam's Razor. William of Occam (1284-1347) was an English philosopher who stressed that the simplest theory which fits the facts of a problem is the theory of choice. Unnecessary complexities like Southampton being poisoned should be "shaved off" by Occam's Razor.

Case 3. A Strange death

In a letter to Russia's Emperor in 1601, Queen Elizabeth described the Earls of Derby as "being of Blood Royal and of greater possessions than any subject within our Realm."³¹ The great grandmother of Ferdinando and William Stanley was Henry VIII's sister, Mary, who was Queen of France before marrying Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk.³²

Ferdinando, known as Lord Strange, was born in 1559. He and his brother William, born in 1561, attended Oxford. Ferdinando was popular and widely respected as a "scholar, poet, and patron of the drama."³³ He was intensely interested in the theater, forming his first acting company at the age of 17. He added de Vere's Paul's Boys in 1590, his actors performing six plays at Court in the winter of 1590-1591.³⁴

The Stanley family had been Catholic, like most English noble families, until the reign of Henry VIII. Henry Stanley, Fourth Earl of Derby and father of Ferdinando and William, was a strong Protestant.³⁵

On September 25, 1593, Henry Stanley died and Ferdinando became the Fifth Earl of Derby. Less than seven months later, Ferdinando died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 34 on April 16, 1594. William Camden, in his *History of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, commented as follows:

"About the beginning of this yeare (1594), Ferdinand Stanley Earle of Darby... expired in the flowre of his youth, not without suspicion of poyson, being tor-

mented with cruell paynes by frequent vomitings of a darke colour like rusty yron.... The matter vomited up stayned the silver basons in such sort that by no art they could possibly be brought againe to their former brightnesse ... No small suspicion lighted upon the Gentleman of his horse, who, as soone as the Earle took his bed, tooke his best horse and fled."³⁶

Ferdinando's death sounds similar to Napoleon's Grande Finale, caused by mercuric cyanide, highly corrosive to the gastrointestinal tract and to any silver basins receiving the vomited poison. "Vomitings of a darke colour like rusty yron"³⁷ is a description of hematemesis, the vomiting of blood.

The rumor was spread that a group of Jesuits had plotted to overthrow Queen Elizabeth, had chosen Ferdinando with his new title, wealth and royal blood to take over the Crown and, when he refused their offer, poisoned him³⁸—quite an absurd scenario. Everyone knew Ferdinando's and William's unbending loyalty to the Crown and there is no evidence that either was a practicing Catholic. As B. M. Ward said in his 1928 de Vere biography:³⁹

"Although both brothers, by their words and actions, showed themselves absolutely innocent of any complicity in this mad project, their very proximity to the throne rendered them perpetually open to suspicion."

Ward concluded that Ferdinando "died in mysterious circumstances, probably of poison."⁴⁰ The Jesuit story is entirely undocumented gossip, smacks of a deliberate fiction and suggests a coverup.

Ferdinando was eulogized by Edmund Spenser and by three of de Vere's University Wits, Thomas Greene in *Ciceronis*, George Chapman in "The Silence of the Night," and Thomas Nashe who called him "thrice noble."⁴¹

Cui bono?

William Stanley and Maid of Honor Elizabeth de Vere, first born of Anne Cecil and of unknown fatherhood, fell in love in 1591.⁴² De Vere was a good friend of the Stanley brothers, sharing several mutual interests including the theater, and he heartily approved of the match. Lord Burghley withheld his consent because William had no suitable title or material wealth, Ferdinando as the older brother having

inherited everything.⁴³ This is a critical factor in analyzing who would benefit most from Ferdinando's death.

The Jesuits had absolutely nothing to gain by poisoning Ferdinando. If, indeed, Ferdinando's Gentleman of the Horse was the actual perpetrator, who hired him to be the hit man?

William Stanley immediately became Sixth Earl of Derby, inheriting vast estates in northern England and Wales.⁴⁴ William

"If, indeed, Ferdinando's

Gentleman of the

Horse was the

actual perpetrator,

who hired him to be

the hit man?"

would certainly not have poisoned his brother—they were close friends and companions in life, letters and the theater. William did not have the mindset or heart to commit such a heinous crime for title and money, nor did Edward de Vere.

William Cecil could hardly contain his enthusiasm at the prospect of his granddaughter Elizabeth marrying Royal Blood and great wealth. After Ferdinando's sudden demise, Burghley immediately granted permission for the talented 32-year-old writer William Stanley to marry 18-year-old Elizabeth.⁴⁵ Was the entire Jesuit scheme fabricated by Burghley to divert suspicion away from the real culprit, himself?

It should be kept in mind that at the very least, Elizabeth de Vere was Cecil's granddaughter by Anne Cecil. There are also those who, like this writer, think that either William Cecil or his son by Mary Cheke, Thomas Cecil, was the incestuous biological father of Elizabeth de Vere, schemed by William Cecil while Edward

de Vere was traveling abroad to ensure that de Vere's estate would not leave Cecilian hands should de Vere die in Europe. The available evidence is quite against Edward de Vere being the father.

The wedding was planned for June, 1594. But wait! There is a sudden complication! Ferdinando's widow, Alice Spencer, discovers she is pregnant and all plans are put "on hold"—if a son is born, he would inherit the title and the riches, not William. Alice shrewdly decided to cooperate with the mighty Cecil and bore a daughter.⁴⁶

Therefore, on January 26, 1595, William Stanley was married to Elizabeth de Vere at Greenwich Palace in the presence of Queen Elizabeth and her Court and a gouty, overweight but beaming William Cecil. The slight gestational inconvenience of Alice Spencer Stanley led to Edward de Vere's revision of an earlier play, now titled "A Midsummer Night's Dream," being played before the wedding throng not in midsummer, but in midwinter.⁴⁷

Conclusions about Ferdinando's sudden death

You would pluck out the heart of my mystery. —Hamlet III, ii, 353

There is little doubt that Ferdinando was a victim of murder most foul in the form of deadly poison, probably mercuric cyanide. Whoever did the poisoning was not trained in the time-honored French tradition of making the symptoms appear like a natural disease or act of God.

The question is, who was the perpetrator? Ferdinando had no known enemies. The Jesuit story is so farfetched as to be implausible. Logic rules out William Stanley, Edward de Vere, and the Gentleman of the Horse as candidates for planning Ferdinando's murder.

Then *cui bono*? Who by his background was capable of such a crime? William Cecil served England and his Queen admirably for 40 years. His private life, however, was replete with endless avarice, deceit, dishonesty, lies, treachery, and political murder including the Duke of Norfolk and Mary, Queen of Scots. Based upon circumstantial reasoning and *cui bono*, it is postulated that Cecil, to bring another noble title, Royal Blood and great wealth

(Continued on page 30)

Poison power (continued from page 29)
into the Cecil family, arranged the poisoning of Ferdinando Stanley.

Summary

Three cases of sudden death, two from the Elizabethan Era, are analyzed as to causation, as follows:

(1) The "perfect crime" of Napoleon's murder by the classic techniques of chronic arsenic poisoning followed by mercuric cyanide was unsolved for 140 years until modern laboratory techniques and superb investigative analysis discovered not only the cause of death but the perpetrator. This case is described to encourage similar detective work in Oxfordian research in general and specifically in suspected murder cases.

(2) Dr. George Eglisham implied that the nefarious Duke of Buckingham had poisoned the Third Earl of Southampton in Holland, an accusation which has been parroted in Oxfordian literature.⁴⁸ This paper's conclusion is that Southampton did not die from poison but from natural causes, most likely a heart attack while accompanying the body of his son home to England.

(3) Circumstantial evidence suggests that Ferdinando Stanley, Fifth Earl of Derby, was killed at the age of 34 by mercuric cyanide. *Cui bono?* Ruling out all others, and considering the scheming, treacherous, malignant private career of William Cecil and the fact that he and his family gained the most from Ferdinando's death, it is hypothesized that Cecil plotted the murder and paid Ferdinando's Gentleman of the Horse to carry out the poisonous deed. As a coverup, Cecil then floated the untenable fabrication that it was another Catholic scheme to steal the throne from Queen Elizabeth.

As with the monstrous murder of Edward de Vere's name and the coerced suppression of his authorship of the world's greatest plays, William Cecil has successfully evaded implication in the murder of Ferdinando Stanley for almost 400 years.

Truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long—a man's son may, but in the end truth will out.

—The Merchant of Venice (II.ii.74)

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Book Reviews

Book Notes

Sarah Smith's *Chasing Shakespeares*, the trade edition of which was reviewed in the Sunday *New York Times Book Review* and was a best-seller in New England, is now out in a paperback edition, testimony to the publisher's faith that it will win an even wider audience. Derek Jacobi called it "a wonderfully entertaining, thought-provoking and highly readable book."

Smith's suspense novel follows two graduate students as they chase down the authenticity of a document that seems to say the Stratford man did not write the plays of Shakespeare. One of them maintains it was the Earl of Oxford; the other is torn between his Stratfordian preconceptions and the evidence for Oxford. Oxfordians make cameo appearances, some by name and some lightly disguised. So do several English professors at Harvard, where Smith earned her Ph.D. in English literature.

She talked about her book in June at the Brookline (MA) Public Library, where she was joined by Richard Whalen, who said a few words about the arguments against the Stratford man and those for Oxford in his book, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* More than 50 people showed up for the hour and a half event, which included a lively, almost tumultuous, Q&A period.

Elsewhere in the publishing world, two multi-volume Oxfordian works are adding installments later this year.

Professors Michael Brame and Galina Popova of the University of Washington plan to publish *Never and For Ever*, the second volume of their trilogy, this fall. The two linguistic scholars have spent a decade applying linguistic analysis to the works of Shakespeare, Oxford and many other Elizabethan writers. The results are staggering: The linguistic evidence suggests that Oxford was extremely prolific, writing not only as Shakespeare but also under the names of many contemporaries, and not only Arthur Brooke, Robert Greene and George Gascoigne.

Meanwhile, Brame and Popova have published *Secret Shakespeare's Adventures of Freeman Jones*, their first offer-

ing in a projected "Secret Shakespeare Series." The book includes the text of a prose work called "The Adventures of Master F.I." in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* and an analysis of its language that, they maintain, shows that it was written by Oxford and thus was a novel by Shakespeare. Students of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, the subject of a 378-page book edited with commentary by Ruth Loyd Miller (published in 1975), will want to compare and contrast it with the interpretations by Brame and Popova.

The prolific pair have also published *What Thing is Love and Related Ditties*, a collection of Elizabethan love poems. They do not identify the author of the poems, which are to stand alone as brilliant, poetic gems, but they say they have "EDited and DELiVERed" them to "veritable lovers."

Besides conceiving and giving birth to books, the professorial partners also announce the birth of Michael Paul, born April 25—just seven days after their joint presentation at the 8th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. (Also two days after the supposed birthday of the Stratford man and 13 days after Oxford's birthday.)

The trilogy by W. Ron Hess, *The Dark Side of Shakespeare*, has grown to a "quadrilogy" (which Spell Check will have to add to its list.) The third volume, which is scheduled to be completed this Fall, carries the subtitle, "The Invincible Paladin, Maecenas & King-Maker of His Time." The subtitles of the first two volumes provide an idea of Hess's work: "An Iron-Fisted Romantic in England's Most Perilous Times" and for volume two, "An Elizabethan Courtier, Diplomat, Spymaster & Epic Hero." The monumental piece of work, exhibiting years of research and wide-ranging reading, will exceed 1,700 pages.

From England comes a book on George Puttenham written by a descendant. *Shakespeare and George Puttenham's Art of English Poesie* by Charles Murray Willis explores the life of Puttenham and his connections to Oxford and to Shakespeare's works. Willis includes poems by Puttenham and a number of docu-

ments from the Puttenham family archives that have not heretofore been published.

And from the Ukraine comes word of a book on the authorship issue written by a professor in the history department of Kherson State University. She is Kateryna Sinkevych, and her book is entitled *The Shakespeare Question in Modern Literary Criticism in the United Kingdom and the United States*. Professor Sinkevych says her book, not yet translated from the Russian, is the only one on the subject in the university library so far. She hopes to be able to add other books and perhaps organize a series of lectures by visiting speakers.

—RFW

Lady Pembroke as Shakespeare makes *Newsweek*

The International *Newsweek* for June 28th carried an article, "Was the Bard a woman?" that promoted the idea that Lady Pembroke was Shakespeare, "the sweet swan of Avon." The article was based on an interview with Robin Williams, an American writer who was scheduled to speak at the Shakespeare Authorship Trust event in London at the end of June.

Lady Pembroke has been considered in the past as possibly being a collaborator with others in writing Shakespeare, but, *Newsweek* reported, Williams' talk in London would advance the idea that she alone was the Bard.

Among some of the circumstantial evidence being put forward is her connection to the world of letters (she was Philip Sidney's sister, one of the best educated women in England and the leader of a "literary circle"). And, of course she was the mother of William and Philip Herbert, to whom the First Folio was dedicated,

The article quotes Stanley Wells for the usual dismissal of the whole notion of an authorship problem, but it does end on the interesting note that the "intrigue could prove as immortal as the works of the Bard—whoever he or she really was."

“Good night, sweet prince”

By Prof. Daniel L. Wright

The controversy over the legitimacy (or even the propriety!) of discussing the so-called Tudor Heir thesis likely will continue to inflame sensibilities on all sides as partisans and detractors of this proposition argue over the value and place of “Prince Tudor” in Oxfordians’ efforts to demonstrate the implications of Edward de Vere’s putative authorship of the Shakespeare canon. Some candid appraisals of the merits of the argument and a fresh perspective on the dispute, however, might go far to calm this argumentative tempest amongst Oxfordians. Intelligent engagement of the issue might lead both supporters and opponents of the Tudor Heir theory to achieve some agreement on ways to evaluate the evidence and argumentation that contribute to and undermine this contentious thesis (hence the convocation of a week-long seminar on the topic, “Prince Tudor: Truth or Delusion?” at Concordia University from August 8-13 this year).

First, it needs to be said—contrary to those who bleat in loudest protest against the oft-assumed “novelty” of the Prince Tudor thesis—that royal bastards not only were numerous in medieval England but often were at the center of crises of legitimacy. Disputes over the right to lawful succession by heirs of less than perfect descent were dominant keys in a chord struck repeatedly in English history, even as early as the Norman Conquest. The capture of the English throne by William, Duke of Normandy, after all, was hardly one that all were inclined to receive with easy acceptance, as William, though indisputably king by right of conquest, could lay little emphasis on his right to the Crown by legitimate descent, he himself being a bastard (William was son to Robert, Duke of Normandy, but his mother was a common tanner’s daughter—hence the not-so-subtle insult implicit in his opponents’ frequent waving of animal skins at him when he passed by).

Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis’s *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* is but one of many texts to remind us that English royal bastards were anything but rare:

Forty-one illegitimate children of the English kings can be identified with near certainty. Including doubtful attributions, the figure is past the fifty mark. There must have been many more whose names have disappeared entirely.... Henry I alone fathered at least twenty royal bastards, Henry II at least three and King John at least seven. (17)

Edward IV, a near-immediate predecessor to Queen Elizabeth’s grandfather, Henry VII, was notorious for fathering a host of bastards. This fact, indeed, was the cornerstone of Richard of Gloucester’s claim to the throne when, soon after Edward IV’s death, it came to light that, in addition to the king’s many other bastards, both the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York (better known to us as “the Princes in the Tower”) were illegitimate children as well, sons to Edward by a bigamous marriage to Elizabeth Woodville.

Elizabeth’s own father and grandfather were fathers of illegitimate children (Roland de Veleville, for example, was widely reputed to be the bastard son of Henry VII, although the evidence for de Veleville’s status as Henry VII’s bastard son is less than conclusive. That Henry Fitzroy was the bastard son of Henry VIII is, however, beyond doubt). There is little reason to think that de Veleville was ever seriously considered as a candidate to succeed his father, as Henry VII (whose father’s legitimacy also was actively disputed) sired sons of legitimate descent, but we do know that Henry VIII and his advisors considered the bastard Fitzroy a possible successor (for more on this, see Beverly Murphy’s *Bastard Prince: Henry VIII’s Lost Son*).

Royal bastards, therefore, were not only commonplaces in medieval England; they often were highly regarded, respected, honored and feared; controversy over them shaped the history of the nation. As a consequence, bastard sons of royalty regularly were promoted and supported by powerful statesmen and used for diplomatic ends; sometimes they were regarded by powerful statesmen as grave threats. Shakespeare—never given to steering the politically safe course in his plays—does

not himself uniformly denigrate bastards. Shakespeare, in fact, contrary to expectations we may nurture of him as a playwright composing in deference to authority and custom, makes a bastard the central character of our interest in *King John*—and as E.M.W. Tillyard says of him, “he is one of Shakespeare’s great versions of the regal type” (*Shakespeare’s History Plays* 226).

During the reign of Elizabeth I, allegations in England and abroad that the Queen had given birth to at least one (and perhaps several) children were widely rumored. Apart from the question of whether these rumors were true, it’s noteworthy to consider that the fact of their advancement suggests opponents of the Queen (herself a bastard—at least according to Catholic reckoning) clearly thought such reports might be regarded as plausible. Such assumptions would have been well-founded. After all, in the first half of her reign, rumors of the Queen’s fecundity were not being propagated solely by her enemies. Even the author of *Leicester’s Commonwealth* accused Robert Dudley of widely giving it out that he secretly had married the Queen and—based upon what Dudley knew to be an apparently widely-held (or at least widely circulated) assumption that the Queen had given birth to at least one (and perhaps as many as five) of his children—planned to foist one of his many illegitimate children on the Realm as Sovereign if the Queen were to miscarry. This course was undertaken by Leicester, declares the writer of *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, in order that were the Queen suddenly to die, Dudley might “make legitimate to the Crown any one bastard of his own,” and he sought to accomplish this seizure of the throne for his heirs, declares the writer of *Leicester’s Commonwealth*, by contriving to replace, via an act of parliament, the words “lawful issue” with the words “natural issue” in stipulating who alone, after Elizabeth, would qualify as England’s rightful heir. Under the circumstances, one has to ask how Dudley could have hoped to prosper by such an emendation to the rules of succession

unless it were widely supposed that the Queen, in fact, had borne a child of Leicester's that, with the assent of Parliament, would be eligible to succeed to the throne on Elizabeth's death.

Moreover, we know that several years before *Leicester's Commonwealth* was published, it was being circulated abroad (especially by Catholic enemies of the Queen) that she was the mother of many illicit children, and it was said by detractors of Elizabeth that the Queen "never goeth [o]n progress but to be delivered." Moreover, in Madrid, the testimony of Arthur Dudley before Sir Francis Englefield had established, to many people's satisfaction, in England and on the Continent, that even if the claims by Arthur Dudley did not conclusively establish him as a son of Leicester and the Queen, questions about his parentage were being raised by his revelations that were difficult to account for by any alternative explanation.

As we've been finding out of late—via, for example, Robert McNamara's disclosures of his and President Johnson's criminally ignorant guidance of the American war effort in Vietnam, and the recent disclosures of orders by the present Secretary of Defense that reveal his role in quietly advancing an agenda of torture and degradation to "detainees" in Iraq—today's rumor and unheeded report is tomorrow's embarrassing truth.

Will today's rumors of a secret prince that was a pawn in Elizabethan-era succession politics also prove to be true?

Personally, I think not. There are almost as many Prince Tudor theses, first of all, as there are Prince Tudor advocates, and the idiosyncratic and speculative explanations that arise from partisans in one corner of the Prince Tudor camp frequently compromise or nullify the conjectures offered by others of the Prince Tudor conviction. In themselves, all these competing scenarios would not prove a bad thing if we had some reasonable expectation of ever uncovering a single truth in this matter—assuming, of course, that there is any truth to uncover.

But for all that unlikelihood, an inquiry, on that basis alone, cannot be dismissed as useless. We pursue many questions for which there may be no ultimate answer (will we ever know, for example, beyond doubt, if Oxford wrote—and how much if he did—the works of Shakespeare?).



Henry Fitzroy was the bastard son of Henry VIII.

The staggering number of incestuous affairs, illegitimate births, political use of bastard children, and the innumerable and constant problems occasioned by the consequences of irregular sexual conduct engaged in by men and women of the royal family and higher aristocracy for whom ordinary monogamy proved too great a challenge has to be acknowledged as a valid context within which to look at the question of Edward de Vere and his relationship to other powerful personages in the realm. The curiosity is all the more appropriate because we know Oxford to have been an adulterer and the sire

of at least one bastard son himself, as well as one accused (albeit by his enemies and without proof) of some of the most shocking and twisted kinds of sexual exploits imaginable.

The question before us, I think, therefore, is not so much whether a Prince Tudor event was possible; manifestly, something like one of the imagined scenarios, however improbable, could have happened. The question is whether it did, and whether, if it did, how it ever might be known.

In a world where we lack definitive knowledge of the sexual escapades of even the most highly-scrutinized members of 21st-century society, our ability to recover any facts that would confirm a sexual liaison between Edward de Vere and the Queen of England that resulted in a son who was spirited away to a Catholic noble household to be raised as someone else—even if it happened!—seems, to me at least, almost impossible to imagine.

But doubts persist, and the question is an ancient and historically valid one—even if most historians, to date, have come down on the side of Elizabeth I's perpetual virginity. Majorities, though, as we all know, do not define truth—and for those of us interested in exploring the question of the authorship of Shakespeare's works, I am sure all of us can agree it is a good thing they do not.

The 3rd Annual Institute of Oxfordian Studies Summer Seminar - August 8-13, 2004

The Institute of Oxfordian Studies convenes a week-long seminar on the Concordia University campus each August to enable registrants the opportunity for close study of the Shakespeare Authorship Question and the Oxfordian Authorship Thesis. The principal topic for 2004 will be "Prince Tudor: Truth or Delusion?"

Equal time will be given to advocates for and against the Prince Tudor thesis. Leading the advocacy for Prince Tudor will be author and actor Hank Whittemore; leading the opposition to the Prince Tudor thesis will be retired statistician Dr John Varady.

The cost of \$995 per registrant for the six-day seminar includes housing (double-occupancy) on the CU campus, linen service, all breakfasts and lunches, instruc-

tional costs, books, classroom supplies and the cost of all day trips (former trips have included trips to Portland's Japanese Gardens and Chinese Gardens, attendance at an outdoor performance of a Shakespeare play, a Saturday picnic lunch, and a luncheon cruise on the Willamette River aboard the yacht, *The Portland Spirit*).

To register, send a check payable to the Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR 97211-6099 with a note indicating that you wish to be a part of the 2004 Institute for Oxfordian Studies summer seminar to convene from 8 - 13 August 2004.

Interested parties may email Prof. Wright at: dwright@cu-portland.edu, or phone him at his office: 503-493-6223.

Was Shakespeare Gay?

By Galina Popova and Michael Brame

Was Shakespeare gay? And does it really matter? The answer to the former question may with some justification be deemed irrelevant by those wishing to enjoy the immortal plays and transcendent poems without regard for what the author himself intended. For such readers, no question will arise upon reading the following lines written to the fair youth:

A woman's face, with Nature's own hand
painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my
passion; (Sonnet 20, 1-2)

By contrast, for those who care to know the poet as he himself unlocked his soul in his luminous love sonnets, the question of sexuality will persist as one of paramount importance. In this spirit one seeks to understand why Shakespeare wrote love poetry to a male youth and in so seeking, one is led to explore the nature of the love the poet expresses.

Early in any inquisitive reader's inquiry, lines such as the two just cited must nudge some degree of wonder about Shakespeare's sexuality. In *Such Is My Love*, the orthodox Joseph Pequigney views Sonnet 20 as a cornerstone upon which he founds his homosexuality hypothesis. There can be little doubt that the poem relates to sex and the fair youth, but we find no real argument emanating from that orthodox critic. Rather than confirming homosexuality on the part of the Shakespeare's beloved fair youth, this sonnet affirms the opposite. A similar conclusion relates to the poet himself.

And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till Nature as she wrought thee fell
a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose
nothing.

But since she pricked thee out for women's
pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their
treasure. Sonnet 20, 9-14.

Although the fair youth is fairer than a woman, the poet frames his stunning climax by attributing to him a phallus, one

that is for "women's pleasure," hence not for the poet. The poet is evidently explicit that it is to his own purpose nothing. Another positive reading may inhere in the phrase "to my purpose nothing." It is the nothing (rather than what Nature has pricked

"Shakespeare's love for

the fair youth was not

homosexual in nature,

but rather parental."

out) that is to the poet's purpose. It follows from these observations that there is embedded within Sonnet 20 a cogent argument indicating that Shakespeare was not gay, and it is remarkable that those few scholars who advocate the homosexuality thesis fail to discern as much.

To counter the obvious requires ad hoc theoretical elaboration of the kind witnessed in Stephen Orgel's critical edition of *The Sonnets*, published by Pelican. Thus, he interprets the first line of the terminal couplet to mean "however, since she selected you to experience pleasure as women do" and the terminal couplet to be normalized as "thy loves use" with a reading "may your lovers use." These interpretations are clearly forced. In particular, the first misses the pun on the fair youth's prick.

When we take that obvious pun into account, Orgel's position reduces to having us believe that Shakespeare meant that Nature gave the fair youth a prick "to experience pleasure as women do," clearly an absurd conclusion. Moreover, the second, opting for "thy loves use" (with a *plural noun* and a verb "use" in place of the widely accepted interpretation "thy love's use," with a *singular possessive noun* plus a noun construction for "use") misses the

obvious parallelism of the final line, which involves an ellipsis of the copula "be."

Mine-be-thy love? thy love's use-[be]-their
treasure.

The parallelism is simply too well crafted not to have been intended by the poet. Accepting it, we emerge with parallel possessive subjects, parallel copulas (although one is elliptical), and parallel possessive predicate complements. Rejecting it, the tripartite parallelism is a random fluke, which is hardly likely. It is part of Shakespeare's artistry and hence intended, showing that Orgel's elaboration amounts to chasing a will-o-the-wisp.

Six sonnets later, Shakespeare discloses the conditions under which he will reveal the nature of his love for the fair youth, concluding in the terminal couplet:

Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
Till then, not show my head where thou
mayst prove me. (Sonnet 26, 13-4)

Such a declaration again militates against the gay thesis, as under no circumstances within the relevant time frame could Shakespeare have revealed the "how" of a loving relationship had it truly been homosexual in nature.

We could go on to discuss more sonnets at greater length, outlining why we find that they give incontrovertible evidence for the conclusion that Shakespeare's love for the fair youth was not homosexual in nature, but rather parental. Since we have already done so in Chapter 8 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*, however, in the balance of this note we want to break new ground by arguing from an entirely fresh perspective. In prosecuting this task, our method will be to look to Oxford-Shakespeare's other pseudonymous works to determine what, if anything, he remarks concerning sexuality in the less familiar literary context.

Readers of this journal will already have grasped the truth of the claim that the name William Shakespeare was a pseudonym for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Those readers may also know that Oxford wrote under additional pseudonyms. To wit, George Gascoigne, Arthur

Brooke, and George Pettie are striking instances of such pseudonyms, and they are empirically confirmed as such in Chapters 9, 10, and 15 of *Shakespeare's Fingerprints*. In this connection, we want to emphasize the estrangement argument provided in the extended essay following our modern spelling edition of one of Oxford's most interesting novels, *Secret Shakespeare's Adventures of Freeman Jones*. That argument shows that the names George Gascoigne and George Pettie were literary names for one and the same author. To this, one may add the fact that their linguistic fingerprints converge and accumulate. They also cascade, as illustrated by the following special case of cascade from Brooke to Pettie to Shakespeare.

BROOKE: Each minute seemed an hour,
and every hour a day: / **Twixt hope** he lived
and despair, of coming or of stay.
(*Romeus and Juliet*, 747-8)

PETTIE: but on the other side, the renowned virtue of Camilla came to his mind, which persuaded an impossibility to his purpose: and floating thus **between hope and despair** he entered into these terms: **O miserable wretch that I am**,
(*A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure*)

SHAKESPEARE: **O miserable** unhappy
that I am
(*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 5.4.28)

The crucial new datum as it relates to Oxford-Pettie's sexuality is found in an extract from the most celebrated work Oxford wrote under the Pettie pseudonym:

For to speak my fancy without feigning, I care not to displease twenty men to please one woman; for the friendship amongst men is to be counted but cold kindness, in respect of the fervent affections between men and women: and **our nature is rather to dote of women than to love men**.

(*A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure*)

In this extract, the alleged publisher of the *Pallace*, who by the arguments advanced in *Shakespeare's Fingerprints* is in fact its author, comments upon sexuality *qua* male: "our nature is rather to dote of women than to love men." Though Oxford was certainly inclined to a liberal lifestyle, such a remark is certainly not expected from a man of homosexual orientation. It is thus one more indication of the author's own sexual preference. Since Oxford-Shakespeare was that author, the evidence converges with that of the sonnets to confirm that the poet was not gay.

A general point concerning Oxfordian research is worth appending: issues can often be clarified and, not infrequently, problems solved by considering works Oxford wrote under names other than his most celebrated pseudonym. In addition to his sexuality, such issues include his religious commitments, his relationship to the Tudor government, suspected intimate relations with the queen, and much more.

Two quotes by orthodox devotees relating to the sonnets provide a pertinent punctuation to the foregoing discussion:

There is an element of the tutorial in Shakespeare's attitude, almost as if he spoke *in loco parentis*. (A. L. Rowse, *The Poems*)

of Shakespeare's Dark Lady)

The late historian almost gets it right, intuiting Shakespeare's parental attitude as the accurate one. Failing to comprehend the real Shakespeare, however, he is led to hedge his intuitions with the embarrassing adverbial modifier "almost."

A second revealing remark issues from a bona fide critic of sixteenth century literature, an author in his own right, including words whose substance Pequigney conveniently fails to address. We have added boldface type font for facility of reference:

... this does not seem to be the poetry of full-blown pederasty. Shakespeare, and indeed Shakespeare's age, did nothing by halves. If he had intended in these sonnets to be the poet of pederasty, I think he would have left us in no doubt; the lovely [...], attended by a whole train of mythological perversities, would have blazed across the pages. The incessant demand that the Man should marry and found a family would seem to be inconsistent (or so I suppose—it is a question for psychologists) with a real homosexual passion. ... What man in the whole world, **except a father or a potential father-in-law**, cares whether any other man gets married? Thus the emotion expressed in the Sonnets refuses to fit into our pigeonholes....

C. S. Lewis. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (503-5)

With Lewis, as with Rowse, and no doubt other orthodox critics, we encounter excellent intuitions that simply cannot be reconciled with the Pequigney framework. Nor
(Continued on page 36)

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Shakespeare gay? (continued from page 35)
can they be resolved within the orthodox Stratfordian framework. Perceptive though Lewis is, he too fails to pose and answer the obvious next question: if the sonnets can only be reconciled with a father or potential father-in-law, why then can the orthodox literary critic not fit the emotion expressed by Shakespeare into the pigeon-hole of paternity, our poet as a father or potential father-in-law and the fair youth a son or potential son-in-law?

The answer is that neither C. S. Lewis nor Rowse nor any other orthodox critic can make William of Stratford fill the parental bill. The orthodox candidate relates to no noble son or potential son-in-law that could by any remote stretch of the imagination exemplify the fair youth of the sonnets. By striking contrast, such a son or potential son-in-law is immediately available to the 17th Earl of Oxford. There is no need for *ad hoc* theoretical elaboration. The old riddle is resolved.

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Leicester (continued from page 25)

killing him, in which he failed; that the countess, suspecting her husband's plot, gave him a poisonous cordial after a heavy meal while she was alone with him at Cornbury. Blount married the countess after Leicester's death, and the narrator of the story gives as his authority William Haynes, Leicester's page and gentleman of the bedchamber, who saw the fatal cup handed to his master. But the story seems improbable in face of the post-mortem examination, which was stated to show no trace of poison.²¹

Ah, yes—the trusty post-mortem examination, which has done so much to sanitize the modern reputation of Elizabeth's favorite, now exonerates his widow, who, driven to distraction by her grief, seeks to alleviate it by immediately marrying her late husband's young Master of Horse. As a keen observer of human nature once remarked, "Tis sport to see the engineer hoist on his own petard."

NOTE: This paper was originally given as a talk at the Shakespeare Fellowship Oxford Day Banquet, 30 April 2004, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The audience was empanelled to act as a jury. Leicester was unanimously voted guilty on all three counts (Sheffield, Throckmorton, Essex). He thus fulfills the FBI's definition of a serial killer.

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3. Weir, Alison, *The Life of Elizabeth I*, Ballantine, New York, 1998, 95.
4. *Leicester's Commonwealth*, Dwight C. Peck, ed., Ohio University Press, Athens OH, 1985, 31.
5. Weir, op. cit., 353. In using the word "veracity," Weir unconsciously got it right.
6. Peck, op. cit., 41-2.
7. *Ibid.*, 11.
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12. Weider, Ben, and Sten Forshufvud, *Assassination at St. Helena Revisited*, Wiley, New York, 1995, 507.
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21. *DNB*, op. cit., VI, 119.

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