



Shakespeare Matters

*"The Voice
of the
Shakespeare
Fellowship"*



From left to right, Vice President Gary Withers, Renee Montagne, and Dr. Daniel Wright. Photo by Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre, Concordia University - Portland.

Concordia Authorship Research Center Set to Open....

by Howard Schumann

Tours of the new Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre took place at the 13th Annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference held from April 16th to 19th at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. With the Research Centre, Concordia expects to become the preeminent academic institution for scholarly inquiry into the authorship of the poems and plays of William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. The Centre is located in the penthouse of an "environmentally friendly" 74,000 sq. ft. library facility with the opening set for September 2009. It will house resources for scholarly investigation and meetings including a 90-seat classroom for credit courses, annual seminars for in-depth study, additional programs and courses, and will provide stable funding for program leadership and scholarly research.

Perhaps the happiest surprise of the weekend was the *Wall*

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The Case of the Wrong Countess

by Bonner Miller Cutting

At Wilton House, the ancient country manor home of the Earls of Pembroke, there is a large painting centered on the wall of the majestic Double Cubed Room. In fact, the Double Cubed Room was explicitly designed by the eminent 17th century architect Inigo Jones to properly display this painting, which spans seventeen feet across and is eleven feet high. Considered "a perfect school unto itself"¹ as an example of the work of Sir Anthony Van Dyck, this massive painting contains ten figures, all life size with the exception of the Earl himself who is slightly larger in scale than the rest of his family, a subtle tribute to his dominance of the family group.²

However, it is not the unique place of this painting in art history or the brilliance of the painter that is called into question, but the identity of the woman in black sitting to the left of the 4th

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The Name within the Ring: Edward de Vere's "Musical" Signature in *Merchant of Venice*

by Ian Haste

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is [only] fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils....

Charlton Ogburn in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and The Reality* (549), cites a discovery by Julia Cooley Altrocchi regarding Edward de Vere in Italy.¹ A *tirata*² given by a loquacious Bolognese doctor called Graziano concerning the exploits of "milord of Oxfort" provides this description: "Edward carries a large sword. His color of costume is violet. He carries for device a falcon with a motto taken from

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Letters:

To the Editor:

I'm a rather busy person, and may I use that as my excuse for not having done a reasonably prompt reading of the latest issue of *Shakespeare Matters*, the one with the article "Benedick and Beatrice's Excellent Adventure." May I congratulate the author(s) of this most enlightening article, and may I also congratulate them both for the remarkable and admirable restraint which has marked their voyage through the process of submitting a paper for presentation at the World Congress of Shakespeares-R-Us. It really illuminates what must either be gross negligence and incompetence, or else quite manipulative machinations, or a combination of both in the processing by the officials of said World Congress of a submission of a paper for presentation. I only wish I could say that I am most surprised in the way their submission was handled by officialdom.

I will certainly approve of the printing of a pseudonymous article. Such an article, not taking the pseudonymous route, would have resulted in the publication of the identities of the various characters of this officialdom - that is, actual names in place of "Dr. Heathcliff," "Dr. Top-Hat," "Dr. Joy," and "Dr. Faustus," would have subjected the authors of this article to complaints of having exposed the actual personages to embarrassment. This road of complaint is thus denied these officials - unless they themselves wish to reveal their identities. Having made these officials pseudonymous it is certainly appropriate to make the authors of the *SM* article pseudonymous.

Would you convey to those pseudonymous authors my congratulation for the manner in which they enlightened us on the process of submitting a paper to such a Congress, and for the quite heroic restraint with which they dealt with the situation. All the months the process entailed must have been a trial for these two, but by sticking to the facts rather than dealing with personalities they have accomplished a great deal. Bravo!

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Desper
Treasurer, The Shakespeare Fellowship

To the Editor:

I would like to preface this joint letter to the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society by saying that I hold all its members in the highest regard for the work they have done in their respective fields to the continuing expansion of the Oxfordian cause. I do not pretend to be telling you anything that you do not already know or have considered yourselves. That being said, I feel that we sometimes allow our respective interpretations of the history and, indeed, the mystery surrounding the most celebrated writer of the English language to cloud or overshadow the central issue, which is the validity of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare. I do not pretend to be as knowledgeable as my fellow SOS and SF members in terms of the finer points of Oxfordianism, yet I feel that my position as a relatively new member gives me a fresh outlook on what I see to be some problems facing both organizations.

While I have only been a member of the Oxfordian movement for a few years, I like so many others have had to face some of the same skepticism and (sometimes)

hostility that comes with the discussing of the Authorship question and the validity of de Vere as a prime candidate, I have come to believe that there are a number of ways in which we need to re-evaluate our approach. I do not myself subscribe wholly to any of the numerous sub-groups that exist in either of our organizations. Whether or not one believes in the Prince Tudor theories or that the sonnets were, in fact, the expressions of the bi/homosexual relationship between de Vere and the young Earl of Southampton, we can all agree that the one unifying belief is that Edward de Vere was the true author of the Shakespeare canon. To quote a fellow S.F. member, "It is about the Earl."

So why is it that after all these years of tireless efforts by so many intelligent and rational people, do we find ourselves still so far away from gaining acceptance by the world at large? Why do we find our organizations not growing but rather stagnating? One possibility is the perception that we are merely a conspiracy group. Well how can we overcome this hurdle? A possible way of debunking this perception by the traditionalist is to work towards developing a clear, concise, and non-threatening

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

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

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

From the Editors:

Who are These Oxfordians – And Why are They Making My Life so Miserable?

"We have met the enemy, and they are us" – Pogo

OK, so the Oxfordians aren't *really* making the lives of *many* orthodox Shakespeareans miserable. Not yet, anyway. Nor, I should add, is that (to my knowledge) the goal. And yet, given the tenacity with which many orthodox scholars seem to adhere to the flimsiest excuses to avoid an impartial examination of the historical and literary evidence from first principles, it seems safe to predict that those "aggressive and contemptuous" displays of pseudo-intellectual exasperation recalled by Dr. William Leahy in the Concordia University festschrift for Isabel Holden, are only likely to become more and more frequent as the 21st century proceeds.

Barring catastrophe on the scale of a world war or major social disruption well beyond the recent economic dislocation one may safely predict that the Oxfordian heresy is only going to continue to percolate in ever-widening ripples through the intelligentsia of the English-speaking world. News briefs in this issue of *Shakespeare Matters*, covering current Oxfordian and authorship publication projects, the Cobbe portrait fiasco, and major news coverage (who would have thought that the major media would still be covering the story in 2009?) all attest to Leahy's significant point: "the Authorship Question gives rise to passions – on both sides – that research into almost any other subject singularly fails to do."

One may even safely predict, from an anthropological perspective, that the heresy will find fertile ground on such intercultural "margins" as English speaking Asia, where millions of new students of the language have not already been over-socialized into the myth and may well readily appreciate the irony of learning English through lines like "What's in a name?" when they realize that the author of those lines was himself the ghostwriter of his own public persona. Certainly on

North Avenue in Baltimore where your editor works, there is nothing but curiosity about the Anglo-American Ivy-League/Oxford myth of the Stratford bard. Sooner or later, whether or not orthodox Shakespeareans have *yet* asked themselves the question of what, exactly, is bothering



them, or not, they probably will be forced into it. We can only commiserate with the cognitive dissonance they will feel when HBO (or some competitor) airs the first de Vere mini-series.

In the meantime the world remains an occupied territory for Shakespearean heretics. Our own question, therefore, is Lenin's (who formulated the problem concisely, whether one likes his politics or not): *what is to be done?* A letter to the editor in this issue of *Shakespeare Matters* assures us that unity is the only path to intellectual transformation. Your editor prints this letter not because he agrees with its analysis but because, unlike Lenin, he believes in open discussion of common problems. He begs leave to state that he does not agree with the analysis. Unity is great except when its not.

It is therefore with some gratification that we announce in this issue of *Shake-*

speare Matters the formation of a new peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal of Authorship Studies, *Brief Chronicles*. New Fellowship Trustee Gary Goldstein, who in 1991 founded the first ever peer-reviewed journal of Authorship Studies in the United States, *The Elizabethan Review*, has generously agreed to be the Managing Editor. *Brief Chronicles* – the name of which is drawn from Hamlet's witty observation (to Polonius) that "the players are the brief and abstract chronicles of the times" – will be published annually, and all articles appearing in it will be double-blind peer reviewed. The publication will be online only and, in the interest of stimulating the widest possible debate on authorship as well as raising the intellectual bar in authorship studies within and outside of the academy, all articles will be free and accessibly by the general public. The mission statement reads as follows:

We hereby invite submissions of research articles, essays and reviews for possible publication in the journal, which will employ a double-blind peer review process. All submissions must conform to the Chicago Manual of Style.

A peer-reviewed interdisciplinary publication, *Brief Chronicles*, is overseen by an editorial board comprised of academics with terminal degrees and distinguished records of scholarship and teaching. The journal will focus on the authorship of the Shakespeare canon from the Oxfordian perspective, publishing research-based notes, articles and monographs, as well as essays and reviews of books, theater performances and movies based on the drama and literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

More generally, the journal solicits relevant materials that shed critical light on the Shakespeare canon and its authorship, on theories and problems in the study

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

New Oxfordian Books

Oxfordians have been busy writing and publishing over the past year. New authorship books in the past year include Helen Heightman Gordon's *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare Sonnets* (xlibris 2008), Carl Caruso's *The Mystery of Hamlet* (PublishAmerica 2008) and, commercially, Emanuel E. Garcia's *Sherlock Holmes & the Three Poisoned Pawns* (Breese Books 2008). The latter is a delightfully brash and imaginative detective novel, which puts Sherlock Holmes himself on the trail, not just of Shakespeare's identity, but on the meaning of his plays. Published by a division of London's Baker Street Studios, the novel credits Sherlock Holmes with supplying J. T. Looney's methodology in *Shakespeare Identified*:

"But if not the Stratfordian, then who?" I queried.

"Oh, that question has already been answered," replied Holmes casually, "by an intelligent man who just so happened to have a most unfortunate name. I played some little part in the investigations that led to the discovery of the true author of the Shakespearean canon. Just after the Great War, Watson, I was approached by a schoolteacher – a modest fellow, thoroughly steeped in the works of the Bard, whose sensibility simply refused to countenance the Stratfordian mythology. He inquired how one might go about conducting a rational and systematic inquiry into the question of authorship, and after giving the matter some thought, I suggested a methodological approach which he subsequently employed and which led to the precise identification of the man behind the works.....But I fear that our time is growing short. Great as this matter may be, it is beside the point. This is not the mystery for which I summoned you."

"Holmes, I am immensely curious – what mystery can be greater?"

"I said to you earlier, Watson, that I was devoting attention to literary detection – not biographical. In the long run does it matter who the man was, or what name

he bore, so long as his words continue to enchant. No, the greater mystery concerns the greatest of his masterpieces, the greatest drama to engage us, a work which, if all others were to disappear, could alone suffice to rebuild the language and art of the theatre." Holmes paused and brooded. My fingers were nearly burnt by the stub of my neglected cigar as I waited tensely.



A Cup of Publication News

Publication of Oxfordian books by established publishers, whether academic or commercial, are few and far between. In fact, no academic publisher has risked publication of a single Oxfordian text since Looney introduced the Oxfordian case in 1920. Recently, however, commercial publishers in the US have responded since the 1990s with a handful of Oxfordian titles. Aside from Charlton Ogburn Jr's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1984, these include Hope and Holston's *The Shakespeare Controversy* (1992 McFarland), Whalen's *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (1995 Greenwood/Praeger), Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare* (1997, The Free Press), Anderson's *Shakespeare by Another Name* (2004 Penguin/Putnam), and Farina's *De Vere as Shakespeare* (2005 McFarland).

This year will see four Oxfordian titles by publishers in the US, England and Germany, providing four different approaches to the Earl of Oxford and the canon.

In what is obviously evidence of long-term interest by McFarland, a publisher in North Carolina that specializes in library science texts, will be the second revised edition of *The Shakespeare Controversy* by Warren Hope and Kim Holston. The book, originally published in 1992, will appear this spring/summer in a trade softcover and contains three new chapters that summarize and analyze Oxfordian research since 1975, the year in which the first edition left off. What is valuable about this title is that it examines other candidates for the authorship laurels, from Francis

Bacon to Christopher Marlowe and the Earl of Rutland, along with a detailed bibliography of authorship publications from the 19th century to the present day.

In the US, an Oxfordian title of historical importance will be the spring publication of *Othello* by Ren Draya, a professor of English at Blackburn College, making this the first Oxfordian critical edition of a Shakespeare play by an active academic. Published by Llumina under the aegis of co-general editors Dan Wright at Concordia University and Richard Whalen, it marks a new stage in Oxfordian research. The edition focuses on how the text of the play can be enhanced for production by theater professionals by demonstrating the extent to which the topical allusions, literary sources and personal history of the 17th Earl of Oxford are crucial to a proper dramatization of the play.

Finally, a new biography of Oxford as Shakespeare by German literary journalist Kurt Kreiler, is scheduled for summer/autumn publication by Insel Verlag, a prestigious publisher in Germany that previously printed the same author's edition of *The Adventures of Master FI* in German. This follows the publication of Joseph Sobran's book in German translation in 2007. Clearly, the Germans are exploring the Oxfordian hypothesis in a significant way.

In sum, 2009 may be the watershed year in which the Oxfordian hypothesis achieves widespread legitimacy in the publishing world as a topic of compelling interest. Reviews of all four books will appear in the inaugural issue of *Brief Chronicles*, the new peer review journal established by the Shakespeare Fellowship. The first issue will appear online in early Fall 2009.

— Gary Goldstein

What's in a Portrait? The Cobbe Portrait Joins the Crowd of Shakespeare Pretenders

The Stratford-upon-Avon Birthplace Trust was in the news this spring with the latest news flash from Shakespearean orthodoxy, which is still – to use a phrase popularized by Michael Wood – “searching for Shakespeare.” Spokesman Stanley Wells unveiled to the world yet another new portrait of “Shakespeare,” as headlined in the March 9, 2009, *New York Times* story by Robert Mackey, “Portrait of Shakespeare Unveiled, 399 Years Late.” Although it is difficult to understand just what evidence the Trust has for identifying the portrait as one of the bard, the Jacobean era portrait of a nobleman with a broad lace collar has been widely hailed the latest thing since the Droeshout. Apparently the so-called “Cobbe portrait,” owned by the Cobbe family of Newbridge house in Dublin, has been identified as being by Shakespeare because of the sitter's resemblance (which is indeed real) to the

Folger Library's Jaansen Portrait.

The distorted reasoning behind the new attribution is perhaps best summed up by Wells himself: “the identification of this portrait marks a major development in the history of Shakespearean portraiture. Up to now, only two images (the Droeshout and the Holy Trinity Bust) have been widely accepted as genuine likeness of Shakespeare. Both are dull. This new portrait is a very fine painting. The evidence that it represents Shakespeare and that it was done from life, though it is circumstantial, is in my view overwhelming.” There you have it. Only two images of Shakespeare. The Cobbe, on the basis of its resemblance to a third, circumstantially but “overwhelmingly” forms an, er, third. Ergo, we have a new *bona fide* image of the bard. It has several

things going for it. It is not “dull.” It is not in the United States. It can be used to sucker the news agencies of the world, who can be counted on to ignore logic as adeptly as the Birthplace Trust, into another round of Stratfordological incantations.

Oxford in the Wall Street Journal

Two more justices of the U. S. Supreme Court have joined Justice John Paul Stevens in his decision that Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, wrote the works of William Shakespeare. And two others of the nine sitting justices surveyed by the Wall Street Journal said for the first time publicly that they were not sure who Shakespeare was.

That was the encouraging news for Oxfordians in the newspaper's front-page April 18 article, which reported Stevens opinion that the evidence against the Stratfordian attribution is “beyond a reasonable doubt.”

The two justices joining Stevens were Antonin Scalia and recently retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Scalia referred to “we Oxfordians,” and although O'Connor had

said she did not want to be decisive, Stevens told the reporter: “Sandra is persuaded that it definitely was not Shakespeare” and “it's more likely De Vere than any other candidate.”

With the addition of the late Justice Harry Blackmun, that makes four justices of the U. S. Supreme Court who over the years have decided for Oxford as the true author.

Two justices hedged regarding Oxford. The Wall Street Journal reported that Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and David Souter said that “they're not sure who wrote the plays,” which sounds like they have reasonable doubts about the identity of Shakespeare. Before he died, Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. told Charlton Ogburn that he “never thought that the man of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the plays of Shakespeare.”

For decades, U.S. Supreme Court justices have had an abiding interest in Shakespeare and the dramatist's keen and profound knowledge of the law. They quote from the plays in their decisions and engage regularly in very popular mock trials arguing



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Street Journal front page announcement that Justice John Paul Stevens and Justice Antonin Scalia believe “the works ascribed to William Shakespeare actually were written by the 17th earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere.” Justice Stevens, citing a lack of correspondence and connections with English royalty by Mr. Shakespeare, told the *Journal*: “I think the evidence that he was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt.” The theme of the Conference was the 400th anniversary of the publication of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, a magnificent sequence of poems published in 1609 that were inspired by a fair youth and a mysterious dark lady.

Their story, like so much about Shakespeare, leaves many unanswered questions, many of which were addressed during the Conference. The Conference welcomed both familiar and first-time presenters including Roger Stritmatter, Lynne Kositsky, Hank Whittemore, Richard Whalen, William Boyle, Michael Delahoyde, Ren Draya, Sam Saunders, Earl Showerman, Ramon Jimenez, Alex McNeil, and newcomers Jacob Hughes, Robin Williams, Maurice Holland, Lamberto Tassinari, and Peter McIntosh. While the SASC continues to demonstrate a commitment to the Oxfordian perspective, it also included papers on different aspects of Shakespeare’s works and alternative theories of authorship.

Shakespeare’s Treason

After welcoming remarks by Professor Kevin Simpson, Chairman of the Social Sciences Department at Concordia on Thursday evening, author and playwright Hank Whittemore presented a performance of his 90-minute one-man play *Shakespeare’s Treason* that provides his ideas on the meaning of Shakespeare’s Sonnets. Written by Whittemore and Ted Story and directed by Story, the play postulates that the Sonnets are a history of the Essex Rebellion, the imprisonment of Southampton, and the outcast state of the poet. The play led off with two quotations, one by Edward de Vere: “Truth is truth to the end of reckoning” and the other by Napoleon: “History is a myth that men agree to believe.”

Whittemore termed Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, King Henry IX, the last of the Tudors. “The Secret Book” – *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, according to Whittemore, were directed to the young prince who had “true rights” to become King of England. The Sonnets, Whittemore announced, use a special language to tell the story of a young prince Oxford wanted to immortalize. They reflect a double image with politically correct if cryptic sentiments on the surface and a dangerous record of the intrigue at their core.

The poems are personal cries from the depth of a man’s soul but are also very political. The phrases “master/mistress” (Sonnet 20), and “summer’s day” in “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” (Sonnet 18) refer to the Monarch, while “beauty’s rose” (Sonnet 1) and the words “love” and “beauty” refers to Queen Elizabeth and her throne. In addition to love, according to Whittemore, the Sonnets contain “murder, treason, hangings, bastardy, betrayal and danger.” They are a chronicle of the poet’s relationship with the fair youth (Southampton), the “dark lady” (Queen Elizabeth), and the rival poet (the pen name “Shakespeare”).

Florio and the Queen

Lamberto Tassinari, essayist, editor of the magazine *Vice Versa*, and Professor of Italian Language and Literature at the University of Montreal, opened the Conference with a paper entitled “John Florio: The Man Who Was Shakespeare.” According to Tassinari, John Florio, known in Italian as Giovanni Florio, was an Italian of Jewish origin who lived in London and was probably a close friend of Shakespeare and the likely author of the canon. Florio compiled the first Italian/English dictionary, its 1611 edition containing 74,000 Italian words and 150,000 English words, one third more Italian words than the prestigious Accademi della Crusca’s dictionary published in 1612 in Florence.

Florio’s biographer Frances Yates defines Florio’s dictionary as the epitome of the era’s culture. Forgotten or ignored by scholars, Florio, the owner of 340 books in Italian, French, Spanish and an unknown

number in English, was also the source of 3,843 new English words and a translator of Boccaccio and Montaigne. According to Tassinari, he displays “the same bombastic style as Shakespeare: the same exaggerated use of metaphor, the same rhetoric, the same wit (quips, puns), the same poetic sense and the same extensive use of proverbs.” Tassinari said that Florio did not claim that he was Shakespeare because, as a prominent foreigner, a *nom-de-plume* was the only way that he could ensure all Englishmen would accept his work as a shared, national heritage.

Geologist in the Forest Practices Authority in Hobart, Tasmania, Dr. Peter McIntosh, then looked at *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* from the viewpoint that the author was Queen Elizabeth I. Beginning with Sonnet 20, McIntosh proposed that the subject of the poem appears to be a fair young man who is being urged to produce an heir. The young man apparently has traveled a great deal overseas and is an aristocrat who has been praised by other poets. It is also apparent that the young man has committed a crime that has affected Shakespeare’s reputation. It is even suggested that the youth has died but lives on in the author’s mind.

According to the accepted dating of the Sonnets to the mid-1590s, William Shakespeare of Stratford would have only been 31 years old in 1595 and not likely to have written these works which reveal that the poet is old, oppressed with melancholy, and possibly near death. According to McIntosh, the imagery of the poems tells us that the poet was surrounded by wealth, books, and music and has a relationship with an eighteen-year-old. McIntosh claimed that all events in Sonnets 1-126 can be matched with the life of the Earl of Essex and his relationship with Queen Elizabeth. McIntosh said that the conclusions that other scholars have reached about the “dark lady” sonnets are incorrect. Only three mention a dark lady and they refer only to people in different guises.

Islands in the Mediterranean

Lynne Kositsky, an award-winning author and poet and President of the Shakespeare Fellowship presented a fable, “The Mouse and the Lion: Responses from an Orthodox Source.” Prof. Roger Stritmatter, PhD, Assistant Professor of English at Coppin State University in Baltimore, Maryland, spoke on the topic “Where in the World? Geography and Irony in *The Tempest*.” Stritmatter asserted that the mysterious unidentified island in *The Tempest* is modeled on Lampedusa, an island in the Mediterranean well known in Shakespeare’s day for its threats to British shipping, its stormy weather, its tradition of being well stocked with food by sailors, and association with Barbary piracy.

The unidentified island in Shakespeare’s play, according to Stritmatter, also experienced stormy weather, was mysteriously supplied with provisions, contained Mediterranean landmarks, and was grounded in Mediterranean topography. Stritmatter pointed out parallels between Lampedusa and the Lipadosa of Ludovico Ariosto’s epic poem *Orlando Furioso*, a story of the chivalric defense of Christendom against Islam.

A familiar voice at Shakespeare Conferences, Richard Whalen, author of the book, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* continued on the theme of geography begun by Stritmatter, citing the connection between Shakespeare’s *Othello* and the city of Famagusta on the island of Cyprus. During the period 1575-76, Oxford was out of touch for four months. Since he had previously said that he hoped to visit Greece and Turkey, it is assumed that he visited Dubrovnik, Ragusa, Sicily, and most likely Famagusta during this time. The question asked in Act 2, Scene 1 of *Othello*, “What from the cape can you discern at sea?” and the reply, “Nothing at all: it is a highwrought flood; I cannot, ‘twixt the heaven and the main, descry a sail,” describes perfectly the harbor of Famagusta, the fact that the sea was not visible from the battlements, and that messages had been carried from the docks to battlements to determine the identity of approaching ships. This scene, according to Mr. Whalen, could only have been described by someone who had visited Cyprus.



Lamberto Tassinari addresses the “Florio Connection.”

Ur Plays and Hercules

The conference keynote speaker was Ramon Jimenez, from Berkeley, California, author of two books on Julius Caesar. Mr. Jimenez spoke on the subject, “The Ur-Hamlet and its Seven Siblings: Explorations in Shakespeare’s Dramatic Juvenalia.” The designation “ur” was first used in 1900 to describe the source of *Hamlet*. The ur-texts were early plays that included *Henry IV*, *Henry VI*, *Henry VIII*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Pericles* in addition to *Hamlet*. Although these early plays are strikingly similar to Shakespeare, the main problem, Jimenez said, is that critics refuse to consider that Shakespeare Juvenilia even exists.

Early known anonymous plays include *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, entered in the Stationers’ Register on May 14, 1594 and performed the same year, and an early version of *Taming of the Shrew*. Many hypothetical “ur” plays, however, have never been found and, according to Jimenez, “may have been dreamed up by scholars.” Because of the uneven quality

of the verse and the style of some plays from the accepted canon, critics must postulate a pre-existing inferior play that Shakespeare “borrowed” from.

The Conference then welcomed back former Fellowship trustee and retired physician from Southern Oregon, Dr. Earl Showerman, who continued to explore the subject of Herculean allusions in the works of Shakespeare begun at last year’s Conference. His topic this time was “Bottom’s Dream: Herculean Farce as Political Allegory.” Showerman said that Heracles, a son of the Greek God Zeus (renamed Hercules by the Romans), was worshipped first as a hero, then as a God. Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, according to Showerman, was designed as a satiric Herculean hero, a tradition embraced by numerous classical authors including Aeschylus, Euripides and Ovid. Herculean heroes have previously been described in the works of Shakespeare and include Mark Antony, Coriolanus, Benedick, and the lords in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Bottom says he could play Hercules as a tyrant, and in fact he does play a Herculean part as the lover of Titania, as the chief

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actor, and stage manager of the rude mechanicals company. He is the most clearly delineated character in the drama — quick witted, and possessing unbounded self confidence in the Herculean tradition. According to Showerman, although *Dream* has no primary source, it is a clear demonstration of Shakespeare's ability to integrate classical, Medieval, and Renaissance sources into a seamless tapestry and is perhaps his most source-rich drama. Dr. Showerman also asserted that the play owes much to Renaissance authors John Lyly, Edmund Spenser, Sir Reginald Scott, and Robert Greene.

Drawing on the work of Eva Turner Clark and Roger Stritmatter, among others, Showerman also postulated that *Dream* can be seen as presenting a political allegory, one that satirizes the relationship between Francois Hercule Valois, the Duke of Alençon, and Queen Elizabeth in the characters of Bottom and Hippolyta. Clark was the first scholar to note Bottom's use of the term "Monsieur" ten times as a clear reference to Alençon, who was called "Monsieur" at court, and his repeated requests for "honey bags" are allusions to the "money bags" Elizabeth provided him to the tune of 350,000 pounds in the 1580's. The play was probably first presented in 1594 as an epithalamium, a work celebrating a marriage, possibly that of Sir Thomas Heneage and the Dowager widow Mary Browne, ten years after Alençon's death.

Tribute to K.C. Ligon and Shakespeare's Songs

Saturday morning began with a tribute to the late K.C. Ligon by Bonner Miller Cutting, an independent scholar from Houston, Texas. She stated that Ligon, a trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship who worked as a TV actress and dialect coach, was a brilliant and generous woman. Among the actors she coached were James Earl Jones, Mary-Louise Parker, James Gandolfini, Laura Linney, Julianne Moore, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Sally Struthers, and Clare Bloom. Ligon also developed dialects for Broadway productions including "1776" "The Rose Tattoo," "Electra," "She Loves Me," "Holiday," "Bus Stop," "Suddenly Last Summer," and "Our Town." In addition to her other accomplishments, K.C. was a teacher who taught at City U. of New York, Tisch School of the Arts, and the New Actors Workshop, as well as a writer who



Concordia students Chelsea Deloney (Ms. Black Oregon 2009) and Emmanuel Henreid assist Ramon Jimenez in his exploration of the Shakespearean apocrypha.

won the Ruth Loyd Miller Southern Writers Award for the best Oxfordian play.

Ren Draya, PhD, Professor of British and American Literature at Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois began the Saturday session, talking on "Shakespeare's Songs, with Special Attention to *Othello*." Although songs had appeared in earlier plays, Shakespeare was the first to integrate songs with the drama. Despite the difficulties in tracing the origin of the songs and melodies used in performance, Dr. Draya noted that there are more than four hundred references in Shakespeare's plays to music. Some examples of the role of music: Richard II listening to music in his prison, the presence of musicians in some of the cast lists, and speeches such as Lorenzo's in *Merchant of Venice*. As Tranio says in *Taming of the Shrew*, "Music and poesy use to quicken you."

We know that the author was someone familiar with court life

and someone with military training because of the precise use of trumpet calls and sennets. In *Othello*, for instance, the Moor's safe arrival on Cyprus is announced by his individual trumpet call; the formal state dinner for Lodovico is heralded by trumpets. Shakespeare's songs can initiate action, illuminate character, or add poignancy and pathos to intimate moments. *Othello* contains two songs. The first, Iago's drinking song, is a compilation of parts of two traditional drinking songs: the hapless Cassio is lured by the convivial atmosphere, becomes drunk, picks a fight, and loses his lieutenantcy. One line — "Tis pride that pulls the country down" — reminds us of the key

theme of pride. The second song, Desdemona's "Willow Song," underscores the motif of a woman disappointed in love. For the listening audience, there is much irony: Desdemona forgets a key line "He was born to be fair; I to die for his love."

Shakespeare and Chaucer

Clinical Associate Professor of English at Washington State University Prof. Michael Delahoyde, PhD, then looked at "Lyric Poetry From Chaucer to Shakespeare" while WSU Graduate Student Jacob Hughes spoke about "Shakespeare the Chaucerian." Dr. Delahoyde stressed the importance Chaucer's poetic influence on Shakespeare, stating that Chaucer is invoked,

possibly unconsciously, throughout the Shakespearean canon. Chaucer's influence on Shakespeare is most overt in *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, based on Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale* from *Canterbury Tales* respectively. Hughes pointed out that orthodox critics typically dispute whether Shakespeare ever read Chaucer based on the fact that vernacular literature was not taught in Tudor grammar schools. However, Edward de Vere is known to have owned a copy of Chaucer, purchased along with his Geneva Bible.

Delahoyde cited the number of parallels between Chaucer and Shakespeare. For example, the famous line from *Hamlet*, "I am but mad north-northwest" (2.2), references Chaucer's line from Parliament of Fowls, "As wisely as I saw thee north-northwest." Another example is the line from *Macbeth* Act 5, Scene 1 "What's done cannot be undone," compared with Chaucer's line from *House of Fame*, "But that is doon, nis not to done." The Chaucerian pattern of witnessing someone else's experience and not having a point of view, according to Delahoyde, is prevalent in the poem *A Lover's Complaint*, usually attributed to Shakespeare. Furthermore, the first eighteen lines of *The Canterbury Tales* are strikingly echoed in *Richard II*, especially in connection with John of Gaunt, Chaucer's patron and brother in law. The use of the word "pilgrimage" is also tellingly, and at times inappropriately, applied to the language of Chaucer's patrons in the play.

Though critics dispute that Shakespeare read Chaucer, according to Hughes, we should assume that Shakespeare did read Chaucer and look for broader connections. Shakespeare evokes Chaucer in nearly every play, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Duke Theseus of *Dream* was derived from Duke Theseus of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, and Feste dons the likeness of "Sir Topas" from the *Tale of Sir Topas*, a pretentious buffoon in *Canterbury Tales*. Offering a witty and sardonic view of life, Falstaff significantly recalls Chaucer himself, directly referencing poems such as the *Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, amongst others.

Family or Love Triangle?

Author and playwright Hank Whittemore presented a study of Sonnets 40, 41, and 42. In his talk, he postulated that these three sonnets were not about a love triangle, but about a family triangle involving Oxford, Queen Elizabeth, and Henry Writotheseley. Whittemore asserted that Mark Anderson in his book *Shakespeare By Another Name* followed a traditional route by isolating 40-42 as a love triangle (involving Elizabeth Trentham) and 78-86 as referring to a living rival poet (naming Essex). Whittemore said that these and indeed all 154 sonnets involve the triangle of Oxford, Southampton and the Queen. They are the lead characters in the "story" being recorded.

The reason Oxford created the sequence of 154 sonnets was specifically to record and preserve the fact that he was the author of the Shakespeare works; that he wrote the Sonnets precisely to tell us why he adopted Shakespeare pen name; that he created the Sonnets to explain the circumstances under which he chose to continue this concealment during his lifetime and even after



WSU graduate student Jacob Hughes analyzes the tip of the iceberg connecting Shakespeare to Chaucer.

his death; and that he deliberately recorded the "story" behind what he knew would be an authorship question. The story of the 100 sonnets from 27 to 126 is played out within the context of Southampton's imprisonment from 1601 to 1603, leading to the death of the Queen, the accession of James, and the release of Southampton. In that context, the Queen is the female side of the triangle, and her view of Southampton and his crime is "dark."

Queen Elizabeth is the "dark lady" and is Oxford's favorite female subject with repeated references to her in Sonnets 25, 42, 105, 133, and 140. Neither these references nor the prison language, referring to Southampton's time in the Tower, are reflective of a love triangle. They are urgent, detailed, matters of fact to be taken literally, not metaphorically. According to Whittemore, with Southampton in the Tower, the "rival" cannot be any individual but must be Oxford's pen name "Shakespeare," which he had publicly attached to Southampton with two dedications.

Whittemore declared that the author of the Sonnets takes too many liberties with the Earl of Southampton for it to be plausible that the author was Shakespeare of Stratford: Southampton marriage proposals (Sonnets 1-17), obliteration of the author's name ("My name be buried where my body is," Sonnet 72), ("That every word doth almost tell my name," Sonnet 76), reference to the author's

(Continued on p. 10)

(Conference, cont. from p. 9)

dedication to Southampton in Sonnet 82 (“The dedicated words which writers use of their fair subject”), and the repeated assertions that the life and immortality of Southampton will be assured even if the author’s name is obliterated.

Essex and Succession

Librarian and long time Oxfordian lecturer William Boyle, in his talk “Shakespeare and the Royal Prerogative: A Never-told tale of the Poet-Philosopher King and His Monarch,” continued on a theme he has covered in past Conferences – the connection between the succession crisis of the 1590s, the role of Essex and Southampton in the Essex rebellion which featured a performance of Shakespeare’s Richard II, and the authorship question relative to William Shakespeare whose name first appeared in print in 1593 when England was entering the last ten years of Queen Elizabeth’s reign.

According to Boyle, (citing Paul Hammer’s article in the Spring 2008 *Shakespeare Quarterly*) the performance of *Richard II* shortly before the Essex Rebellion was not meant to inflame the public. Referring to an article from the 1982 *Georgetown Law Review* by Jack Benoit Gohn, Boyle said that it appears more likely that Shakespeare was issuing a warning through the play that actually deposing a monarch may not be a very good idea, even if it appears that it must be done. According to Gohn, Shakespeare reworked the true history of Richard II by allowing Richard to participate in his own demise. Indeed, Richard’s disinheritance of Bolingbroke was, like Elizabeth’s refusal to name a successor, in effect, the disinheritance of the nation and that, while the cause may be just, taking the throne by conquest was fraught with danger.

Another “succession document” was the 1594 poem *Willobie His Avis*. The poem, according to Boyle, is all about Avis’s chastity and the five suitors trying to woo her. Boyle identified the suitors in Willobie as: Thomas Seymour, Philip II, Duke of Alencon, a composite of Hatton and Hapsburg, and a composite of Leicester and Essex (all well known as suitors of the Queen during her reign). Boyle also pointed out that wooing meant (as it does today) as much “seeking the favor of” someone in power as a romantic quest. *Willobie* is a significant publication because it mentions Shakespeare and his *Lucrece* in the introduction, and includes a character named W.S (called an “olde Player”) advising a second character “H.W.” (called a “Young Actor”) on how to woo Avis.

Though scholars have for years accepted that W.S. is most likely meant to represent “Shakespeare,” Boyle pointed out that if B.N. De Luna in her book, *The Queen Declined*, is right about Avis being meant to represent the Queen. then W.S. cannot be the actor from Stratford. This is given more credence by the cryptic lines in the final poem in *Willobie* and its ending lines “I am content” (the poem is signed by “Ever or never,” a tipoff for Oxfordians that it is the true Shakespeare –Vere – making the statement “I am content”). Boyle concluded with a brief mention of the 1599 collection of poems published in the name of William Shakespeare by William Jaggard called *The Passionate Pilgrim* in which one poem is clearly a response to the “W.S.” section in

Willobie. He said that this really is a clinching argument that W.S. in Willobie was meant to be Shakespeare.

Another look at Elizabethan Law in the context of the Essex Rebellion was provided by Maurice Holland, Professor of Law and former Dean of the School of Law at the University of Oregon who spoke on “Misprision of Treason: A Look at Elizabethan Law in the Context of the Essex Rebellion.” Misprision of treason is a legal concept referring to someone who knows a treason is being or is about to be committed but does not report it to a proper authority. According to Holland, Southampton was fully guilty as convicted and sentenced and could not have received misprision of treason as a plea bargain since there were no “plea bargains” in those days. Indeed, he asserted, that no one associated with the Essex Rebellion could have been charged with misprision of treason. Southampton was pardoned unconditionally by Queen Elizabeth only out of compassion.

SASC Banquet

At the Banquet, an introduction and time-lapsed slide presentation of the partially completed Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre was presented by Gary Withers JD, Executive Vice-President of Concordia. Daniel Wright, Ph.D., Professor of English and Conference Chair then spoke, asserting that Concordia University is “the only university in the U.S. that has not been held captive to an ossified orthodoxy.” He presented the award for Artistic Excellence in the Arts to Renee Montagne, co-host of National Public Radio’s Morning Edition.

In her talk, Ms. Montagne whose radio program, according to Dr. Wright, is the most widely heard broadcast in the U.S., stated that when she read the *Harper’s* article about the Shakespeare authorship debate, she was intrigued by the possibility that the author was someone other than William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon. She said that tries to go into any situation with as much knowledge as she can and “entertains all possible realities.”

The Annual Scholarship Award was presented to Robin Williams, author of *The Sweet Swan of Avon*, a book promoting the candidacy of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, as author of the works of William Shakespeare. In accepting the award, Ms. Williams said that we can all learn things from each other and that the Conference made her feel that she wants to read the works of Shakespeare again.

A second Scholarship Award was given to Bill Boyle. In his introduction, Prof. Wright noted that Boyle, a librarian, blogger, and editor, has not authored a book but has dedicated his life to the authorship question. Boyle stated that this was his twelfth year at the Conference and that he has been an Oxfordian for thirty years.

The final award of the evening was presented to long time Oxfordian Barbara Crowley who was described as “the engine behind the movement.” Crowley, whose father was a founding member of the Shakespeare-Oxford Society, said that “it was a pleasure to be a part of this wonderful experience.”

Mary Sidney and Richard II

As the Conference resumed on Sunday morning, Robin Williams from Santa Fe, New Mexico, author of award-winning books about design, typography, the web, and the Macintosh computer presented a paper about her book *Sweet Swan of Avon* which proposes that Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, was the author of the Shakespeare canon. Mary Sidney was acknowledged to be the most educated woman in England at the time. She was fluent in many languages, the author of several poems about her brother Philip Sidney, and the first woman to publish a play in English. Her mission in life was to create great works in the English language and she developed the most important literary circle in English history, leading the Wilton Circle for two decades and encouraging fellow writers to write in English.

Ben Jonson, a friend of the Sidney family whose patron and benefactor was Mary’s sons William and Phillip Herbert (the latter, of course, also de Vere’s son-in-law), called Shakespeare the “Sweet Swan of Avon” in the First Folio. Mary was associated with the swan motif in poems, she wrote with a white swan quill pen, and, in a commissioned engraving, is seen with swans in her lace collar and wrist ruffs and swan wings below her hand. Ms. Williams said that the Sonnets were love poems written to a man although she noted the possibility that not all of the Sonnets were written by the same person. However, according to Ms. Williams, a strong indicator of Mary Sidney’s authorship lies in the fact that she fell in love with a much younger man, Matthew Lister, after the death of her husband and believed he was having an affair with nineteen-year-old Mary Roth, a clear theme of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*.

Another featured speaker was Dr. Michael Egan, editor of *The Oxfordian* and author of the Mellon Award winning multi-volume study of *Richard II, Part I*. The play, traditionally known as *Thomas of Woodstock*, is listed as an anonymous, untitled, and incomplete work but, according to Egan, should be considered as part of the Shakespeare canon. In a comparison between the two Richard II plays, Egan noted that there are 1600 verbal parallels. Though some critics say that the parallels are trivial, Egan responds that the most important evidence is the quality of the writing. He called the play remarkable for its high level of legal knowledge, especially the law of treason and suggested that in recommending a constitutional monarchy, it should be considered as another “succession” drama.

As an illustration of verbal parallels, Egan pointed out the following from *I Richard II* and *Henry IV*:

Lapoole. What, is he dead?

Murd. As a door-nail, my lord.

(*I Richard II* 5.1. 242–3)

and

Fals. What, is the old king dead?

Pist. As nail in door.

(*Henry IV*, 5.3.120–1

Egan stated that the parallels do not prove that Shakespeare wrote *I Richard II*, but do show that there are deep affiliations.

Author MacDonald P. Jackson used stylometrics to propose that Samuel Rowley was the likely author and said that the work was likely plagiarized by Rowley from Shakespeare. Egan called Jackson’s analysis “chaotic and subjective,” especially his comparisons based on assonantal nasal rhyming (a type of rhyme where only the vowels “rhyme” or are similar-sounding; consonants are ignored). Egan dates the play to 1592-1593, taking exception to Jackson’s argument that “Woodstock’s contractions and linguistic forms, expletives, metrical features, and vocabulary all point independently to composition in the first decade of the seventeenth century,” a conclusion that would rule out the play being a source for Shakespeare’s *Richard II*.

A SOARING Demonstration, Mathematics, and Classical Sonnets

Bill Boyle and Conference Chairman Daniel Wright put on a SOARING demonstration. SOAR (Shakespeare Online Authorship Resource) is planned to be a permanent online annotated bibliography created by Boyle for the study of the authorship issue. Noting that Google has its limits, Boyle said that the resource will contain a selected annotated database of articles, essays, books, and journals investigating the authorship question using actual documents that will cover all authorship candidates.

Sam Saunders, Professor of Mathematics at Washington State University asked the question “Do Shakespeare’s Sonnets Exhibit Harmonic Balance?” He answered that they do and demonstrated how some studies of word use can reveal harmonic balance for any particular author and his works by calculating the total number of words used, and then breaking that total down into the most-used single word as a percentage of the total and the least-used single word as a percentage of the total. If the percentages align in a more or less straight line slope on an X-Y axis, then there is a harmonic balance in the work which is the case with the Sonnets examined by Saunders.

The final speaker was Alex McNeil, Attorney and Trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship, who focused on Sonnets 153 and 154. These sonnets conclude the entire sequence but have seemed to many to be tacked on rather than fit organically into the whole. McNeil said that he believed these Sonnets are in their proper sequence. He noted how the two sonnets are both based on the same Greek epigram about the permanence of desire but stated that the reasons there are two sonnets on the same subject are that they exemplify the author’s point that he always writes about the same thing, and illustrate the process of revision.

According to McNeil, the two sonnets also suggest that the author inserts himself into all of his works, even those which are based on classical sources, for example *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, the first two poems published under the Shakespeare name and both dedicated to Southampton. McNeil suggested that although both Sonnets have a similar theme, they are different. In 153, the speaker expresses hope (which lies in his mistress’ eyes), but in 154, the speaker is past hope. This suggests that 154 was written or revised very late in Oxford’s life, perhaps after the death of Queen Elizabeth.

With that the 13th annual SASC adjourned for another year.

(News, cont. from p. 5)

whether Hamlet was guilty of murder for killing Polonius or was innocent by reason of insanity.

Although the headline implied that Stevens' decision was recent, his interest dates to 1987, when he, Blackmun and Justice William Brennan presided at a mock trial in Washington, D. C. to consider the authorship issue. The three-judge panel did not find for Oxford, but after more consideration Stevens and Blackmun ultimately decided in favor of Oxford as the true author, in effect rendering a 2-1 decision for Oxford retrospectively. Stevens' writings and lectures over the years and his comments in the Wall Street Journal article show that he (and his clerks) have done their homework on the authorship issue. Oxfordians and other non-Stratfordians would recognize his arguments.

The two voting for William of Stratford were Justices Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer. Chief Justice John Roberts, and Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito declined to comment for the article.

— Richard F. Whalen

Branagh in Doubt?

News Flash: Ken Branagh is debating whether to be, or not be, an Oxfordian. An article by Sandro Monetti in the



Branagh as Inspector Wallander. Is he on the case or being held for intellectual ransom?

U.K.'s *Sunday Daily Express* of May 3 reported that Branagh was having difficulty maintaining the posture of a loyal orthodoxist. The paper carried a picture of Kenneth Branagh, beneath which was the caption: "DOUBTS: Shakespeare devotee Branagh." The article, headed "Bard actor: 'Shakespeare may not have written all his plays,'" reported that Shakespearean actor Keneth Branagh has questioned the true identity of the author of the plays to which the star has devoted his career. He admits he is beginning to be swayed by the theory that the true author was not William Shakespeare but the 17th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere.

Branagh is quoted as saying: "There is room for reasonable doubt. De Vere is the latest and the hottest candidate.... There is a con-

vincing argument that only a nobleman like him could write of exotic settings and that William Shakespeare was a simple country boy." Branagh, who has been Oscar nominated three times for his work on Shakespearean films, added: "I'm fascinated by all the speculation.... If someone could find conclusive proof that Shakespeare wasn't the author of the plays then it would cause a seismic shock - not least to the economy of Stratford-upon-Avon."

Branagh was speaking at the US premier of his BAFTA-winning Swedish detective series, *Wallander*. Branagh is widely regarded not only as a consummate Shakespearean actor (his Iago alongside Laurence Fishburne's *Othello*, among other roles, shows his magnificent command of Shakespearean roles), but as the most influential popularizer of Shakespearean drama through film in recent years. Apparently, doubt soon took hold. Perhaps someone warned Branagh that it would still be impolitic for him to express any doubts about the bard in public. Or perhaps the original article was in error. In any case, the offending news has been removed from the world-wide web. John Shahan, writing for *Doubt About Will*, reports that

the *Sunday Express* article was in error. Kenneth Branagh did not mean to say that he has changed his position. The article has been taken down. An authoritative source confirms that he has always believed, and still does, that "the plays of Shakespeare were written by the man from Stratford, of the same name." Mr. Branagh is fascinated by the alternative theories, but he is "a Stratfordian through and through and expects to remain so."

Hmm.... "Expects to remain so?" Till *when?* Doomsday? The next time he can sneak out for a night on the town without being shadowed by damage control handlers? McDonalds has purchased McHeddingham?

God forbid that Monetti's original article should go unpunished, and Branagh go the way of Leslie Howard, Sir John Gielgud, Sir Derek Jacobi or Michael York, to name only a few of his colleagues who have been more consistently retrograde to the desires of the Shakespeare monarchy.

Sorry to say, it sounds as if the world's most successful Shakespearean producer is being held in an unlit coat closet and fed pickled herring and sauerkraut, while being forced to listen over and over again to an MP3 of Olivier's *Hamlet* blasted in one ear and the theme park song from Stratford in the other. Copies of *Shakespeare Matters* are being intercepted at the gate and burned. Wouldn't we like to be a cherub on *that* wall?

Kenneth! Thou shalt not be an heretic, repeat after us:

"There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river in Stratford. It is called Avon in Stratford; but it is out of our prains what is the name of the other river; there was a babe of great promise born by the river in Stratford, and a man in Macedon, if we could only remember his name. But 'tis all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both."

Kenneth! No sleeping! Repeat after us! "There is salmons in both...."

(*The Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 1*)

Earl of Pembroke. The official 20th century catalogue of the Pembroke family's art collection flatly identifies the woman as the Earl's second wife, Anne Clifford.³ We will see how this identification stands up to scrutiny when the portrait is placed in its historical and cultural context.

The official reason for the identification of Lady Anne Clifford is the fact that Philip, the 4th Earl of Pembroke, was married to her when the portrait was painted. Another historical fact is that Philip was married to his first wife, Lady Susan Vere, when the First Folio of William Shakespeare was published in 1623, and of course it is well known that Philip and his older brother William are the "incomparable paire of brethren" to whom it was dedicated.⁴ The familial relationship between the dedicatees of the First Folio and Edward de Vere – a result of this marriage – is troubling to orthodoxy, as Philip's father-in-law is widely regarded as the leading alternative candidate among those who doubt the traditional attribution of Shakespeare's works.

The six arguments presented here will show that that the woman to the left of the 4th Earl is not his second wife Lady Anne Clifford — as proffered by the Wilton House catalogue — but his first wife, Lady Susan Vere. If these arguments with their respective evidentiary support are convincing, then one might tender the suggestion that the substitution of Countess Anne for Susan Vere may have something to do with the authorship issue.⁵ Thus it is important to determine the identity of the sitter, and in order to do this, we must first take into account the circumstances of Philip's two marriages.

In 1604, the court of King James was bustling with the news of the marriage of the handsome young Philip Herbert and Lady Susan Vere, the third daughter of the 17th Earl of Oxford.⁶ It was considered a love match, a surprising occurrence in a time when marriages were arranged for dynastic aggrandizement. Even more remarkable is the largesse that King James bestowed on the union. He was, in effect, the wedding planner, financing the event which went on for days at enormous cost, and supplying the new couple with gifts of money and

property, even fulfilling the patriarchal duty of providing Susan Vere with her marriage portion. The King walked the bride down the aisle, accompanied by his royal family. In a statement not often reiterated by historians, King James is reported to have said that had he not already been a married man, he would have married Susan Vere himself rather than giving her

The six arguments presented

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to his favorite Philip Herbert.⁷ It is further reported that the King showed up at their bedside bright and early the next morning to get a firsthand account of their wedding night. They did manage, presumably without the supervision of the King, to have 10 children, and their marriage of approximately 25 years ended when Susan died from smallpox in 1629.

Philip inherited the Pembroke title at his older brother's death early in 1630. Later that year, Philip remarried. His choice, Lady Anne Clifford, the widowed Countess of Dorset, was somewhat unexpected, as, in the words of a Herbert family

biographer, her "attractions could not have been conspicuous."⁸ The marriage was described as loveless from the beginning. One might ask why the eligible bachelor took on the inimitable widow, a stubborn woman whose negotiating skills had been well honed in decades of legal battles with her Clifford cousins. In fact, she had put up a fight of such magnitude in her efforts to reclaim the Clifford properties that King James himself stepped in to referee the bloodbath. When his royal judgment went against her, she refused to accept it, withstanding enormous pressure from her first husband and just about everybody attached to the royal court. We can gauge her strength of character in one of her letters when she wrote that she would not comply with the King's Award "no matter what misery it cost me." The King's decision was ultimately put in place by coercion.⁹

It is not surprising that she brought this steely determination into her marriage with Philip, and even less surprising that the marriage was a disaster, certainly from Philip's point of view. The marriage ended after 4 ½ years when Philip cast her out of his lodgings in Whitehall Palace in December of 1634,¹⁰ leaving himself "virtually widowed a second time."¹¹

Some historians suggest that Van Dyck began the painting in 1634, and although this may be only an inadvertent error, it must be clearly stated that this date is not possible: Sir Anthony Van Dyck was out of the country from October of 1633 until March of 1635.¹² Van Dyck could not have begun work on it until the summer of 1635, exactly the time when the negotiations for the final separation between Philip and Anne were completed.¹³ Given Philip's temper and Anne's obstinacy, it is a safe bet that the discussions between their representatives had not been pleasant.

But there is more to the story. When Philip (hereafter called Pembroke) booted Lady Anne out of his palace lodgings, he in effect banished her from the court of King Charles as well. With this "catastrophic collapse of her status and her cause," Lady Anne became a veritable persona non grata at the Caroline Court.¹⁴ Worst of all, even her biographers agree that this enormous breach was her fault. Both the Herbert and

(Continued on p. 14)



The Baron engraving of the Pembroke Family. Is the seated Lady to the Earl's left his first or second wife?
By permission of the National Galleries of Scotland.

(Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 13)

Clifford family historians concur that what Pembroke really sought when he married Lady Anne Clifford was her younger daughter, Isabella Sackville, as a match for one of his younger sons.¹⁵ Pembroke thought he and Lady Anne had a deal for Isabella's marriage when he married her, and by 1634 it was time to formalize the Herbert/Sackville betrothal. This Lady Anne refused to do. Pure and simple, she wanted Isabella to marry an Earl. A younger son, even a scion of the prestigious Herbert family, just wasn't good enough.

On that fateful December day at Whitehall Palace, Pembroke had apparently called her hand and found that she

could not be prevailed upon to finalize the betrothal for her Isabella and his son. Pembroke's fury toward his second wife is understandable in light of the fact that she reneged on their deal. Not only was it a breach of good faith but a humiliating rejection of his family.¹⁶ It should be out of the question that he would choose to immortalize Anne Clifford in his family celebration portrait. I should rest my case right here.

But there is more to discover in this multifaceted investigation. One can hardly miss the beautiful young woman in the luminous white dress at the very center of the painting. She is Lady Mary Villiers, and it might come as a surprise the extent to which the portrait is all about her.

Mary Villiers was the daughter of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, whose rise to the top ranks of the English nobility is well known. He was the great favorite of both King James and King Charles, and after his assassination in 1628, Mary, his firstborn child, was taken into the royal household. She was raised thereafter as the "spoilt pet of the court" where her nickname was Butterfly.¹⁷ Her marriage contract to the Pembroke heir had been signed in 1626 when she was four years old and Charles Herbert was seven. Most significant was her dowry of 25,000 pounds, which was to go into the coffers of the Pembroke family once the marriage was solemnized.¹⁸

Another element in the story is the

munificence that King Charles bestowed on the Flemish master painter Anthony Van Dyck. Van Dyck was knighted in 1632, and upon his return to England in the spring of 1635, the King himself paid the rent on his resplendent waterfront studio at Blackfriars and built a causeway for access

It is easy to connect the dots: King Charles visited Van Dyck's studio regularly and could hardly have missed the Titianesque painting of the Pembroke Family taking shape right before his very eyes -- even more compelling as Butterfly, the favorite of the Royal Court, occupied center stage in the family group. After the banishment of Lady Anne Clifford, it is bizarre to suggest that Pembroke would take this opportunity to rehabilitate her before the court as a member of his family in his dynastic portrait. By contrast, the record shows that Pembroke's first wife Susan Vere had been above reproach.

to it by boat.¹⁹ Replete with musicians and sumptuous banquets, this studio rapidly became the principal gathering place for the Carolinian Court. An observer wrote that Van Dyck's workshop "was frequented by the highest nobles, for example the King, who came daily to see him and took great delight in watching him paint and

lingering with him."²⁰

It is easy to connect the dots: King Charles visited Van Dyck's studio regularly and could hardly have missed the Titianesque painting of the Pembroke Family taking shape right before his very eyes -- even more compelling as Butterfly, the favorite of the Royal Court, occupied center stage in the family group. After the banishment of Lady Anne Clifford, it is bizarre to suggest that Pembroke would take this opportunity to rehabilitate her before the court as a member of his family in his dynastic portrait. By contrast, the record shows that Pembroke's first wife, Susan Vere, had been above reproach.

There is a sad postscript regarding the young couple who are celebrated in the painting. Following the custom of separating newlyweds due to the youth of the bride, young Lord Herbert was sent to Italy.²¹ He died of smallpox soon after his arrival in Florence, leaving Pembroke to suffer the loss of his son as well as the loss of the prestigious and lucrative Villiers marriage.

Next we turn to the historiography of the identification of the Countess in the portrait. Somewhere along the way someone has wrong-footed himself. Throughout the 18th century it was understood that Susan Vere was the woman in the Van Dyck portrait. A good point of departure is the recent commentary by David Howarth, a specialist in seventeenth-century culture and art history. In his recent book, *Images of Rule*, Howarth has this to say about the woman in Van Dyck's portrait:

To Pembroke's left a woman sits huddled in black. It has come to be assumed that her tense, sullen isolation indicates Pembroke's second wife, Lady Anne Clifford, with whom Pembroke had contracted a loveless marriage. However, this woman ...is shrouded in black, hands folded on stomach as was conventional in recumbent effigies of the dead, and it was presumably these features which made [Freeman] O'Donoghue in his catalogue of the British portrait prints in the British Museum, suggest that this disconsolate creature is in fact a posthumous likeness of Pembroke's first wife, Lady Susan Vere.

Susan Vere. This is surely right.²²

It's nice to have an expert of Howarth's stature dispute the attribution of Lady Anne Clifford; thus his statement, coming at the end of the 20th century, bears repeating: "This is surely right....The disconsolate creature is a posthumous likeness of...Lady Susan Vere." Yet there is another reason

It has come to be assumed that her tense, sullen isolation indicates Pembroke's second wife, Lady Anne Clifford, with whom Pembroke had contracted a loveless marriage. However, this woman ...is shrouded in black, hands folded on stomach as was conventional in recumbent effigies of the dead, and it was presumably these features which made [Freeman] O'Donoghue in his catalog of the British portrait prints in the British Museum, suggest that this disconsolate creature is in fact a posthumous likeness of Pembroke's first wife, Lady Susan Vere.

besides the sitter's somber appearance for the Susan Vere identification in the British Museum catalog. Susan is the sitter of record in the engraving of the painting made in 1740, approximately a hundred years after Van Dyck painted the work, and it is this engraving that O'Donoghue lists in his catalog.²³ Therefore, it seems that

(Continued on p. 16)

(*Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 15*)

O'Donoghue was following the historical information. Indeed, the artist Bernard Baron made two engravings of the painting in 1740, both of which identify the principal sitters as "Philip Herbert...with his wife Susan Vere."²⁴

Along with the two Baron engravings, there are four 18th century catalogs that contain inventories of the paintings and art at Wilton House. The earliest one, published in 1731 by Gambarini of Lucca, refers to the Earl's "Lady, Daughter to the Earl of Oxford."²⁵ Subsequent catalogs, put together by Richard Cowdry and James Kennedy eliminate the name of the "Lady's" father, but the description implies that the Earl's lady is Susan Vere:

This consists of ten whole Lengths, the two principal Figures (and they are sitting) are Philip Earl of Pembroke and his Lady; on the Right-Hand stand their five sons Charles Lord Herbert, Philip, (afterwards Lord Herbert) William, James, and John; on the Left their Daughter Anna Sophia, and her Husband Robert Earl of Carnavon; before them Lady Mary, Daughter of George Duke of Buckingham, and wife to Charles, Lord Herbert; and above in the Clouds are two Sons and a Daughter who died young."^{26 27}

It can hardly be questioned that the children in the portrait, referred to as "their children," are Susan Vere's children. There were no children from Pembroke's marriage to Anne Clifford. However, Susan's name is only implied -- thanks to the fact that the children are hers -- and this does seem to be a bit of an oversight. After all, Countess Susan was the daughter of an Earl, and the granddaughter of Lord Burghley, whose stellar position in English history needs no further elaboration here. After all, Lady Mary Villiers is referenced in these catalogues as the "Daughter of George Duke of Buckingham." Thus, it should not be too much to ask that "his Lady" be recognized both by name and aristocratic lineage. Actually, the fourth and last of the 18th century catalogues is more satisfying in this regard, acknowledging the Earl's wife as "Susan, daughter of Edward, Earl of Oxford."²⁸

Along with the identification of the Baron engravings of 1740 and the identifications in the 18th century catalogues, there is an eyewitness account of a traveler who visited Wilton House in 1738:

We now turn our attention to the distinguished authority and art connoisseur of the early 20th century, Sir Lionel Cust. He was the curator of The National Portrait Gallery, editor of *Burlington Magazine*, and a member of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust....It seems that Cust's identification is the line of demarcation for the official attribution of Lady Anne Clifford as the Earl's lady in black. With the two exceptions previously noted, this identification has been adhered to throughout the 20th century.

And now I am gone so far I am come to the grand point, the account of the great picture, my heart begins to fail me.....and a bold undertaking it is for me, to give you any account of the noble picture....." He continues in this vein for a while, then finally gets around to describing Earl Philip and his Countess: "On my Lord's left hand sits my Lady in a great chair, all in black, with her hands before her in a great tranquility: she was Susan, daughter to Edward, Earl of Oxford."²⁹

In 1801 the antiquarian John Brittan wrote an extended account of the portrait in his *Beauties of Wiltshire*, mostly dealing

with the unfortunate cleaning processes to which it was subjected earlier in the 18th century. At this time Philip is still sitting next to "Susan his wife."³⁰ I submit that these sources are evidence that it was understood throughout the 18th century that the Earl's "Lady" was Susan Vere. It seems the change of the sitter's identity from the first wife to the second is a later phenomenon. The next step is to narrow down the time when this adjustment was made.

Notices of the painting are few and far between in the 19th century. The first to follow Britton was William Hazlitt in his *Picture Galleries of England*. Writing in 1824, Hazlitt notes that "There are the old Lord and Lady Pembroke." "Old Lady Pembroke" -- as he calls her -- is now without a name at all, but she is not quite yet Lady Anne Clifford. Continuing in his customary gruff tone, Hazlitt describes the Earl's Countess as "his help-mate looking a little fat and sulky by his side...."³¹

In 1838, the Director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin, Gustav Waagen, came out with a massive multi-volume tome: *Art and Artists in England*. The painting is now of "The Earl and His Countess." She has lost her name again, but in a tiny slip twixt cup and lip, Waagen notes that "her daughter," Anna Sophia, is to "her left."³² After this there is an occasional retro-reference back to Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, published in the late 18th century. Walpole is the source of the oft quoted (and previously mentioned) praise that the painting "would serve alone as a school of this master." However, he scrupulously avoided mentioning any of the sitters by name.³³

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The principal painting there is the immense composition representing the fourth Earl of Pembroke with his

second wife, Anne Clifford, and his family, including his son Philip, Lord Herbert, afterwards fifth Earl of Pembroke, his son's wife Penelope Naunton, and also his daughter Anne Sophia, with her husband Robert Dormer, Earl of Carnavon.³⁵

It seems that Cust's identification is the line of demarcation for the official attribution of Lady Anne Clifford as the Earl's lady in black. With the two exceptions previously noted, this identification has been adhered to throughout the 20th century. Aside from the introduction of Lady Anne Clifford onto the canvas, Cust made an imponderable mistake when he substituted Penelope Naunton for Lady Mary Villiers! A quick check in any book about the peerage will reveal that Penelope, the wealthy heiress of Ralph Naunton, married Viscount Paul Bayning in 1634 and was widowed in 1638, thereby freeing up her person and her pocketbook for the Pembroke earldom. When she married Lord Philip Herbert in 1639, the paint on Van Dyck's canvas was quite dry.³⁶

More than a century after the publication of the four 18th century catalogues, a new catalogue of the Wilton House treasures was published in 1907. Its author, Nevile R. Wilkinson, had been a Captain of Her Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, but perhaps his qualifications for the task were enhanced by the fact that he was married to a daughter of the Earl of Pembroke.³⁷ In this grand two-volume folio -- referred to by later writers as the "Great Catalogue" -- Captain Wilkinson reinforces the Lady Anne Clifford attribution. In the chapter about the 4th Earl and his family, Wilkinson devotes four pages to the virtues of Lady Anne while Susan Vere's name is called up only once, specifically as the mother of just one of the Earl's children. For all practical purposes, Susan has disappeared into the woodwork as a nearly anonymous first wife.

Following shortly upon the heels of Captain Wilkinson, the 20th century proliferation of the identification of Lady Anne was advanced by her first biographer, Dr. George C. Williamson. Williamson was widely published with an enviable resume to his credit, and it is certainly his endorsement that sealed the deal.³⁸ In his limited

edition biography of Lady Anne published in 1922, he goes to great lengths to describe her "grave countenance" in the Van Dyck.³⁹ Then he reveals that he has examined an-

More than a century after the publication of the four 18th century catalogues, a new catalogue of the Wilton House treasures was published in 1907. Its author, Nevile R. Wilkinson, had been a Captain of Her Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, but perhaps his qualifications for the task were enhanced by the fact that he was married to a daughter of the Earl of Pembroke. In this grand two volume folio Captain Wilkinson reinforces the Lady Anne Clifford attribution, devoting four pages to the virtues of Lady Anne while Susan Vere's name is called up only once, specifically as the mother of just one of the Earl's children. For all practical purposes, Susan has disappeared into the woodwork as a nearly anonymous first wife.

other much smaller portrait of Lady Anne Clifford at Wilton House. Hoping that two wrongs will make a right, Williamson has this to say about the heretofore unknown small portrait:

It had been forgotten for many years, and was not included in the great catalogue of the Wilton pictures, [i.e. Captain Wilkinson's two volumes] but was found in an upstairs room....It bears a long inscription saying that it represents Lady Anne, and the likeness to that in the great Van Dyck is quite unmistakable, although the portrait depicts her more cheerful in appearance....She has suspended from the front of the corsage a miniature of Lord Pembroke. As she is in a black dress, it is possible that this portrait may have been painted immediately after Lord Pembroke's decease.⁴⁰

The suggestion that the small portrait was painted after Pembroke's death is simply rubbish. Pembroke died in 1650. Lady Anne was born in 1590. The sitter in the small painting is hardly a 60-year-old woman. Dr. Williamson of all people should be able to do better than this. That this painting was not included in any of the Wilton House catalogues is most intriguing; what else has not been included in these historic catalogues? A unique feature of the portrait is the miniature of Pembroke worn at the neck of the sitter. As Williamson himself was an expert on miniature painting, he should have been able to recognize a likeness of Pembroke when he saw it. A miniature brooch was more likely to be worn by a wife; hence, the wearer's identity can be surmised by the simple process of elimination. With this in mind, the presumption should be entertained that the balding woman with the aquiline features is Susan Vere.⁴¹

Of course it would be helpful to our program to have a portrait to work from that was a securely established likeness of Susan Vere. In an 1842 *Hand-Book to Public Galleries of Art In and Near London*, there is a listing of a "Portrait of a Lady in Rich Dress," located at the Dulwich Picture Gallery.⁴² It is identified as a portrait of "Susan Vere, first wife of Philip Earl of Pembroke." Better yet, it is listed as a painting by Van Dyck. It would be just what the doctor ordered for the purposes of comparison, even though the

(*Cont. on p. 18*)

(Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 17)

compiler observed that “this picture has suffered terribly.”⁴³ This portrait is still in the collection of the Dulwich Picture Gallery. However, the attribution of the painter has been changed from Van Dyck to Cornelius Johnson the Elder, and the identity of the sitter is officially classified as unknown. It is now called “A Lady in Blue,” and images are available upon request.

In comparing the Dulwich portrait and Williamson’s plate, the features are similar enough to be the same person, painted by a great artist and a mediocre one respectively. Obviously, the loveliness of the painting formerly attributed to Van Dyck far surpasses the small painting, which Williamson attributed to William Dobson, a Van Dyck follower.⁴⁴ That both figures are balding is striking, and this is an element far removed from Lady Anne Clifford, whose abundant dark hair was one of her better features.

In comparing the Blue Lady to the figures of the Earl and his Lady in the great picture, what is striking is the similarity of the Earl’s and the Blue Lady’s sideward glance – a pose characteristic of Van Dyck which lesser painters tried to emulate. In addition to the graceful movement, the Lady in Blue has the sensitive expression of a Van Dyck, something else beyond the grasp of the lesser painters whose portraits were more in line with the dull, static Jacobean effigies.⁴⁵

But unless this portrait ultimately regains its identification as Susan Vere, there are no established portraits of her extant. However, we do have a good many of Lady Anne Clifford. Quite a different face is apparent when the physiognomy of Lady Anne is compared with the sitter in the Pembroke family portrait. At approximately age 28, Lady Anne sat for William Larkin and the next year for Paul van Somer, both distinguished artists of the era. There are two representations of her by Sir Peter Lely in the mid to late 1640s, and these likenesses correspond almost exactly to her portrait in the right panel of her great triptych painted in the mid 1640s, about a decade after Van Dyck painted the Pembroke family. In commenting on this, her most recent biographer remarks how much Lady Anne had aged in only ten years “since Van Dyck painted

her.”⁴⁶ The likeness that dates from 1629, right before the Pembroke marriage, is the closest in real time to Van Dyck’s family portrait. That these renditions of Lady Anne bear no resemblance to the Earl’s Countess

In spite of the disparity of the resemblance between the sitter in the Van Dyck and the many portraits of Lady Anne, her identification continues to be perpetuated by her biographers who put their imaginations to work to account for the sitter’s remote, disconnected appearance. Martin Holmes describes her “detachment” and Richard Spence refers to her as “looking withdrawn,” hoping this will explain away the Countess’ vacant “oblivious gaze.” They both leave unexplained why the Countess is clothed in basic, somber black, admittedly “almost humbly in comparison” to her husband with his Garter regalia and the colorfully attired young people.

is compelling evidence that Van Dyck did not paint her, for it should not be even a remote possibility that Van Dyck could fail to capture such elementary elements as Lady Anne’s dark hair and her distinctive

features with the dimple in her chin.⁴⁷

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In fact the costuming is itself an indication that the presence of the Countess is a fictionalization, and an example of what one authority calls “the typical Jacobean taste for ingenuity in paradox.”⁵⁰ In a recent study Emile Gordenker discusses how Van Dyck used clothing to fictionalize his sitters.⁵¹ That the lady in black is not dressed in the rich attire of a Countess is significant in the context of Van Dyck’s portraiture. In this case, her humble appearance -- not commensurate with her status -- is a technique used by Van Dyck to put his subjects “between the actual world and the realm of mythology.”⁵² Of course the three cherubs floating at the top corner are obvious allegorical iconography further enhancing the sense of the fictionalization of the family group.⁵³

Looking even more closely at Van Dyck’s Countess, the folded hands are another clue that the sitter is Pembroke’s deceased wife. Van Dyck places the hands and arms like this in only one other portrait that I can find, that of Cecilia Crofts. As described by Malcolm Rogers, “Her arms are folded in a cradling gesture over her womb, perhaps indicating that she was pregnant when the portrait was painted.”⁵⁴ Oliver Millar notes that Van Dyck painted Queen Henrietta Maria with similarly folded hands when she was pregnant.⁵⁵ It seems that the folded hands and cradled arms are associated with motherhood and are an appropriate motif for the matriarch of a dynasty.

The comparison of the cradled arms leads to one more observation. In the Crofts portrait, the arms are more rounded

than those of Pembroke’s Countess, and her fingers are more delicate and loosely held. Though the pose is essentially the same, the arms and hands of Cecilia Crofts are far more graceful and natural than Pembroke’s lady in black. Again, the skill of the master painter is apparent in the subtle artistry. Pembroke’s Lady has been described as “tense,” though a better word would be rigid.

If a visitor were to be standing before this painting in the Double Cube Room at Wilton House – and could see it clearly without being blinded by the magnificence of the room and the treasures it houses – he might notice one more thing: that the Countess is “noticeably thinly painted” in comparison to the rest of the figures.⁵⁶ One might sense the breathtaking effect generated by the austere figure rendered in the exceptionally thin brush-work, a testament to Van Dyck’s “power of empathy” with his subjects. This is a foremost example of his artistry made manifest in his “miraculous rendering of surface textures.”⁵⁷ She is ethereal. A surreal, gossamer figure captured in the thin paint. She is not quite there, even on the canvas, in quite the same way that the other family members are.

And what a contrast she is with the rest of the family in motion all about her. It could be a scene from a well-choreographed ballet: daughter Anna Sophia is the only one who has actually found her place on the stage as she reaches for her husband’s hand. He is moving up to the next step, as is Lady Mary Villiers who turns to glance back at the viewer. The Earl is turning and gesturing to his right, introducing his heir, it is thought, to his bride.⁵⁸ The two older boys are turning towards him, flaunting their attire, and the three younger boys are directing their attention upwards, as if the cherubs floating above were a distraction. Amidst all the commotion, the thinly painted figure with the squared off arms gazes vacantly away, and her stillness is palpable.

After all that’s been said, it’s not too much to ask that common sense be brought into the equation. Clearly, the purpose of the painting was to celebrate the Pembroke family dynasty. It is reasonable that Countess Susan would be given the respect she is due at her husband’s side, as the dynastic

survival of the family has been assured by the children of their marriage. David Howarth notes: “It was entirely appropriate

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that Van Dyck should have included the mother of Pembroke’s children. The spirit

of the Earl’s first wife thus compliments the presence of Lady Mary Villiers, by whom Pembroke expected to be provided with grandchildren.”⁵⁹

Thus, there is a litany of reasons for the Susan Vere identification: (1) the break-up of the marriage between Pembroke and his second wife; (2) the 18th century historical identifications; (3) the sitter’s lack of resemblance to Lady Anne’s established portraits; (4) the rigid, funereal pose of the sitter with the fictionalized attire and symbolism of matriarchy, all rendered in the thin paint by Van Dyck; and (5) just plain common sense.

As previously stated, twentieth century scholars use the marriage of Pembroke and Lady Anne Clifford as the reason for their identification of her in Van Dyck’s painting; and, indeed, the Earl’s second marriage would stay on the books until one or the other of them died in spite of their de facto divorce.⁶⁰ This circumstance notwithstanding, it seems the “time is out of joint,” and this element of chronological dissonance does need to be addressed. Therefore, the one question that is still on the table is the use of posthumous likenesses in other paintings of the era.

Numerous examples of what is known as chronological latitude can be found. The well known painting of Sir Thomas More and his family was commissioned by More’s grandson in 1593. In this multi-generational composite, the living Thomas More II is elderly and appears to be about the same age as his great-grandfather at the other side of the painting. His own father is a young man, and his famous grandfather, who was executed by Henry VIII in 1535, appears as he did in the fullness of life.⁶¹

Another example of chronological incongruity, as well as an example of the custom of commemorating lifetime landmarks in works of art, can be found in the charming family gathering of Henry VIII. In this painting the King celebrates his decision to put his two daughters back in the line of succession in 1544.⁶² Henry’s son Prince Edward, the Tudor heir, is sitting at his father’s right knee. The Queen chosen for the place of honor at his left is his third wife Jane Seymour, who died giving birth to the Prince six years earlier.

(Cont. on p. 20)

(The Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 19)

Of course in real time Henry was happily married (more or less) to his sixth wife, Queen Catherine Parr.

The significance of Henry VIII's family as a precedent for the Earl of Pembroke's family portrait is self evident; therefore, it must be asked if art historians are sure – absolutely certain -- that it is the deceased Queen Jane at Henry's side and not the contemporaneous Queen Catherine. The identification is indeed nailed down. The image of Jane Seymour was copied, almost exactly, from an earlier painting by Hans Holbein dating from 1537. The queen's gabled hood and wheel-shell headdress are an unmistakable mark of Queen Jane as Henry's later Queens chose the more fashionable French hood and headdress.⁶³ Although the French style was in vogue even when Jane was Queen, it was associated with Anne Boleyn, and Queen Jane shied away from this reminder of her fallen predecessor. Thus, it is certain that the Queen at Henry's side is his deceased wife who had produced the heir to the throne.⁶⁴

Van Dyck himself was called upon to portray deceased loved ones on canvass. Sir Kenelm Digby commissioned two paintings of his wife Venetia Stanley after her death. The first was painted two days after her unexpected demise when Van Dyck responded quickly enough to Digby's request to paint her before her body was removed for burial. This memorial keepsake was said to have been a great comfort to Sir Kenelm.⁶⁵ Moreover, in a subsequent effort to vindicate her reputation, he also commissioned from Van Dyck an elaborate allegory of her as Prudence, something she had hardly been in her younger days as the notorious courtesan of the Carolinian Court. As he did with the Pembroke Family portrait, Van Dyck put an allegorical scenario to good use to fictionalize his subject, and "Prudence" is crowned by cherubs -- her "virtue rewarded after death."⁶⁶

For another perspective, we turn our attention to the tomb of the Duke of Buckingham located in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey. The figures of his children have been the most admired part of the monument, and their dress and appearance have been used to determine

when the monument was completed.⁶⁷ Our "Butterfly" Mary Villiers can be seen as a child on the monument, approximately two years before she appears as a teenager of thirteen on Van Dyck's canvass. Included in this funerary scene on the tomb is a boy reclining with his right arm supported on a skull. This is Charles, the Duke's deceased son. His presence along with the three living children reveals how well accepted was the convention of including deceased family members in the living family group.

The 19th century editor Dr. Grosart's comment about Edward de Vere is well known: "An unlifted shadow somehow lies across his memory." The gradual disappearance of Countess Susan from the annals of the Pembroke family and the concurrent elevation of Lady Anne Clifford indicate that this shadow has fallen on his third daughter as well.

Conclusion

The 19th century editor Dr. Grosart's comment about Edward de Vere is well known: "An unlifted shadow somehow lies across his memory." The gradual disappearance of Countess Susan from the annals of the Pembroke family and the concurrent elevation of Lady Anne Clifford indicate that this shadow has fallen on his third daughter as well.

Susan's husband Philip is someone else to whom the hand of history has not been kind. In spite of all his efforts to leave behind a flourishing dynasty, things did not go well for him. The coveted Villiers mar-

riage went by the wayside. His marriage to Lady Anne cost him dearly. He never saw a penny of income from her estates, and did not even manage to reel in her daughter as a match for his younger son -- something that would have been a real coup for the Herbert family.⁶⁸ Moreover, the marriage cost him the leverage he would have had as an eligible bachelor to further another more worthwhile dynastic arrangement for himself and possibly his children. Therefore it seems ironic that the memory of Lady Anne Clifford, and not Lady Susan Vere, is raised up by later generations of Pembrokes. But all things considered, it is good to know that at least Philip had the Van Dyck masterpiece to show for his troubles.

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Endnotes

¹ Richardson, George. *Aedes Pembrochiana: A New Account and Description of the Antiquities and Curiosities in Wilton-House*. London: R. Baldwin, 1774, 74.

² Moir, Alfred. *Anthony Van Dyck*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1994. 114.

³ Sidney, 16th Earl of Pembroke. *A Catalogue of the Paintings and Drawings at Wilton House*. London: Phaidon Press LTD, 1968. 59.

⁴ Hannay, Margaret P. Phillip's Phoenix *Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. 159-162. In 1597, Lord and Lady Pembroke sought the marriage of their older son, William, and Oxford's second daughter, Lady Bridget Vere. Oxford gave his consent to the match that "dothe greatly content me, for Bridget's sake, whome always I have wished a good husband..." The marriage negotiations fell apart due to political reasons.

⁵ The presence of Susan Vere in the equation opens the door to issues which have been heretofore left largely unexplored. First of all, there is the question of the Herbert brothers' motivation for lending their names and political clout to the publication of the First Folio, something that Charlton Hinman describes as a "decidedly chancy venture." (The Norton Facsimile,

pages x and xi). It may be thought that their motivation was the preservation of the masterpieces of a family patriarch, an interest not shown by the descendents of the traditional "Stratfordian Shakespeare." Unexplained too by the traditional story is the source of the "considerable outlay of capital" that Hinman thinks was needed to get the Folio through the publishing process. Again, the Herbert "Brethren" are a likely source if for no better reason than that they are the only possible source of the "outlay" of venture capital needed to get the job done. But then again their motivation is puzzling and may be explained by the Herbert/Vere marriage. Another question is the extent of Ben Johnson's participation in the First Folio. Although orthodoxy reluctantly accepts him as the editor – once again because he is the only person in sight with the credentials for the job – great credit has been traditionally given to the actors Heminge and Condell. A closer examination of the long-standing relationship between Ben Jonson and the Pembroke family (including Countess Susan) diminishes the importance that has been attributed to Heminge and Condell and puts Ben Jonson in a different light.

⁶ Aikin, Lucy. *Memoirs of the Court of King James the First*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees Orme, Brown, 1822. 205. Sir Ralph Winwood's report of the nuptials includes additional details of the wedding celebration at court and information about the King's gift of 500 pounds land for the bride's jointure.

⁷ Aikin, 205-206.

⁸ Lever, Tresham. *The Herberts of Wilton*. London: John Murray, 1967. Shortly after the death of her first husband, the Countess contracted smallpox "which disease did so martyr my face..." 98.

⁹ Spence, Richard T. *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)*. Great Britain: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997. 40-58. Spence discusses in great detail Lady Anne Clifford's legal struggles to win back the Clifford properties from which she had been disinherited by her father's will.

¹⁰ Spence, 99.

¹¹ Spence, 101.

¹² Barnes, Susan J., Nora De Poorter, Oliver Millar, Horst Vey. *Van Dyck: A Complete*

Catalogue of the Paintings. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 8-9, 573. The 1968 Wilton House catalogue states that it was "painted in London, 1634-35." Perhaps the dates of Van Dyck's sojourn in Brussels were not available to the writer. (59-60). There is an occasional suggestion that the painting dates to a time prior to Van Dyck's departure for Brussels in the fall of 1633. These are gainsaid by the appearance of Mary Villiers who was born in March of 1622. The figure of Mary Villiers in Van Dyck's large painting is certainly not a 10 or 11 year old child. Moreover, Robert Dormer, the Earl's son-in-law, had been out of the country on an extended trip, returning in June of 1635 to take his place to the left of his wife.

¹³ The formal settlement of separation was signed on June 5, 1635.

¹⁴ Spence, 101.

¹⁵ Wilkinson, Nevile R. *Wilton House Pictures*. London: Cheswick Press, 1907. 290. Nicholson, Adam. *Earls of Paradise*. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008. 222. Holmes, Martin. *Proud Northern Lady*. London: Phillimore & Co., LTD, 1975. 132. Spence, 101.

¹⁶ Wilkinson, 290. Spence, 111.

¹⁷ Wilkinson, 297.

¹⁸ Nicolson, 222. Differences of opinion on dates and facts of the Herbert/Villiers marriage vex the researcher every step of the way. Even the exact amount of the dowry is in question. Nicolson seems uncertain and gives the amount as 20,000 and 25,000 pounds in different places in his book. Lever agrees with the 25,000 pounds (105). Howarth comes in on the low side with 10,000 pounds (227). Writing in 1907, Wilkinson puts the figure at 20,000 pounds (297).

¹⁹ Van Dyck made many trips between England and the Continent. A detailed account of his travels and activities is provided in the Chronology at the beginning of the Complete Catalogue cited above pages 8-9.

²⁰ Gordenker, Emilie E.S. *Anthony Van Dyck and the Representations of Dress in Seventeenth-Century Portraiture*. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002, 10.

²¹ Lever, 105. Nicolson, 230-231.

²² Howarth, David. *Images of Rule. Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997, 226-227.

²³ O'Donoghue, Freeman. *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits in The British Museum*, vol. V. London: Longmans, 1922. 49. This is cited by Howarth, page 304.

²⁴ Both engravings are in the permanent collection of The National Galleries of Scotland, ID # EPL 34.1 and UP P 47. The former is available for reproduction in black and white photography, and the staff responds promptly to requests.

²⁵ Gambarini of Lucca. *A Description of the Earl of Pembroke's Pictures*. Westminster: A. Campbell, 1731, 8-9.

²⁶ Cowdry, Richard. *A description of the Pictures, Statues, Busto's, Basso-Relievos,*

Great credit has been traditionally given to the actors Heminge and Condell. A closer examination of the long-standing relationship between Ben Jonson and the Pembroke family (including Countess Susan) diminishes the importance that has been attributed to Heminge and Condell and puts Ben Jonson in a different light.

and other curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton. London: J. Robinson, 1751, 58.

²⁷ Kennedy, James. *A New Discription of Pictures*. London: Benjamin Collins, 1758. 53.

²⁸ Richardson. *Aedes Pembrochiana*. The twelfth edition is available through Google Digitized Books. Great Britain: Salisbury Press, 1795, 74.

²⁹ Wilkinson, 302-303.

³⁰ Brittan, John. *Beauties of Wiltshire*, Vol 1. London: J. D. Dewick, 1801, 180.

³¹ Hazlitt, William. *Picture Galleries of England*. London: C. Templeman, 1836. 106-107. (This citation is from Google

(Wrong Countess cont. from p. 21)

Digitized Books, University of Wisconsin collection).

³² Waagen, Gustav. *Treasures of Art in Great Britain, Vol III*. Originally published in London: John Murray, 1838. Reprint, Elbiron Classics, 153. Several editions of this book are made available through Google Digitized Books, but the pages describing the paintings at Wilton House are mysteriously eliminated from all but the one cited herein.

³³ Walpole, Horace. *Anecdotes of Painting in England, Vol II*. London: J. Dodsley, 1786.

³⁴ Cust, Lionel. *King Edward VII and his court: some reminiscences by Sir Lionel Cust, K.C.V.G.* New York: E.P.Dutton, 1930, xix

³⁵ Cust, Lionel. *Van Dyck*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1900, 119.

³⁶ Lever, 106.

³⁷ Sidney, 9.

³⁸ Dr. Williamson was one of the general editors of Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, still an important reference on library shelves. His *Curious Survivals: Habits and Customs of the Past That Still Live in the Present* as well as books on Pietro Vannucci, George Morland, and *The Anonimo: Notes on Pictures and Works of Art in Italy*, are among his recently republished work. His versatility is apparent in the wide range of subjects on which he published, to name a few: *The Book of Amber, The Money of the Bible, Everybody's Book on Collecting, Guildford in Olden Times, The Imperial Russian Dinner Service, and A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot*.

³⁹ Williamson, Dr. George C. *Lady Anne Clifford*. Great Britain: Kendal, Titus, Wilson & Son, 1922, 349.

⁴⁰ Williamson, 349-350.

⁴¹ In the 1968 Wilton House Catalogue is a portrait (Item #95) identified by inscription as Lady Anne Clifford. No image is given, but the description fits the plate in Williamson's 1922 book, particularly as it is considered "neither good nor flattering." The miniature at her neck is now thought to be of her first husband, the Earl of Dorset. The catalogue notes that "Old re-paints were removed in 1950," 37-38.

⁴² Mrs. Jameson. *Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London*. Lon-

don: John Murray, 1842. 464. Kessinger Publishing, 2004. Mrs. Jameson lists this portrait as Item #134. This portrait is now catalogues as Item #DPG89. (Personal correspondence with the Dulwich Picture Gallery).

⁴³ Jameson, 464.

⁴⁴ The 1968 Wilton House catalogue does not suggest who the artist of Item #95 may have been.

⁴⁵ Llewellyn, Nigel. *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 234. The resemblance of paintings of the time with funeral effigies is not accidental. Llewellyn notes that "to follow a painted portrait in the making of an effigy was standard practice throughout the post-Reformation period, especially when top people were being commemorated."

⁴⁶ Spence, 111. The images of the young Lady Anne can be found in Spence's biography, pp. 74-77, the one dating from c. 1629, 93, and the elderly Lady Anne, 112-113.

⁴⁷ In the *Complete Catalogue* of Barnes, et al, there is no listing of a Van Dyck portrait of Lady Anne Clifford alone. Therefore, no portrait of her painted by Van Dyck exists at all if the identification of her in the Pembroke Family group is erroneous. As Van Dyck painted exclusively the courtiers, families and friends in the inner circle of the Royal Court, it is unsurprising that she was not granted the privilege of "sitting" for him.

⁴⁸ Holmes, 128. Spence, 102.

⁴⁹ Spence, 102.

⁵⁰ Lightbrown, Ronald W. "Issac Besnier, Sculptor to Charles I, and His Work for Court Patrons." Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court, editor, Howarth, 148.

⁵¹ Gordenker, 62.

⁵² Gordenker, 52.

⁵³ Gordenker, 53.

⁵⁴ Rogers, Malcolm. "Golden Houses for Shadows": Some Portraits of Thomas Killigrew and His Family." Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court, editor Howarth, 222-223.

⁵⁵ Millar, Oliver. *The Age of Charles I*. London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1972. 240. Martha von Monmouth is painted by Van Dyck with similarly folded hands, considered symbolic of her pregnancy. Barnes, 558-559.

⁵⁶ Barnes, 573.

⁵⁷ Ollard, Richard. "Clarendon and the Art of Prose Portraiture in the Age of Charles II." Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court, Essays in Honour of Sir Oliver Millar, David Howarth, editor. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 197.

⁵⁸ Moir, 114.

⁵⁹ Howarth, 227. The obsession of the upper classes with dynastic considerations should be compelling motivation for Pembroke to put his first wife by his side in his grand dynastic portrait, even if his second marriage had been satisfactory, which it certainly was not.

⁶⁰ Lindley, David. *The Trials of Frances Howard*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. The infamous divorce trial of Lady Frances Howard and the Earl of Essex is an object lesson in the difficulties presented in obtaining a divorce, even among the upper aristocracy. "As Roderick Phillips observes: 'England was unique in the sixteenth century as the only country where an established or dominant reformed church did not break with the Roman Catholic doctrine of marital indissolubility,'" 86.

⁶¹ Hearn, Karen, editor. *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England, 1530-1630*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1996. 128-129.

⁶² Starkey, David. *Elizabeth Apprenticeship*. Great Britain: Vintage, 2001, 30-31. It is noteworthy that the two Tudor princesses appear to be the same age, though Mary was sixteen years older than Elizabeth.

⁶³ Norris, Herbert. *Tudor Costume and Fashion*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1997, 287-288.

⁶⁴ Alfred Moir concurs with both the identifications and the influence of the Holbein mural as a model for Van Dyck's Pembroke Family, noting that "Holbein's mural of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour was destroyed by fire in 1698, but in the 1630s it was at Whitehall where Pembroke had his London accommodations," 114.

⁶⁵ Sumner, Ann and Amos, Polly. "Kenelm Digby and Venetia Stanley: The Love Story of the Seventeenth Century." *Death, Passion, and Politics Van Dyck's Portraits of Venetia Stanley and George Digby*. Great Britain: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1996, 30-31.

(Continued on page 28)

(Ring cont. from p. 1)

Terence: Tendit in ardua virtus."³ De Vere spent ten months in Italy, from May 1575 until March 1576, and seems to have devised his motto, *vero nihil verius*, sometime between this Italian sojourn and the year 1579, when it first appears in print. Although the motto, translated into English as "nothing truer than the truth," is based on an epigram by the Latin writer Martial, it twice includes the Latin root of de Vere's name, *veritas* – truth.

The next known use of an Edward de Vere motto was when it was revealed beneath his coat of arms and in an acrostic poem in Anthony Munday's *Mirror of Mutability*.⁴ There it appeared under the heading: "Verses Written by the Author upon his Lord's posy, *Vero Nihil Verius*." Sometime between 1576 and 1579 the motto had been transformed to that which we know today, *veronihil verius*, and which de Vere used for the remainder of his life.

In *This Star of England*, Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn cite a Latin poem of ten lines, written on the fly-leaf of a Greek Bible, which de Vere sent to his wife from Italy on hearing of the birth of their first child, Elizabeth. The poem is addressed: "To the illustrious Lady Anne de Vere, Countess of Oxford, while her noble husband, Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, was occupied in foreign travel." The poem, in the translation by B.M. Ward, begins: "Words of truth are fitting to a Vere" and further contains the line: "May thy true motto be Ever Lover of the Truth."

The Ogburns state that "The Latin poem, ... is for the most part a series of puns on Truth through the words *Vera, Veritas & Vere...*" There are indeed fifteen such puns in the English translation of those ten lines. The Ogburns continue: "He meant the motto to be read, 'E-ver Lo-ver of the Truth ... this is one of the earliest evidences we have of Lord Oxford's tendency to play upon his name, but he continued to do so, both obviously and subtly, though unfailingly, through everything he wrote upon his name and truth...'"

The birth of de Vere's daughter Elizabeth was July 2, 1575, but he was not able to write to his wife from Italy with the Latin poem until September 24 of that year. This would suggest a progression of the transformation of de Vere's motto along

these lines: (a) Valor proceeds to arduous undertakings, 1575/76. (b) Ever Lover of the Truth,⁵ late 1575. (c) Nothing is Truer than Truth, 1579.

The modern Italian word *vera*, translated into English, is the adjective *true*. But other lesser known translations show *vera* as a noun of various meanings. One example of its use as a noun is the wall which surrounds the top of a well which prevents animals from falling in, this is called a *vera*. Also when two water pipes are abutted, a metallic band is sealed around the join to prevent leakage. This seal is called a *vera*. *Vera* is synonymous with round, particularly a circular flat band.

The usual Italian word for ring is anello, which pertains to rings of all kinds. But the single word vera, without the appendage anello, has another little used translation and that is: wedding ring.

The usual Italian word for ring is *anello*, which pertains to rings of all kinds. But the single word *vera*, without the appendage *anello*, has another little used translation: wedding ring.

Before Italy became a unified nation in March 1861, the city-states which preceded unification spoke in different dialects. The use of *vera* to mean wedding ring was unique to the dialect spoken by the city-state of Venice⁶ at precisely the time de Vere was living in Venice and had a home there.

In 1935 Benito Mussolini proclaimed the "Vera Alla Patria"⁷ edict, which literally translates into "wedding ring to the country." He did this as a means to garner funds for Italy's war with Abyssinia. This demonstrates that the wedding ring interpretation of *vera* was understood in northern Italy by the twentieth century.

Towards the end of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*,⁸ after Portia

mischievously accuses Bassanio of losing the ring she had given him at their wedding the day before, Bassanio sheepishly tries to defend himself in the following exchange:

Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring
And would conceive for what I gave the ring
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When nought would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

Port. If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.

(and six lines later...)

I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.

The ring referred to in this exchange is the wedding ring given by Portia to Bassanio for their wedding ceremony. If we substitute the sixteenth century Venetian word for wedding ring, for the modern English word (i.e., "*vera*" for "ring"), the verses would look like this:

Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the vera,
If you did know for whom I gave the vera
And would conceive for what I gave the vera
And how unwillingly I left the vera,
When nought would be accepted but the vera,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

Port. If you had known the virtue of the vera,
Or half her worthiness that gave the vera,
Or your own honour to contain the vera,
You would not then have parted with the vera.

Could *vera* be a reference to de Vere's motto, *vero nihil verius*? Could *vera* be a pun on *vero* or on the Italian pronunciation of *Vere* in which the final *e* is sounded? Possibly, but we can do better than that.

In modern English, to pluralize a noun we merely add the letter *s*. *Vera* is an Italian singular feminine noun⁹ and to make such nouns plural, the feminine ending of the noun which is the letter *a*, is changed to the letter *e*. Some examples to illustrate this include: (cup) *tazza* = (cups) *tazze*; (chair) *sedia* = (chairs) *sedie*; (apple) *mela* = (apples) *mele*. This rule also applies to *vera* so the word that means wedding-rings is *vere*.

(Continued on page 24)

(*Ring continued from p. 23*)

Is there more than one ring involved in *Merchant's* Act III wedding ceremony? At their wedding, Since Portia gives a ring to Bassanio but Bassanio does not give a ring to Portia. our translation remains singular, *vera*.

Port. I gave my love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it.

However, Bassanio's friend Gratiano begs to be married, in the same ceremony, to Portia's maid-in-waiting, Nerissa.

Grat. . . . I do beseech you,
Even at that time I may be married too.
Bass. With all my heart, . . .

For the Nerissa/Gratiano nuptial, Nerissa

**Because the author
introduced a second bride to
the ceremony and each bride
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That is “rings” in the Italian
equivalent of “vere.”**

gives her husband a ring but he, like Bassanio, does not return the favour.

Ner. I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

Grat. . . . a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give me,

Because the author introduced a second bride to the ceremony and each bride gave a ring to her groom, the plot becomes, in part, the story of the provenance of two rings instead of one. That is, “rings” in the Italian equivalent of “vere.”

In the sixteen lines immediately preceding the “ring” speeches (above) we

are reminded three times that two rings are involved in these weddings: lines 193 and 196; line 198; lines 206 and 208 The ring speeches begin immediately after the final reminder, at line 210.

Grat. My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begg'd it and indeed
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine;
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

Port. What ring gave you my lord?
Not that, I hope, which you received of me.

Bass. If I could add a lie unto a fault,
would deny it; but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

Port. Even so void is your false heart of truth.
By heaven, I will ne'er come in your bed
Until I see the ring.

Ner. Nor I in yours
Till I again see mine.

Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring
And would conceive for what I gave the ring...

(192-210, emphasis added)

In Italian, adding a wedding-ring turns *vera* into *vere*.

A source for the last scene of *Merchant of Venice* is generally agreed to be *Il Pecorone* by Giovanni Fiorentino.¹⁰ No known English translation existed at the time *Merchant* was written. In *Il Pecorone* one lady and one gentleman are married and there is only one ring exchanged. *Il Pecorone* works well with one marriage and one ring. Shakespeare differed from his source by adding a second couple for a double wedding, which necessitated two rings. This seems to have been a deliberate and purposeful addition to his source play. As the author draws our attention repeatedly to the fact that *two rings* are being written about in *Merchant of Venice*, the second of which is an intentional and contrived addition to the source play, the substitution of *vera* for “ring” may be superseded by *vere* for “rings” making the verses appear thus:

Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the vere,

If you did know for whom I gave the vere
And would conceive for what I gave the vere
And how unwillingly I left the vere,
When nought would be accepted but the vere,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

Port. If you had known the virtue of the vere,
Or half her worthiness that gave the vere,
Or your own honour to contain the vere,
You would not then have parted with the vere.

Out of a series of ten consecutive lines, the word ring/vere forms the final word of every line except for one. Nine times out of ten! Does Shakespeare rhyme the word “ring” elsewhere in his works? *Ring* is scattered

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throughout the plays but never in such a blatant display of apparently superfluous repetition as in *Merchant*, and never in such a rhyming sequence. There are other examples of rhyming repetition in *Merchant*. In 5.1 the phrase “in such a night” is used eight times in a sequence of twenty-six lines, six of which form the initial words of the line and, indeed, of successive stanzas.

When the suitors to Portia choose which of the three caskets to open, they find that inside each casket is a scroll containing a rhyming verse. The golden

casket has a nine line verse and the final word of each line rhymes with “gold.” The silver casket has a ten line verse, with the final word of the first seven lines rhyming with “is” and the last three lines being a triplet rhyming with “bed.” The lead casket scroll contains a verse of eight lines, the first four of which rhyme with “new” and the final four lines rhyme with “is.”

A search for a similar repetitive line ending of the word “Vere” in Elizabethan works uncovered the Echo Verses¹¹ written by Edward de Vere, the third stanza of which, preceded by the end of the second stanza, is reproduced below:

From sighs and shedding amber tears into sweet song she brake,
When thus the echo answered her to every word she spake:
Oh heavens! who was the first that bred in me this fever? *Vere*.
Who was the first that gave the wound whose fear I wear for ever? *Vere*.
What tyrant, Cupid, to my harm usurps thy golden quiver? *Vere*.
What sight first caught this heart and can from bondage it deliver? *Vere*.

The words in the Echo Verses were spoken by a woman and commonly attributed to Anne Vavasor, although the words are presumed to be written by Edward de Vere to be spoken by Anne Vavasor. Caruana and Sears¹² state that at about this time (1580) de Vere and Anne Vavasor were exchanging love poetry.

A look at the First Folio version of *The Merchant of Venice* reveals one more surprising detail in support of this thesis (Figure One).

We are not only drawn to this exchange by the brazen repetition of the word *ring*, note that this significant word is capitalized in every instance, providing yet another call by the author for us to take notice of this passage and of this word. The word *ring* is used as a noun 38 times in *Merchant*. In Acts 1 and 2, ring is not used at all. In Act 3, ring is used three times, and Act 4, eleven times, none of which are capitalized. The only place where capitalization of the word *ring* occurs is in the final Act. In Act 5, it is used twenty-four times, the first twenty being capitalized. The speeches of Bassanio and Portia are surrounded by the capitalized use of *Ring* with eight preceding the speeches, nine

within the speeches and three following. Of the characters listed as friends to Antonio and Bassanio, Salarino and Salanio play only minor parts. It is the other friend, Gratiano who plays the significant role. It is Gratiano who begged to be married in the same ceremony as Bassanio, and it is Gratiano, who receives the second ring in the double marriage implied in *Merchant*. The very name “Gratiano” is significant.

Perucci records the name of the doctor who delivered the tirade about

Grat. My Lord Bassanio gave his Ring away
Unto the Iudge that begg'd it, and indeede
Deserv'd it too: and then the Boy his Clarke
That tooke some paines in writing, he begg'd mine,
And neither man nor master would take ought
But the two Rings.
Port. What Ring gave you my Lord?
Not that I hope which you receiv'd of me.
Bass. If I could adde a lie vnto a fault,
I would deny it: but you see my finger
Hath not the Ring vpon it, it is gone.
Port. Euen so void is your fault heart of truth.
By heauen I will nere come in your bed
Vntill I see the Ring.
Ner. Nor I in yours, till I againe see mine.
Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did knowe to whom I gaue the Ring,
If you did knowe for whom I gaue the Ring,
And would conceiue for what I gaue the Ring,
And howe unwillingly I left the Ring,
When nought would be accepted but the Ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure?
Port. If you had knowne the vertue of the Ring,
Or halfe her worthinesse that gaue the Ring,
Or your owne honour to containe the Ring,
You would not then haue parted with the Ring:
What man is there so much vnreasonable,
If you had pleas'd to haue defende'd it
With any termes of Zeale: would the modestie
To vrge the thing held as a ceremonie:
Nerissa teaches me what to beleue,
He die for't, but some Woman had the Ring?

Figure One: Folio text of *Merchant* showing capitalization of “Ring.”

de Vere at the tournament in Italy as Graziano. Although spelled differently, and Gratiano is the more ancient of the two names being seldom if ever used today, the pronunciation of Graziano is identical to Gratiano.¹⁵ Edward de Vere knew Dr. Graziano as it was he (Graziano) who delivered to de Vere and others, the tirata in 1575, but it is Shakespeare who uses the phonetically identical name to help make this sub-plot contain two wedding rings instead of one.

The final lines of *Merchant of Venice* are:

Grat.
But were the day come, I should wish it dark,

That I were couching with the doctor's clerk,
Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's *ring*.

As Portia is the rich lady and Nerissa the maid-in-waiting, one would expect the final two words to be “Portia's ring.” Portia is the dominant character needed to drive the plot along. However, Portia represents one ring. Nerissa represents the second ring. By using Nerissa's ring to end the play the author is demanding one final time that we recognize the plurality of the rings. The final word in the play is *ring*. The author's use of Nerissa turns that final word from ring/vera into rings/vere. That, the very end, is in exactly the place where you and I would sign our names to something we had written. The word “ring,” in this instance, is not capitalized in the First Folio.

Conclusion

1. The English WEDDING RINGS becomes VERE when translated into Italian but, at the time the play was written, it was only so in the Republic of Venice where de Vere had a home.
2. The word RING occurs as the final word of the line, nine times in a sequence of ten lines in *Merchant*, and every time, the word “Ring” is capitalized in the First Folio.
3. The author differed from his source and accentuated the addition of a second ring which *allowed for* the plural of RING to become RINGS to become VERE.
4. Based on the arguments above, we may make four additional observations:
 - a. Edward de Vere wrote the Echo Verses giving heavy emphasis to VERE.
 - b. Edward de Vere altered his motto to include and better reflect his name: VERE.
 - c. Vere wrote the Latin poem which contained multiple references to truth and/or its Latin root: VER.
 - d. William Shakespeare wrote the “ring” speeches in *The Merchant of Venice* revealing a possible VERE

(Continued on p. 26)

(Ring cont. from p. 25)

connotation.

The comic relief in the final scene of *Merchant*, like *Il Pecorone* before it, does not require more than one ring. The giving of a ring with a promise to keep it forever, the giving it away to a perceived stranger the next day to who was in reality his own wife, the embarrassment, the guilt, the shame and the reconciliation, could all be equally accomplished between Portia and Bassanio alone. Nerissa's second ring is dramatically redundant to the plot. But that same ring, because it enables the plurality of Merchant's rings, is absolutely crucial if the author is Edward de Vere, to enable the singular "wedding ring" to become the plural "wedding rings," since "wedding rings" is the direct English translation of the Italian word which spells his name: VERE.

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Nerissa's ring, the second ring, is dramatically redundant to the plot. But Nerissa's ring, that second ring which enables the plurality of the rings, is absolutely crucial if the author is Edward de Vere, to enable the singular "wedding ring" to become the plural "wedding rings," since "wedding rings" is the direct English translation of the Italian word which spells his name: VERE.

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Endnotes

¹ *Dell' Arte Rappresentative Premeditata ed all' improvviso.* by Andrea Perrucci. Published in Naples 1699.

² A *tirata* (tirade) was an entertainment by the *Commedia dell'Arte*. In this case of *The Tirata della Giostra* (The Tirade of the Tournament), a certain Dr. Graziano very quickly recites the names and titles of twenty or thirty knights and ladies with their countries of origin, along with details of their horses, devices, garments, shields and the events that befell each of them during the tournament. It is the speed of delivery which provides the humour.

³ *Tendit in ardua virtus.* (Valor proceeds to arduous undertakings.)

⁴ *The Mirrour of Mutability*, 1579, by Anthony Munday contained an acrostic poem which spelled "EDWARD DE VERE EARLE OF OXFENFORD" and another which spelled "VERO NIHIL VERIUS."

⁵ Although de Vere never used *Ever Lover of the Truth* as a motto for himself, he coined it for his wife (who also never used it). It was a part of a poem.

⁶ Rizzoli Larousse VOL 15 Milano, 1964 & 71. *vera* s.f. (*voce veneziana, dal lat. tardo viria, braccialetto*). Region. Anello nuziale. - Archit. Sin. di PUTEALE. Voce Veneziana may be translated as "Voice of the Venetian dialect," or "as spoken in Venice" (Venetian Republic). *Vera* was apparently not used before 1861 to mean wedding ring throughout most of present day Italy although in parts of northern Italy today the wedding band is sometimes referred to as a *vera*, a veneto-slavic term meaning "fidelity."

⁷ In 1935 during Italy's war with Abyssinia, Benito Mussolini issued the *L'Oro Alla Patria* edict, which called for all Italian people to forfeit their wedding rings so the gold could be melted down to assist the war effort. Because most adults wore wedding rings at that time and the sacrifice was personal and emotional, it was commonly called *Vera Alla Patria*, and Il Duce gave no choice but to donate. This continued until 1943.

⁸ All lines quoted are from Act III, Scene 2; Act IV, Scene 2; Act V, Scene 1.

⁹ Mario Hazon. Edition Garzanti. April 1961 Italy: *Vèra*, s.f. 1. (*di pozzo*) well-curb 2. (dial.) (*anello nuziale*) wedding ring. 1. *Vera*, singular, feminine, noun. *pozzo* is the wall surrounding the top of a well to prevent falling in. 2. (dialect) wedding ring.

¹⁰ *Il Pecorone* by Giovanni Fiorentino, written in 1378, and first published in 1565.

¹¹ Echo Verses in the Rawlinson MS. at the Bodleian Library, these lines are headed "Verses made by the Earle of Oxforde" and followed

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way of communicating the facts supporting Oxford, coupled with the facts against the traditional figure of the man from Stratford. Now what was I meaning by the statement that we must use a non-threatening approach? All too often, we are asked by those first hearing about the authorship question, "what does it matter?" or even, "why can't you just appreciate the works as they are without having to find something wrong with it?" This is certainly something I have had to respond to (even from members of my own family). I have to reassure these people, that to question the validity of the authorship is not an attack on the works themselves. We are not trying to make mountains out of molehills but rather attempting to cultivate new interpretations of these literary masterpieces by gaining a further understanding of the man who wrote them.

Another question that is often asked of me by skeptics is the reasoning behind keeping the identity of the author a secret even after his death. Here is the make-it or break-it point as I see it. For if you become too detailed with names, dates and the like or if you list only one Oxfordian interpretation, you run the risk of that person either being bogged down with too much information or they find your interpretation a little hard to swallow. While it is my belief that rational people can put aside the myth of the Virgin Queen, they might still find it hard to believe that the Elizabeth was able to conceal multiple pregnancies, let alone one. This is not to say that those who support the Prince Tudor theories don't have some valid points in their arguments. I personally find the idea plausible, as I also do with the homo/bi-sexual interpretation. But when we are dealing with those who have had little or no knowledge of either Shakespeare or of the authorship candidates, we must be very subtle in our approach. We should communicate the simple points of Oxford's biography and how it corresponds with the Shakespeare canon, not bash them over the head with it but rather give them something to think about. Give

them some literature or point them towards sources that won't overburden them with the more minute details that are covered in our conferences and in some of our publications.

Another way we could make ourselves more accessible to those who do not yet ascribe to our view of the Shakespeare authorship issue is to open ourselves and more particularly our publications to non-Oxfordian contributors. I am speaking, of course, to the recent divisiveness over the appointment of Dr. Michael Egan as the new editor of *The Oxfordian*. While I was at first surprised and unsure about what it would mean to have an editor who was not a confirmed Oxfordian, after thinking the issue over and listening to Dr. Egan's responses to membership's questions and concerns, I have come to the belief that it will ultimately help us in the long run to have a person of Dr. Egan's standing working for us. While I certainly believe that *The Oxfordian* should remain primarily Oxfordian in its content, it is my opinion that as long as we allow only the Oxfordian perspective to be represented, we will only succeed in producing a journal that preaches to the choir and which can, therefore, be written off by our critics as being biased. We should not look at it as a step towards abandoning our ideals but rather as a way to help us sharpen our arguments against the opposition.

The final point that I would like to mention as being a possible deterrent to gaining new converts to our cause is the continued split between our two organizations. As those of you who have met me at previous conferences might recall, I have been an avid supporter of the efforts at reunification. While I was never privy to the causes that led to the original schism, I would contend that whatever issue or issues led to the split, they have either been resolved or are no longer of consequence. Would it not serve both organizations to pool our collective resources to form a single and much stronger organization? What message

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are we sending to those on the outside when we are unable or unwilling to work together? Let us not forget that we all have a common goal, and while we may disagree on some of the finer points, we should all be willing to agree on the most important thing . . . “it is about the Earl.”

I must now end this letter and, once more, ask that you please forgive my presumptiveness in addressing you on these matters. I mean not to dictate or preach, but merely to voice some of the concerns I have come to have over the last three years. I want to thank all those who have befriended me and given me the encouragement to take a more active role in this, our cause.

Yours Sincerely,

Stuart J. Green

(Ring, cont. from p. 26)

by a subheading, “Ann Vavesour’s Echo.”

¹² *Oxford’s Revenge*, Preliminary Draft Edition, 1989. Caruana & Sears, (82)

¹³ *The Fugger Newsletters*. One of the richest families in Europe in the 16th century was the merchant family of the Fuggers who lived in Augsburg, in present day Germany. They had representatives

and associates all over Europe and around the world. From these they would receive letters describing local conditions and events, and anything the correspondent thought might be of relevance to the family’s mercantile interests. Reports from London, however, were comparatively few as few agents were based there. *The Fugger Newsletter* is a collection of thousands of these manuscripts which date from 1568 to 1604. They were first edited in 1735 and part of the collection was translated by L.S.R. Byrne and published in English in 1926. Among the topics discussed in the Fugger Newsletters were deaths of kings and queens, wars, the arrival and departure of ships, the horribly botched execution of the Earl of Essex, other executions, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

¹⁴ Ruth Loyd Miller, in “*Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*,” Vol. 1 (496), gives the period 1578-1581 as the time Ann Vavasour was significant in the life of Edward de Vere. A letter from Francis Walsingham dated March 23rd, 1581 states that Ann Vavasour gave birth to an illegitimate son, subsequently named Edward Veer, on the night of 21st March, 1581. This places the time of conception to June 1580.

¹⁵ Graziano. There is a “t” sound in the “z” as in the words *Pizza* and *grazie*.

(The Wrong Countess, cont. from p. 22)

⁶⁶ Parry, Graham. “Van Dyck and the Caroline Court Poets.” *Studies in the History of Art* 46 (1994), 350. Anthony van Dyck Susan J. Barnes, Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. and Julius Samuel Held, eds. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1994, 259.

⁶⁷ Lightbrown, 150-152. The size of the younger son, born in April 1629, is an important factor in dating the monument, as is the appearance of Lady Mary, the oldest child.

⁶⁸ Spence, 111.

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of early modern authorship and literary creativity, and on related questions of early modern literary culture, aesthetics, bibliography, psychology, law, biography, and history. Contributions that utilize an interdisciplinary methodology that draws on the conventions and data of more than one relevant humanities discipline to produce original, carefully reasoned, and readable insights, are especially welcome.

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