



Shakespeare Matters

"The Voice of the Shakespeare Fellowship"

Isabel Holden (1915-2007): In Memoriam

by Charles Beauclerk

Editor's Note: The following remarks were delivered by Charles Beauclerk at the memorial service for Mrs. Holden, held October 12, 2007, at the Northampton, Massachusetts Congregational Church.

It's a great privilege to have been asked over to honor Isabel Holden today. I knew that the iron in her soul would draw me here willy-nilly, and so it has....

Isabel was a woman of discretion and modesty, who if she intended something preferred to do it before speaking, hence her life as a leading Shakespearean heretic – despite her considerable influence in this field – may be unknown to many of you. But it is in this role that I wish to speak of Isabel today.

There was, it's true, a martial quality to Isabel's bearing and temperament, yet there was something unbroken too, a certain wildness perhaps – very rare in the world today – and a former age might well have seen her in the guise of crusader or knight errant. Even in her own home, one got the impression that she was just passing through, a soldier on campaign perhaps

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Isabel Holden, Oxfordian extraordinaire, with her devoted companion, "Romeo."

A Shakespearean "Snail Poem," Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere

by Richard M. Waugaman, M.D.

This anonymous poem (see p. 6), first published in the 1585 edition of *Paradise of Daintie Devises*, was written by de Vere/Shakespeare. First, a word of introduction about *Paradise*. Oxordians know it as one of the Elizabethan books that contained several poems by de Vere in its ten early editions, published between 1576 and 1606. Rollins (1927), in a wonderful scholarly edition on *Paradise*, calls the book "the most popular miscellany printed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth" (p. xiii). Ninety-nine poems were in the first edition; twenty-six were added to later editions. They were all written as lyrics for songs—"being aptly made to be set to any song in 5 partes."

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William Shakespeare and the Authorship Controversy: A Study in Literary Triumph and Historical Tragedy

by Allegra Krasznekewicz

Allegra Krasznekewicz, a junior at Santa Catalina school in Monterey, California, recently won both the Monterey County and California State History Day Competitions for this interdisciplinary paper on the authorship controversy.

"To be, or not to be — that is the question." This familiar quotation from *Hamlet* is one of the countless manifestations expressing Shakespeare's profound understanding of the human condition that has transcended the centuries. His mastery of words and his ability to express the mind's intricacies with the utmost grace, insightfulness, and poignancy has bestowed upon him a legacy of genius. Behind his masterpieces, however, lies a puzzling void of primary sources concerning his private life and public involvement in Elizabethan

(Continued on p. 21)

Letters:

To The Editor,

Sundra Malcolm's step-by-step analysis of the four letters, M.O.A.I. (*Shakespeare Matters*, Fall 2007, p. 24), which occur in the letter found by Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*, act 2, sc.v) is surely the correct one, but I believe it falls short of the intended solution. L. S. Cox (*Shakespeare Quarterly* (xiii) 1962, p. 360) also concluded these four letters to be an anagram for I AM O, and from this, understood 'O' to be an abbreviation for Olivia. Unfortunately, "I am Olivia doth sway my life" makes no sense: nor for that matter does the substitution of Oxford for Olivia. I therefore suggest Malcolm's solution should be completed in the following manner.

Maria's intention was to gull Malvolio into believing Olivia was his secret admirer without directly saying this. She achieved her goal by taking four letters from Malvolio's name, leaving his vanity to fill in the rest. She then had to use these same four letters so that they would directly apply to Olivia's current situation. (The Countess was then being wooed by Duke Orsino, who had recently sent his page to convey his love for the Countess. But instead, Olivia had fallen in love with the page).

It is against this background that the verse below makes perfect sense.

I may commend where I adore;
But silence, like a Lucrece knife,
With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore;
Already Orsin' doth sway my life.

Maria can now employ the four letters from Malvolio's name and rearrange them to say exactly what is written in the fourth line of this verse: "I am O. doth sway my life." 'I am' is Latin for 'Already' and 'O' is an abbreviation for 'Orsino'. But Maria intends the letters to be a riddle, so she rearranges and capitalizes 'I am O', in order to invite Malvolio to dote upon seeing part of his name as the object of Olivia's attention. Maria also drops several clues for members of the audience, in order for them to arrive at this meaning: Malcolm

correctly detected these in her article.

By resorting to a Latin riddle, 'Shakespeare' had in mind a more educated audience than was to be found inside the Globe, and indeed, the play's first known performance was at the Middle Temple in 1601: the original having undoubtedly been intended for the Queen's entertainment during the 1580s, with caricatures of Elizabeth, together with Hatton and Raleigh. These would have been obvious to the Court at that time. I also suggest that any educated member of the audience would have had no difficulty in rearranging these four letters, when searching for an anagram, and immediately discovering 'I AM O' to be the intended solution, for Latin and English were interchangeable amongst scholars at that time. As Malcolm rightly observes: 'the solution for this riddle should be easy to find otherwise playgoers might unnecessarily get bogged down in metaphysics.' Perhaps she was thinking of J. L. Hotson's attempt at a solution, in which he treated the letters M.O.A.I.

as abbreviations for water, earth, air and fire. (Mare, Orbis, Aer, Ignis).

David Roper

To the Editor:

John Shahan is to be commended for the work, resources and dedication he has put and continues to put into his Declaration of Reasonable Doubt in the Internet. May many thousands sign it. In *Shakespeare Matters* (fall 2007), he develops the rationale for the declaration, and his hopes for its influence on Shakespeare professors.

In his article he also deplors what he sees as a deliberate strategy by Stratfordians to suppress the issue, de-legitimizing it in academia. The picture may not be quite so dire, and I'd like to suggest why.

As John notes, the *New York Times* survey showed that 82 percent of Shakespeare professors responding think there

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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).

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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.

Book Review

Shakespeare: The World as Stage by Bill Bryson New York: Harper Collins, 2007.

Reviewed by Richard F. Whalen

At first glance, it's surprising that Bill Bryson, the prolific travel writer, American humorist and science popularizer, would write a biography of William Shakespeare for HarperCollins, and with a closing chapter on "Claimants." He's not a Shakespeare scholar, British historian or university professor. (Nor is he an Oxfordian.)

But there is a reason. His book was written for the publisher's Eminent Lives Series, and each author in the series is selected precisely because he or she is not a specialist in the life of the eminent person but presumably can bring a fresh view in a biographical essay of fewer than two hundred small pages.

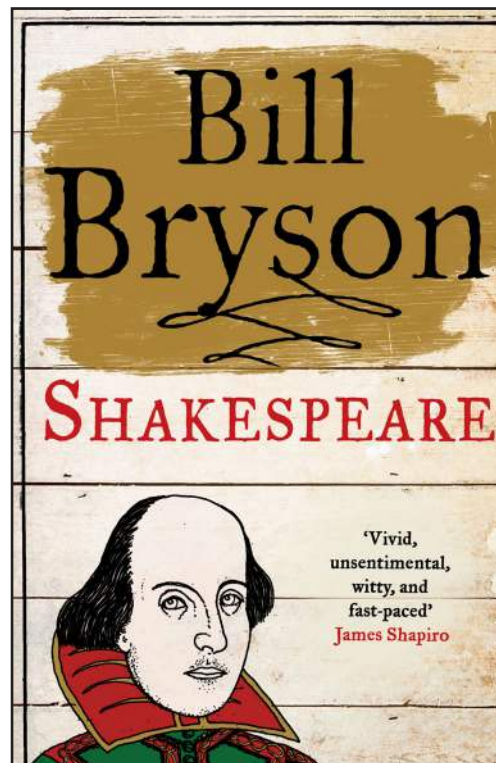
Bryson's view, however, is as stale as any Stratfordian biography, and he commits no fewer than eighteen significant, factual errors, which have been brought to his attention.

Born and raised (to his chagrin in Des Moines) Bryson is an Anglophile who now lives in Durham in northern England. He is currently chancellor of Durham University, succeeding Peter Ustinov, a position that seems to be largely ceremonial and promotional.

His *Lost Continent* on his travels in America in the 1980s, opens: "I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to. . . Outside the town there is a big sign that says, WELCOME TO DES MOINES. THIS IS WHAT DEATH IS LIKE. There isn't really. I just made that up." Critics called the book "funny. . . outrageous."

So he brings to Shakespeare biography and the authorship issue an outsider's view, an attempt at humor, a gift for phrase-

making and a penchant for anecdotes and striking statistics. His biographical essay is a light-hearted, almost superficial survey of the few facts and imaginative suppositions about the Stratford man as the



author. One reviewer called it "brilliantly funny," but that is going much too far.

Necessarily, it is full of the usual disclaimers: "We don't know. . . We've no idea. . . Nothing is known. . ." So he writes about life in London, the "Shakespeare" portraits, Queen Elizabeth, the theaters and the actors. And as usual, the subject is missing from his biography, and Bryson admits it. For a series on Eminent Lives, Bryson's subject is decidedly un-

eminent.

Lacking solid facts, Bryson turned to statistics. Shakespeare "left us 884,647 words, made up of 31,959 speeches, spread over 118,046 lines." The Spanish Armada went into battle with "123,000 cannon balls." Somebody told him that there are more than five thousand books on the authorship controversy. That can't be true. It would mean almost thirty-five books a year on average for the past 150 years. Maybe he meant books and articles, but even so. . . .

Bryson appears to have been charmed and co-opted by Stanley Wells, the Stratfordian scholar whom he calls, "perhaps the world's leading Shakespeare authority."

Wells reviewed his manuscript, so it's no surprise that Bryson ends his popularizing excursion into the world of Shakespeare as a Stratfordian, although he does sound a little desperate about the evidence and perhaps even a bit uncertain.

Some uncertainty may have been caused by David Thomas, a director at the National Archives and colleague of Jane Cox, now retired. He told Bryson that he and Cox agreed that the three signatures on Shakspeare's will in the archives were probably not in his hand. Bryson calls it possibly a "shock to the historical record." It's really a shock to Stratfordian suppositions.

He was already aware of the Shakespeare authorship controversy, having glanced at it in *The Mother Tongue* (1990). In his final chapter, on "Claimants," he mentions that non-Stratfordians have

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

Bill Bryson Still Confused

Best-selling author Bill Bryson recently wrote that Shakespeare is “a kind of literary equivalent of an electron — forever there and not there.” Resorting, as Bryson does, to metaphysical mumbo jumbo is one way of handling a very thorny problem.

Here’s another way. Michael Pennington, a player who’s logged some 20,000 hours of stage time performing or directing Shakespeare, brought his one-man-show about the Bard (“Sweet William”) to the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in December.

Friday’s *Minneapolis Star Tribune* quotes Pennington musing in his own way about the same problem Bryson describes:

Despite his long association with Shakespeare’s work and the obvious research that he’s done, Pennington said he feels that he still doesn’t know much about the man.

‘We’re thrown back on the plays, undistracted, as we always were,’ he wrote.

Of course, “undistracted” is a loaded word -- suggesting investigation into anything other than the plays themselves is a waste of everyone’s time.

Tyrone Guthrie, founder of the theater where Pennington will perform, thought otherwise. The Tony Award-winning impresario who also set up the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada penned the these words in *The New York Times* in 1962:

There is a theory, advanced by reputable scholars, seriously and, in my opinion, plausibly, that Shakespeare merely lent his name as a cover for the literary activities of another person.

— Contributed by Mark K. Anderson via his *Shakespeare By Another Name* Blog. Keep up with the News at Mark’s Blog, online at <http://shakespearebyanothername.blogspot.com/>.

Shakespeare Video Game: in Search of an Author

The idea that Shakespeare was a mask behind which was concealed a political operative in Queen Elizabeth’s court certainly adds a new layer of possible meaning to these plays and poems. It might just be what’s needed in something called “Arden, The World of Shakespeare” (<http://swi.indiana.edu/ardenworld.htm>).

As the December *Technology Review* reports, a \$250,000 project (funded by the MacArthur Foundation) to adapt the Shakespeare canon into a multiplayer video game has ended in failure. “Arden’s” founder, Edward Castronova, told TR that the problem was simple. “It’s no fun,” he said.

I’ve never designed a video game before, so I’m sure there are complexities here that I’m missing. But if all that we have of “Shakespeare” is a practically random assortment of plays and poems, without a real, discernible human being that links them together, then it’s no wonder “Arden” never took off.

Here’s a counter proposal: The life story of the author “Shakespeare” and the works he produced are intimately and intricately interwoven. The reason 20,000 hours and \$250,000 can’t put “Shakespeare” back together again is the same reason American and British publishers have pumped out some 20 traditional Shakespeare biographies in the past decade alone.

There’s a nearly insatiable public desire to make a visceral, emotional connection with the greatest author in our language. And when history has stuck you with the wrong guy, the best one can hope for are fleeting and fragmentary glances at what should be vast, profound and meaningful biographical revelations.

This is no game either — although I’d venture that some great interactive entertainment centered around the authorship question could readily be brought to market.

Rather, the enterprise at hand is the literary equivalent of (sorry, Mr. Bryson) a grand unified theory — forever interconnected, forever yielding new insights, forever there.

— Contributed by Mark K. Anderson

More Red Herrings...and an Oxfordian Silver Bullet

Two items on the agenda, both of which are red herrings, have recently showed up in the arsenal of orthodox Shakespeareans to dissuade people away from the Edward de Vere camp:

The first was raised in October by British blogger Oliver Kamm (<http://oliverkamm.typepad.com/blog/2007/10/kranks-that-str.html>), who ran through the standard-issue tirade against Oxfordians (snobbery, conspiracy theory, etc.) that reveals the all too familiar problem that he doesn’t begin to grasp the state of the debate he criticizes.

Shakespeare disbelievers, to him, are “outright cranks” who fail to appreciate that “the number of scholars of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature seriously entertaining [alternate theories about who wrote Shakespeare] is, to my knowledge, fewer than half a dozen.”

In fact, as readers of *Shakespeare Matters* know, *The New*

York Times conducted a survey of four-year colleges and universities across the U.S. this year and discovered that 17 percent of Shakespeare professors said there may in fact be “good reason” to doubt that Will Shakespeare of Stratford wrote those plays and poems.

Kindly count again, Mr. Kamm.

Second is a bigger issue raised by a bigger voice in a bigger venue. In the October 27 edition of *The Guardian*, James Shapiro reviewed a new Shakespeare book by Charles Nicholl

Here are some other facts: Twyne registered his story with the state censors in July 1576. Three months before that, de Vere raced across the English Channel on a ship from France (intercepted by pirates, no less) convinced that in his absence, his wife had borne a daughter out of wedlock. Twyne’s tale is of the tribulations of a daughter born under tumultuous circumstances involving both pirates and a disastrous journey at sea.

Furthermore, de Vere knew the Twynes, having rented lodgings for Laurence Twyne’s brother Thomas in 1573 so that Thomas could translate a book about the history and geography of England.

(<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,2199818,00.html>). In his review, Shapiro raises what looks to be an emerging anti-Oxfordian argument, that in 1605 “George Wilkins, a violent low-life with literary pretensions ... was soon collaborating with [Shakespeare] on *Pericles*.”

De Vere died in 1604, and so this would be a devastating argument for de Vere partisans... if anyone had any proof for it.

As it is, the Wilkins-Shakespeare collaboration theory is like practically everything else in Stratford-ville: A whole lot of possibly-maybe-perhaps packaged neatly with a big red bow and presented to the reader as fact.

Here’s what we know: A guy named Laurence Twyne wrote a book in 1576 that contains a story that was then appropriated (to put it politely) by another guy named George Wilkins in 1608. Wilkins’s book says it’s “The true history of the play *Pericles* as it was lately presented...” The Shakespearean play *Pericles* was published the following year, in 1609.

The conventional theory goes that Wilkins and Shakespeare worked together on this plagiarized story from Twyne, and that Wilkins and Shakespeare worked together on the play that was attributed solely to Shakespeare. But this is pure speculation.

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In other words: Whoever one thinks wrote *Pericles*, Laurence Twyne’s book and the distressing events from de Vere’s life in 1576 constitute the best source(s) for the play. George Wilkins -- and with it, yet another anti-Oxfordian silver bullet -- have essentially nothing to do with it.

— Contributed by Mark K. Anderson.

In Memoriam

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o’ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

It is with sadness that we report the passing of two colleagues, Peter E. Moore and Susan Sybersma, both Shakespearean researchers and scholars active in the Oxfordian movement.

Sybersma, a longtime member of the board of trustees of the *Shakespeare Oxford Society*, had a keen interest in the *Henry VI* plays.

During the 1990’s Moore wrote numerous articles, published in the Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter, and (with the patronage of Russel Des Cognets) *The Shakespeare Newsletter*. Moore was one of the best critics of orthodox Shakespearean dogma. He read orthodox sources closely and was a keen critic, able to produce orthodox authorities as witnesses against themselves. His essay on the chronology of the plays, which appeared in the Fall 1991 *Shakespeare Newsletter* (40), remains, in your editor’s opinion, among the best statements of the problems of the traditional chronology ever written. In honor of Peter’s work, we will reprint that essay in a future issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.

(Snail Poem, cont. from p. 1)

*The deepe turmoyled¹ wight², that lives devoyde of ease,
Whose wayward³ wittes⁴ are often found, more wavering⁵ then the seas:
Seekes sweete repose⁶ abroad,⁷ and takes delight to rome,
Where reason leaves the Snayle for rule,⁸ to keepe a quiet home.*

*Leape not before thou looke, lest harme thy hope assayle,
Hast havocke makes in hurtfull wise, wherfore be slow as S[n]ayle:⁹
Refrayne from rash attempt, let take heede be thy skill,¹⁰
Let wisdome bridle¹¹ brainsicke¹² wit,¹³ and leasure¹⁴ worke thy will.¹⁵*

*Dame reason¹⁶ biddes I say, in thynges of doubt be slacke,¹⁷
Lest rashnesse purchase¹⁸ us the wrong, that wisdome wills us lacke:
By rashnesse divers¹⁹ have bene deadly overcome,
By kindly²⁰ creepyng on like Snayle,²¹ duke Fabe²² his fame hath wonne.*

*Though some as swift as hawkes, can stoope²³ to every stale,²⁴
Yet I refuse such sodayne²⁵ flight, and will seeme slow as Snayle:
Wherefore my prety²⁶ Snaille, be still and lappe²⁷ thee warme,
Save²⁸ envies²⁹ frets³⁰ mauger³¹ their fumes,³² there few shall do thee harm.³³*

*Because in some respect, thou holdes me to be wise,
I place thee for a Precedent, and signe before mine eyes:
Was never any yet, that harme in thee could find,
Or dare avow that ever Snaille, wrought³⁴ hurt to humaine kinde.*

*I know dame Phisicke doth, thy friendly helpe implore,
And crav's the salve from thee ensues,³⁵ to cure the crased³⁶ sore.³⁷
Sith Phisicke then avowes, the vertues in degree.³⁸
In spight of spight³⁹ I weare thee still,⁴⁰ that well contenteth me.*

FINIS

“Snail Poem,” first published in the 1585 edition of *Paradise of Dainty Devises*. See page 7 for notes.

Richard Edwards (1525-1566) is listed as the book's editor. He was a poet and playwright, and master of the children of the Chapel Royal. I suspect that the alleged account of the book's origins are fictive. The dedicatory epistle claims that the book was compiled by Edwards "for his private use," describing him as "not long since departed this lyfe," although he had been dead for ten years. Several poems are subscribed with names of poets who are unknown to us (e.g., "D. Sand," "Yloop"). Some have no subscribed name at all. Several, including the first, are subscribed with the phrase, "My lucke is losse." In addition, who edited the subsequent nine editions? Rollins somewhat implausibly speculates that it was the printers. I would suggest that we further investigate the possibility that de Vere himself edited this book, and included some poems that he did not sign.

Seven poems appeared for the first time in the 1585 edition of *Paradise*. The first three (like ten poems in the 1576 edition) have no subscription. In the last edition of *Shakespeare Matters*, I argued that another one of these three anonymous poems was also written by de Vere. Its title is "A young Gentleman willing [i.e., wanting] to travell into forreygne partes being intreated to staie in England: Wrote as followeth." It was this title that alerted me to the likelihood of de Vere's authorship, since we know he struggled to win the Queen's permission to make his 1575-76 trip to the Continent.

Let us turn now to an analysis of "In prayse of the Snayle." Charlotte Spurgeon, in her marvelous, path-breaking book on Shakespeare's use of imagery, singles out the unusual range of Shakespeare's sympathy, which extends not only to humans, but to a wide variety of animals. She observes that most of us think of the snail primarily as being slow, so that comparisons of a person to a snail are derogatory. She argues that Shakespeare was primarily impressed by the snail's emotional sensitivity. She supports her thesis with quotations from two plays and from a long poem:

The snail seems to him an example of one of the most delicately sensitive organisms in nature; it is 'love's feeling'

only that 'is more soft and sensible/
Than are the tender horns of cock-
led snails" (*LLL* IV.3.336). In *Venus
and Adonis* (l. 1033), he writes of the
feelings of the "snail, whose tender
horns being hit,/ Shrinks backward
in his shelly cave with pain,/ And
there all smother'd up in shade doth
sit,/ Long after fearing to creep
forth again." [Spurgeon asks us
to] notice "how he emphasises the
greater poignancy of mental than
physical pain, even in a snail." And
in *Coriolanus*, Aufidius "Thrusts
forth his horns again into the
world;/ Which were inshell'd when
Marcius stood for Rome,/ And durst
not once peep out."

(107)

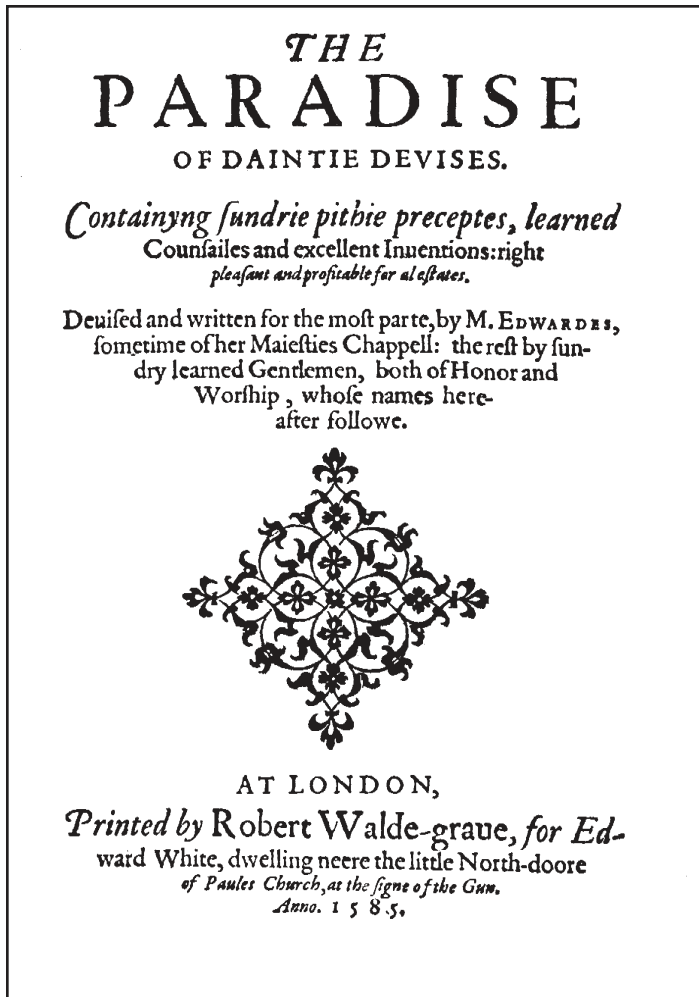
Even when he is citing the snail's
proverbial slowness, Shakespeare does
so sympathetically, as in the schoolboy
"creeping like snail/ Unwillingly to
school" (*As You Like It*, II.7.X). Spur-
geon notes that the snail would not be
the most obvious candidate for a poet's
sympathy. She might have added that
Elizabethans were still influenced by
the medieval notion of the Great Chain
of Being, with God on the highest
level, the oyster on the bottom of the
animal branch of this Chain, and the
snail far closer to the oyster than to
man. But our poet begins by calling
the snail a "wight," which immediately
implies a kinship with humans, since
"wight" can refer both to people and
to animals.

Barker (1996) expands on Spur-
geon's study of the snail in two of
Shakespeare's plays and in other early
modern dramas. She argues that snail
imagery in that period is "indicative of
fundamental cultural anxieties," and
is "an image of decay of demarcation
in general" (27). Barker found several
examples of snail imagery in English
Renaissance drama, which she said
contains the majority of such refer-
ences. Thus, our poem is unusual
in several respects. Barker cites the
work of Lillian Randall, who concluded
that in the thirteenth and fourteenth

Explanatory Notes to the "Snail Poem" (page 6)

- 1 Toiling—pronounced as three syllables
2 creature—animal or human
3 erratic
4 "wayward wittes" was used by John Studley in his 1566 translation of Seneca's *Medea*, a play
wright who significantly influenced Shakespeare.
5 note the "wave" present in this word, anticipating "seas"
6 this is the earliest use of "sweet repose" listed in Early English Books Online (EEBO). It was
then used in the play *Arden of Faversham*, to which Shakespeare may have contributed (cf.
Shakespeare Quarterly, 2006). It became a popular phrase in many later works by other au-
thors.
7 out of one's house; outdoors [2 *Henry IV*—"your Lordship abroad"]; into foreign lands [*Mac-
beth*]
8 i.e., when the snail is no longer governed by reason
9 the misprint "Sayle" in the 1585 edition is corrected to "Snaile" in the 1596 edition
10 art, expertness, sense of what is right
11 guide, control; curb, restrain, check
12 foolish
13 mental faculties
14 unoccupied time [Sonnet 39]; opportunity afforded by freedom from occupations [*Much Ado*]
15 "work thy will"—to perform, carry out, execute [occurs elsewhere in 1596 edition, as well as
in
Munday's *John a Kent*—"Leave the God of Heaven to work his will"]
16 "Dame reason" was referred to several times in Christine de Pisan's *The City of Ladies*
17 slow
18 bring about
19 several people
20 an archaic meaning, as an adjective, is "native born"
21 cf. "creeping like a snail" in *As You Like It* II, vii, 146).
22 Quintus Fabius Maximus, a 3d century B.C. Roman general of the second Punic war who was
known for the success of his cautious military strategies; he tried to wear Hannibal down by
avoiding pitched battles
23 refers to a hawk descending swiftly on either its prey or to the lure
24 a living bird such as a pigeon, used to entice a hawk into a net
25 hasty, impetuous, rash
26 clever [used in that sense by Holinshed]
27 to enfold, clothe; to coil, to wrap as in a garment. Changed to "lay" in 1596 edition
28 unless
29 ill-will, malice [*Merchant of Venice*]; envy in its current meaning [Julius Caesar]; plural—
jealousies, rivalries. The word was changed to "envious" in all editions subsequent to 1585.
30 nets
31 in spite of; spelled "maugur" in 1596 edition
32 something imaginary [*Romeo*—"Love... made with the fume of sighs"]; something which
clouds the reason [*The Tempest*—"the ignorant fumes"]
33 Rollins (1927) glosses this line as meaning "Except for the fretting of those who envy you,
there are few who shall harm you, no matter how much the envious may fume" (269).
34 caused (literally, "worked")
35 follows
36 infirm; pronounced as two syllables. Spelled "crazed" in 1596 edition
37 Rollins notes that "crazed sore was a favorite expression of the Elizabethans; *sore* is an
adverb, and the phrase means those who are very infirm or sorely injured" (269). However, I
found no other examples in EEBO.
38 "virtues in degree" alludes to traditional medieval beliefs in the hierarchy of seven virtues—
three were theological (faith, hope, and charity, all three resulting from grace, and all three
necessary for salvation) and four were moral (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude).
The phrase also alludes to Aquinas's influential synthesis of virtues, incorporating Aristotle's
"habitus," which refers to man's capacity to act well or badly
39 "in spite of spight" was a phrase used in Shakespeare's *King John IV*, and in Philip Sidney's
His Astrophel and Stella. It was also used by George Pettie in his 1581 translation of Stefano
Girazzo's *Civile Conversation*—"in spite of spight shee [Queen Elizabeth] will triumph over
all yll tongues."
40 Rollins believes "I weare thee still" means "as my device (as in a shield or coat of arms)"
(269).

(Continued on p. 8)



Title page of the 1585 edition of *Paradise of Daintie Devises*. The edition contains for the first time several anonymous poems, including the “Snail” and “Travel” (see Fall 2007 *SM*) poems.

(*Snail Poem, cont. from p. 7*)

centuries the snail symbolized cowardice. Barker argues that, in English Renaissance drama, the snail can allude to the intersection of multiple meanings—the name of a simple military defensive maneuver; young men and their education; a monster (which she links with the psychoanalytic concept of the repressed); sexual ambiguity and gender confusion (some snails are hermaphroditic); in gardening, an adversary; and a rebellion against authority.

Spurgeon’s example of Shakespeare’s unusual sympathy with the snail supports the attribution of “In prayse of the Snayle” to de Vere, author of Shakespeare’s works. Whoever the poet was, he was very much a kindred spirit of Shakespeare’s. As with her three examples, the poet finds many

virtues in the snail. Even its slowness is portrayed as a virtue, in contrast with the hazards of hastiness. The anonymous author of *The Arte of English Poesie* cites Emperor Augustus’s motto, *festina lento*, “make haste slowly.” The poet’s snail exemplifies this advice.

In 1580, Gabriel Harvey ridiculed some of the clothing fashions that de Vere brought back with him from Italy. In particular, he compared his cap to an oyster. It is possible that de Vere identifies with the snail in this poem partly as a defiant retort to Harvey’s taunt.

The Shakespearean works that Spurgeon cites for sympathetic images of the snail are relatively early ones. Londré speculates that the first draft of *Loves*

Labours Lost was written by de Vere in 1577. That may have been close to the time our poem was composed. *Venus and Adonis* seems likely to have been written later, perhaps as late as 1592.

Our poem has a misleading simplicity if we stop at its surface. What could be simpler than a harmless snail? Yet more disturbing allusions abound. In particular, many words in the poem allude to mental disturbances of various sorts. Thus far, I have glossed only one set of meanings of several words in the poem.

As in the typical Elizabethan court masque, the dangers outlined in the first two stanzas threaten chaos, until the day is saved by Dame Reason, Duke Fabe, and Dame Phisicke. Another transition occurs midway through the poem—starting with “Wherefore my prety Snaile” in the fourth verse, the remainder of the poem is an apostrophe to the snail.

Examining the poem a bit more closely, we see that the hapless snail keeps veering toward the precipice of mental instability. “Turmoyled” can mean *tormented* or *thrown into confusion*. “Wayward wittes” can allude to loss of one’s reason, as does the reference to reason leaving and no longer ruling. “Brainsicke” can refer to madness. “Frets” can mean an agitated state of mind, “fumes” can be something that clouds one’s reason, and “crased” can be crazed or insane. Barker (1996) believes that the snail’s androgyny, in its literary uses, evokes “the abolition of boundar-

ies” which can in turn allude to fears of “cognitive breakdown” (27).

As in the typical Elizabethan court masque, the dangers outlined in the first two stanzas threaten chaos, until the day is saved by Dame Reason, Duke Fabe, and Dame Phisicke. Another transition occurs midway through the poem—starting with “Wherefore my prety Snaile” in the fourth verse, the remainder of the poem is an apostrophe to the snail.

The fifth stanza is brimming with Biblical¹ phrasing. We know how much the Bible influenced Shakespeare, and how consistent de Vere’s Biblical annotations are with Shakespeare’s works (see Stritmatter). “I place thee for a...” recalls four Biblical instances of “I... give thee for a...” and one “I set thee for a...” “Before mine eyes” alludes to five Biblical uses of the phrase “before mine,” all but one of them being exactly this phrase, “before mine eyes.” “I will place thee for a Precedent” alludes strongly to Isaiah 49:6, “I wil also give thee for a light of the Gentiles,” and to Jeremiah 6:27, “I have set thee for a defence and fortresse among my people.”

The word “signe” occurs 73 times in the Geneva Bible. Eight of those times, or more than 10 per cent, are in Ezekiel, a book that was heavily annotated by de Vere. It usually alludes to a message from God as a “signe of the covenant,” a phrase found three times in Genesis. In fact, the fifth stanza of our poem can be read as having been spoken by God. The eight times “signe” is used in Genesis and Exodus are all passages in which the speaker is God. A passage in 2 Chronicles (32:24) points to the poem’s final stanza, in alluding to a sign from God which consoles a sick person: “In those days Hezekiah was sicke unto death, and prayed unto the Lorde, who spake unto him and gave him a signe.”

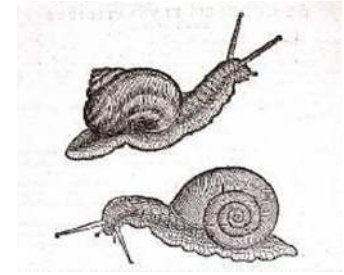
In the third chapter of Exodus, Moses hears the voice of God speaking to him from the burning bush. After being told to demand that Pharaoh release the Jews, Moses asks God a series of questions. In his reply, God said, “And this is the *sign* for you that I Myself have sent you” (Alter, 320; Exodus 3:12; my emphasis). Alter’s commentary acknowledges the ambiguity of just what this sign is. It may be God’s voice speaking from the burning bush. Two verses later, God answers Moses’s

question about his name with his famous “I AM THAT I AM” (capitalized in de Vere’s Bible). That phrase famously appears in de Vere’s 1584 letter to Burghley, and in Sonnet 121.² A “signe” also alludes to a

What may have been taking place in de Vere’s life when he wrote this poem? I suspect the reference to hawks that are caught in a net when they follow a lure is a key to the events in de Vere’s life that inspired the poem. He may have written the earliest version of it after he returned from his long travels on the Continent in 1575-76. The snail would thus stand for de Vere from the poem’s first line. That is, it was de Vere who earlier sought “sweete repose abroad,” rather than staying quietly at home. The poem can be read as de Vere’s account of what led him to travel abroad, as well as his feelings about having returned home.

divine miracle, or a way of keeping God’s commandments.

“Wrought hurt” in the fifth stanza uses the Biblical past tense of the verb “to work.” Many of the 88 uses of that word in the Geneva Bible are pejorative—what is wrought is villainy, abomination, wickedness, evil, folly, and treason. “Snayle”



occurs once in the Geneva Bible, and twice in the Bishop’s Bible. Psalm 58:8 in the Geneva Bible states “Let him [the wicked man] consume like a snaile that melteth, and like the untimelie frute of a woman, that hath not sene the sunne,”³ and “Let them creepe away lyke a snayle that forthwith consumeth to naught” in the Bishop’s Bible. The snail was thought to melt away both because of the track of slime it left behind, and also because snails would sometimes perish on hot rocks in the desert. It is also striking that this unique use of “snail” in the Geneva Bible was just before a reference to a woman having a miscarriage or stillbirth (“like the untimelie frute of a woman”), possibly as divine punishment.⁴ The second stanza contains several proverbial phrases. “Thy hope” from its first line is a phrase that occurs only once in the Geneva Bible, in the book of Proverbs, in the consoling statement, “For surely there is an ende, and thy hope shall not be cut off” (Proverbs 23:18). “Thy will,” the last two words of the second stanza, allude to the Lord’s Prayer. All but one of the times that phrase is used in the Bible are in reference to doing God’s will.

These many Biblical echoes alert us to a theological dimension of the entire poem. Like some of the Sonnets, the entire poem reads like a secular version of some Christian hymn of praise, starting with its title. The poulter’s measure used in the poem is still used now for some Christian hymns (where it is now called “short meter”). All the poems in *The Paradise of Daintie Devices* were lyrics, meant to be sung. Read allegorically, the first line, “The deepe turmoyled wight, that lives devoyde of ease,” sounds like a reference to post-Edenic man. The “thynges of doubt”

(Continued on p. 10)

(*Snail Poem, cont. from p. 9*)

of the third stanza may allude to spiritual doubt. There is an implicit contrast between religious faith and “Dame reason.” The “creepynge” wight in the final line of the third stanza makes the reader think not just of the snail, but of the Edenic snake. The

This poem has several echoes of another anonymous poem of the 1585 and later editions—“A young Gentelman willing to travell into forreygne partes.”⁷ In particular, the first stanza of the present poem shares nine key words with the other poem, occurring in six of the latter poem’s seven stanzas (deepe, live[s], seas, seekes, sweete, abroad, rome, leave[s], and home). The closely similar “lives” and “leaves” of the first stanza imply that one must leave home in order to live, just as “live” and “leave” have the same implication in the other poem. The first four lines thus seem to constitute a sort of subliminal summary of the other poem, while simultaneously introducing a fresh topic...I assume both poems reflect the author’s intense conflicts about his successive homes and his relatives who reside in them.

descent of the hawk in the next line may thus allude to the fall of Man that resulted from succumbing to the serpent’s temptation. “I place thee for a ... signe before mine eyes” in the fifth stanza may then evoke Numbers 21:9—“So Moses made a serpent of brasse, and set it up for a signe, that as many as are bitten may looked upon it, and live.” This is the only Old Testament reference

to a sign that was cited by Jesus. In John 3:14-15, Jesus compares himself to that bronze serpent. In the Bible, bronze is a metal connected with God’s judgment. The fifth stanza ends with an implicit contrast between the Edenic snake and the harmless snail, who never “wrought hurt to humaine kinde.”

I suspect de Vere enjoyed the contrast between “brainsicke”(stanza 2) and “Phisicke” (stanza 6)—the latter word enacts an undoing of the state of being sick. The mucus that the snail secretes is called the “salve” that offers “helpe” and “cure” to those who suffer “craséd sores.”⁵ To the early Christians, the snail was a symbol of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul. Jesus was a healer who offered mankind the “salve” of salvation (cf. “salve me,” Latin for “save me”). The medicinal properties of snail slime were known to Galen and Hippocrates. Pliny recommended it for burns and skin infections, since it has antibiotic effects. He also advocated snails for fits of madness. In de Vere’s day, one author recommended it as an ingredient in a treatment of fever, and of “felon” (a sore on the finger) (“T.C.” *An Hospital for the Diseased*, 1578). Bullein (1579) claimed that “Snayles cleneth the iyen [eyes], helpeth the Eares, and is wholsome for bone ache” (p. 81). Some skin creams sold today contain snail mucus, and recently the Food and Drug Administration has shown interest in possible medicinal uses of snails.

I find it likely that de Vere wrote this poem in response to a specific challenge that he faced in his life. It reads as a defense of his chosen course of behavior, in response to real or imagined criticism that he was being too slow in taking some proposed action. De Vere certainly needed the advice he offers in this poem—his life was filled with rash, headstrong, impulsive, self-destructive actions. As I argued in an earlier article (Waugaman, in press), de Vere was the only living member of the nobility who allowed his initials to be subscribed to some of the poems in *Paradise of Daintie Devices*. This fact alone increases the likelihood that some of the anonymous poems in the book were also written by him. If “In praise of the Snayle” is in fact by de Vere, its anonymity suggests the poem alludes to circumstances that were too sensitive for his authorship to be made public.

What may have been taking place in de Vere’s life when he wrote this poem? I suspect the reference to hawks that are caught in a net when they follow a lure is a key to the events in de Vere’s life that inspired the poem. He may have written the earliest version of it after he returned from his long travels on the Continent in 1575-76. The snail would thus stand for de Vere from the poem’s first line. That is, it was de Vere who earlier sought “sweete repose abroad,” rather than staying quietly at home. The poem can be read as de Vere’s account of what led him to travel abroad, as well as his feelings about having returned home. The fourth stanza contains a significant turning point. Whereas the first stanza spoke of taking “delight to rome,” the fourth stanza contrasts “delight” with the rhyme “flight,” in the phrase “I refuse such sodayne flight.” It is also in the fourth stanza that the poet openly identifies himself with the snail for the first time “I... will seem slow as Snayle.” With that identification explicit, he now advises the snail to “be still,” to wrap itself up, reassuring it that it will now be relatively safe from harm. Safety is found in

avoiding impulsive actions, resisting temptation, and remaining self-sufficient.

When he returned to England from the Continent, de Vere refused to become ensnared in married life with Anne, despite the entreaties of Lord Burghley that de Vere immediately acknowledge his paternity of her infant daughter. De Vere cannot be accused of impetuosity in waiting three years before he resumed living with his wife. De Vere alluded to Burghley's pressure to act quickly one week after he returned to England in a letter to him-- "Urged... by your letters to satisfy you the sooner..." He rebukes Burghley for the latter's lack of "patience," and he announces, "I mean not to weary my life anymore with such troubles... nor will I, to please Your Lordship only, *discontent* myself" (Anderson, pp. 116-117; my emphasis; cf. "that well contenteth me," the poems final words).

If his estrangement from his wife occasioned this poem, it would highlight another set of meanings in it. Snails were long thought to be associated with femininity and with fertility. Barker (1996) noted that the snail could be a symbol for lust—"the snail rather irresistibly resembles both the tongue and the male sexual organ... a snail images both the tongue that persuades [i.e., seductively] and a means for implementing that persuasion" (p. 23). De Vere may have viewed Anne as a sexually enticing "stale," or snare. Ancient medicinal uses of the snail included several uses in the treatment of pregnant women. Pliny believed snails could help speed childbirth. Galen advised snails for *hydrops fetalis*.⁶ And de Vere's estrangement from his wife was precipitated by his accusation that another man had impregnated her. "Thynges of doubt" might thus allude to doubts about who was the father of his wife's child. The historical record shows that Anne sought an abortion for that pregnancy from the Queen's physican, Richard Master (Anderson, 118-119).

De Vere learned his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, was failing to keep their agreement to allow him to live apart from Anne—Burghley planned to ask the Queen to intervene to pressure de Vere to end his marital estrangement. On July 13, 1576, de Vere wrote Burghley, warning him to drop that plan. His letter includes the statement, "For always I have and will still *prefer mine own contentment* before others..." (Anderson, p. 121; emphasis added). The final words of our poem, "that well contenteth me," may echo the sentiment of that letter, as well as his earlier refusal to "discontent myself."

Most of Shakespeare's sonnets have various connections with other contiguous or distantly placed sonnets. Similarly, this poem has several echoes of another anonymous poem of the 1585 and later editions—"A young Gentelman willing to travell into forreygne partes."⁷ In particular, the first stanza of the present poem shares *nine* key words with the other poem, occurring in six of the latter poem's seven stanzas (deepe, live[s], seas, seekes, sweete, abroad, rome, leave[s], and home). The closely similar "lives" and "leaves" of the first stanza imply that one must leave home in order to live, just as "live" and "leave" have the same implication in the other poem. The first four lines thus seem to constitute a sort of subliminal summary of the other poem, while simultaneously introducing a fresh topic. No other stanza

includes nearly as many words that are shared with the other poem. I assume both poems reflect the author's intense conflicts about his successive homes and his relatives who reside in them. I suggest that both poems may have been inspired by his trip to the Continent.

The poem's rhyme scheme is that of rhymed couplets throughout. The first stanza rhymes "rome" and "home,"⁸ offering an early contrast between those two alternatives, which are reconciled by the snail, who takes his home with him. In the third stanza, "overcome" and "wonne" are imperfect rhymes to the ear, though they are closer rhymes to the eye, since "m" and "nn" look so similar. The poem's meter is iambic, with six feet alternating with seven feet. This so-called "poulter's measure" was popular with Elizabethan poets. Saintsbury (1923) calls it "a sort of bridge and compromise between literary and popular verse" (311). Its alternating length, shorter then longer, echoes the iambic structure of each foot. There is a caesura midway through each line of hexameter, and after the fourth foot of each line of heptameter. Steven May (1980), an authority on de Vere's poetry, calls him "a competent and fairly experimental poet" who used eleven different metrical and stanzaic forms (including poulter's measure) in the sixteen poems that May definitely attributes to him.

In summary, I have presented several arguments for attributing the 1585 poem "In praise of the snayle" to de Vere. I have tried to show that, like Shakespeare's sonnets, it is packed with multiple levels of meaning.

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(Continued on p. 32)

Italian Directions for English Merchants

by Richard Paul Roe

I want to tell you about some of the striking events that occurred in the latter half of the sixteenth century in Italy and how they relate to the “Italian Plays.” These actual events provide much of the background for some of the plays. Although this can be a massive subject, I will confine myself to salient parts of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew* to illustrate the playwright’s skills in orienting interested people in his own country about doing business in Italy.

Only a handful of contemporary books about Italy had been written for the English until the latter part of that century; and none was useful as a businessman’s guide to current events in that enchanting and productive country. At best, they need to be thought of as travel books. A significant market in reprints of Italian books began to grow in England, and the ability read Italian had become popular in England’s affluent circles. Some of those books were translated into English, but their contents were largely occupied with literary matters, social behavior, and other intellectual interests. There were a few travel diaries, but they said nothing about what products Italy might have to offer or want to buy.

What commercial knowledge of Italy the English had was mainly learned from the long tradition of the English selling raw wool in select places such as Florence, and their reciprocal purchase of finished woolen cloth. As for other products, the English had largely depended on the arrival of foreign ships coming to England from the Mediterranean laden with silks, wine, dried

fruit, and other luxury goods. Occasionally before 1550, English trade vessels did arrive intermittently in the Mediterranean, but for the next 20-odd years hardly any of them came.

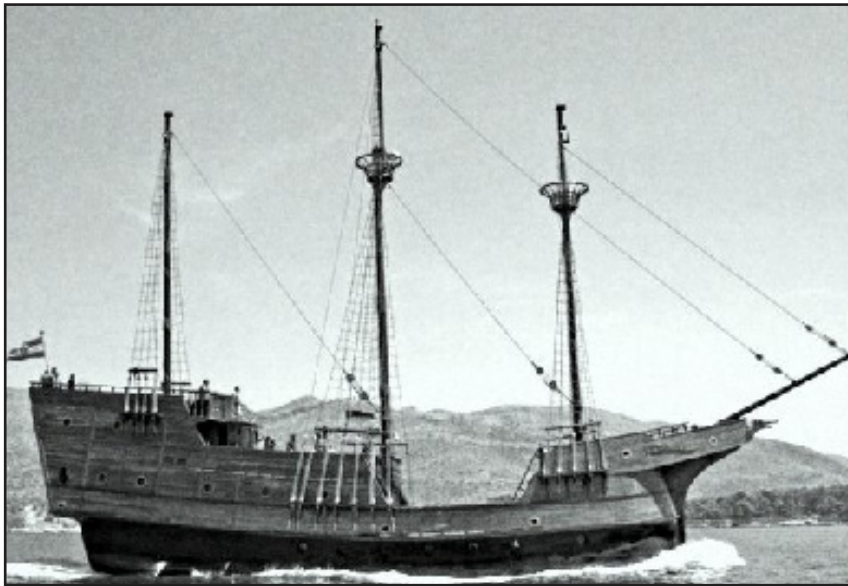
Within the Mediterranean, an event took place the aftermath of which had a profound impact upon the affairs of its border-

ing nations, and with it, a rarely noticed impact upon the events described in the Shakespeare plays set in Italy, though the playwright never described, never referred to, never so much as hinted at this event. While it had no direct impact in England, its aftermath would alter forever England’s interest in the Mediterranean in general and specifically her attention toward Italy. This event, the massive sea battle known as the Battle of Lepanto, occurred on October 7, 1571, just inside the Greek Gulf of Patras, an arm of the Adriatic Sea. It derives its name from the small town of Lepanto

nearby, now known as Naupactos. Greece was then occupied by the Turkish Empire, and its principal naval power of many ships had been riding at anchor there.

The Turks had been making grievous inroads toward the West, its army was at the gates of Prague, and its navy had only recently taken the rich island of Cyprus, which had been part of the Venetian Empire for a over eighty years, and they were looking for opportunities to continue their westward reach in the Mediterranean.

Venice, Spain, Genoa, and the Papacy joined hands, forming the Christian League. Its combined navy was under the command of Don John of Austria, half-brother of Philip II of Spain. It was an unparalleled victory. The League lost twelve galleys and one



The Argosy: An Early Modern ship designed and used by Ragusan Merchants from Dubrovnick.

captured. The Turks lost 113 galleys and 117 were captured. Don John became a hero throughout Christendom.

He had expected Philip to support him in carving out a new kingdom for him to rule in part of Greece. When it didn't happen, he began to explore for opportunities in other Mediterranean ports, even as far away as Istanbul. Ironically in that same year, Venetian vessels stopped coming to England. They had begun to encounter severe hostility from the Spanish, the Neapolitans, Sicilians, the Papal States and Genoa. Moreover, there was an increase in piracy by Turkish and Barbary pirates. These so called Christian states no longer offered their hospitality to Venetians in retaliation for their having made a humbling treaty with the Turks whereby Venice and Turkey would resume their trade rela-

An Elizabethan audience would know what an argosy was, and it would discover from the lines in the play that this Venetian merchant had somehow deviated from the ancient Venetian rule that its merchants use Venetian ships only; his merchandise was aboard foreign ships. Argosies were a specific class of vessels that were manufactured, owned and operated by the merchants of the Illyrian city once known as Ragusa and now known as Dubrovnik.

tions. Those other states called the Venetians traitors.

The Venetians regarded the Spanish as the real traitors; they had failed to implement a second strike against the Turks; they had turned their backs on Venice, and the Venetians could only survive economically by resuming trade with Turkey and its eastern satellites. Out of a genuine need, in 1573 they made a humble treaty with Turkey called "The Peace of Constantinople." Ironically, almost simultaneously, the young men of Venice rebelled against their long tradition of going to sea; it was simply too dangerous. The loss of Venetian ships in encounters with Spain, and the other hostiles at sea were too severe.

To all of this grief the Venetians developed an answer, and it was carefully put in place. Because of rebellion at home, they had lost the vitality of their merchant marine while their losses at sea had become unacceptable. Gradually, the pragmatic rulers of Venice offered no serious opposition to the centuries-old rule

that Venetians could only use Venetian ships.

Early in 1575 a remarkable English noble and a handful of friends arrived in Venice. He later portrayed the remarkable response which the Venetians pursued, a response which overturned centuries of a rigid Venetian policy and changed mercantile practices in the Mediterranean basin forever. He described it all in Act I, Scene 1, of his *The Merchant of Venice*.

When the curtain rises, there are three men on stage: the "Merchant" himself, Antonio; his lackey, Salerio, and his merchant friend, Solanio.

Antonio says:

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much ado to know myself.

(I.1.1-7)

Salerio replies:

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
There where your Argosies with portly sail
Like signors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or as it were pageants of the sea,
Do overpeer the petty traffickers
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

(I.1.8-14)

An Elizabethan audience would know what an argosy was, and it would discover from the lines in the play that this Venetian merchant had somehow deviated from the ancient Venetian rule that its merchants use Venetian ships only; his merchandise was aboard foreign ships. Argosies were a specific class of vessels that were manufactured, owned and operated by the merchants of the Illyrian city once known as Ragusa and now known as Dubrovnik. They were easily identifiable by their banner of St. Blaise (Serbian, St. Vlah), the patron saint of Ragusa.

The name resulted from the difficulty of an English tongue trying to pronounce "Ragusa." English shipping ledgers of the sixteenth century variously record merchant ships calling from Ragusa as a "Ragusye," "Arguze," "Argose," "Argosea," and so on.

The playwright then adds more of such news in Solanio's response to Antonio:

My wind cooling my broth

(Continued on p. 14)

(Italian Directions, cont. from p. 13)

Would blow me to an ague when I thought
 What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
 I should not see the sandy hour-glass run
 But I should think of shallows and of flats,
 And see my wealthy Andrew docked in sand
 ... Should I go to church
 And see the holy edifice of stone,

English ships were not the cumbersome and slow-moving galleons that are described by Salerio in his first scene remarks, “as it were pageants of the sea” that look down upon -- “do overpeer” - “the petty [small] traffickers .../That ... fly by them with their woven wings.” This is charming poetry, but it is also a graphic description of the small and swift merchant ships from the north, capable of sailing circles around those fat and awkward ships favored by Mediterraneans, an advantage that would be further demonstrated in the later English destruction of the Spanish Armada.

And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
 Which touching but my gentle vessel's side
 Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
 Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
 And in a word, but even now worth this,
 And now worth nothing?

.....
 But tell not me; I know Antonio
 Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

(I.I.22-40)

Antonio's exact shipping procedures were also made clear. He had ceased using Venetian ships; he wouldn't be worried about the Ragusan ships, which enjoyed the hospitality of Spain.

On the other hand, his merchant friend Solanio is disclosing to Elizabethan audiences that his merchandise - “spices” and “silks” - would also be transported in ships, the ones he calls “my Andrew” (I.I.27).

An *Andrew* was a ship owned by the famous Andrea Doria of Genoa (1468-1560) and next by his great-nephew and heir, Giovanni Andrea Doria. Andrea Doria was Genoa's great Renaissance admiral and statesman. He was also the head of a Genovan family of enormous wealth, garnered from banking, finance, and merchant shipping, and it was his practice and that of Giovanni to use “Andrea” as part of the name for many of his ships. Examples are *Andrea la Spume* (Andrew the Sea Foam), *Andrea l'Onde* (Andrew the Wave), *Andrea il Gabbiano* (Andrew the Sea Gull), and *Andrea il Delfino* (Andrew the Dolphin). Thus Andrea, pronounced “Andrew” by an English tongue, easily became the nickname for any vessel that flew the Doria flag.

Some time around 1550 English ships had virtually disappeared from the Mediterranean. The reasons are many and complex, but they principally included Spanish hostility even then. The English dealt with this by getting their Italian grapes and wines, oil and other Mediterranean desirables from arriving Venetian vessels. But, in the defining year of 1573 Venetian ships ceased arriving in England. Moreover, as mentioned, the young men of Venice had rebelled from the tradition of going to sea because of the radically increasing danger from piracy. In addition, the Venetian shipyards were having difficulty getting ship timber, and it had become much cheaper and far safer to use the merchant vessels of Ragusa and Genoa. Concomitantly, in the significant year of 1573, the English began to respond to all this, to probe the Mediterranean with vessels of their own. When they did, they found the Spanish were not all that formidable; Philip II had turned his attention and his warships away from the Mediterranean and toward the New World. At the same time, to their happy surprise, the callers from England discovered they were welcome, especially at Tuscan and Venetian ports. So they increased their presence and set out to gather more intelligence about Mediterranean opportunities.

There were great opportunities for the English entrepreneurs and shippers. For transport of goods, English ships were the cheapest, largely because they were faster and more reliable. These sailors from the North didn't weave their way along the meandering shores of the Mediterranean, keeping the coastline in sight, as all Mediterranean people had done since the beginning of time. They sailed in straight lines, using the compass, often on the high seas where they did not regularly encounter hostile vessels. Their crews were paid by the trip, not by the week as Mediterranean sailors were; and their ships were not the cumbersome and slow-moving galleons that are described by Salerio in his first scene remarks, “as it were pageants of the sea” that look down upon -- “do overpeer” - “the petty [small] traffickers .../That ... fly by them with their woven wings.” This is charming poetry, but it is also a graphic description of the small and swift merchant ships from the north, capable of sailing circles around those fat and awkward ships favored by Mediterraneans, an advantage that would be further demonstrated in the later

English destruction of the Spanish Armada.

The growth of the English presence and its financial success in the Mediterranean had abruptly become, in the late 16th century, the most important of England's foreign enterprises, with its Queen, on 11 September 1579, formally issuing a royal patent for the Levant Company to trade in the Levantine area of the eastern Mediterranean.

The dramatist has provided his countrymen with additional information of his knowledge of a changed Venice by listing the destinations of Antonio's argosies. In Act I, Scene 3, Shylock, the money lender, in speaking of Antonio's creditworthiness, says:

he hath an Argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies,
I understand moreover upon the Rialto, he hath a third to
Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath
squandered abroad . .

(I.3.15-19)

And later, in Act III, scene 2, Bassanio receives a letter about Antonio about which, when reading its purported news, he exclaims:

Hath all his ventures fail'd? What not one hit? From
Tripolis, from Mexico and England, From Lisbon, Barbary
and India, And not one vessel scape the dreadful touch Of
merchant-marring rocks?

(III.2.266-270)

Shylock has named five specific destinations and adds that there are others; and Bassanio names six, nearly all the same places named by Shylock. All of them are historically accurate.

Mexico seems a peculiar destination, one that critics have used to deprecate the playwright's knowledge of Venice, saying that since Venetian ships couldn't go there, it was a serious mistake for the playwright to have sent one of Antonio's ships there. As we have seen, however, the mistake was the failure of the critics to know that an argosy was not a Venetian vessel. Ragusan argosies were always welcome in Mexico, and one of them could have carried Antonio's merchandise. There are other places named by Shylock and Bassanio where a Venetian ship wouldn't or couldn't go, but where an argosy could.

As for the "Indies," there were two places with that same designation in the European and English vocabularies of that time. It was only later that this ambiguity was clarified by its division into "West Indies," for the Caribbean world, and "East Indies," for India, Ceylon, the Spice Islands, and so on. There is no record of Venetian voyages reaching the East Indies in those times, but there are some records, though sparse, of Ragusan ships having gone there. The West Indies, of course, were a part of the Spanish Empire, being the Caribbean and its adjacencies. The "Tripolis" mentioned as a destination could also ambiguously refer to two different places, either the city on the Levantine coast or the one on the coast of North Africa.

Of all the memorable places within the city of Venice, only one of them is given a name in *Merchant of Venice*: the Rialto, the financial district of the city. Its center consisted of a relatively small public square called Campo di San Giacomo di Rialto which is adjacent to the Grand Canal of Venice about midway along its S-shaped course. Though the Rialto is mentioned by name five different times in the play, none of its scenes is set there. For a thousand years before *Merchant* was written, the Rialto had been considered the center of the city both physically and financially. By tradition this was the very spot of dry land where the first Venetians began their City of the Lagoon, and it was on a date of which they are certain: at high noon on Friday, 25 March 421 A.D. Part of that tradition maintains that the modest church on the square, San Giacomo di Rialto, was the first church built in

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Venice, although the present building dates from about 1097.

Once in a while a writer or traveler will confuse the Rialto with the small shops lining the great white stone bridge that crosses over the Grand Canal from the Rialto district to reach the opposite side of the city. Somehow it is usually assumed the Venice bankers did business on the bridge instead of on the handsome, decked and stepped and partially roofed to accommodate small shops and vendors' spaces. But as Brooklyn is not the bridge by which it is reached, neither is the Rialto its bridge. In fact, for much of that sixteenth century there was no Rialto Bridge at all.

Its ancestors were a succession of clumsy structures made

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(Italian Directions, cont. from p. 15)

of wood. A good likeness of the last wooden one is portrayed in the 1496 painting by Vittore Carpaccio entitled "The Miracle of the Cross at the Rialto." It collapsed into the Canal on the disastrous day of 14 August 1524. Years were spent in debates over architectural proposals, the first stone for the famous replacement not finally being laid until 9 June 1588 and the bridge not fully completed until 1591. Meanwhile, the Grand Canal was crossed by standing upright with Venetian aplomb in the small ferry-boats similar to large gondolas, which were called *gondolone da prada*.

Of specific importance to the story of *Merchant of Venice*, the Rialto was the place where the city's nobles, merchants, and financiers gathered each weekday to transact business, gossip, and report news, especially shipping news, and to make trade agreements and form joint ventures, to buy and sell cargo, and to borrow and lend money. And there, each weekday morning, the bankers' benches were set up in the arcades of its *Fabbriche Vecchie* building, their ledgers opened and their day begun. The Rialto may well have been the most important, and certainly the most famous, financial exchange in the western world. It was also the place to which mercantants would come from Mantua, for example - on their errands with bills of exchange.

In 1574, the English were not as sophisticated in financial matters as the Italians. In Act IV, scene 2 of *Taming of the Shrew*, Tranio realizes that to convince Baptista of his eligibility to win Bianca he needs to recruit someone to pose as Lucentio's father, someone who would also be willing to fib in affirmation of Tranio's falsehoods. Biondello is sent to a city gate to recruit some person arriving in town who is presentable and willing to play the father's part. We learn of this when Biondello enters this scene and says to Tranio:

O master, master, I have watched so long that I am dog-weary, but at last I spied an ancient angel coming down the hill will serve the turn.

Scholars have opined he is called an "angel" because of an old English coin with the figure of Archangel Michael, an idea which can only be irrelevant. He is more likely to be called that by Biondello because he regards him as heaven-sent to assist in the negotiations for Bianca's hand.

Tranio asks Biondello, "what is he, Biondello?" He answers:

Master, a marcantant, or a pedant,
I know not what, but formal in apparel,
In gait and countenance surely like a father.

Biondello isn't at all sure what the man does for a living, but he does have a respectable appearance, for which both of those professions were known. A "pedant" was a school teacher or tutor. As for a "marcantant," the Italian word for it is *mercantante*, which, when anglicized, loses its final "e."

It is my guess that the first "a" in the word in the First Folio is a typographical error for "e," ever since repeated. Not only

was it an unfamiliar word in England, but aside from this play it has never been used in English literature. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, influenced by its appearance in the First Folio, has given it the same misspelling; and the definition given there is "merchant," which is sort of right — and sort of wrong — for a sixteenth century mercantant. *Black's Law Dictionary* comes a bit closer, defining it as "a foreign trader," but even this definition requires clarification since one is, in effect, a traveling commercial agent, but of an unusual kind.

This man is no pedant; he is, indeed, a marcantant, as will be disclosed in his conversations, as when he and Tranio have their ensuing dialogue:

Mercantant/Pedant: God save you, sir.

Biondello is sent to a city gate to recruit some person arriving in town who is presentable and willing to play the father's part...This man is no pedant; he is, indeed, a marcantant...a traveling commercial agent of an unusual kind...

Tranio as Lucentio: And you, sir. You are welcome. Travel you far on, or are you at the farthest?

Mercantant: Sir, at the farthest for a week or two, But then up farther, and as far as Rome, And so to Tripoli, if God lend me life.

Tranio: What countryman I pray?

Mercantant: Of Mantua.

Tranio: Of Mantua, sir? Marry, God forbid! And come to Padua, careless of your life?

Mercantant: My life, sir? How, I pray? For that goes hard.

Tranio: 'Tis death for anyone in Mantua To come to Padua. Know you not the cause? Your ships are stayed at Venice, and the Duke, For private quarrel 'Twixt your duke and him, Hath published and proclaimed it openly. 'Tis marvel, but that you are but newly come, You might have heard it else proclaimed about.

Mercantant: Alas, sir, it is worse for me than so, For I have bills for money by exchange From Florence, and must here

deliver them.

These lines reveal the specific knowledge of the playwright. It is even more specific and remarkable when this *Mercantant* says he is from Mantua, of all places. First, we are informed that this man is a professional traveler because of his scheduled and remarkably wide itinerary: arriving in Padua from Florence, and next going “up farther,” by which he probably means Venice; then turning around to go back south “as far as Rome.” After that, surprisingly, he says he will go to Tripoli, across the Mediterranean in North Africa on its Coast, where gold dust routinely arrived from the mines of Sudan, making it an important financial center.

Secondly, at the end of their dialogue, the *Mercantant* makes the purpose of his traveling profession even more specific when he says he has bills for money by exchange. These financial instruments had been widely employed in Europe, the Near East, and North Africa since medieval times. They had what seemed a nearly magical use, which was the discount buying of a written order (bill) on a bank - usually one located elsewhere - to pay a stated sum of money on or after a specific later date. Thus, less than the stated amount of money was actually paid out for the paper at its place of origin on some earlier date, later to be exchanged at a particular bank in another city for the full stated amount. This difference in the amounts was the bill buyer's profit.

This business of issuing, discounting, and then redeeming bills of exchange was done in many Italian cities, including Mantua, Padua, Venice, Florence, and Rome. Elsewhere in Europe, it was done in such places Antwerp, Lyon, and Frankfurt, for example. However, in going to London, the bill carrier went by sea and usually arrived on the Thames hard by The City of London, where the banks were located. He was thus never encountered out on the road by English laymen - not enough, that is, to have acquired an English name instead of the Italian one.

Of particular importance to the play's *Mercantant*, there were bill discounters and responsive banks in Tripoli, a striking fact which the playwright knew. From all that the *Mercantant* has now said, his

profession is now fully defined; he is the collection agent for a bill discounter or an issuer of bills who lives in Mantua.

For years I have been bothered by the slavish practice of all editors of *The Taming of the Shrew* marking the lines of the man imitating Lucentio's father to be spoken by “Pedant.” The playwright thoroughly ridiculed a pedant in *Loves*

These lines reveal the specific knowledge of the playwright... the end of their dialogue, the Mercantant makes the purpose of his traveling profession even more specific when he says he has bills for money by exchange. These financial instruments had been widely employed in Europe, the Near East, and North Africa since medieval times. They had what seemed a nearly magical use, which was the discount buying of a written order (bill) on a bank - usually one located elsewhere - to pay a stated sum of money on or after a specific later date.

Labours Lost, and has not done such a thing to this masquerader in *Shrew*. The failure or conscious refusal to correct the name error in preparing the play for its printing in the First Folio correctly to use “Pedant” instead of “Mercantant” might well be due to an earlier English scrivener's mistake in not knowing what a mercantant was but knowing what a pedant was. Can this constantly repeated error be attributed as well to the same

ignorance? While some editors did not hesitate to change (erroneously) Speed's line in Act II Scene 5 of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* from “Welcome to Padua” to “Welcome to Milan,” for example, all editors fail to correct “Pedant” to an accurate “Mercantant.”

In the above-quoted dialogue between Tranio and the Mercantant, in which he says he is from Mantua, the playwright has given us another one of his cryptic signals, since Mantua is named three times in quick succession. Not only this, but in the fib about a quarrel between the Duke of Venice (the state that included Padua) and the Duke of Mantua, the playwright has specifically referred to its duke, who would have been a Gonzaga, the family which had then ruled Mantua for centuries.

In his masterwork, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean Sea in the Age of Philip II*, Fernand Braudel writes:

The agents of the Gonzaga, who bought thoroughbred horses, were as at home in Tunis and Oran as in Genoa or Venice, coming and going with bills of exchange on Barbary (on the credit of Christian merchants settled there) ... (I, 468)

This would, perforce, include Berber-populated Tripoli, where payments could be received in gold, a metal in short supply in Italy, and far more desirable than silver, which kept losing value due to the Spanish glut of it.

The best text of *Merchant of Venice* is the First Quarto of 1600. It provided the text in the First Folio of 1623.

The play was entered in the Stationers' Register on July 22, 1598. This record was kept by the Stationers' Company in which members of the Company recorded work they intended to publish.

Due to the fact that it contains recitals of events that actually happened around 1575, those first recorded performances before the court at Whitehall on February 10, 1605, and again on February 12 indicate was a gap of

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(Holden, cont. from p. 1)

or some scholar-gypsy, the bohemian and the amazon coming together with delightful improbability. She always seemed to be pacing her hall on the top of the hill, drawing off her gloves or thrusting her whip into the umbrella stand, as a fresh gust of wind blew in under the door. Shy and intensely private though she was, nothing could stop Isabel bolting on her armour one more time if the cause beckoned. I can see her now, lance couched, visor down, ready for the charge. And yet,

The academy, with its entrenched beliefs and vested interests, was not the enemy in Isabel's book; rather it was a hive of potential converts, and armed with her gruff charm, she set to work with a will, inviting members of the English faculty from Smith to dinner on the hill, careful to put them at ease before letting the tiger out of the cupboard.

as all her admirers will aver, she was the invisible knight, working to great effect behind the scenes.

I first met Isabel in 1989 at Oxford University where she appeared without warning at one of the De Vere Society lectures. She sat near the back in a tweed suit and hat with her sister, Constance St. John, identically attired. We spoke briefly after the event. Several months later I received a letter from her, suggesting the unthinkable: that I give a lecture on the Earl of Oxford at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. It was like asking the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach the Gospel at Mecca. (As I would

soon learn, Isabel took a perverse joy in swimming against the tide.) Intrigued by the sheer folly of her proposal, I readily agreed, not imagining that anything could come of it. I had not reckoned with the Holden tenacity.

A year went by, and then out of the blue a formal letter of invitation arrived from the Director of the Folger, Werner Gundersheimer, asking me to speak at that august institution. Isabel, herself a Friend of the Folger and well in with the Library's administrators – the Trustees of Amherst College – had pulled it off! That one lecture was to change my life profoundly, and Isabel was responsible for arranging dozens more through her contacts at schools and colleges throughout New England over the coming years. Around the same time she alerted Roger Stritmatter, now Dr. Stritmatter, to the existence of Oxford's Geneva Bible at the Folger. His subsequent dissertation on the annotations in that Bible proved a watershed in Oxfordian studies, and Stritmatter himself became the first student to earn a Ph.D. by crossing the Shakespeare authorship minefield. I'm told he still has both his legs!

Isabel came late in life to the belief that the Earl of Oxford was Shakespeare, and despite the depth of her knowledge and the force of her conviction, was never dogmatic or uncharitable in stating the case for de Vere. The academy, with its entrenched beliefs and vested interests, was not the enemy in Isabel's book; rather it was a hive of potential converts, and armed with her gruff charm, she set to work with a will, inviting members of the English faculty from Smith to dinner on the hill, careful to put them at ease before letting the tiger out of the cupboard. She even took a Shakespeare course at the College so as to introduce some of her heterodox ideas to less free-thinking souls. She corresponded too with a number of leading Shakespeare scholars, including Eric Sams, whose work on *Edmund Ironside* was of particular interest to her. Through her reading and correspondence with others, she was always taking the subject in new directions and helping to expand the consciousness of the movement.

Isabel was a pollinator of ideas, a

sort of Johnny Appleseed of the Oxfordian world, who enjoyed introducing people both to each other and to new concepts, and to this end she presided over a literary salon which met on the hill once a month. A paper would be presented on some aspect of the Shakespeare-Oxford question, followed by discussion. These motley gatherings were convivial occa-

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sions, which Isabel chaired in her own vague yet forthright manner, by turns enthusiastic and offhand. If by chance there was a lull in the conversation she would terrify some novice by turning to him with a well-aimed "And what have you got to say for yourself?" If, on the other hand, she felt that the speaker was wandering from the point or being too clever, she would retire to the pantry and make a tremendous din with the dishes in

a shameless attempt to drown him out!

Isabel's scholarly instincts were excellent, and often ahead of the game. She saw early on the significance of the so-called apocryphal plays for the Oxfordian case, hence her exploration of *Edmund Ironside*. She was also a cham-

a hub and refuge for Shakespearean dissidents. We bathed in "the cool streams of her liberality" – to steal a phrase from Thomas Nashe – and relished "the high countenance she showed to scholars." There was always some fugitive soul up in the creaky attic overlooking those blue

ing that she had something very special up her sleeve – a little bit of magic perhaps – and it is surely in Isabel's brand of self-effacing integrity that our future as a race, if we have one, reposes. "No law is sacred to me," said Emerson, "but that of my nature." Isabel more than understood this; she embodied it.

I last saw Isabel last winter. There had been a number of guests for supper, and, yes, the conversation turned on the Shakespeare question, with Isabel talking fondly of her lady from Ferrara. Before bed a friend and I accompanied her on her walk with the dogs. Thick flakes of snow fell, would you believe it, from a starry sky. On the way back she stopped in the parking lot just down from her house, and gave us both a big shock by suddenly drawing a sword from her sturdy-looking cane and making as if to carbanado some



pion of Lady Mary Wroth, the niece of Sir Philip Sidney, whose prose romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* may yet contain vital clues to the authorship mystery. And in the last couple of years she had nosed out a trail in 16th-century Ferrara, a city-state south of the Veneto, leading – she believed – to the lady who inspired Shakespeare's creation of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. All her special interests were reflected in this final caper, from alchemy to renaissance feminism.

Though fiercely independent and something of a loner, Isabel was always generous in sharing knowledge and ideas, and 87 Round Hill Road became

Holyoke Mountains, including myself once. Even Isabel made sure that the old coaching house (for so it is) was never more than a staging-post on her quest, for she never ceased to dream of finding that elusive path leading to the heart of the Shakespeare mystery, or – better still – of putting someone else onto it.

Whatever her forbidding exterior might suggest, Isabel was a wonderfully warm person, in the profoundest sense of one whose nature springs from deep within. Undoubtedly a fighter, she was much more than that: she was, without cavil or qualification, truly herself, and in so being gave others the courage to be more fully themselves. One had the feel-

imaginary foe. "Steady on, old girl," I murmured feebly. But she was laughing like a kid – a kid of 92! It seemed she had a few wild oats left to sow.

It wasn't that Isabel was ill at ease in the modern world; rather she chose to defy it by holding fast to her vision of the true and the beautiful. Who here hasn't seen her in that extraordinary horse-drawn fly – rather like a giant tea-cup – whizzing along the Vermont lanes in full equestrian gear, whip poised, a half-net over her face, like some trespasser from a lost age of romance? It was an unforgettable sight.

And Isabel was an unforgettable person. Northampton will be a ghost town

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(Holden cont. from p. 19)

without her. I almost feel like a ghost myself, returning here today.

To end, I'd like to recite a sonnet by the young Robert Frost, which to me evokes that spirit of self-reliance and adventure that was such an inspiring element of Isabel's nature:

Into My Own

One of my wishes is that those dark trees,
So old and firm they scarcely show the breeze,
Were not, as 'twere, the merest mask of gloom,
But stretched away unto the edge of doom.

I should not be withheld but that some day
Into their vastness I should steal away,
Fearless of ever finding open land,
Or highway where the slow wheel pours the sand.

I do not see why I should e'er turn back,
Or those should not set forth upon my track
To overtake me, who should miss me here
And long to know if still I held them dear.

They would not find me changed from him they knew—
Only more sure of all I thought was true.

Farewell Isabel, and on behalf of us all, thank you.

© Charles Beauclerk, 12th October 2007,
Northampton, Mass.

(Italian Directions, cont. from p. 17)

thirty years between the events and its performance. There is no record of its performance again until 1741.

In the case of *Taming of the Shrew*, after sorting through a series of confusing dates in its history, *The Readers Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* opines that the date of first performance of the play was sometime around 1593, about twenty years after the historical events recited as being concurrent with its action.

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(Bryson Review, cont. from p. 3)

won some notable supporters and some notice in the media—PBS, The New York Times, Harper's Magazine, History Today, and Scientific American (on the portraits.) "Perhaps most extraordinary," he says, is that the Globe Theatre became under Mark Rylance "a kind of clearing-house for anti-Stratfordian sentiment."

He briefly quotes Daniel Wright and William Rubinstein, but his out-of-hand dismissal betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the Shakespeare authorship issue. Bryson writes:

Daniel Wright, a professor at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, and an active anti-Stratfordian, wrote in Harper's Magazine, that Shakespeare was, "a simple, untutored wool and grain merchant" and "a rather ordinary man who had no connection to the literary world." Such statements can only be characterized as wildly imaginative. Similarly, in the normally unimpeachable History Today, William D. Rubinstein, a professor at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, stated in the opening paragraph of his anti-Stratfordian survey: "Of the seventy-five known contemporary documents in which Shakespeare is named, not one concerns his career as an author." That is not even close to being so.

But Wright and Rubinstein were referring to the man from Stratford, not the London dramatist, whoever he was. Unfortunately, Bryson's fundamental misunderstanding of the controversy (willful misunderstanding, some might allege) is not unusual. Still, he should have known better. Unwary readers will not recognize the faulty reasoning.

Bryson then goes on to argue that the name "Shakespeare" is in theater records and on the plays and poems. Of course it is, but that completely misses the point. The point is, Who was this Shakespeare, whose name is on the plays and poems? Was he really the "simple, untutored" William Shakspere of Stratford, or was he someone

else using "Shakespeare" as a pseudonym? That's crucial to an understanding of the whole controversy. Without that distinction there is no controversy.

Although he has a full chapter on "Claimants," Bryson does not list a single Oxfordian or non-Stratfordian book in his Selected Bibliography of thirty-seven works. He seems to have read a few magazine articles (and perhaps Looney) and simply accepted the Stratfordian characterization of the controversy. Wells is no doubt responsible for the Stratfordian spin. (This reviewer urged Bryson in 2005 to have some fun challenging the establishment and offered to provide background help, but got no response.)

He ends the book with a seemingly deliberate ambiguity. Referring to the genius of Shakespeare, he concludes: "Only one man had the circumstances and gifts to give us such incomparable works, and William Shakespeare of Stratford was unquestionably that man—whoever he was."

This startling conclusion can have a double meaning for his readers. For Stratfordians, it can mean "whoever he was in his personal and professional life about which almost nothing is known." For non-Stratfordians, "whoever he was" might signal Bryson's lingering doubts about Shakespeare's identity. It looks like a witty bit of ambiguity. Perhaps Bryson was chuckling with his tongue firmly planted in his cheek as he wrote the last words of his manuscript about the Eminent Life of Shakespeare, "whoever he was."

(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 1)

England's literary society. This absence of documentation raises suspicion in the minds of many Shakespearean scholars and historians, leading to a question regarding the authorship of the plays. In response, an alternative candidate has been advanced as the potential author: Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose well-documented experiences at court would have allowed him to use the plays as an expression of the follies and achievements of English Renaissance society. The triumph of Shakespeare is his prolific literary genius expressed within the most renowned works of literature; but the authorship controversy illuminates a tragedy for historians, scholars, and actors who wish to further their insight of the author and his works beyond the timeless words to discover their historical significance.

The authorship controversy reminds scholars and historians alike that the masterful plays, regardless of their author, remain the most triumphant works of the English language. Shakespeare captured the essence of humanity and displayed it in a timeless array of words that have moved millions throughout history to tears of laughter and grief. Countless, frequently repeated expressions and phrases are derived from his works, such as: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be. . ." (*Hamlet*), "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (*Richard III*), "Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (*Twelfth Night*), as well as "forever and a day" (*As You Like It*), "I have not slept one wink" (*Cymbeline*), and "in my mind's eye" (*Hamlet*). Furthermore, 1,700 words in the *Oxford English Dictionary* such as *dwindle*, *laughable*, *majestic*, and *lustrous* were coined by Shakespeare.¹

However, it is not only his mastery of words that enraptures readers and audiences; Shakespeare's portrayal of love, insanity, jealousy, and vengefulness as manifested by his flawed characters remain the most profound interpretations of the human psyche. His plays proffer insights that are both riveting and relevant no matter the century or culture. Both on stage and more recently on film, actors and directors including Lawrence Olivier,

Orson Welles, and Kenneth Branagh have delighted in performing Shakespeare's dramatization of the human condition and contributing to the multitude of creative interpretations of his works. Because the themes and characters are enduring, the plays can be set and dressed in any location or time period. For example, modern film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays include *Richard III*, directed by Richard Loncraine set in Fascist England, and Baz

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Luhrmann's version of *Romeo & Juliet*, set in L.A. and involving gangs.

Despite the timeless truths so eloquently expounded upon in the plays, tragedy is an inherent aspect of Shakespearean scholarship both for those who accept William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon, frequently referred to as the "Man from Stratford," as well as those who advocate Oxford's authorship. For Anti-Stratfordians, this tragedy transcends the attribution of the plays. Dr. Roger Stritmatter, a professor at Coppin State University, comments that if de Vere were to become the accepted author, the "outcome will not only affect how we read and understand [the plays], but even has implications which go far beyond the field of Shakespearean stud-

ies *per se*, involving as it does questions of literary psychology and history."² To historians passionate about the intricacies of Elizabethan England, this possible loss dims our perception of the period and robs scholars of a new dimension of historical richness that could be further investigated if the authorship of the plays was reexamined. For Stratfordians, the tragedy of the authorship question is just as profound. They find it unfortunate that some scholars overlook the beauty of Shakespeare's writing while searching for clues pertaining to authorship. Dr. Philip Schwyzer, a professor at University of Exeter explains, "The authorship controversy has led many otherwise intelligent and sensitive people to read the plays, not as works of art, but as puzzles to be solved or 'cracked.'"³ Nonetheless, the lack of records documenting the life of the "Man from Stratford" cannot be disregarded in Stratfordian studies of the plays. This causes many to view Shakespeare's works as literary achievements isolated from the author, depriving them of the enrichment gained through the analysis of how an author's life experiences, status in society, and interaction with other contemporary literary figures affect his works.

These factors cannot be expounded upon in traditional Shakespearean studies due to the fact that historians possess very few sources that provide concrete evidence regarding the "Man from Stratford." His birth in April 1564 to John Shakespeare, an illiterate glove maker,⁴ was recorded in the baptismal record of Holy Trinity Church. The documentation reads, "26 Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakspere xxx."⁵ For the next 18 years there are no documents concerning Shakespeare, nor are there references to him as a student at either the Stratford Grammar School or in contemporary lists of students at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.⁶ Even if the young Shakespeare did attend grammar school, the rudimentary Latin and the fundamental grammatical principles of the English language taught at these institutions do not nearly account for the vast reservoir of knowledge the playwright exposes through his writing.

Many Stratfordians account for this

(Continued on p. 22)

(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 21)

lack of education by appealing to the concept that Shakespeare's innate genius was enough to write the plays, and a man of such outstanding and unparalleled intellect did not need a university education. Yet the plays clearly demonstrate that their author possessed a vast array of knowledge in countless subjects including: law, court life, sports of the aristocracy (hunting and falconry), philosophy, Biblical scholarship, English and European history, French, Italian, Spanish, and the classical language-

Lawyers, including Nathaniel Holmes of the U.S. Supreme Court and the British judge Lord Penzance, have often taken up the side of Anti-Stratfordians because they recognize that Shakespeare's substantial understanding of the law would have required some type of legal education.

es, music, astronomy, medicine, military exploits, navigation, and the exploration of the New World. The sheer volume of topics that are handled with considerable fluency reveals *not only* natural genius but intellectual augmentation through extensive education as well. For example, lawyers, including Nathaniel Holmes of the U.S. Supreme Court and the British judge Lord Penzance, have often taken up the side of Anti-Stratfordians because they recognize that Shakespeare's substantial understanding of the law would have required some type of legal education.⁷

Yet it is not only the playwright's impressive reservoir of knowledge about various subjects that holds scholars and audiences in awe. Shakespeare was a master of the English language, possessed a

massive vocabulary, and is credited to be the creator of 1,904 words. The nearest comparisons are as follows: Francis Bacon with 866 words, Ben Jonson with 838, George Chapman with 802, and Edmund Spenser with 606.⁸ In response to this ongoing dispute about the education required to write the plays, Elizabethan scholar Joseph Sobran states, "In the end, calling the Shakespeare plays works of genius tells us very little about them. 'Genius' is not an explanation. . . We can't make up the deficit in our knowledge of Shakespeare using superlatives."⁹ Yet because of the inescapable absence of documentation surrounding the "Man from Stratford's" education, extraordinary genius is the only solution traditional Shakespearean scholars can rely on.

This trend reflecting a dearth of records pertaining to the "Man from Stratford" continues throughout the rest of his life. The second document historians possess that sheds light on this elusive figure is a church register recording his marriage as "willm Shagspere" to "Anne hathwey of Stratford in the Dioces of worcester maiden"¹⁰ on November 28, 1582. Additional parish registers recording the births of his three children conclude the documentation of the first half of Shakespeare's life. The following period, from 1585 to 1592, is known as the "lost years" due to the absence of any public or personal references to Shakespeare,¹¹ though it is speculated he traveled to London and began his literary career during this time. The plays began publication in 1594 though none bear the playwright's name until four years later.¹² A record from 1599 lists Shakespeare as one of the owners of the Globe Theater, home to the acting troupe known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, suggesting that he had achieved financial success.¹³ From 1604 to 1611, the very years during which Stratfordians date the majority of Shakespeare's most well-known plays, there are no London records mentioning his name.¹⁴ Scholars conclude that he was probably in Stratford during the height of his literary career, alienated from London's intellectual stimulation. Until his death in 1616, Shakespeare's name appears in only a few inconsequential legal transactions when he testifies in a lawsuit over a

dowry in 1612 and purchases a house in the Blackfriars district in 1613.¹⁵

Accompanying the scarce documentation of the "Man from Stratford's" life is a perplexing absence of interaction between the playwright and other literary figures. Although Shakespeare's contemporaries including Ben Jonson and Edmund

Accompanying the scarce documentation of the "Man from Stratford's" life is a perplexing absence of interaction between the playwright and other literary figures. Although Shakespeare's contemporaries including Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser critiqued and praised his plays and poetry, they never commented on the author as an individual beyond his works. These references are impersonal and valuable solely from a literary, not a historical, perspective.

Spenser critiqued and praised his plays and poetry, they never commented on the author as an individual beyond his works. These references are impersonal and valuable solely from a literary, not a historical, perspective. Furthermore, during an era when other authors were honored by eulogies and ceremonies at their death, there is no such documentation recorded for Shakespeare. Only a month before the bard's death, the less celebrated playwright Francis Beaumont died and was recognized by a multitude of eulogies and a burial in Westminster Abbey. Both Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser, two other prominent

literary figures, were similarly honored at their deaths with eulogies and interment in Westminster Abbey.¹⁶ In fact, no contemporaries mention Shakespeare or pay tribute to his legacy until 1623 when *The First Folio* was printed with many of his previously unpublished plays.

Yet perhaps the most bewildering and frustrating document of Stratfordian studies is Shakespeare's will. There is no doubt surrounding the authorship of this document, for it begins with the statement, "In the name of God Amen I William Shackspeare. . . in perfect health and memorie. . . doe make and ordayne this my last will and testament. . ."¹⁷ The will specifically describes household items and money, bequeathing to a Stratford companion the exact amount of "thirteene poundes, sixe shillings, and eight pence," and "unto my wife my second best bed."¹⁸ He also leaves money to the actors Heminges, Burbage, and Condell, co-owners of the Globe Theater,¹⁹ supporting the "Man from Stratford's" role as a theater investor but not necessarily as a playwright. Yet this document does not mention the manuscripts of the 18 plays yet to be published or any books,²⁰ though in his works Shakespeare frequently references texts and borrows from various literary sources and it would be expected of an author of such high intellect and knowledge to possess an extensive and prized library.

It is this alienation of the "Man from Stratford's" documented life from literary society that has led to a question revolving around the author's identity. Over fifty candidates, including Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley (the sixth Earl of Derby), and even Queen Elizabeth have been suggested since the mid-nineteenth century,²¹ but the outstanding figure of the twenty-first century is Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. An accumulation of persuasive evidence supporting his candidacy suggests that the genius behind the plays has possibly been found. His well-documented biography demonstrates the education, literary connections, passion for theater, and adventure-filled life reflected in Shakespeare's works. Born in 1550, de Vere was a precocious child, attending Cambridge

University at nine, receiving his bachelor's degree at fourteen, his master's degree from Oxford at sixteen, and then attending law school.²² He came from a highly educated family that was quite involved with the literary arts. De Vere's maternal uncle, Arthur Golding, was the renowned translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that is frequently referenced in Shakespeare's

Although the necessity of using a pen name is disputed, writing plays produced for money was not considered a suitable occupation for an Elizabethan aristocrat and Oxford's reputation would have been tarnished to be openly associated with the theater. The theater locales, called the liberties, were in no way considered appropriate for those of elevated status. They were situated outside of the walls of London along with other rowdy and vulgar forms of entertainment...

plays. Henry Howard, his paternal uncle, was the creator of the sonnet now known as the "Shakespearean Sonnet" because of the playwright's extensive use of this poetic form.²³ He possessed an extensive library throughout his life which included a Bible filled with marginal notes next to

the passages referenced to in Shakespeare's plays.²⁴

In the midst of his education, Oxford's father died, and in 1562 the twelve year old earl was sent to live with Queen Elizabeth's chief secretary, advisor, and lord treasurer Sir William Cecil, who became the administrative head of the government and received the new title Lord Burghley in 1571.²⁵ Also in 1571, Oxford became a member of the House of Lords, and he was actively involved in politics for the remainder of his life. In 1586, he participated the trial that condemned Mary Queen of Scots to death, and two years later, he served on one of the British ships that defeated Philip II's Spanish Armada.²⁶ Oxford was an avid traveler and frequently voyaged throughout the European continent where he visited Paris, Strasburg, Padua, Florence, Sicily, and Venice, the site of one of his homes.²⁷ There is no doubt that the earl possessed extensive and direct contact with military life and numerous European cities, two subjects that are recurrently dwelled upon in Shakespeare's plays.

Yet de Vere was not solely a politician, naval captain, and world traveler. The arts, theater in particular, played a prominent role in his life, and he proffered his support to literary figures through generous patronage. Although his involvement with the theater was limited because of his noble rank, he participated from a distance by sponsoring an acting troupe, temporarily leasing Blackfriar's Theater, and acting as the patron of both John Lyly and Anthony Munday, author of *Sir Thomas More*, a play containing multiple passages modern scholars attribute to Shakespeare.²⁸ Furthermore, Oxford was referred to as a poet and playwright by multiple contemporaries. For example, the literary critic Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) states that "The best for comedy among us be Edward Earl of Oxford."²⁹ This suggests that de Vere was writing under a pen name because not a single play bearing his own name survives today.

Although the necessity of using a pen name is disputed, writing plays produced for money was not considered a suitable occupation for an Elizabethan aristocrat

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(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 23)

and Oxford's reputation would have been tarnished to be openly associated with the theater. The theater locales, called the liberties, were in no way considered appropriate for those of elevated status.

Not only do contemporary references to de Vere as an accomplished playwright bolster the claim that he is the potential genius behind the plays, but extensive similarities between Shakespeare's works and events of de Vere's own life further support his authorship....The majority of Shakespearean scholars believe Lord Burghley to be the model for the character of Polonius, and the subtle references to his character quirks in the play, suggest that the author must have been closely associated with this figure who was became de Vere's legal guardian when the young earl was only twelve years of age.

They were situated outside of the walls of London along with other rowdy and vulgar forms of entertainment including taverns, prostitution, and exhibitions of bear-baiting and cockfighting.³⁰ Although this scandalous and crime-filled

environment was scarcely fitting for an individual of noble blood, aristocrats frequently concealed their theatrical connections. George Puttenham, the probable author of the anonymously published book of literary criticism called *The Art of English Poesie*, states in this work, "I know very many notable gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their own names to it. . . ." ³¹ Later he specifically references de Vere, writing, "Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford."³² This passage suggests that in an attempt to conceal his connections with the theater and avoid scandal, de Vere's works were credited to a different name. The repeated contemporary references to the earl as an author or playwright have led some scholars to believe that these mystery plays were most likely those published under the name of Shakespeare.

Not only do contemporary references to de Vere as an accomplished playwright bolster the claim that he is the potential genius behind the plays, but extensive similarities between Shakespeare's works and events of de Vere's own life further support his authorship. On one of his crossings of the English Channel, pirates attacked his ship,³³ an incident that the Prince of Denmark endures in *Hamlet*. The majority of Shakespearean scholars believe Lord Burghley to be the model for the character of Polonius, and the subtle references to his character quirks in the play, suggest that the author must have been closely associated with this figure who was became de Vere's legal guardian when the young earl was only twelve years of age. An example in the play that demonstrates the degree of familiarity that the author possessed with Burghley can be found when Polonius has spies watch his son in Paris. The advisor of Queen Elizabeth had a similar penchant for spying on his relations and sent agents to follow his own son sojourning in Paris.³⁴

Henry IV Part I also contains personal events from Oxford's life. In 1573, de Vere and three companions ambushed

travelers on the exact same stretch of road between Rochester and Gravesend as Prince Hal, Falstaff, and their rowdy cohorts did in this play.³⁵ Similar to the Capulet and Montague rivalry in *Romeo and Juliet* were the repeated street brawls between Thomas Knyvet and de Vere. Knyvet was the cousin of Anne Vavasor, a former lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth whose prospects had been ruined due to her affair with the Earl of Oxford, and he sought to avenge Vavasor's honor by belligerently confronting her lover.³⁶ These fights, which reflected the same jealous and vindictive tensions between the feuding families in Shakespeare's most famous romance, were not ended until a London councilor intervened.

Unless de Vere's claim to authorship can be resolutely excluded with solid and undisputable evidence, the uncertainty surrounding the identity of the individual behind Shakespeare's brilliant works will continue to play a large role in historical Shakespearean studies.

The multitude of similarities between de Vere's life and the plays offer persuasive evidence which supports him as the true author. However, many scholars dismiss him as a feasible candidate because of his death in 1604, when, according to the Stratfordian chronology, over a dozen plays had yet to be published.³⁷ It is entirely possible that de Vere wrote the plays before his death that were then published at a later date. Given that eighteen plays were not published until after the death of the ostensible author, a similar theory has to be embraced by Stratfordian scholars as well. Scholars can deduce the approximate year in which the author could have written a specific play by looking at the outside

texts and events referenced. The plays in question utilized sources ranging from 1516 to 1603, coming to an abrupt end a year before Oxford's death.³⁸ It seems strange that the "Man from Stratford" would stop alluding to contemporary publications after 1603 when he still had 13 years to live. *The Tempest* is the one play that Stratfordians use to discredit Oxford's potential authorship because of Ariel's mention of "the still-vexed Bermoothes," a place that scholars assume to be the Bermudas. A shipwreck occurred off these islands in 1609, and William Strachey, secretary of the Virginia colony, wrote a letter recounting this event. This account was not published until 1625, yet Stratfordian scholars assume that Shakespeare saw the letter earlier in manuscript form and incorporated the exotic Bermudas into his play. Yet this was not the first shipwreck to ever occur in the Bermudas, and during his lifetime, Oxford himself received a letter recounting the wreck of one of his own ships off these isles.³⁹

Unless de Vere's claim to authorship can be resolutely excluded with solid and undisputable evidence, the uncertainty surrounding the identity of the individual behind Shakespeare's brilliant works will continue to play a large role in historical Shakespearean studies. The lack of historical evidence supporting the authorship of the "Man from Stratford" restricts the study of the plays from both sides of the controversy and forces the literary triumph of the Bard to walk hand in hand with the tragedy of his lost identity. It may be that for centuries, praises have been sung to the wrong man. From a literary perspective, this is no misfortune because the plays are immortal, their themes timeless, and they will be continue to be studied, appreciated, and mulled over by students, teachers, actors, and directors for centuries to come. However, the tragedy manifested in the authorship question is most significant from a historical perspective. If de Vere were accepted as the author, historical analyses of the plays would be revolutionized, both on paper and on stage. Shakespearean scholar, actor, and director Stephen Moorer explains, "Actors can never know too much. If we know de Vere was the author, then people could use history in approaching a role to discover new

things."⁴⁰ A convincing example is found in *Henry V*, when on the eve of Agincourt, a French noble asks a comrade, "My Lord Constable, the armor that I saw in your tent tonight, are those stars or suns upon it?" (Act III, scene vii). From an Oxfordian perspective, this quotation has extensive historical significance and relates to the Battle of Barnet during the War of the Roses. The Earl of Oxford's Lancastrian forces, wearing stars on their armor, faced the Yorks' forces, wearing armor engraved with suns. During the fight, a Lancastrian

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commander fired at oncoming soldiers, mistaking Oxford's stars on their armor for suns, an error securing victory for the enemy.⁴¹ This one line of the play thus interpreted changes *Henry V*'s historical perspective and adds layers of meaning.

As a prominent aristocrat and a ward of one of England's most powerful men, Oxford had a direct view into court intrigues to draw upon in his writing. It would be fascinating for historians to analyze how Oxford manipulated and ridiculed political and social ideas to express his views on society. Scholars could also compare de Vere's relationships with other prominent Elizabethan personages

to characters in the plays. Furthermore, historians have recognized connections between political events of the time and the performances of particular plays to sway public opinion. For example, history plays such as *Henry V* may have played a critical role in cultivating a sense of English nationalism in the months leading up to and after the 1587 Spanish Armada. If Oxford's authorship could be accepted, the idea of the plays as tools of propaganda could be further analyzed and enriched considering his close relationship with the royal family. These new dimensions of the plays cannot be uncovered to their full potential while "Man from Stratford" is the established author because of the alienation of his documented life from the plays. As a commoner, it must be assumed he was receiving information about court life and events abroad secondhand, another factor estranging him from his subject matter and the fluency with which he wrote about such topics. Therefore, traditional Shakespearean scholarship overlooks the wealth of potential historical significance that could be investigated if the plays' authorship could be regarded in a new light. Although this is an intellectual tragedy, it is also a rich opportunity to explore history and literature with a new perspective for those with open minds. The authorship controversy creates a more profound intellectual tragedy for close-minded Stratfordians who simply accept the void of historical knowledge surrounding their interpretations of Shakespeare's works and refuse to examine or consider the authorship question at all. To any curious mind unhindered by traditional Shakespearean dogma, the question surrounding Shakespeare's true identity can provide nothing but intellectual opportunity and discovery.

Endnotes

¹ Anne Mallibard. "Shakespeare's Influence." 2007. *About Inc.* <<http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm>>.

² Roger Stritmatter. "Re: The Shakespeare Authorship Controversy." Interview

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(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 25)

by e-mail to the author.

³ Philip Schwyzer. "Re: The Shakespeare Authorship Controversy." Interview by e-mail to the author.

⁴ Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing), 9.

⁵ Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 21. Translation from Latin: 26 April son John Shakespeare xxx.

⁶ Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 253.

⁷ John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996) 20.

⁸ Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 235.

⁹ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 9.

¹⁰ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 21.

¹¹ Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing) 10.

¹² Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 22.

¹³ Diana Price, op. cit., 16.

¹⁴ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 24.

¹⁵ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 24.

¹⁶ Richard Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who was he?* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 16.

¹⁷ "The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare," <<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakspere/shakwill.html>>.

¹⁸ "Last Will and Testament," op. cit.

¹⁹ Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 147.

²⁰ Diana Price, op. cit., 146.

²¹ John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996) 8.

²² Daniel Wright, Who was Edward de Vere? <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.

²³ Daniel Wright, 'Who was Edward de Vere?'

²⁴ Roger Stritmatter. "The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Bible: Provi-

dental Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence." February 2001. *Shakespeare Fellowship*. <<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/bibledissabsetc.htm>>.

²⁵ Daniel Wright, Who was Edward de Vere? <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.

²⁶ John Michell, op. cit., 162.

²⁷ Daniel Wright, "Who was Edward de Vere?'

²⁸ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 133.

²⁹ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 138.

³⁰ Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, op. cit., 26-27.

Meres was a valuable source in my research because he listed Edward de Vere as the best English comedy playwright, but modern scholars have nothing but some early poems and letters surviving under Oxford's name.

³¹ Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 135.

³² Joseph Sobran, op. cit., 135.

³³ Daniel Wright, "Who was Edward de Vere?'

³⁴ Richard Whalen, op. cit., 109.

³⁵ Daniel Wright, "Who was Edward de Vere?'

³⁶ Richard Whalen, op. cit., 106.

³⁷ Anne Mallibard. "Play Chronology."

³⁸ Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* op. cit., 156-157.

³⁹ Richard Whalen, op. cit., 120.

⁴⁰ Stephen Moorer. Telephone interview.

⁴¹ Richard Desper. "Stars or Suns?" *Shakespeare Fellowship*. <<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/starsorsuns.htm>>.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Meres, Francis. *Palladis Tamia*. 1598.

As cited in: Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.

Francis Meres, who lived from 1565 to 1647, was an English churchman and writer who attended Cambridge University. His book *Palladis Tamia* is a critical analysis of contemporary literary works. This was a valuable source in my research because Meres listed Edward de Vere as the best English comedy playwright, but modern scholars have nothing but some early poems and letters surviving under Oxford's name. I utilized this primary source to support my argument that it is likely de Vere used a pen name because he was referred to as an excellent playwright although no historic references regarding a specific play written by him exist.

Puttenham, George. *The Art of English Poesie*. 1589. As cited in: "Puttenham, George: The Art of English Poesie." Available from <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbn/toccernew?id=PutPoes.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all>. Internet: accessed 15 January 2007.

Georges Puttenham, an English courtier who attended Oxford University, lived from 1520 to 1590. Although *The Art of English Poesie*, one of the most important critiques of Elizabethan poetry, was published anonymously, modern scholars credit it to him. This text was useful to me because of its insight into the literary scene of the contemporary English court and the relationship between the nobility and the theater. It supported my argument that de Vere was writing plays under a pen name through statements declaring that many nobles tried to conceal the authorship of their works "as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned." Furthermore, Puttenham specifically mentions de Vere's name as the most prominent and talented nobleman concealing the identity of his

writing.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Originally published circa 1603. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Edition, 2005.

Using events and characterizations in *Hamlet* together with the observations of the Elizabethan scholar Richard Whalen in his book *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*, I went beyond the literary triumph of this play and analyzed it as a historical document containing valuable information pertaining to the authorship controversy. Although the works of Shakespeare to me will always be the most eloquent, profound, and magnificent tributes to the power of the English language, this paper gave me the opportunity to look at them from a historian's perspective and uncover a new dimension behind the plays. Anti-Stratfordian scholars have discovered a vast range of similarities between Edward de Vere's life and allusions and characters in *Hamlet*. The accumulation of these connections analyzed in my paper present a persuasive collection of evidence supporting Oxford's authorship.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry IV, Part I*. Originally published circa 1598. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Edition, 2005.

I analyzed this play and Whalen's observations in the same manner as I did with *Hamlet*. Once again, I was given the valuable opportunity of using the perspective of a historian to examine a literary triumph and recognize the connections between the play and Oxford's life in order to bolster his candidacy as the true author.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Originally published circa 1600. New York: Washington Square Press New Folger Edition, 1995.

This play was a very valuable primary source as it provided specific historical evidence pertaining to how Shakespeare's works can be interpreted differently when regarded with an Oxfordian perspective.

Richard Desper's observations connecting *Henry V* (found in the article "Stars of Suns," see annotation below) to the War of the Roses exemplify the new dimension of historical information that has the potential to be uncovered, and this bolstered my argument relating to the historical tragedy surrounding the authorship question.

This site provided the complete and unabridged will of William Shakespeare. It was fascinating for me to analyze this document and look at the multiple occasions where it is specific in bequeathing household items and money, but fails to mention anything related to literature or books. Shakespeare's will is one of the most important documents for Anti-Stratfordians, and it has been the cause of great bewilderment for many Shakespearean scholars.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Originally published circa 1597. Norwalk: The Easton Press, 1940.

Romeo and Juliet provided another significant source of similarities to de Vere's life. When examining this play as a historical document and comparing it to events of Oxford's life, the parallel between the Montague and Capulet brawls and the Knyvet and Oxford skirmishes became apparent and served as another piece of evidence to support de Vere's claim to the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford Parish Registers. 1564, 1582, 1583, 1585.

As cited in: Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.

In his book, Joseph Sobran included registers from the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon that recorded William Shakespeare's baptism (April 26, 1564), William Shakespeare and Anne Hathway's marriage (November 27, 1582), the baptism of Susanne Shakespeare (May 26, 1583), and the baptisms of Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare (February 2, 1585). These registers, which account for all the evidence documenting the first half of Shakespeare's life, demonstrate the lack of records historians have for the "Man from Stratford." I used these primary sources to illuminate how little is actually known about Shakespeare and reinforces the validity of the authorship controversy.

"The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare." March 1616.

As cited in: "The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare." Available from <http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakespeare/shakwill.html>. Internet: accessed 20 October 2006.

This site provided the complete and unabridged will of William Shakespeare. It was fascinating for me to analyze this document and look at the multiple occasions where it is specific in bequeathing household items and money, but fails to mention anything related to literature or books. Shakespeare's will is one of the most important documents for Anti-Stratfordians, and it has been the cause of great bewilderment for many Shakespearean scholars. This primary source gave me the valuable opportunity of analyzing a historical document and then using it to support my argument.

Secondary Sources

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(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 27)

Anderson, Mark and others. "Shakespeare Authorship FAQ." Available from http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/?page_id=34. Internet: accessed 10 October 2006.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society is committed to advancing the recognition of Edward de Vere in the authorship controversy as the potential author of Shakespeare's works. Their website provides an excellent introduction to the controversy, the reasons for its origination, the importance of this academic question in history and in literature, and the candidacy of de Vere. Although it does

Desper's article relates to the War of the Roses from an Oxfordian perspective; it not only provided me with a persuasive and concrete example exhibiting how Oxford's authorship could historically alter the plays, but it also illuminated the tragic loss of historical richness potentially lying beneath the veil of the "Man from Stratford's" supposed authorship.

not address specific evidence as much as other sources, it does illuminate the authorship of Shakespeare's plays as a valid and interesting debate with significant consequences and effects. Furthermore, this website closely examines the chronology of the later plays to prove that they all could have been written before 1604, the year of Oxford's death.

Desper, Richard. "Stars or Suns?"

Available from <http://www.shakespearefellows.org/virtualclassroom/starsorsuns.htm>. Internet: accessed 12 March 2007.

Desper's article about how *Henry V* relates to the War of the Roses from an Oxfordian perspective not only provided me with a persuasive and concrete example exhibiting how Oxford's authorship could historically alter the plays, but it also illuminated the tragic loss of historical richness potentially lying beneath the veil of the "Man from Stratford's" supposed authorship. As a student of history, this example detailing how the historical time period and significance of *Henry V* could change if Oxford was the author thoroughly convinced me of the tragedy accompanying the authorship question.

Dunton-Downer, Leslie, and Alan Riding. *Essential Shakespeare Handbook*. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2004.

This book is a comprehensive survey of Shakespeare's life, works, and the Elizabethan theater. It was most helpful in providing a Stratfordian perspective on the authorship controversy. The biography of Shakespeare was interesting to compare with Anti-Stratfordian biographies to expose authors' agendas as well as to note the multiple instances in which Stratfordian biographers are forced to speculate and fill in gaps of missing information with their own ideas.

Kathman, David and Terry Ross, eds. "The Shakespeare Authorship Page: Dedicated to the Proposition that Shakespeare Wrote Shakespeare." Available from <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/>. Internet: accessed 10 October 2006.

As suggested by its title, this Stratfordian website provided an extensive overview of the opposite side of the controversy, and it specifically focused on disproving Edward de Vere as the potential author of the plays. As I analyzed this opposition to Oxford, I was not only able to balance my research but also to think critically

about the authorship controversy and how to defend the Oxfordian perspective when faced with such an argument. By examining the topics brought up in this article, I formulated ideas about how to use Shakespeare's biography as a way to disprove him as the real author.

Mabillard, Anne. "Play Chronology." Available from

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/keydates/playchron.html>. Internet: accessed 2 January 2007.

This website provided a complete listing of the dates the plays were written ac-

Price's book was instrumental to me because of its extensive description and analysis of the lack of literary evidence and connections accompanying the recorded biography of the "Man from Stratford."

ording to Stratfordian scholars. Although this list was helpful, the historical accuracy of any play's chronology is questionable because it is impossible for historians to determine the exact year a play was written without concrete evidence. To verify that most Stratfordian scholars agreed with this listing, I compared it to chronologies found on other sites and in books. Although they were not all identical, the general time periods were the same. Having this chronology was helpful because I could reference during what years and points in Shakespeare's career Stratfordians think he wrote the plays. For example, during the years 1604 to 1611, when this chronology stated that some of the greatest plays were written, there are no London records about Shakespeare, suggesting he was in Stratford.

Mallibard, Anne. "Shakespeare's Influence." Available from <http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm>. Internet: accessed 10 January 2007.

A list of the most frequently used words first coined by Shakespeare is posted on this website, demonstrating the profound influence the author continues to have on the English language today.

Michell, John. *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996.

Although the author's position is Anti-Stratfordian, this book offered an overview of eight Elizabethan candidates and their claims to authorship, including the "Man from Stratford" himself. It also presented a valuable description of the extent of Shakespeare's education, the subjects written about in the plays, and the breadth of the author's vocabulary. This book was an excellent introduction to the authorship controversy and its most prominent candidates, and it helped me to form my own opinion regarding the true author of Shakespeare's plays.

Moorer, Stephen. Interview by author, 27 January 2007. Telephone interview.

Mr. Stephen Moorer is the Director of the Pacific Repertory Theater in Monterey County as well as an experienced Shakespearean actor and scholar. He provided valuable insight on the tragedy of the authorship controversy from an Oxfordian point of view along with his knowledge as a director, actor, and scholar eager to apply history in approaching Shakespearean roles.

Ogburn, Charlton. "The Man Who Shakespeare Was Not (and Who He Was)." Available from www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/ogburnarticle.html. Internet: accessed 21 October 2006.

This website, based on the Public Broadcasting program aired about the authorship question, delivered a complete

overview of the Oxfordian perspective of the authorship controversy. It was also one of the few sources that delved in depth about why the identity of Shakespeare matters, and although it was not in a historical context, it helped me to develop my ideas about the tragedy accompanying the authorship question. This article also provided insight on the immense and essential role personal experience plays in writing and how the "Man from Stratford" would have had only second-hand access to the subjects he wrote about. Furthermore, the fact that Ogburn's views were broad-

Schwyzzer believes that even those who insist that the "Man from Stratford" is truly Shakespeare have uncovered a kind of tragedy because when people question the plays' authorship they read them not as magnificent works of literature, but as codes or messages to provide clues about the real author's identity.

casted by PBS' *Frontline* sheds light on the validity and far-reaching importance of the authorship controversy in modern Shakespearean scholarship.

Price, Diana. *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001.

This book was instrumental to me because of its extensive description and analysis of the lack of literary evidence and connections accompanying the recorded biography of the "Man from Stratford." In addition, Price provides an in-depth

examination of Shakespeare's will. One of the most frequently addressed topics in the book is what the author refers to as "personal literary paper trails," which include all types of evidence pointing towards the author's active involvement in the London literary scene and his interaction with other writers, playwrights, and poets during his own life—all which are absent from Shakespeare's recorded life.

Schwyzzer, Philip. Interview by author, 1 February 2007. E-mail.

Dr. Philip Schwyzzer is the Senior Lecturer in Renaissance Literature and Culture at the University of Exeter, England. He was exceedingly helpful in answering my questions about the tragedy of the authorship controversy, and his Stratfordian insight shed a new light on this tragedy. He believes that even those who insist that the "Man from Stratford" is truly Shakespeare have uncovered a kind of tragedy because when people question the plays' authorship they read them not as magnificent works of literature, but as codes or messages to provide clues about the real author's identity.

Shakespeare, William. *Coriolanus*. London, Globe Theater, 10 August 2007.

The experience of attending *Coriolanus* at the Globe Theater transformed the way I view Shakespeare and it gave me a strong sense of what Shakespearean theater was like in Elizabethan England. Everything in this theater is produced in a manner faithful to that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The stage is an exact replica of the Globe Theater where Shakespeare's plays were first revealed to the world. Even the viewing experience was authentic. I stood in the yard as a "groundling" (peasant) only a few feet from the actors to watch the play. There was considerable interaction between the actors and the audience in the production, and the audience was drawn into the action on stage. For example, when Coriolanus gave his grand speeches to the plebeians

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(Literary Tragedy, cont. from p. 29)

of Rome, the groundlings truly felt like the plebeians. Attending this Globe Theater production enhanced my understanding of Shakespeare and Elizabethan England in a tangible way, and it was truly an amazing experience.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Stratford-Upon-Avon, Royal Shakespeare Theater, 15 August 2007.

This performance was a contemporary version of the timeless romance *Romeo and Juliet*. The costumes and sets were stark and minimal, leaving room for the power of Shakespeare's language and the fresh interpretations of the actors to be emphasized. This reflects the principle that no matter the costuming, setting, or interpretation of a Shakespeare play, it can retain its emotional poignancy, linguistic power, and relevance to human nature. Furthermore, this performance took place in Stratford, the birth of the accepted Shakespeare. Although it has obviously become more industrialized and commercialized, Stratford is isolated from the intellectual stimulation of London and Oxford, and its rural and remote setting spurred my curiosity pertaining to the authorship question.

Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.

This was a highly beneficial book because of its inclusion of a wide variety of primary sources, including records from the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford and excerpts from Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (see primary sources). Furthermore, the text was very informative, especially the in-depth biography of Edward de Vere. This book gave me the opportunity to analyze and interpret historical documents and place them within the context of my own paper as well as the opportunity to uncover the authorship controversy in its historical setting. The first half of the book was dedicated to the lack of evidence and records surrounding the life of the "Man from Stratford" while the second half expounded upon a variety of evidence and primary sources supporting Edward de Vere's claim to authorship.

Stritmatter, Roger. *The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence*. Available from <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/bibledissabsetc.htm>. Internet: accessed 20 January 2007.

Although I chose not to delve into detail on this subject in my paper, the marginalia of Oxford's Geneva Bible is another source of convincing evidence supporting his authorship. On this website, Roger Stritmatter thoroughly analyzes the notes de Vere made next to numerous passages in the Bible and the references to these passages in Shakespeare's plays.

Stritmatter, Roger. Interview by author, 15 March 2007. E-mail.

Dr. Stritmatter, an assistant professor at Coppin State University, provided me with invaluable insights pertaining to the tragedy of the Shakespeare authorship question on both a literary and historical level. As an Oxfordian scholar who analyzed de Vere's Geneva Bible and its importance to the authorship question (see annotation above), Dr. Stritmatter illuminated how Shakespeare's works could be looked at differently if Oxford was the author, and he emphasized the significance and validity of the authorship controversy in both Shakespearean and historical studies pertaining to Elizabethan England.

Whalen, Richard. *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994.

This book proved to be a valuable source of information for two reasons: first, it presented both the Stratfordian and Oxfordian views of the authorship controversy, and secondly, it provided an excellent listing and description of the similarities between Oxford's life and the plays. The first half of the book was dedicated to presenting all of the information historians possess about the "Man from Stratford's" life as well as a chapter supporting the Stratfordian perspective of the authorship controversy. This account aided me in acquiring balanced research and assuring that I understood both sides of the controversy. The second half of the book chronicled Edward de Vere's life story while linking it to events that occur in the plays. There is a variety of evidence supporting Oxford's claim as author, but after reading this book I found the extensive accumulation of connections between the plays and de Vere's life to be the most convincing.

Wright, Daniel. "Who was Edward de Vere?" Available from <http://www.authorshipstudies.org/who.cfm>. Internet: accessed 13 October, 2006.

This website provided a detailed biography of Edward de Vere that is filled with similarities between his life and the plays. This biography was helpful not only because of its comprehensive ac-

(Letters, cont. from p. 3)

is no good reason to doubt that William of Stratford was the great poet-dramatist. But the converse of course is that a surprising 17 percent *do* find reason to doubt the Stratford man's credentials, and there are more examples of scholarly inquiry and perhaps incipient skepticism within the Shakespeare establishment and academia in general. To cite a few—all from just the last decade or so:

Four of the leading Shakespeare professors engaged Oxfordians with essays in the *Harper's* special issue. They were Jonathan Bate, Harold Bloom, Marjorie Garber and Gail Kern Paster. Garber, a senior professor at Harvard, is the author of *Shakespeare After All*,

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and although she devoted only three paragraphs to the authorship controversy in her book she listed seventeen works as suggested readings—and nine are by Oxfordians, including Looney, Ogburn, Sobran and myself. And Gail Kern Paster, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, joined me in a two-hour debate before six hundred people at the Smithsonian Institution.

Another establishment Shakespearean, Brian Vickers, author of the acclaimed *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, has concluded that today's Stratford monument of a writer, a mainstay of the Stratfordian argument, is not the original, which depicted a sackholder (Summer 2007 issue). He said he agreed with Oxfordian Richard Kennedy.

David Bevington of the University of Chicago, editor of the HarperCollins/Longman edition of the collected works of Shakespeare, discussed the authorship controversy twice in public forums, one of them with me on NPR Chicago. He also provided helpful comments on the manuscript of my edition of *Macbeth*.

The Tennessee University School of Law sponsored a two-day symposium on "Who Wrote Shakespeare" with speakers from both sides of the issue and published the proceedings in full in *The Tennessee Law Review*.

James Shapiro of Columbia University, a Stratfordian, is writing a book that apparently may analyze the authorship controversy as an historical, societal and cultural phenomenon. It's conceivable it might be at least somewhat even-handed.

The Shakespeare Newsletter from Iona College, which claims more than 2,000 subscribers, mostly professors and theater people, has printed Oxfordian articles and letters, the latest an ongoing exchange between the editors and myself on their evidence for the Stratford man: his will, the monument and the

First Folio front matter.

The University of Massachusetts-Amherst awarded Roger Stritmatter, now of Coppin State University, a PhD after he successfully defended his dissertation on Oxford's Bible. Early indications are that an article by Roger and Lynne Kositsky in the current *Review of English Studies* on the Strachey letter and an analysis by Nina Green may well influence Professor Andrew Gurr's forthcoming Variorum edition of *The Tempest*.

Dan Wright at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, and Bill Leahy at Brunel University in London have launched the first MA programs in Shakespeare authorship studies.

Next April will be Dan's 12th annual Authorship Studies Conference. As many as ten professors have delivered research papers at the conferences, and more have been in attendance. Former chair of the English department, Dan is also the founder and director of the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Center at Concordia, where he has the full support of the university president, administration and faculty.

So far, more than seventy-five professors have signed the online Declaration of Reasonable Doubt about Shakespeare's Identity, including the president, deans and department heads at Concordia. Their support was formally announced at the conference banquet last April, an announcement held the same day as the declaration signing in California.

More than two hundred university professors have demonstrated in their writings "a more-than-passing interest in the authorship controversy," including Oxfordians, skeptics and Stratfordians who receive my twice yearly newsletter. In the early 1990s, only a handful could be identified as having some interest.

Eight English literature professors are editing Oxfordian editions of Shakespeare plays.

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(Letters, cont. from p. 31)

Felicia Londre of the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Kristin Linklater of Columbia University described in scholarly books their conclusion that Oxford was the true author.

More than a dozen Oxfordian professors raise the issue in their classes. Michael Delahoyde at Washington State University designed and taught an honors course on Oxford as Shakespeare, a course that was probably a first for any university.

The extent of these examples just from the past decade is unprecedented. Nothing like it occurred in academia before the mid-1990s. Along with the *Times* survey they testify to the recent change in attitudes in academia, especially among a few of the leading establishment Shakespeareans. The orthodoxy is not all that monolithic.

The online declaration of reasonable doubt about Shakespeare's identity may well prove to be a powerful accelerating force persuading more professors in the Shakespeare establishment that his identity (in the concluding words of the declaration) "should henceforth be regarded in academia as a legitimate issue for research and publication and an appropriate topic for instruction and

discussion in classrooms."

Yours,

Richard F. Whalen

(Snail, cont. from p. 11)

It Tells Us. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

"T.C." (1578). *An Hospitall for the Diseased*, London: R. Tottell

Waugaman, Richard M. "A Wanderlust Poem, Newly Attributed to Edward de Vere." *Shakespeare Matters*, 7:1 (1, 21-23).

Endnotes

¹ Unless otherwise specified, I am referring to the Geneva Bible owned by de Vere.

² The numbers of some of the sonnets are closely linked with their content. The number of this sonnet, 121, lists the number of letters in the words "I am I." In addition, the two Arabic numbers 1 resemble the word "I." cf. also "I am I" in *Richard III*, V, iii.

³ In the Sternhold Metrical Psalms

bound at the end of de Vere's Geneva Bible, Psalm 58:8 is translated as "As snail do wast within the shel,/ And unto slime do run:/ As one before his tyme that fel,/ And never saw the sunne." De Vere annotated his metrical psalms far more than he did the version of the psalms bound in his Old Testament.

⁴ Psalm 58:3 refers to the womb: "The wicked are strangers from the wombe: even from the belly have they erred, and speak lies." The seventh verse anticipates some of the imagery of the eighth: "Let them [the wicked] melt like the waters, let them passe away: when he shooteth his arrowes, let them be as broken." (The Bishop's Bible also include the snail in a list of "uncleane thynges that creape upon the Earth" [Leviticus 11:30])

⁵ Yes, that was 13 iambs, like each couplet in our poem

⁶ Dangerous fluid accumulation in the fetus.

⁷ Cf. my article on that poem in *Shakespeare Matters* (2007).

⁸ These words are also rhymed in "A young Gentleman will to travell into forreygne partes," which I have previously attributed to de Vere (Waugaman, in press).

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