



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



Vol.34: no.2

"Let me study so, to know the thing I am forbid to know"

Summer 1998

Shaking the Spear at Court

*Oxford as "The Knight of
the Tree of the Sunne"*

by Dr. Daniel L. Wright

When the Renaissance gave birth to dramatic art in Europe, its nativity was at the court. Royal patronage of the theatrical arts enabled the Golden Age of Spanish Theatre by nurturing the dramatic genius of such court playwrights as Alarcón, Calderón, Rojas Zorilla, and Agustín Moreto. The royal house of Portugal financed the productions of such showmen as Gil Vicente, and the French court of the Valois king, Charles IX, was host to the work of court poet Pierre de Ronsard, as well as those court writers dedicated to the reformation and refinement of French language and literature who collectively were known as the Pléiade, and among whom were such figures as Etienne Jodelle and Jean de la Taille. Ludovico Ariosto orchestrated the Italian Renaissance in the theatrical arts from the court of Ferrara, and in England, a succession of Tudor monarchs encouraged, supported, and financed the writing of plays and the production of court entertainments long before the emergence of public theatres.

In England, we have vast evidence of the prominence and activity of various court impresarios during the era of the Tudor regime. Thomas Heywood—poet, playwright, balladeer and patron of players—was especially influential in developing the dramatic arts at court during the reign of Henry VIII. Scholars regard him as instrumental in effecting the dramatic bridge between the comic interlude and mature English comedy. We have court records of Heywood being paid for performing these interludes by Henry VIII, and George Puttenham testifies that Heywood continued to prosper in his ser-

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Shakespeare's son on Death Row?

*Spanish ambassador's letter makes it clear
that 18th Earl's life may have hung in the bal-
ance as the First Folio was rushed to completion*



*Henry de Vere, 18th Earl
of Oxford. As leader of the
opposition to the Span-
ish Marriage, was his fate
a factor in publishing the
First Folio in 1623?*



*In Count Gondomar's
letter home to Spain in
May 1622 he states, "I
have a strong desire to
cut off his [18th Earl's]
head."*

On July 7th researcher Peter Dickson gave his third lecture of the year at the Library of Congress on his theory about the publication of the *First Folio* and the Spanish Marriage Crisis. Since our report about Dickson's work in the last issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* he has uncovered more new documents which lend support to his theory about the *Folio* publication.

The July 7th lecture, held at the Hispanic division of the Library of Congress, was highlighted by Dickson's presentation of a letter he had just received from Spain's royal archives in June. In this letter (see the translation on page 4) the Spanish ambassador to London at that time, Count Gondomar (full name, Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña), wrote back to his home government that the action that King James took in April 1622 in imprisoning Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford, were at the behest of Gondomar himself. Furthermore, in this same letter, Gondomar states that King James had also relieved the 18th Earl of Oxford of his fleet command in the English Channel because of Gondomar's request, and Gondomar goes on to say that he personally would like to see the 18th Earl of Oxford executed.

The clear implication in the letter is that James is doing whatever Gondomar wishes to see done. This in

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another authorial name clue?**

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“By this Hat, then...”

New Evidence about the 1580s “Portrait of a Gentleman”

by Katherine Chiljan

In July, 1581, Queen Elizabeth I made a gift to the Earl of Oxford of “one hat of the Dutch fashion of black taffeta with band embroidered with [indecipherable] pearl and gold.” This fascinating tidbit was stored in the one surviving log book from the Wardrobe of Robes; the manuscript details items of clothing and jewelry lost or given away by the Queen from her personal wardrobe.*

This new bit of Oxford’s biography further supports, if not proves, my contention that “Portrait of a Gentleman” is indeed of Oxford (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Winter 1997). The sitter in this portrait is wearing a black hat with pearl and gold buttons, and the circa 1580 dating agrees with that of the gift.

The portrait was analyzed by Janet Arnold, the costume historian who wrote the marvelous folio-size work, *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d*. “I would think that this young man is either English or French. The ruff size is quite large for 1580... So it could be an Englishman dressed in the French fashion, or a Frenchman. He is certainly a courtier, with a sword containing so many jewels, and such an evident air of fashion.”

In this exact time period, Oxford (as Ward and Ogburn believe) got lampooned for his French appearance. Relating an encounter he had in February 1581, Barnabe Riche wrote, “It was my fortune at my last being at London... where I met one came riding towards me, on a footcloth nag, appeared in a French ruff, a French cloak, a French hose, and in his hand a great fan of feathers, bearing them up (very womanly) against the side of his face... But by this time he was come something near me, and I might see he had a beard, whereby I was assured that he should have been a man.” (Riche, *His Farewell to Military Profession*)

The pencil-thin beard in the portrait could be the same one Riche had a hard time seeing. The rose in the ear is an undeniably feminine affectation.

The Queen’s presence is strongly indi-



In addition to the distinctive cap worn by the circa 1580 gentleman and the rose in his left ear, he also sports a hair style that seems to echo Elizabeth’s “pearl drop” look.

cated in this portrait: he wears her hat, the “Tudor” rose, her symbol, and the tuft of hair on the temple could be simulating her frequently worn pearl drop. In all likelihood, Oxford had the portrait made very soon after he received the hat, so on a superficial level, it could be an acknowledgment of the gift.

The intriguing thing about the royal hat gift to Oxford was that it was given a month after his release from the Tower, June 8th, 1581. He had been imprisoned for two and a half months and was to remain under house arrest for several more. (His offense was the birth of a bastard child by his lover Anne Vavasour.) Why would the Queen give Oxford a gift at this time? A small token of compensation for his confinement? A sign of restored favor? A replacement for a lost article? Upon Oxford’s release, the Yeoman Porter of the Tower demanded his upper garments as a fee. The demand was rejected, but maybe he managed to snatch Oxford’s hat?

The exact reason for the royal hat gift may never be known, but there would be no doubt that Oxford would want to be portrayed wearing it. This painting depicts Oxford at the peak of his flamboyant attire, during, by contrast, his most humiliating year.

*Janet Arnold, “Lost from Her Majesties Back,” *Costume Society Extra Series* no. 7, 1980; the manuscript is at the Public Records Office, Duchess of Norfolk Deeds, C/115/L2/6697, f. 76, entry no. 324.

A Catholic Shakespeare ...training as a Priest?

There’s never a shortage of Shakespeare stories in today’s world, and with the stakes being raised daily in the authorship debate (see our page-one story on “Shakespeare’s son...”), mainstream Shakespeare studies are keeping pace with recent theories about either new Shakespeare works (e.g., *The Funeral Elegy*) or, now, a whole new Shakespeare biography.

This latest—that Shakespeare of Stratford was actually living in northern England as William Shackshafte at Hoghton Tower in the early 1580s—has recently received major coverage, with a Style Section story in the June 25th *Washington Post*, and more recently a feature story in the Catholic newspaper *The Wanderer* (July 16th).

Theories of a Catholic Shakespeare have been around for a long while, but over the past 4-5 years the whole issue has been given new life with the arguments made by Ian Wilson in his 1993 book *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, and by Margarita Stocker in 1996 with her theory that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is a thinly veiled anti-Protestant tract.

The current theory about William Shackshafte is being promoted by Prof. Richard Wilson of Lancaster University and Sir Bernard de Hoghton; they plan to build a \$32 million Shakespeare research and performance center in Hoghton Tower as a centerpiece for their theory, believing that the area was a “Jesuit clearinghouse” for young men to be sent abroad to study for the priesthood.

According to Wilson, records about the itinerary of the martyred priest Edmund Campion lend support to his theory that young Shakespeare could have wound up going from Stratford to Hoghton Tower, and from there perhaps into the underground Jesuit pipeline between England and the continent.

For Oxfordians all this activity appears to be more a story of “Desperately Seeking Shakespeare” than serious new research or scholarship. “Shakespeare, the secret Catholic” gives the traditional author a biography for the Lost Years, a thematic sub-text for his writing, and a reason to be secretive. Little wonder that it’s so attractive.

This is not to say that there may not be some fire somewhere near this Catholic smoke. Peter Dickson’s recent research (“Shakespeare’s son...” page one) certainly has the politics of the Catholic issue front and center, and—as Oxfordians are well aware—Edward de Vere’s own tumultuous

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22nd Annual Conference, November 12th to 15th

Plans for the 22nd Annual Shakespeare Oxford Society Conference have begun to take shape, and it is estimated that this could be the largest and most publicly visible conference in our history. A group of approximately twelve local members have been meeting regularly since November and are putting together a program that is unprecedented in scale and scope. The San Francisco Conference is expected to attract leading speakers and celebrities from around the globe in addition to providing some unique entertainment and publicity events.

Conference activities will begin during the week of November 9th with a special Press Conference at which William Shaksper of Stratford will appear before the public to announce his apology for having lived the last 400 years as an imposter. Lord Oxford will also be present to accept the posthumous recognition of his authorship under the pen-name of "William Shake-speare." Finally, a special appearance by Elizabeth I will corroborate that this conspiracy was sanctioned and perpetuated by her for political reasons.

The conference planning committee has contracted with one of the country's leading and most popular Elizabethan entertainment troupes, As You Like It Productions (utilizing leading players from the California Renaissance Faires), to provide an evening of entertainment at an "Elizabethan Banquet." As You Like It Productions is one of the oldest and most successful anachronistic entertainment companies in the country.

Conference attendees can expect to see and meet such figures as Gloriana herself, Leicester, Drake, Raleigh, Southampton, Hatton, Derby, and other famous noblemen and ladies of the court.

A rich variety of speakers have been invited to give presentations. Some of the latest and most ground-breaking research will be presented from leading thinkers such as Dr. John Rollett, Peter Dickson, Robert Detobel (via Christopher Dams), Peter Moore and Joe Sobran. Special invitations have also been extended to such luminaries as Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, Dr. Moritmer Adler, Patrick Stewart, Sir Derek Jacobi, Michael York, Dr. Charles Van Doren and Elizabeth Ashley. While these people have not confirmed an appearance (most cannot do so until 30 days before the event), we are especially optimistic due to the Conference location this year and our expectation of extensive local—and perhaps national—publicity.

Appearances by any of the invited celebrities mentioned above will naturally provide for some interesting speakers for the luncheons or dinners over the 3-day Conference schedule. Moreover, it is planned that some of the cinema and theatrical personalities will appear on Sunday at the final event, "A Celebration of Shake-speare and The Earl of Oxford" at the San Francisco Palace of Fine Arts, one of the most scenic forums in the city. The event will be open to the public, and should generate much publicity about the mystery of the Shakespeare authorship.

The theatrical debut of Alan Hovey's *Aye, Shakespeare!* will be the featured entertainment event at the Palace, with the production especially designed to educate newcomers to the authorship controversy. The show will be followed by a special panel of celebrities/luminaries discussing their views on the authorship question. The day's busy schedule will conclude with a reception for Society members and guests, and will again feature Elizabethan entertainers provided by As You Like It Productions.

For more information please contact Dave Hicks, Conference Chairman at 415-522-9766. Conference registrations and brochures were sent out in the middle of July. If cost is a concern, please inquire about our limited subsidy program that allows a special discounted rate in exchange for services at the conference.

Call for papers 22nd Annual Conference

Individuals wishing to present papers at the Conference should send them to:

Katherine Chiljan
82 Malta Drive
San Francisco CA 94131
Tel: (415)239-4342
email: chilj@earthlink.net

Papers should be delivered typed double-spaced, or on disk in ASCII, WordPerfect 5.1 or Word 6.0 (Mac format preferred)

Length should be based on a presentation time of approx. 30 minutes

A Letter to the Earl of Oxford: Edward de Vere

REST, REST, PERTURBED SPIRIT!
trust time! The truth will out!
Stratford cannot contain your monument
for it is everywhere that Romeo sighs,
Lear howls or Portia pleads her case
and Hamlet rouses us to rage at the
injustice of the world!

We hear our inmost thoughts and know
ourselves a little better than we did
because you live immortally in every line.
A simple school master stood up to Stratford,
searched you out because he understood
what writers always knew
"the work could not be married to the man."

A band of lawyers then took up your cause
and spoke in your defense.
Our scholars sacrificed their lives'
best energies to clear your wounded name,
gallantly battle ignorance and arrogance,
endure the SCORN WHICH PATIENT MERIT
OF THE UNWORTHY ALWAYS TAKES.

And bless the actor, he of that motley crew
you loved so well.
Dreary rehearsal halls and empty dressing rooms
are his reward for the pure joy of
giving your verse a voice.
Four centuries he's brought you
to the common man
who might not find you in a book.

Spear-Shaker, Patron Saint of Poets - No!
Stratford cannot contain your monument
for it is in the heart of every reader.
REST, REST, PERTURBED SPIRIT!
Trust time! The truth will out!
THE END CROWNS ALL!

Katherine Assante
Cornwall, New York

Shakespeare's Son (Continued from page 1) itself is not new information, since Gondomar is already notorious in history as a Machiavellian type who had more than once manipulated the English monarch in the name of Spanish policy objectives. What is new is that the letter clearly reveals that Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford—Shakespeare's son—is now in the sights of a man who can convince King James to do what he wants him to do.

The Gondomar letter itself has only been cited once in earlier historical scholarship about this period, and never (to Dickson's knowledge) has it been reproduced in full as we have done in this issue of the newsletter (see box, this page). In an 1869 book, *Prince Charles and the Spanish Marriage Crisis* by Samuel Rawson Gardiner, the author makes reference to this letter (which he had read while researching in the Royal Spanish archives in Simancas). It was a footnote in Gardiner's book about this letter that led Dickson to request a copy from the archives earlier this year.

As for the "Marriage Crisis," this is a

period in English history that seems to have drifted off into obscurity. Dickson has stated to the newsletter that he believes "this is primarily because the Liberal Nationalist and even anti-Catholic bias of most British historians prior to the middle of this century encouraged them to turn a blind eye to the conduct of King James and his young advisor/protege/lover George Villiers—the Duke of Buckingham—in what was, for them, a disgraceful scheme to achieve a permanent peace with Spain through a marriage alliance."

This alliance was to have been the marriage of James I's son Charles with King Philip IV's sister, and would have thus been the key event in sealing a permanent peace agreement between England and Spain. From about 1613 through 1623 the marriage alliance was a major foreign policy objective of the Spanish. It became a crisis in England because a majority of the English population wanted no part of such a deal—seeing it as a return of the papacy to the Isle—and it was opposed at higher levels of government by a most interesting (to Oxfordians)

set of leaders: the 3rd Earl of Southampton, the 18th Earl of Oxford, and the Earl of Pembroke, one of the dedicatees of the *First Folio* and Lord Chamberlain from December 1615 through 1626. The crisis reached hysterical heights when Prince Charles and Buckingham secretly left England in 1623 for eight months to travel to Spain to secure the marriage deal in person.

Incredibly, 120 years passed before the Marriage Crisis received the serious attention of scholars again. Thomas Cogswell of Harvard University wrote about it in *The Blessed Revolution* (1989), but his book is actually about the period immediately following the failure of the marriage proposal, beginning in the fall of 1623 when Buckingham and Prince Charles had returned from Spain empty-handed, and the nation went into a prolonged celebration which included bonfires in the streets throughout London.

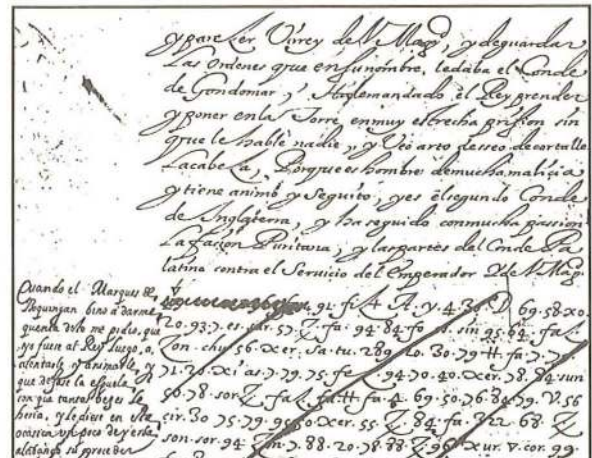
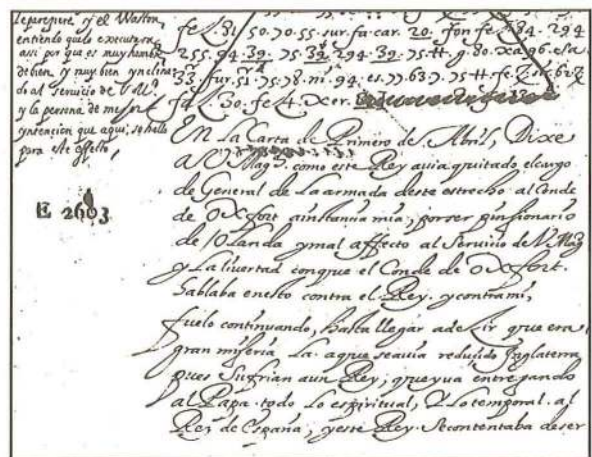
Cogswell does not mention the May 16th Gondomar letter in his book, nor does he dwell much on the roles of Southampton and Oxford in the whole affair. And, as Gardiner before him, he pays no attention at

Count Gondomar's letter to the King of Spain, 16 May 1622

The two sections reproduced at the right are of the two consecutive pages of the Gondomar May 16, 1622 letter that refer to the 18th Earl of Oxford's imprisonment. The sections before and after the references to the 18th Earl were written in code about military matters (the text on the left of these sections is the decipherment of the code). It is interesting that Gondomar did not consider his remarks on his relationship with King James merited encoding.

The translation of the Oxford section of the letter is courtesy of Dr. Juan Manuel Perez of the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress:

"In the letter of April 1, I said to your Majesty how the King removed the Earl Oxford as commander in chief of the armada in the Strait [Ed. note: the fleet in the Channel] because I told him to, because he [Oxford] was partial to the Dutch, and also because of the way Oxford was bad mouthing the King and me. He spoke even to the point of saying that it was a miserable situation that had reduced England's stature because the people had to tolerate a King who had given the Pope everything spiritual; and everything temporal to the King of Spain. I told King James to arrest this man and put him in the Tower in a narrow cell so that no one can speak to him. I have a strong desire to cut off his head because he is an extremely malicious person and has followers. And he is the second ranking Earl in England, and he and his followers are committed to the Puritan Faction with great passion and to the faction of the Count of the Palatinate against the service of the Emperor and your Majesty."



all to the parallel event of the *First Folio* publication occurring in 1622-1623, let alone consider that the *Folio* publication and the Marriage Crisis are linked. But this “oversight” is shared by nearly all scholars of the period, and in the authorship debate neither Stratfordians nor anti-Stratfordians have ever made this connection either.

Dickson’s new theory addresses this oversight by stating that there clearly is a connection between a *Folio* publication project that *has always been acknowledged* to have been sloppy and flawed, the monumental proportions of the Marriage Crisis, and the involvement of Oxford’s friends and family in both the crisis and the *Folio* publication.

Dickson has further stated that, given the historical evidence of this period, the *Folio* publication project can no longer be seen as a purely literary project, and that once one accepts the political dimensions of the project, the Oxfordian theory of the Shakespeare authorship has *by far* the best explanatory powers.

Why the *Folio* in 1623?

In order to fully understand the possible interconnection between the Marriage Crisis and the publication of the *First Folio* one must first ask why was the *Folio* published in 1623? There has never really been any serious question in either Stratfordian or anti-Stratfordian camps about why the *Folio* was published at this particular time. It appears to have just been generally accepted that it was published when it was published because that’s apparently how long it took for those involved to get organized, go to the printer and have it done.

It has been considered by some that the strange events of 1619 when a series of quartos known as the “Pavier” quartos appeared might constitute an early attempt at publishing a Shakespeare *Folio*. These quartos were published by Pavier in association with Jaggard, but the titles involved are a mixed bag of previously published Shakespeare titles and such apocryphal plays as *Sir John Oldcastle* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. None of the previously unpublished 18 plays that would first appear in the *Folio* four years later were part of this project, which would seem to indicate that the key players in the later *Folio* project (i.e. those who held the text of all the unpublished plays in some form—“the grandpos-

sessors?”) were not involved in releasing them to anyone in 1619, even if printers such as Pavier and Jaggard were themselves think-



Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count Gondomar. Known as “The Spanish Machiavelli” to most Englishmen in the early 17th century.

ing at this time about collecting whatever they could of Shakespeare’s plays.

However, there is one significant fact about the *First Folio* that all scholars—Stratfordian and anti-Stratfordian—have always acknowledged, and that is that the *First Folio* was full of errors, to a point of embarrassment as some critics have noted. Why this is so, no one has ever been able to figure out, or even to theorize much about. It is this telling fact, coupled with the scholarship of Charlton Hinman in his 1963 work *The Printing and Proof-reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, that provides the linchpin for Dickson’s theory. Hinman’s work clearly establishes that the *Folio* printing process *could not have begun* any earlier than February or March 1622 (and may even have started later in 1622), and in the 35 years since his work was published no one has rebutted this key fact.

We know that work on the *Folio* must have been completed in October to November 1623 since the first copies for sale appeared in bookstores in December 1623.

This means that the entire project was completed during virtually the same period of time that Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford, was in the Tower (April 1622 to December 1623).

Another intriguing fact about the whole *Folio* project that should also be mentioned here is that Jaggard registered 16 of the previously unpublished 18 plays with the Stationers’ Register on November 8th, 1623. This event thus came at the very end of the printing schedule, not the beginning, a most peculiar ordering of priorities. Compare this, for example, with the Ben Jonson *folio* project in 1615-1616, for which the printer registered *all the previously unpublished material* as the *first step* in the process, not the last.

Jaggard’s trip to the Stationers’ also took place just days after a very public reconciliation between Southampton and Buckingham and an agreement for the release of Oxford from the Tower, an agreement which included an arrangement for him to marry Diana Cecil, great granddaughter of Lord Burghley. All these events took place within four weeks of the return of Buckingham and Prince Charles from Spain, empty-handed. The Marriage Crisis was over.

While mainstream scholars from Sidney Lee in 1902 to Irvin Matus in 1994 have all commented on the *First Folio*’s clear shortcomings and wondered why more care was not taken with such an ambitious and important project, one of the best quotations we could find that illustrate the significance of this unanswered question about the *Folio* publication comes from none other than Charlton Ogburn, in his *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. At the conclusion of Chapter 13 Ogburn has this to say about the *First Folio* publication:

A second reason for the textual failings of the *Folio* must be that however long the collection had been planned the actual production was rushed. A much better job could have been done with the materials available. Were the compilers fearful that the longer the work of assembling and printing took the greater the danger would be of provoking a reaction at the highest level of the realm and of a bar to the publication? A guess as to the cause of haste, relying on our present information, can be only a shot in the dark. (*TMWS*, page 239)

The newsletter has been in touch with Ogburn about Dickson’s theory and about
(Continued on page 6)

Shakespeare's Son (Continued from page 5) this paragraph from Chapter 13 of his book. Ogburn commented to us that, "Dickson appears to have taken this shot in the dark, and I am coming to believe that he is correct in his theory about the *Folio* publication and the Marriage Crisis. It would certainly explain a great deal that has, up to now, been unclear."

Ogburn also later commented in a separate conversation with Dickson that, "You have placed the Oxfordian theory at the heart of English history."

Was the 18th Earl in danger?

In addition to Gondomar's May 16th letter, there is another significant historical fact that must be considered here in understanding that Oxford's imprisonment was serious business—the fate of Sir Walter Raleigh in 1618. The historical record is quite clear that Raleigh's execution on Oct. 29th, 1618 was primarily an accommodation with the wishes of the King of Spain and the English-Spanish "peace process" of the time.

And the record is equally clear that Count Gondomar played a key role in convincing King James that Raleigh *must be* executed for the sake of that peace process. Surviving letters between Gondomar and King Philip IV show the King instructing his ambassador on how to convince James that Raleigh's execution is a political necessity for the good of English-Spanish relations.

It should also be noted here that James' young and upcoming favorite George Villiers—at this moment the Marquis of Buckingham, but soon to be the "Duke of"—supported Raleigh's execution in his new role as James' chief advisor, a fact undoubtedly not lost on the increasingly alarmed opponents of James' policy with Spain.

Thus, when Oxford spoke of James giving "everything temporal to the King of Spain" (as cited in the May 16th letter) he may well have had in mind this earlier sacrificial execution of Sir Walter Raleigh in addition to more recent affronts. And there can be little doubt that Oxford's friends and family also had in mind Raleigh's death, and must have believed that he could just as easily be sacrificed for the sake of English-Spanish relations as had Raleigh.

Since Gondomar's May 16th letter echoes the arguments used in 1618 to engineer Raleigh's execution, there really can be no

doubt that Oxford's life was in danger over his politics and over his role in publicly criticizing both King James and Gondomar. And we also now know that he was seen as "the" leader in opposing Spanish Policy vis-à-vis England, and not just by Gondomar.

On 18 April 1623 King James wrote to Buckingham in Spain (*Letters of King James IV & I*, 409), and informed him that the Star Chamber had considered freeing Oxford at that time—since no charges had yet been brought—but the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Middlesex, interceded and warned the King

***"When Othello speaks
of Iago in Act V—
'... demand that demi-devil /
Why he hath thus ensnar'd
my soul and body?'
—it is not hard to imagine
politically aware readers
or audiences in the 1620s
thinking of Gondomar
(‘Diego’) and his
'ensnaring' hold on
their English monarch,
... and thus on
England's future."***

against freeing Oxford, stating that, "he would provide a ringleader for the mutineers." So, James wrote, "...which advice I followed."

This characterization by Middlesex is quite interesting, since the use of the word "mutineers" implies the absolute authority of the King and his decisions—the captain of the ship of state—even as a majority of his subjects and of the peerage were clearly against the course being set for the nation through the proposed Spanish marriage.

The reference in the final sentence of Gondomar's letter to the "Palatinate" is a reference to James' daughter Elizabeth Stuart (driven by the Hapsburg armies into exile in Holland with her husband, the Elector of the Palatinate) and seen by Protestants in England—the mutineers?—as "The Queen of Hearts," a superior alternative to the increasingly "soft on Catholicism" James, his boy-wonder advisor George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), and the dark presence of the notorious Count Gondomar—popularly

called "The Spanish Machiavelli"—serving as the ambassador/broker between England and Spain.

Othello a harbinger?

The first imprisonment of both the 3rd Earl of Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford had occurred in the summer of 1621, shortly following the downfall of Francis Bacon over bribery in the conduct of his office—with, interestingly, Southampton leading the opposition against Bacon. The 47-year old Southampton and the 28-year old Buckingham nearly came to blows on the floor of Parliament over this matter.

Just months later the Countess of Pembroke died, and within weeks of her death *Othello* (one of the Shakespeare plays that had never been published before) was registered for publication. Dickson believes that the *Folio* publication process probably began in earnest following this first imprisonment, and that the appearance of *Othello* was perhaps a first step in that process.

If Eva Turner Clark is at all correct in her assessment of *Othello* in *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, the play dates from the 1580s and alludes to such matters as the politics of a marriage match (Elizabeth and Alençon) and the seemingly endless military efforts of Spain to bring the rest of Europe back to Catholicism, with the battleground then—as again in the early 17th century—the Netherlands. Such allusions would not be lost on an audience with any historical memory of the Elizabethan era.

Concerning *Othello* it is especially interesting to note that Iago's name can be seen as a diminutive (Jago) of "Diego" in Spanish—"Diego" being Gondomar's first name and also being Spanish for "James." James is known to have referred to himself and Gondomar as "the two Diegos."

When *Othello* speaks of Iago in Act V—"...demand that demi-devil / Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?" (V, ii, 300-01)—it is not hard to imagine politically aware readers or audiences in the 1620s thinking of Gondomar ("Diego") and his "ensnaring" hold on their English monarch—the other "Diego"—and thus on England's future.

So, the appearance of *Othello* at this time (even though it was registered with a different printer than Jaggard) could well have been a harbinger of the *Folio* publication soon to come, complete with an implicit

message that those involved in getting the *Folio* published *did have in mind* the political crisis of the time and the key players in that crisis.

The *Folio* and politics

Over the past year Dickson has been in regular touch with a small number of Oxfordians around the country about his theory and its implications for the authorship debate. The question that has most often come up in these discussions is “how does publishing the *Folio* have any bearing on saving Oxford?”

That is, of course, a difficult question to answer. It may be that the rush to publish was simply an attempt to preserve the plays, given that the political climate indicated that more than Oxford’s life could be lost if the Spanish Marriage became a reality.

In other words, for the Protestant faction in England the stakes in this crisis could be that they feared—with good reason—that the days of Bloody Mary could be returning, and that *many lives* might be lost, along with many books and manuscripts.

Also to be considered here is that the “grand possessors” certainly had their own strong convictions about the philosophical, political, and artistic accomplishment of these plays and of their author, and in this light their publication at this point in time might be seen as a political statement in opposition to what was undoubtedly perceived by James’ opponents as the betrayal of the nation by its own monarch. The publication might also then have been a message to this monarch to “think twice before you execute Shakespeare’s son.”

The other key question involved here is, of course, why publish the *Folio* under the name “Shakespeare,” especially if the purpose—in part, at least—was to save the 18th Earl’s life?

This is, again, a difficult question to answer. Dickson believes that, in the heat of this crisis, it was way too late to change, assuming that there ever was a thought or a



In re-examining the history of the early 1620s, it becomes clear why the Marriage Crisis has dropped from sight in the traditional histories. The bizarre personal-political relationship between the aging James (left) and his twenty-something advisor, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (right) was marked by an era of increasing corruption and bribery scandals, a dazzling increase in the creation of and sale of titles to all comers (with Buckingham’s meteoric rise being a prime example), and—most importantly—the clear willingness of both the King and his young advisor to let the likes of Count Gondomar dictate terms of English policy at critical moments. All this combines to paint a most unflattering portrait of how England was being governed at this moment in history, and makes it clear how publishing the Shakespeare Canon at this moment could well have been seen by those involved as making a sane statement in a world gone mad—so long, of course, as a pseudonym separated the treasured works and their philosophy from any skeletons in the Elizabethan closet.

plan to someday publish under Oxford’s name. Publishing now was a bold enough move in itself, but to use Oxford’s name would have been somewhat like “rubbing it in” and would most likely have been counterproductive. Undoubtedly James knew who the true author was anyway.

For most Oxfordians, the more familiar answer to the question about sticking with the Stratford man is the matter of what the plays might have to say about the behind-the-scenes politics of the nation-building Elizabethan era, about Gloriana herself, and about the author. Such realities would have been laid open to everyone’s scrutiny once the true identity of the author was known—or, if you will, openly acknowledged. From this point of view, the time would never be right, as Oxford himself wrote in the *Sonnets*: “... I, once gone, to all the world must die.”

Such considerations as these will certainly occupy the minds of Oxfordian—and all other—scholars for years to come. And, of course, we cannot even begin here to consider such eternally vexing questions as “What was the true religion of the true

author?” ...or “Are there political secrets embedded in the Shakespeare canon?” ...or “Had the author by the end of this life transcended all the “mere” political and religious ritual and dogma of the day as he explored his soul and spoke to posterity of his explorations?”

Conclusion

Finally, then, we should conclude by returning to the key question postulated by Dickson’s theory: “*Is there, in fact, a connection between the Marriage Crisis of 1621-1623, the imprisonments of Southampton and Oxford in 1621, and of Oxford again in 1622-1623, and the late-starting and too-soon-finishing Folio publication process of 1622-1623?*” This is the core of Dickson’s new and provocative theory, and, if he is right, neither Shakespeare authorship scholarship nor mainstream Shakespeare scholarship will ever be the same.

We can say, after months of consideration, that Dickson’s conclusions are not based simply on unfounded speculation (as a few Oxfordians familiar with his work have already remarked), but have been carefully thought out in light of the existing historical record, and they do seem to indicate some sort of causal relationship among these key events. The wonder, really, is that no one had seen it before.

Whatever various critics (Stratfordian, Oxfordian, or other) may now say about the pros and cons of this theory, it is probably safe to say that no one will ever again look at this critical period in English history in the same way as before.

W. Boyle

Peter Dickson is scheduled to speak at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable Symposium in Los Angeles, October 11th to 12th, and at the Shakespeare Oxford Society Conference in San Francisco, November 12th to 15th.

Dickson’s phone/fax number is (703)243-6641.

Justice Stevens casts deciding vote for Oxford in an Oxfordian victory at D.C. authorship trial

By Aaron Tatum

"I just wanted you to know that the latest convert to this view is Mortimer Adler, who joins me and others of those who are frequently referred to as kooks," declared Associate Justice John Paul Stevens in a ruling at the Shakespeare Mock Trial at the U.S. Supreme Court on May 14th of this year. After a 6-6 jury deadlock, Stevens, citing "Rule 50," cast the deciding vote in favor of Oxford (See the box on page 9).

The event, sponsored by the Lawyers Committee for the Shakespeare Theatre of Washington, D.C., was attended by about 150 people, mostly members and guests of the Committee. Among those attending were Associate Justices William Kennedy and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg was selected and sat as one of the twelve jurors.

The format was a traditional American trial court with Justice Stevens as the presiding judge. Certain basic facts about Shakespeare and Oxford were stipulated as evidence in the program handed out before the event. "This way all preconceived notions are checked in at the door," said Oxford counselor Jim Murray, Esq.

Murray, a Seattle lawyer and former assistant to former FBI Director William Webster, joined D.C. attorneys John Dugan, Esq. and Wendy Collins Perdue, Esq., a Georgetown University Law Professor. Mr. Dugan lead off with an excellent summary of the facts. Murray conducted a brilliant cross-exam of expert witness Danson and Ms. Perdue put forth a concise and forceful closing argument for the Oxford side.

For the Shakespeare Trust, Mary Cole, Esq. and Burt Fishman brought in expert witness Dr. Larry Danson, a Princeton English professor specializing in Shakespeare. Columnist and author Joseph Sobran represented the Oxfordian side as the expert witness.

The evening held many surprises, most notably, a bit of testimony by Danson prompted from questioning by Stratfordian counsel Cole that challenged the widely

recognized—even among Stratfordian scholars—relationship between the character Polonius and William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

After Justice Stevens instantly questioned the validity of Danson's testimony, Danson replied in a long, rambling diatribe



The legal team that presented the case for Oxford included (left to right) Law Professor Wendy Collins Perdue (Georgetown University), attorney Jim Murray, columnist Joseph Sobran and attorney John Dugan.

against most of his fellow Stratfordians, calling A.L. Rowse "a bit of a maverick" with "not much respect in the scholarly community, but that's *ad hominem* ... Rowse may have said that, but I can't be responsible for every Stratfordian."

He called the Burghley-Polonius nexus a "very reductive argument ... I think you'd find most current Shakespeareans would say that to reduce the play that has reached millions of people who have never heard of the Earl of Oxford or his life and Lord Burghley to a covert picture of Lord Burghley, is a self-defeating thing..."

Indeed, self-defeating it was in the next round of questioning when Oxfordian counsel Murray cross-examined Danson: "Are you familiar with Sir Edmund Chambers and the *Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* ...?":

Danson: "It's my constant companion; I keep it by my bedside."

Murray: "He agrees that Polonius is Lord Burghley. Did you recall that when you gave your answer a minute ago?"

Danson (incredulously): "Did I recall that when I gave my answer? Is that at all relevant to my answer?"

Murray: "The question is, did you recall that when you gave your answer?"

Danson: "I did not recall that."

Danson continued on into several other near-disasters, such as the cross-examination by Murray over the Gunpowder Plot alleged to have informed *Macbeth*, and the Strachey shipwreck letter alleged to have informed *The Tempest*; both these examples have to do with "chronology," i.e. plays supposedly written after Oxford's death. Murray also noted here that there was a lack of chronology information on Danson's Princeton University website.

In another exchange, Danson could not answer Murray's questions as to any positive connection between Robert Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* and the man from Stratford.

Joe Sobran had testified for Oxford before Danson, and, as attorney Murray observed, "made the best kind of credible witness." Sobran as an expert witness gave smooth, well-paced answers to all questions, drawing on the arguments made in his recent book *Alias Shakespeare* and the practice he's had in the past year in several debates on the authorship. There were no over dramatic tones and handwaving to cover a paucity of facts and scholarship often found in his Stratfordian counterpart.

No matter what a given Oxfordian may actually believe about Oxford's sexual preferences as absolute proof in the authorship debate, Sobran makes skillful and reasoned arguments for the *Sonnets* as the key to understanding the author. His homosexual theory of the heretofore unexplained relationship between the author and the Fair Youth offers a firm position from which to debate, which stands in stark contrast to the Stratfordian position, where the relation-

ship between the author and the Fair Youth is generally not addressed at all—which is just what happened during this trial.

The Stratfordian counsel Fishman instead tried more familiar tactics, such as asserting the difficulty of hundreds of Elizabethans covering up Oxford's authorship:

Fishman: "Let's talk about this, you don't call it a conspiracy of silence, this agreement to respect the Earl's wishes—and I take it that's the reason no one breathed a word of de Vere's role as Shakespeare for centuries." Sobran: "Well, no one printed it. It could have existed in letters."

Fishman: "But nothing has survived to the best of [our knowledge]."

Sobran: "You know everything had to be licensed and printed in those days."

Fishman: "I want to know just ... how many hundreds of people had to be in on it? ...the authors, fellows in the King's Company, Heminge and Condell—they had to know who wrote the plays?"

Sobran: "I would say far fewer than the number who kept John Kennedy's amours out of print in this town." (Laughter).

Fishman returned quickly to letters and diaries as a possible source. Sobran replied that, "Letters and diaries perish. Printed matter survives much better."

Fishman also wondered how hundreds knew without a leak, to which Sobran replied, "I don't know that hundreds cared, even if hundreds knew."

The counselor continued on the matter of conspiracy by asking how Oxford could keep the cover-up going for 300 years.

Sobran answered, "He didn't have to keep it going for 300 years. Once the tradition of his authorship had been broken, that's when the theatres were closed by the Puritans in 1642, then no more had to be done. It's not as if you could beat the truth out of the Shakespeare scholars with a rubber hose."

Fishman also covered many other familiar points, all of which were ably handled by Sobran, such as the Camden coat of arms, the Ben Jonson diary, and the Earl's lofty societal position.

On the latter issue, Fishman asked if Sobran wasn't taking a rather snobby view of the world—that only Oxford could have written the works. "No. I hope not and with no disrespect to democracy, I think it's a matter of sociology. Elizabethan England was not an equal opportunity sort of place. You may deplore this, but it was a fact."

Associate Justice Stevens' historic ruling as presiding Mock Trial judge

Following is the text of Justice Stevens' ruling based on a Rule 50 pleading under the Rules of Interpleader following the jury's six to six deadlock.

"I thought because of the closeness of the evidence, I would tell you how I was going to rule on the motion: that was, I was going to abide by the verdict of the jury. I'm a great believer in trusting in the good judgement and wisdom of jurors and I would have to follow that principle here no matter which way it would have come out and then I intended to just add two or three words to explain some of my own reaction to the evidence. I won't take any time."

"...I had read recently a book by Antonia Fraser (*Faith and Treason—The Story of the Gunpowder Plot*) ... Since that was brought up in the evidence I thought I'd read two sentences out of one chapter of the book. The Plot, of course, occurred in 1605, shortly after King James succeeded Elizabeth in 1603. In 1604, early in the year, he made a trip from the Tower to Parliament to make his first visit to Parliament, it was a grand public occasion, with praise and all sorts of activity."

"[The] two sentences I would read [to you] are:"

The new English Parliament was summoned on 31 January 1604. Six weeks later, the King and Queen journeyed in splendour from the Tower of London for the official Opening ceremony. This was the first public procession of the reign... (page 84)

...Among those who walked from Tower Bridge to Westminster was Shakespeare's company of players, wearing the King's livery... (page 84)

...King James rode a white jennet (possibly one of the Spanish horses presented by Tassis the previous October) under a

canopy carried by Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber. His duties included listening to two speeches by Ben Jonson and several by the playwright Thomas Dekker, delivered under seven wooden arches specially erected for the occasion and intricately carved... (page 85)

"When I read something like that," continued Stevens, "I say [to myself] 'where was Shakespeare?' One wonders."

"I have to confess, I first became interested in this issue when I visited Stratford many years ago and visited the home, Shakespeare's large home, and independently I was struck by the fact there were no books in the house."

"It puzzled me ever since and, of course, when you look at the diaries and you find that although his son-in-law was a very literate doctor and wrote his own diaries, they never mention him. And as one who's seen his handwriting I wonder if he could have written out all these things you had to do by hand at that time.."

"I must say, I was a little surprised that our expert took a firm position that Polonius could not have qualified as Burghley because a lot of people feel the other way about it, but that's certainly a much more expert opinion than mine."

"I just wanted you to know that the latest convert to this view is Mortimer Adler who joins me and others of those who are frequently referred to as kooks because the advocates the other way feel very strongly, and I respect their scholarship and their enthusiastic belief in the rightness of their cause, and they're probably right [about one thing]: there are unanswered questions on both sides of this difficult issue."

"But it was a very interesting performance and I thank everyone for being here and I think it may be true that many of us leave with the views we held when we came in." (Applause).

What was clear to this observer and many others in attendance was that the Oxfordian side won this authorship encounter with a surfeit of ready explanations based on nearly eighty years of research on this 400-year old historical question.

The embarrassment of losing this particular Mock Trial should, one might surmise, prod the inbred Stratfordian estab-

lishment to abandon their propensity toward self-perpetuation, and to begin addressing their propensity to ignore incisive historical questions.

Justice Stevens had it right when he said in his eloquent ruling: "There are unanswered questions on both sides of this difficult issue."

Thus, the continuing debate.

2nd Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference

Twenty-one papers—and more—demonstrate the significance of an academic venue

The Second Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference convened on the campus of Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, from April 2nd to 5th last spring. Total registrations (full and partial) nearly doubled last year's inaugural conference attendance. It is clear that this event has already become an important date on the Oxfordian calendar, and will undoubtedly become a focal point for new research, ideas and publicity about the authorship issue in the years to come.

Dr. Daniel Wright, a trustee of the society and the founder of the conference, was naturally delighted at the turnout. He recently told us, "the Edward de Vere Studies Conference represents the realization of the highest hopes of Oxfordian scholars and enthusiasts everywhere—an annual conference of Oxfordians within the ivy-covered halls of the academy [at which] to impart the

latest insights and discoveries by Oxfordian scholars from all over the world."

Dr. Wright continued, "The commitment of Concordia University to the task of resolving the Shakespeare authorship question is a bold and unique venture by an institution heir to the reformation tradition of skepticism and the scholarly critique of 'settled' assumptions."

The Conference officially opened on Thursday afternoon with the usual registrations, coffee hour and greetings among friends old and new.

The first event took place Thursday evening with a showing of the Leslie Howard WWII propaganda film *Pimpernel Smith*. Charles Boyle spoke briefly before and after the film about the significance of Leslie Howard's early Oxfordianism and his bold move to place in the film a number of references to Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* and to have the lead character (Prof. Horatio

Smith) make such statements as "The Earl of Oxford wrote that, you know [following a Shakespeare quotation]." This was Boyle's first public speaking appearance since his stroke at the Minneapolis Conference in 1996, and all the old guard among Shakespeare Oxford Society members in attendance were delighted to see Charles back in the authorship fray.

Another special event during the Con-

ference was the panel on "Does Resolving the Question of Disputed Authorship Matter?" The panel was moderated by Dr. Lynell Evans of Concordia, and included Dr. Daniel Wright, Stephanie Hughes, Dr. David Richardson and Dr. Stephen Ratcliffe.

Wright, but there were also some newcomers to the debate, such as students Joshua Hill, James Maxfield, and Jill Mattingly. Among other presenters were Elizabeth Appleton from Canada and Daphne Wilson from England, and several professors of English who are not Oxfordians, but who attended and presented nonetheless: Dr. Stephen Ratcliffe from Mills College (Oakland, Calif.), Dr. Joanne Knowles (Concordia University, Portland, Oregon), and Dr. Ren Draya (Blackburn College, Carlinville, Illinois).

Two of the papers presented can be found in this issue of the newsletter (see page 1 for Dr. Daniel Wright's paper on Oxford as "The Knight of the Tree of the Sunne" and page 12 for Richard Whalen's paper on "The Queen's Worm").

The paper that made the biggest impact over the weekend was Roger

Stritmatter's presentation on the painting "Elizans Triumphans." Since Stritmatter will be presenting an updated version of his paper at the society's annual conference in San Francisco in November, its original inclusion in this issue of the newsletter has been postponed; we will provide it in the Winter 1999 newsletter, along with our report on the San Francisco Conference.

We can report that Stritmatter made a convincing case for positively identifying Edward de Vere as one of the canopy bearers in this famous early 17th century painting. The question and answer session following Stritmatter's talk was easily the liveliest of the four days as many in the audience picked up on various points made and even wound up asking each other questions as everyone zeroed in on the intriguing new historical perspectives presented in having a portrait of Oxford at the end of his life "bearing the canopy" over his sovereign.



The panelists for "Does Resolving the Question of Disputed Authorship Matter?" listen to a question from the audience. They are (from left to right), Dr. Stephen Ratcliffe, Dr. Daniel Wright, Dr. Lynell Evans (moderator), Oxfordian editor Stephanie Hughes, Dr. David Richardson.

ference was the panel on "Does Resolving the Question of Disputed Authorship Matter?" The panel was moderated by Dr. Lynell Evans of Concordia, and included Dr. Daniel Wright, Stephanie Hughes, Dr. David Richardson and Dr. Stephen Ratcliffe.

There were some lively exchanges with the audience—which included several individuals who were not anti-Stratfordians of any stripe. The emphasis was on the familiar question "would it make a difference in reading and understanding Shakespeare if Edward de Vere were to be accepted as the true author?" The answer from both panelists and from the Oxfordians in the audience was, in a word, "Yes."

There were a total of twenty-one papers presented over the three and a half days that the Conference was in session. Presenters included some familiar names such as Stephanie Hughes, Richard Desper, Roger Stritmatter, Richard Whalen and Dr. Daniel

Several of the many interesting points that arose during the question and answer session with the audience were, 1) that, if the figure is Oxford, we now know which leg was lame (his left, clearly a thin stick in the painting), 2) that his physical stature was small (easily the shortest man in the painting), and—probably the most interesting of all—3) that his status at this time seemed to invite the painter to show him *differently* than anyone else in the painting (in profile, virtually unrecognizable compared with almost all the other subjects who could be—and in fact have been—identified by comparison with known oil portraits from the period).

Among other presenters this year special note should be made about students and teachers who have recently joined the growing ranks of Stratford doubters and/or Oxford supporters. Dr. David Richardson of Cleveland State University and several of his graduate students (Jill Mattingly and James Maxfield) were on hand to present papers that had first been done last fall (1997) at the Ball State student panel on the authorship question. Dr. Richardson, of course, has presented workshops on teaching the authorship at each of the last two Shakespeare Oxford Society Conferences.

Another student, Joshua Hill, came all the way from St. Andrew's School in Scotland to talk about how important it is from a writer's perspective to know that Oxford is Shakespeare. Victoria Kramer, a special education tutor in Portland, made a very interesting presentation based on current studies on the role of education in early childhood, and concluded that—creative genius notwithstanding—intense formal education in the early years will *always* trump self-taught or later education, no matter who the individual or what the subject.

Other presenters included Dr. Charles Berney, a MIT researcher, who regaled the audience with his scientific time line on the resolution of the authorship question (the key variable being Stratfordian resistance to facts), Dr. Richard Desper updating his perspectives on the notorious *Funeral Elegy* story, Richard Lester (from Beaufort, South Carolina and an acquaintance of Charlton Ogburn) asking the eternal question “Who Was the Upstart Crow?” (his answer was the Stratford man in the role of a playbroker/actor), Dr. Joanne Knowles exploring “The Subversive Needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots,” Dr. Ren Draya on “The Case for *Henry VIII*: Katherine of Aragon, Catholicism and Courtly Splendour,” and Randall Baron on “The Inquisition Post Mortem of Edward de Vere.”

At the special Awards Banquet Saturday evening Ruth Loyd Miller was honored with the Scholarship Award and actor Michael York with the Arts Award. The Concordia Theatre Department entertained the guests with performances of selected scenes accentuating Shakespeare/Oxford's personal presence throughout the plays.

It was a rewarding four days in the great Northwest for all those who attended, presenters and listeners alike. We recommend that all Oxfordians mark April 9th to 12th, 1999 on their calendars for the Third Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference.



Three-fifths of the Edward de Vere Studies Conference Advisory Board: (left to right) Stephanie Hughes, Dr. Daniel Wright and Dr. Merilee Karr. Not pictured are Dr. Jack Shuttleworth and Deanna Whitestone.



Among some of the presenters at the Conference were Scott Fanning (top left), Elizabeth Appleton (top right), Daphne Wilson (bottom left) and Dr. Jack Shuttleworth (bottom right). Appleton is the Canadian author of the 1985-1986 pamphlet series “Edward de Vere and the War of Words,” which concern the Martin Marprelate pamphlets of the late 1580s; she presented further information on this subject. Wilson traveled all the way from England to present new and interesting material on the de Vere-Harlackenden lawsuits. Fanning explored a little considered aspect of Hamlet, namely the possibility of allusions to Leonardo de Vinci in the text, and Shuttleworth presented his thoughts on how Oxfordians could go about assembling and publishing annotated text for all the plays in the Canon.

“The Queen’s Worm” in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Does another of Shakespeare/Oxford’s word games clarify an enigmatic scene?

by Richard Whalen

At the climax of *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Cleopatra is about to kill herself, Shakespeare introduces a Clown. The clown, or fool, or jester in Shakespeare is most often the truth-teller, the character who can tell painful truths to the monarch with impunity. He also seems to be the voice of the dramatist commenting on the action. When he speaks the audience should pay particular attention to what he says. As far as can be determined, scholars have not given the clown’s scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* the attention it deserves. For Oxfordians the scene may appear to be loaded with special meaning.

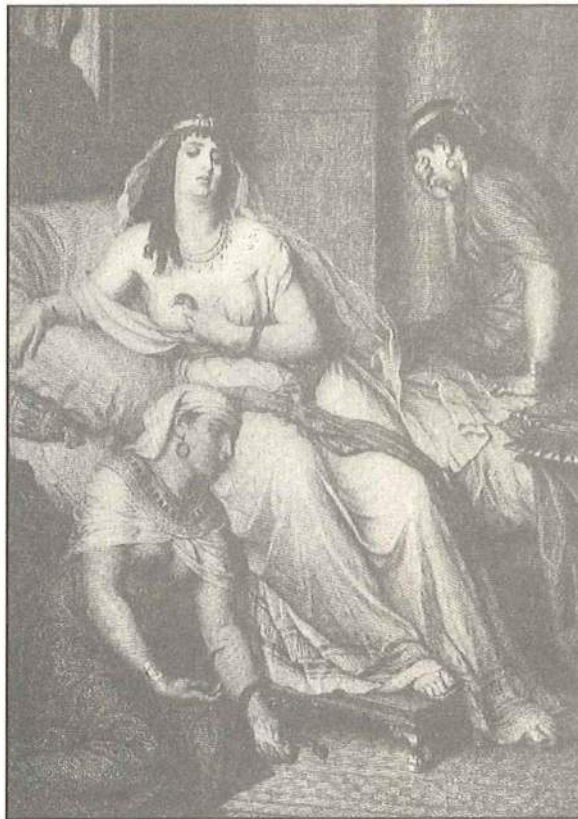
The clown scene and Cleopatra’s death by snakebite also deserve attention because they do not occur in *Plutarch’s Lives*, which Shakespeare otherwise follows closely. Plutarch merely says that Cleopatra’s use of a poisonous asp brought to her in a basket was one of several different ways she was supposed to have killed herself. There is, of course, no clown in *Plutarch*. The scene with the clown and Cleopatra is Shakespeare’s invention. All the more reason to examine what they say to each other.

Throughout the scene the poisonous asp is referred to not as an asp, or a snake, or a serpent.

Shakespeare refers to it repeatedly as a “worm.” That is an unusual word for a serpent, but it is the first and now archaic meaning in the *Oxford English Dictionary*; it comes from the Old Saxon. The dictionary uses a line from the clown scene to illustrate that meaning. Shakespeare could have used any of the other synonyms in his vocabulary, including “serpent,- ‘-snake-’ or —viper”; but he used “worm.” (Incidentally, Shakespeare never used the word “asp,— but Thomas Nashe did, and in connection with Cleopatra. Alexander Pope put it into a stage direction in *Antony and Cleopatra*.)

More surprising is that the word “Worm”

appears nine times in just thirty-six lines in the clown scene—far more than in any other play. It occurs only once or twice in about half of the other plays, sometimes to mean a serpent, usually to mean an earthworm or maggot, as in “the worm of conscience”



“Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, /
That sucks the nurse asleep?”

(*Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing*). This unusual frequency in thirty-six lines in *Antony and Cleopatra* bears examination.

The significance may well lie in the fact that “worm” in French is “ver”—and, of course, the Earl of Oxford’s family name was de Vere. The plays are full of puns and wordplay, some of it multi-lingual. The English “worm” thus can be seen here as a pun on the French “ver,” standing for de Vere, the English dramatist with the French surname. Moreover, “Vere” was probably pronounced “vair” in English as well as in

French, the same pronunciation as for the French word for worm.

With this in mind, analysis of the passage suggests some interesting interpretations that seem to have gone unnoticed. Any one of the interpretations taken by itself may not have the strength of validity. Taken together, however, they may be persuasive that Edward de Vere in the person of the clown is talking about himself, the worm, to Queen Elizabeth in the person of Cleopatra. (See the scene’s text in the box, page 13)

Cleopatra is the first to refer to the asp as a worm. She calls it “the pretty worm of Nilus that kills and pains not.” This might be taken as the queen’s recognition that de Vere’s plays kill false notions but without intending to cause pain to the holder of them, especially if she is the queen.

In his answer the clown mis-speaks (a natural blunder for a clown) and says the worm’s bite is “immortal;” people die of it. But the blunder can be seen as deliberate, one that conveys a truth. The worm’s bite—that is, de Vere’s play—will indeed make Cleopatra immortal. And, by extension, his plays will make Queen Elizabeth immortal. Many commentators over the years have taken Cleopatra to stand for Queen Elizabeth.

The clown then rambles on about an honest woman who lied and then died when the worm bit her. The meaning is obscure, but the clown concludes

by saying “the worm’s an odd worm.” Just as de Vere was certainly a difficult, odd lord in Elizabeth’s court, not like any of the others. He was the odd de Vere, the odd worm. The queen tries to dismiss the clown, but he will not leave; so she tolerates him, as a monarch tolerates a court jester.

The clown wishes her “all joy of the worm.”— a strange benediction, unless de Vere is asking her to enjoy and appreciate him and his plays. Then he lectures her, just as the court jesters in Shakespeare, the “allowed fools,” are permitted to lecture the

monarch. She must understand that “the worm will do his kind—that is, that de Vere will do his thing. He will write plays. He will critique court affairs.

Again, he lectures her: —“The worm is not to be trusted but in the keeping of wise people.” That is, de Vere’s plays are only for the wise who will understand them and their advice. “There is no goodness in the worm,” confesses de Vere’s drive to bring painful truths to the stage, truths that will not have goodness for anyone but the wise. The non-wise will find no goodness in the worm de Vere, only painful satire. The queen assures him that his advice will be heeded, and the clown, pleased, again drops into mock humility and says, in effect, that the worm—de Vere—is not worth the feeding. He is not worth being taken care of.

Suddenly Cleopatra asks, “Will it eat me?” A strange question. This might be seen as a sudden switch in meaning of “worm,” that is: Will the earthworms eat me when I’m dead? The clown gives her a strange reply that seems to reassure her: Of course not, he may be saying, “a woman is a dish for the gods” unless the devil gets hold of her. Perhaps this implies that de Vere recognizes the queen as a favorite of the gods, a queen who is unmarred by the devil and who will be immortal.

Leaving, the clown repeats, “I wish you joy of the worm.” Perhaps de Vere is saying again that his writings, with their criticism of the court and society, are not meant to bring sorrow and pain to the queen, but only entertainment and wisdom, that is, “Joy.” Just as Cleopatra in the play will find joy in her death by the bite of the worm.

Twenty lines later, Cleopatra clasps the asp to her breast. At this moment, the worm and the fool or court jester—that is, de Vere—all come together. She calls the worm her fool: “Come thou mortal wretch ... poor venomous fool...”

Then, in a change of pace, Cleopatra finds peace. Her attendant is wild with grief, but Cleopatra in an astonishing metaphor says to her: “Peace, peace, dost thou not see my baby [the worm, the serpent, de Vere?] at my breast, that sucks the nurse asleep?” Usually the baby falls asleep at the breast. Here the nursing woman, Cleopatra, with the asp at her breast, falls into the everlasting sleep of death.

The guards and Caesar arrive, but the asp, the worm, the fool, de Vere—all one—have disappeared, leaving, however, a trail. Oxfordian scholars apparently have not remarked on the unusual clown scene—except for Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn Sr. in *This Star of England* (1,172). They warn that the scene is “not to be taken at face value.” They describe the clown as a truth-teller, and although they mention the significance of “worm,” they do not explain its significance. They simply call the passage “a lucid word to those of us who are ‘wise.’” They may well have read “worm” as “de Vere” in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but they do not say so.

Ruth Loyd Miller mentions the French word for worm in her edition of *A Hundreth Sundry Flowers* (92). She notes how Edward de Vere punned on his name in several languages, particularly in the Latin word for truth in his motto, “Vero Nihil Veritas.” She leads off a list of such puns with “ver” for worm, or for spring, but she doesn’t mention the clown scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Shakespeare scholars generally say little or nothing about the odd scene even though it comes at the climax of the play. It may contain too many puzzles for them.

Read from an Oxfordian perspective, however, the scene’s strange emphasis on “worm” may make sense and give the climax an even more powerful emotional impact.

Through this scene between the clown and Cleopatra Edward de Vere may be telling his audience, and Queen Elizabeth, about himself as her playwright.

The Worm’s Bite

From *Antony and Cleopatra* (Riverside) (V,ii,241-79,305-11)

Enter Guardsman and Clown [with a basket]

Guard: This is the man.

Cleopatra: Avoid, and leave him. (exit Guardsman)
Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there,
That kills and pains not?

Clown: Truly, I have him; but I would not be the party that should desire you to touch him, for his biting is immortal; those that do die of it do seldom or never recover.

Cleopatra: Remember’st thou any that have died on’t?

Clown: Very many, men and women, too. I heard of one of them no longer than yesterday, a very honest woman—but something given to lie, as a woman should not do but in the way of honesty—how she died of the biting of it, what pain she felt. Truly, she makes a very good report of the worm; but he that will believe all that they say, shall never be saved by half that they do. But this is most falliable, the worm’s an odd worm

Cleopatra: Get thee hence, farewell.

Clown: I wish you all joy of the worm.

Cleopatra: Farewell.

Clown: You must think this, look you, that the worm will do his kind.

Cleopatra: Ay, ay, farewell.

Clown: Look you, the worm is not to be trusted but in the keeping of wise people; for indeed, there is no goodness in the worm

Cleopatra: Take thou no care, it shall be heeded.

Clown: Very good. Give it nothing, I pray you, for it is not worth the feeding.

Cleopatra: Will it eat me?

Clown: You must not think I am so simple but I know the devil himself will not eat a woman. I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not. But truly, these same whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women; for in every ten that they make, the devils mar five.

Cleopatra: Well, get thee gone, farewell.

Clown: Yes, forsooth; I wish you joy o’ th’ worm
[exits]...

Cleopatra: [to an asp, which she applies to her breast]
...Come, thou mortal wretch...
Poor venomous fool,
Be angry and dispatch...

...Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?

Wright (Continued from page 1)

vices as a maker of plays and other court entertainments during the reign of Edward VI, stating that Heywood “was well benefited by the king” and was much acclaimed for “the myrth and quicknesse of his conceits.” Heywood’s fortunes grew even greater during the reign of Mary I; his intimacy with the Queen was such, indeed, that according to legend, he entertained and cheered her even on her deathbed. Mary also patronized the talents of Nicholas Udall and Thomas Sackville—Udall as the principal in charge of court entertainments during Mary’s brief reign, Sackville as Master of Ceremonies at important court functions.

On her accession to the Throne in 1558, Elizabeth I appointed William Hunnis a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, in which capacity he succeeded Heywood as one of the leading impresari of the court; according to all accounts, many of his entertainments, if not extraordinary in their artfulness, yet were capable of manifesting sufficient excellence to be celebrated by his contemporaries; indeed, George Gascoigne includes several examples of Hunnis’s work in his 1577 publication of the *Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth*.

Richard Edwards, another court impresario of the Tudors, was appointed a gentleman of the Chapel Royal by Queen Elizabeth I in 1565. Unhappily, his tenure as a playwright for the Queen did not last long (he died but two years later in 1567), and yet—brief as Edwards’ time of service to Her Majesty was, we know of glowing praise accorded his dramaturgical work for the court and even possess a transcript of some of the conversation that passed between him and the Queen after he much affected her with a brilliant staging of the play *Palamon and Arcite* in Oxford, at Christ Church Hall, a performance which we may be sure the teenage Edward de Vere attended.

Indeed, throughout her reign, but especially during her early years as Queen, we have abundant evidence of Elizabeth’s reliance on many men of the theatre for her court drama, among them Richard Ferrant, Sebastian Westcott, Richard Mulcaster, Thomas Giles, and Richard Bower. None of these men, however, produced a great quantity of dramatic work, especially work that proved to be impressive or memorable; many

of them, indeed, were noted at least as much for their musical talents as their dramaturgy. Their influence, in short, was inconsiderable. Indeed, as Allardyce Nicoll attests, “the first twenty-five years of the Queen’s reign did not provide much of peculiar excellence. The surge of poetry . . . which we associate with her was not truly prophesied until the eighties . . .”

Who, therefore, we must ask, was the English court impresario or were the team of court impresari in the 1580s and 1590s who so staggered those noblemen of Europe

“Who, therefore, we must ask, was the English Court impresario—or the team of Court impressari—in the 1580s and 1590s who so staggered those noblemen of Europe who came to entreat the Queen or pay Elizabeth homage?”

“Where, moreover, we must ask, in the midst of this artistic revolution at the English Court, was Shakespeare? . . . he is never so much as even introduced to the Queen.”

who came to entreat the Queen or pay Elizabeth homage? Visitors and ambassadors to the court of Elizabeth wrote voluminously of their astonishment at the vigor of English court life, its high culture and abundant, refined entertainments. Indeed, as Felix Schelling attests, during the heyday of Elizabeth’s reign, plays were all the fashion “and it was the court that set the example.” In fact, as Schelling reminds us,

[t]he number of recorded performances at court [in the late sixteenth century] is upwards of two hundred, and it is probable that no week in any year elapsed without at least one afternoon or evening devoted to this

form of amusement. Indeed, no meeting of princes, reception of ambassadors, entertainment, or ceremonial was complete without a play . . .”

Well, who was writing and directing these plays that made the Elizabethan court the talk of Europe? Heywood was gone, Edwards was dead, Gascoigne had died in 1577. Lyly—Lord Oxford’s secretary—was surely part of the mix, but how much of this floribundant art of the Elizabethan court was his creation? Who *else* was there? George Peele (for a while), Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Lord Strange. *This* was the coterie of dramatic talent that shook the foundations of dramatic art in Renaissance Europe at the court of Elizabeth? I don’t think so.

Where, moreover, we must ask, in the midst of this artistic revolution at the English court, was Shakespeare? At the height of the English Renaissance, at the zenith of Britain’s most glorious achievements in art, that mystical and unfathomable Genius of Geniuses, the Playwright of Playwrights, the poor butcher’s apprentice-made-good, that incomparable master of classical literature, rhetoric, and unrivalled artist of the English language, acclaimed by the late A.L. Rowse the “best known, the most popular dramatist” of his day, William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, *is nowhere to be seen* at Elizabeth’s court. He is never so much as even introduced to the Queen. But then, why would he have been? As orthodox Stratfordian Alfred Harbage concedes,

There is not a shred of proof that Shakespeare was ever intimate or socially familiar with anyone except members of his own class . . . There is not a shred of proof that he ever received so much as a shilling from a lord . . . or even a free dinner in a lordly household. Unlike Jonson, Shakespeare never received a lucrative commission for an entertainment or masque at a noble or royal household. The legend that he received the preposterously large sum of £1000 [when Southampton was bankrupt!] first appeared in print a hundred years after his death.

Heywood sang to a dying Mary; Edwards chatted with Elizabeth, but Shakespeare, to the Queen and—even more notably—to all of his fellow dramatists of the day, was an unknown, an invisible man.

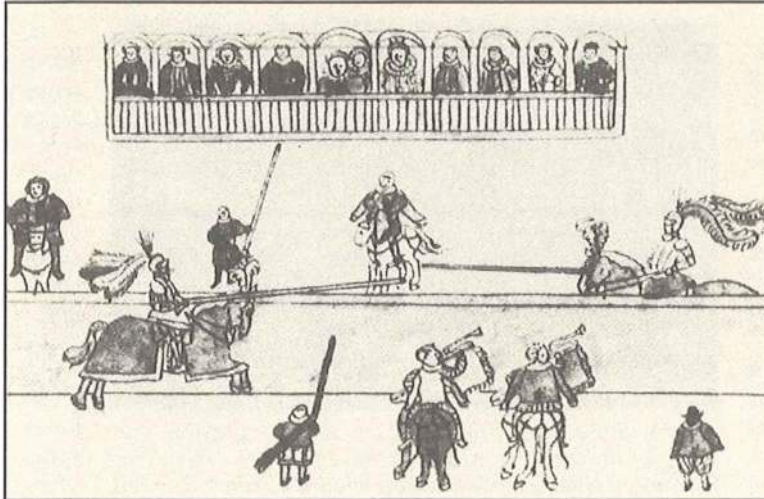
And yet, at this same time, these same dramatists and writers fill their cups fairly brim to overflowing in praise and adulation of Edward de Vere as a dramatist—a man for whom we haven't a single play under his own name! Gabriel Harvey, William Webbe, and Angel Day hail him a master scholar, dramatist, and poet. Edmund Spenser, Henry Peacham, and Francis Meres salute his genius, acclaim him foremost among the artists of Elizabeth's court, and laud his artistic achievements in the theatre. George Puttenham effuses, "I know very many gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their own names to it: as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned . . . of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford."

Peacham, in his work, *The Compleat Gentleman*, chronicles all of the Elizabethan age's notable playwrights, and he is so comprehensive in his catalogue of these dramatists as to include, among the greats, such minor talents as Paget and Buckhurst. He headlines this list, moreover, with Edward de Vere—a list, we must note, however, that *never mentions Shakespeare*.

Indeed, by the time of the monarchy's overthrow in the mid-seventeenth century, no playwright gathers more literary dedications by men of letters than Edward de Vere—Ben Jonson excepted; Oxford wins more notice among his fellow writers than even Sir Walter Raleigh or Sir Philip Sidney. No one, not incidentally, at the same time, ever dedicates a thing to any writer named William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, of course, is never mentioned by these writers, dramatists, and commentators who were his contemporaries because they knew him to be Edward de Vere, a pseudonymous author. We needn't rely simply on their declarations of Oxford's inimitable talent and achievements, however; attestation of Lord Oxford's work as

a courtier poet and dramatist are confirmed by a vivid account of Oxford's participation in something so simple as another wise seemingly-inauspicious tournament at Whitehall



This sketch, reproduced from Alan Young's Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments, shows Queen Elizabeth (top, center) watching two knights jousting from the viewing gallery at Whitehall Tiltyard. Young notes that the sketch is inaccurate in regards to the placement of the gallery, which actually faced up the length of the barrier between the jousting knights.

in 1581, an account in Oxford's biography that of ten is overlooked by most commentators for what it says about Oxford as a manager of theatre in favor of noting something of his considerable martial prowess.

Oxford was a potent adversary to confront in such tournaments. Oxford, however, was far more than a knightly gallant and a fearsome competitor within the lists. He was imbued with the spirit of Thespis as well as Mars, and his sensibilities as a poet, playwright, patron of players and creator of theatre were perhaps never so rapturously indulged, apart from the playhouse, as they were when he was amidst such regal company and on these occasions. This enthusiasm for studied exhibition by Oxford is attested, for example, in Alan Young's *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, wherein the author recounts, in abundant detail, the circumstances of Oxford's participation in one of his last tournaments (prior to his imprisonment in the Tower), at Whitehall, on 22 January 1581. The circumstance of this contest, some Oxfordians may recall, was, of course, the Earl of Arundel's "friendly" challenge to knightly gallants as one

Callophissus, a Lover of Beauty, to which challenge responded, among others, Lord Windsor, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir William Drury, and Lord Oxford. What is particularly notable for our purposes here, however, is not that Oxford answered the challenge (when, after all, was he ever inclined to forego such an invitation?), but the manner in which he answered Arundel's challenge.

Young tells us, for example, that all of the respondents to Arundel's challenge at Whitehall styled themselves, rather unpretentiously (save one! [guess who?]), by such unimaginative nomenclature as the Red Knight, the White Knight, and the Blue Knight—but, according to Young, "the Earl of Oxford appeared in the Whitehall tiltyard as the Knight of the Tree of the Sun . . . and it appears that he concealed himself in his pavilion [a 'statlie Tent of Oreng tawny Taffata, curiously imbroydered with Siluer, & pendants on the Pinacles'] before any of the other participants arrived." Moreover, in recounting the events that followed from records of the day, Young reports that, as the ceremonies commenced,

From forth this Tent came the noble Earle of Oxenford in rich gilt Armour, and sate down vnder a great high Bay-tree, the whole stocke, branches and leaues whereof, were all gilded ouer, that nothing but Gold could be discerned. [. . .] After a solemne sound of most sweet Musique, he mounted on his Courser, verie richly caparasoned, whe[n] his page ascending the staires where her Highnesse stood in the window, deliuered to her by speech [his] Oration . . .

The speech (notably, the only one recorded for the day!) discloses Oxford's purpose in appearing before the Queen in such lavish ostentation. Young's report from the records of the day reveals to us that Oxford told Her Majesty and the august assembly before the Queen that he, a wandering knight, had met "an aged 'Pilgrime or Hermit' who showed him 'a Tree so beautiful, that his eyes were daseled.'" Young continues:

(Continued on page 23)

Oxfordian News

Authorship Roundtable sponsors symposium in Los Angeles; Oxford Day Banquet held in Cambridge; second-guessing the Bard in Stratford

California

The Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable will be sponsoring a Shakespearean Research Symposium in **Los Angeles** this fall (October 10th and 11th).

The event is a first for the Roundtable, founded in 1985. In past years they have sponsored a series of monthly lectures from September to June.

The scheduled speakers (as of July) include: Dr. Patrick Buckridge, Peter Dickson, Gerald E. Downs, Roger Nyle Parisious, Diana Price, Prof. David A. Richardson, and Richard Roe.



Among those attending the 11th Annual Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge, Massachusetts, were Mr. James Hardigg (center), talking with Society President Randall Sherman (left) and trustee Grant Gifford (back to camera).

Massachusetts

The 11th Annual Oxford Day Banquet was held at the Harvard Faculty Club in **Cambridge** on Friday, April 24th. Thirty-eight Oxfordians and other guests attended.

In addition to local Oxfordians, among those attending this year were also Society members from California, Missouri, New York and Connecticut, and members of the Board of Trustees in town for the semi-annual Board meeting.

Randall Sherman, Charles Burford, and Dr. Daniel Wright each gave talks. Dr. Wright had been hoping to give his talk as part of the seminar series on the Harvard campus, but arrangements could not be made. However, his efforts were not wasted on the assembled Oxfordians in Cambridge, and he received a long round of applause after his spirited presentation. In addition to these talks, there were also brief presentations by Roger Stritmatter and the event's founder, trustee Charles Boyle.

Boyle, in addition to welcoming one and all, read a special poem from longtime Society member and published poet Katherine Assante of Highland Falls, NY (unable to attend due to health considerations).

The poem, written in commemoration of Paul Robeson's 100th birthday, was, Assante noted, her personal response to a man who had in his day performed some of the great Shakespearean roles, such as Othello. She has long felt a certain empathy between his outcast status and that of

another of her heroes, Edward de Vere. Assante's poem:

For me, one voice,
out of this century,
rings out above the rest
challenging the conscience
of America.

Four hundred years Othello waited
for this man to fill the role.

Out of the bitter black
experience
came a strength and beauty
born of pain,
a simple eloquence
that moves us still
to re-examine
outworn myths
that plague mankind.

Talent can never
be denied
though recognition
be long overdue.

I hear Paul Robeson sing
and am reminded
that music
is not bounded
by geography or race.
It is the language beyond words
where we can all share
our common human heritage.

Also in the **Boston** area recently, Society member Beverly Creasey, who writes theatre reviews for *Theater Mirror* (an Internet magazine) told us about some interesting mentions of the authorship debate that took place during the Reduced Shakespeare Company's 30-minute Shakespeare show. Neither of the local major papers (*The Boston Globe* and *The Boston Herald*) bothered to mention these little gems in their reviews (both of which were positive, as was Creasey's).

The most obvious authorship moments occurred whenever Shakespeare's name was mentioned, leading each time to a running gag about "which Shakespeare? ...don't you mean Edward de Vere?" There were also repeated comic mentions of A.L. Rowse

in another running gag. (Many an Oxfordian has cited Rowse's appearance on *Frontline's The Shakespeare Mystery* as a major factor in causing them to take the debate seriously, something that Rowse was incapable of doing).

Washington

In **Seattle**, radio station KVI played host to an authorship interview of Joseph Sobran conducted by Michael Medved on his nationally syndicated radio talk show.

Medved was quite fair in handling the issue and the callers, among whom were two Marlovians, one Baconian and at least one traditionalist "with his nose out of joint," as Patrick Sullivan put it when posting to the Phaeton email discussion group about the interview last April.

Sullivan also wrote that he had been the one to first suggest the idea to Medved last summer, leading up to the Seattle conference, but had never heard a word until—voilà!—there it was. The lesson, wrote Sullivan, is to keep plugging away with letters to media outlets, because you can never be sure whether suggestions are taking hold or not.

England

Is the chamber of commerce of **Stratford-on-Avon** hedging its Shakespeare bet? Stratford rakes in profits from millions of tourists who visit the picturesque village



On the Monday after the Edward de Vere Studies Conference Bill (left) and Charles Boyle took advantage of a day off in the Northwest to visit Mt. St. Helens. Such a trip is only possible since a new road and a series of viewing stations were completed in summer 1996. The Mt. St. Helen's site, 50 miles north of Portland, is well worth the visit and, in early April, is not too crowded.

because it is supposed to be the hometown of William Shakespeare. But what if it's not? What if the man who wrote under the pseudonym William Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, who came from Hedingham, not Stratford? This could be a major problem.

The *New Yorker* magazine recently reported that Stratford now has what could be a back-up tourist attraction—the Teletubbies. These are the somewhat obscure, doll-like characters in a TV cartoon that has been a smashing success in Great Britain and may begin airing on PBS.

The magazine says their headquarters is in Stratford, and, more important, Stratford has a Teletubbies gift store that sells Teletubbies merchandise that is hard to find elsewhere.

The store owner told the magazine that “thousands of out-of-towners make the pilgrimage every week.” The volunteer guides to the Shakespeare sites reported “an overwhelming volume of Teletubbies-related questions.” If the Stratford man story collapses, Po, Laa Laa and Tinky Winky appear ready to keep the tourist business humming.

“Tubby or not Tubby, that is the question,” says one local, according to the magazine.

Notes from the Classroom:

Unexpected help from Neil Simon

By Pamela Bowen

High school students reading Shakespeare often struggle with the Elizabethan language hoping just to get on with the story. If some metaphors come clear along the way, that's a bonus. Getting such readers to care about or even comprehend the dating of the plays based on contemporary allusions is very challenging. However, what we in the ed biz call a “teachable moment” recently presented itself at my high school.

Halfway through the reading and discussion of *Hamlet*, my advanced placement class took time out to see the drama department's production of Neil Simon's *Rumors*. The next day I asked the class to tell me if they could date the composition of *Rumors* based on the topical allusions in it. I thought perhaps a modern example could make the dating-based-on-allusions process clear to my students.

The first topical references the class came up with were not specific enough to narrow the date. Students mentioned BMW, profane language, political cover-ups, extramarital affairs, analysts, tax accountants, and TV cooking shows. We could place the show in the late 1900s, but not more accurately.

I pressed them for more specifics. Eventually, we generated this list of allusions in *Rumors*:

Meryl Streep
Group Therapy
Trivial Pursuit
Valium
The Concorde
Mrs. Thatcher
Mr. Gorbachev
Crystals
Polaris rockets
Don Corleone
Phantom of the Opera

Though my students' experience of this world does not exceed eighteen years, they could state confidently that the topics on the list are not hot (with the possible exception of *Phantom*). They are of another time, not 1998. Without further research, the class placed *Rumors* about ten years ago.

To verify our estimate I sent small groups

to the library to find the dates when the allusions in *Rumors* were “hot.” At the end of their scavenger hunt they were to guess a specific year and open the “hermetically sealed Price-Waterhouse” envelope containing the answer.

One group guessed 1987 just because that year predominated in their findings. The other guessed 1988, the correct year, because they knew *Phantom* opened that year. Both groups felt successful in dating *Rumors* fairly accurately based on allusions.

According to my students who also had roles in *Rumors*, the drama teacher had actually changed at least one of the references that he deemed too dated. The line, “You know what this night is beginning to remind me of? *Platoon*.” was changed to ...*Titanic*.” This altering of the allusions brought up an interesting topic. Was it possible that a revival of a Shakespeare play might have prompted a director to update the play's allusions to fit his own current political or social climate? Would such a reviser change all the allusions in the play or only those that suited his purposes? Our drama teacher only saw fit to change one and left the rest intact. This mixing of allusions from 1988 and 1998 gave *Rumors* a rather out of kilter feel. What time period were we in, anyway?

Students saw that determining the date of a play after some of the allusions had been updated would be especially difficult, particularly if the scholars had not lived during the time period of the play. We can feel what's hot and what's not in *Rumors*, but 400 years separate us from Shakespeare's plays. Scholars guessing the date of Shakespeare's plays must rely on research, not gut feelings.

Trying not to push my personal Oxfordian agenda, I left the lesson at that. My students tried their hand at dating *Rumors* and were successful, proving that allusions are an admissible guide to a play's age. They also realized that a play containing allusions from later revisions requires careful handling. Little did I suspect that Neil Simon's *Rumors* would prove a useful tool in helping my students understand the dating-by-allusions process.

Column
The Paradigm Shift
 by Mark K. Anderson

The Zen of Shake-speare

The story Oxfordians tell is alternately simple and dauntingly complex. On one hand, we observe that Shake-speare, like every other writer before and after him, followed the cardinal rule of all literary endeavors: write what you know.

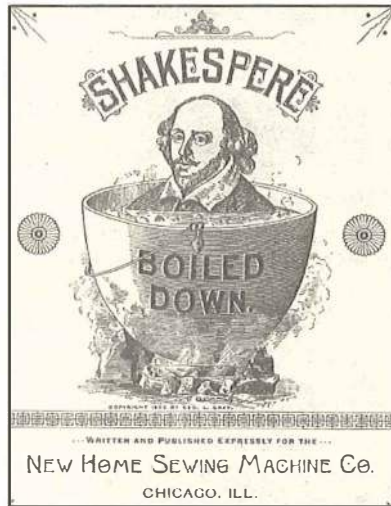
His works, while never simplistic or straightforward autobiography, drew deeply from the life of the man behind the pen. His intimate knowledge about customs, geography, culture and individuals in Venice or the court of Navarre, for instance, came from first-hand experience in those surroundings, not 16th century travelogues and chatty sailors in London pubs. Shake-speare's extensive network of legal metaphors and language was not borne of casual study or watching the Elizabethan equivalent of "The People's Court"; he knew abstruse legal terminology and obscure English case law because he had been trained as a lawyer at the Inns of Court. His unsurpassed debt to Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* springs from the fact that Golding was his uncle and Latin tutor at the time the famous translation was being prepared. And so on.

Yet it's also easy to lose oneself in a mire of facts and trivia. To recount the complete life's story of the 17th Earl of Oxford, one must command vast banks of knowledge about every facet of his life. (I've often heard people to observe what a great movie his life story will make someday. I reply that with the 54-year adventure he walked, you could probably make an incredible film about any one of his years on the Earth.)

So, as we have seen with some academically affiliated anti-Oxfordian advocates, one diversionary tactic has been to draw up lists of pettifoggery and peccadilloes associated with the Earl of Oxford and/or his modern day supporters. Its analogue in the natural world would be the octopus: shooting a dark jet of ink into the waters, and while its adversaries grope around for their bearings, the creature has swooshed away to trouble someone else.

Sometimes, that is, the basic story can get lost in all its subsidiaries and tributaries.

So it was that earlier this year I decided to perform an experiment unheralded in the history of Shaxperotics. I wanted to find a summary of Shake-speare in two lines or less.



Such a brave—and certainly more than a tiny bit silly—feat has never, so far as I'm aware, been attempted. That's probably for good reason, too.

That is, even if one wielded verbal compression skills beyond the might of a few thousand junkyard car crushers, the poetry would still be squished beyond recognition. Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, Prospero, Portia, the *Sonnets*: they couldn't all fit in the shoebox.

On the other hand, a lot can be said in one couplet or one haiku. It wasn't necessary to isolate an immortal tragedy in ten iambs, I realized. Rather, all that was needed was the Zen of Shake-speare—if such a thing existed at all.

So after a few days in the kitchen, boiling and reducing and distilling and extracting, I hit upon the indivisible core. Bringing the entire stock of plays and poems down to the quintessence of its quintessence, I found, leaves only the two lines that appeared on the first publication which bore the Shake-speare name. And, wouldn't you know it, they're not in English, nor were they even written by Shake-speare. They are:

*Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo
 Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.*

These words, from Ovid's *Amores* (I.15.35-36), grace the title page of the 1593 publication of Shake-speare's *Venus & Adonis*. (Though no English translations of the lines were available at the time, Marlowe's translation of the *Amores* was published in 1597, with the above rendered as "Let base-conceited wits admire vile things / Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses' springs.")

To Stratfordolators, this title page epigram is the stuff dreams are made on. Just a quote to grace the face of the author's first publication—perhaps to impress his presumed "patron," the Earl of Southampton, with the aspiring writer's knowledge of the ancient scribbler everyone seemed to be talking about in the 1590s.

John Roe, editor of the New Cambridge edition of *Venus & Adonis*, shrugs his shoulders in his footnote on the title page epigram. "By invoking Ovid the poem may be signaling the rarefied eroticism that is to follow," he supposes.

The Variorum edition goes a few steps further in quoting from A.W. Verity's (!) 1890 edition of *Venus & Adonis*: "In these lines, [Shake-speare] avow himself the child of Apollo and declares that henceforth his elixir vitae will be full draughts from the Castalian spring. The same proud confidence in himself and devotion to his art reappears again and again in the 'Sonnets.'"

Both commentators raise valid points. But no Stratford booster has yet, to my knowledge, ventured to offer any reasons why those particular lines from the *Amores* were quoted. No one wants to say what the inspiration—perhaps even the joke—was behind throwing down two obscure lines from Ovid on the title page of the first heir of the author's invention.

That's where the Oxfordian path diverges from that of the orthodoxy.

First off, Marlowe's translation may not alone suffice to convey the epigram's context. In his 1601 play *The Poetaster; Or, His Arraignment*, Ben Jonson offered a more

(Continued on page 24)

Book Reviews:

Creating Literature Out of Life: The Making of Four Masterpieces.

By Doris Alexander. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

By Richard F. Whalen

The fundamental problem with Will Shakspere of Stratford as the author of Shakespeare's works is that his life does not fit the works he is supposed to have written.

Most of the time his supporters strive mightily to ignore the problem or to rationalize it away.

They concoct an all-knowing genius or conjecture that during the "Lost Years" of his twenties he must have somehow learned everything he put into the poems and plays. Or they simply subtract the biography of the author from his works and forget about him.

On those rare occasions when a leading establishment scholar faces up to the biographical problem, it remains a problem. In *Shakespeare's Lives*, for example, Professor Schoenbaum examines the many Stratfordian biographies and finally concedes: "Perhaps we should despair of ever bridging the vertiginous expanse between the sublimity of the subject and the mundane inconsequence of the documentary record."

The significance of this dizzying gap between the Stratford man and Shakespeare's works, however, goes unrecognized and unexamined. The entrenched Stratfordian professors cannot and must not recognize the fundamental truth about all great writing: The best writers always write best about what they know best.

In her aptly titled book, *Creating Literature Out of Life*, Doris Alexander discusses works of four writers who wrote best about what they knew best. She illuminates "the mystery of creativity" by showing how great fiction results not only from a "blending of memories" but also from a writer's impelling need to confront and resolve an urgent life problem.

In earlier books she had studied how Eugene O'Neill and Charles Dickens created literature out of their lives. In the book at hand she extends her study to include four very dissimilar works: Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Edward FitzGerald's

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Mann's *Death in Venice* flowed from a blending of several experiences and memories. The plot duplicates his trip to Venice in 1911. There he saw a beautiful Polish boy, who inspired in Mann a "lyrical Dionysiac rapture." The boy also reminded him of a statue of Hermes Psychopompos, the guide of dead souls to the underworld. Mann's sister, Carla, also a struggling artist, had committed suicide the year before. She kept a human skull on her dresser, and details of her death are reflected in the story. Another recent death was that of the composer/conductor Gustav Mahler, whom Mann idolized; and the hero of the story looks like Mahler.

"The entire push of the story," says Alexander, "had emerged from the realization—opening up as Mann wrote—that the lure of death in Carla was also within him and that it was inextricably allied to his homoerotic impulses." This was the life and death problem that Mann was able to resolve.

Treasure Island, with its mutilated men on a disease ridden island, enabled Stevenson to work through painful memories of his lonely, sickly youth when he dreamed of becoming a rough pirate. The one-legged pirate, Long John Silver, was based directly on Stevenson's closest friend, a tall, powerful man who lost a leg to tubercular arthritis. Stevenson once told him, "It was the sight of your maimed strength and masterfulness that begot John Silver in *Treasure Island*."

Stevenson's knowledge of the sea came from his father and grandfather, seafaring men who designed and built Scotland's lighthouses. He planned to do the same and studied marine engineering, but his illness made such a career impossible. For most of his life Stevenson suffered from a life-threatening lung disease. "He made his fight against the fear of death by writing *Treasure Island*," says Alexander. She concludes: "Only when the theme he found allowed him to resolve a major life-problem through a blend of memories could Stevenson achieve the work that rendered him immortal." (11)

Alexander's most unlikely example is FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Almost always thought of as a translation,

it is really a work of genius based on the Persian classic—just as Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is based on *Plutarch's Lives*.

Terrifically ambivalent about women, briefly and most unhappily married, suddenly bankrupt, FitzGerald creates in poetry his own philosophy of life from the epigrams of the eleventh century Persian writer. A Persian quatrain about predestination, for example, is transformed into FitzGerald's expression of the futile agony of regret. "In this way," says Alexander, "FitzGerald could come to grips with his feelings of guilt and remorse at having let himself be married against his will, and then not managing to endure it." (Oxfordians will see a striking parallel with the Earl of Oxford's first marriage.)

Half of Alexander's book is on *War and Peace* and Tolstoy's blending of intimate, family and political memories into one of the world's greatest novels. She brilliantly traces all the complex influences on Tolstoy, from his mother, who died when he was an infant, to a failed coup d'état of idealist aristocrats. Tolstoy's genius was so all encompassing that the life parallels and blendings of memories are everywhere in the book. For him, all of life was an urgent problem to be resolved. Tolstoy was driven by his search for the meaning of life and history.

"*War and Peace*," says Alexander, "came out of his most intimate struggles, his most intense experiences, the people he had been closest to and had loved best.... He had really, by the end of the book, arrived at the life-meaning and philosophy that only much later on he would try to translate into every act of his daily life."

The 17th Earl of Oxford is famous for the turmoil and urgent problems in his life, including his mistrust of his first wife, the accusations of bastardy, his involvement in court politics, and his stormy relations with Queen Elizabeth and Lord Burghley. All are reflected in the poems and plays of Shakespeare, just as Doris Alexander would expect.

In contrast, the "mundane inconsequence" and utter irrelevance of the biography of Will Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon renders unbelievable the claim for him as the great poet/dramatist.

Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

Published quarterly by the
Shakespeare Oxford Society
P.O. Box 263

Somerville, MA. 02143

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

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From the Editor:

To be or not to be ... evident

The central issue of the authorship debate, once one has gotten past the usual firstlines of resistance—it can't be true! no conspiracy could be that big! it doesn't matter anyway! my teacher says all anti-Stratfordians are nuts!—is the debate over what constitutes evidence in determining “what happened” and “why it happened” four hundred years ago, and—of equal importance—how such evidence should be interpreted.

In the course of putting together this issue of the newsletter and working with Peter Dickson on our page one story (“Shakespeare's son on Death Row”) this matter of evidence—and interpretation of evidence—has loomed large.

Most of the evidence Dickson has gathered has been around for centuries—even the incredible May 16th Gondomar letter, first referred to in a footnote in an 1869 publication, but never before reproduced anywhere. Yet he only found this footnote because he had already been looking into the political—not literary—history of this period, following up on his intuitive feeling that these two events—the politics of the Marriage Crisis and the *Folio* publication—were linked somehow.

Dickson has remarked a number of times in the past year how strange it seemed to him, as a historian and a newcomer to the authorship debate, that no one had ever before seriously looked at the political events surrounding the *Folio* publication. He wondered especially how Oxfordians could have missed focusing on the imprisonment of the 17th Earl of Oxford's son during the *Folio* publication. That these parallel events of the publication and the imprisonment of the author's son must be somehow connected seemed, well, just plainly evident, and so he dug deeper and deeper into this period in history.

Two years ago we wrote about some similar issues in our article “Writing History” (Winter 1997), although at that time the concern was the “Southampton as son” theory. And there were some familiar elements in that story—such as evidence provided by an ambassador's letter, telling us something about events in England that we would not otherwise have known about. Still, as we said then, any such evidence cannot really be understood or even evaluated until it has been incorporated—through interpretation—into a larger narrative.

The connection between the Marriage Crisis and the *First Folio* publication is primarily an interpretation of the facts at hand, an interpretation that to our knowl-

edge no one has made before. And in the estimation of an increasing number of Oxfordians at this moment, it is a reasonable interpretation. In fact, it may well prove to be momentous in clarifying much about this period in English history, and may turn out to be a major step forward in helping us to make the case for the 17th Earl of Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare Canon.

It should also be noted here that over the past year many who had heard about Dickson's work and his evolving new theory about the *Folio* publication at first balked—how can it be? what's the connection? where's the proof? It was all rather reminiscent of moments familiar to us all in the authorship debate itself.

While many of us in the Oxfordian movement have marveled over the years at the supposed obstinance of others in the authorship debate (Stratfordians, Baconians, Marlovians, or—depending on which breed of Oxfordian you are—fellow Oxfordians) in refusing to see that [fill in here the certainty of your choice] is so *plainly evident*, here is one instance where apparently *all of us* missed the boat, and it took a newcomer to make the connection. And there may well be a lesson in that for all of us, oldtimers and newcomers alike.

With that in mind, it should be noted that this new theory, as exciting and as forceful as it is in explaining how and why the *First Folio* came to be published at this particular point in time, still does not answer all the questions surrounding the Shakespeare authorship mystery.

For example—to name just a few—questions remain to be answered about the true nature of the Shakespeare plays themselves (literature or historical testimony?), about why *none* of the Bard's poems (*V&A*, *Lucrece*, *The Sonnets*) were either included or even mentioned in the *Folio* project, about how and why decisions were made about which plays were to be included in the *Folio* and which were not (and what might we learn from that?), and, finally, about why a pseudonym was still used 19 years after the author's death, and how—once it had been used—it has never been dislodged, not during the tumultuous years of the Commonwealth period just a few decades later, nor anytime during all the centuries following. More evidence and more interpretation are needed concerning all these questions.

And undoubtedly, someday in the future, when all these questions have been answered, someone will remark how evident it all was. How could anyone ever have missed it?

Letters:

To the Editor:

Mark Anderson's column "The Art of *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*" (Spring 98, page 16) provokes some thoughts on my part. I have been a member of the Society for over ten years, and have, in that time, written a number of articles for the *Newsletter*. None of my articles made any reference, direct or indirect, to my views on current American politics. My forbearance was due to the facts that (a) such matters have little relevance to Shakespeare, and (b) I am aware that not all members of the Society share my point of view. Charlton Ogburn is certainly capable of expressing strong opinions, and I am well aware that he supports a particular political position, and yet the 900-odd pages of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* do not reveal whether he is Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative. I suggest that others follow his example.

Peter Moore
Atlanta, Georgia
12 June 1998

To the Editor:

With reference to your article "Ciphers, codes and the authorship debate" and Stephanie Hughes' "A Society of Secrets" (Spring 1998 *Newsletter*), with two reproductions of the same miniature by Nicholas Hilliard of "Unknown Man clasping a hand from a Cloud" and, in particular, to the statement "cryptic phrases in Latin whose meaning still defies interpretation" (Hughes, page 7), I am writing to ask you why that very

miniature with the Latin motto "Attici amois ergo" has been chosen to corroborate the belief that impressas and mottoes hide a secret meaning and therefore cannot be interpreted?

I am also writing to let the Oxfordian American readers know that the *De Vere Society Newsletter* includes an explanation and interpretation of the Latin motto on that Hilliard miniature (March 1997, pages 7-8).

In order to demonstrate that Latin mottoes or posies of Elizabethan times are almost always unintelligible to present day readers or historians, a different example should have been chosen, i.e. one which *does* have an obscure meaning.

The interpretation of the hand from the cloud is a separate problem, a distinct field of investigation, even though related to the sitter, the background and the addressee of the miniature itself.

Noemi Magri
Mantova, Italy
21 June 1998

To the Editor:

I basically agree with Charles Young in what he thinks about Shakespeare ("Ciphers, codes and the authorship debate," Spring 1998), though I cannot agree with everything he says. Our members should also be aware that there was another part of his *Games Magazine* article that was not discussed in the newsletter article—his view on the painting "Elizans Triumphans."

When Elizabeth is triumphantly wheeled about on a mobile throne under a canopy borne by four gentlemen, he is right to say that one of them is the Earl of Oxford, but it

is not the one he thinks. It is not the person in the rear, it is the one in front, the one with a bad leg who looks straight ahead—as identified by Roger Stritmatter at the De Vere Studies Conference (*Ed. note: see page 10 for more details*).

Nevertheless Young is on the right path and should only be encouraged to do more research.

Charles Boyle
Harwich, Massachusetts
15 July 1998

To the Editor:

Edward Sisson in his letter in the last issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Spring 1998, page 23) gets hold of an interesting stick, but [should] query at the right end.

Mr. Shaksper turned [down] the opportunity of lionisation at the Court productions of Christmas 1604 (7 plays); we may talk of *Hamlet* without the Prince indeed, at the greatest social triumph afforded to any actor/playwright since time began—if indeed Mr. Shaksper wrote the plays. To my mind that makes it clear that contemporaries well knew he was not the author—see the article on Shakespeare's London Career from 1599 (*De Vere Society Newsletter*, October 1997, page 4).

The point is that any publisher of literary works would be likely to know that Shaksper was not the author. Any writing "by W.S." could be tacked on to the Shakespeare corpus without any damage from Mr. Shaksper. The publisher's defence to a claim from Mr. Shaksper would be (1) that Shaksper was not—or could not prove himself—the author, and (2) who is W.S. anyway?

Mr. Shaksper would be keeping a low profile after Oxford's death, either as part of some identity-cover bargain or because he realised his social (and/or legal) position in London was indefensible. Anyway he had his hush money; he did not need to run the danger of being part of a conspiracy to make money out of spurious productions.

The strong point is that Mr. Shaksper, litigious soul, never litigated about the plays, or about their monetary consequences. They were irrelevant to him and he to them.

R. C. W. Malim
Blandford, Dorset, England
6 July 1998

(Continued on page 22)

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to establish Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), as the true author of the Shakespeare works, to encourage a high level of scholarly research and publication, and to foster an enhanced appreciation and enjoyment of the poems and plays.

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Letters (Continued from page 21)

To the Editor:

Did Ben Jonson actually write the R.R. eulogy (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 1997/Winter 1998, page 13) in the 1611 *Divine Weeks* of Josuah Sylvester? Who, then, or what, might "R.R." represent?

Robert Detobel has sent to me a persuasive solution for the "who": Robert Radcliffe, fifth Earl of Sussex (1569?-1629). Uneasy in a corner of his mind at the Jonson attribution, Detobel went digging beneath the slab of the *DNB* and discovered (in Greg's bibliography of plays) that Jonson had composed a masque, *The Hue and Cry of Cupid*, for the wedding of Radcliffe's daughter, sometime prior to 1608. Evidence is thus provided for a close degree of acquaintance between Jonson and Radcliffe (who maintained a company of players).

Detobel offers the possibility that Jonson may have "taken over" a Radcliffe poem, or that perhaps the reverse happened. However, neither speculation seems especially attractive. The *DNB* entry on Radcliffe reveals an able soldier, but a man given to dissipation and unmentioned as a poet, although the entry does cite him as "a patron of men of letters." Moreover, the thought of a techy Jonson handing over lines of his for modification by a wassailing Sussex is not credible.

The R.R. eulogy feels like Jonson down to the marybones, with its plenitude of textual confirmation, and the additional substantiation for this perception is to be found in the letters-to-the-editor of Detobel himself and Fran Givens (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 1998, page 21).

"The question," Detobel at last concludes in his letter to me, "is whether Radcliffe was the author or simply lent his initials to verses by Ben Jonson." A Mark Antony-ish largesse of initials lending seems the more likely of the alternatives—if, indeed R.R. represents Robert Radcliffe. (Detobel cites five other bearers of those initials with feasible dates; so gaze we upon another deliberate ambiguity in the manner of "E. L. Oxon.")

James Fitzgerald
Natick, Massachusetts
7 June 1998

Shakespeare as a Priest (continued from page 2) history includes his turning in his cousins as secret Catholics plotting against Elizabeth in 1580. And doubts still linger about de Vere's own innermost thoughts on the subject; did he have some sympathies for the old faith right up to the end, even as he politically propagandized the new order in Tudor England?

In the story as seen by Wilson and de Hoghton through their new theory, "there is [an] extraordinary but logical connection between the most Catholic town in the Midlands [Stratford] and the great center for Catholic patronage at Hoghton."

Wilson goes on to say, "My theory is

[that] what makes Shakespeare different is he never offers us a utopian ending—his plays continue to mystify us—and this is related to Catholic secrecy... Shakespeare's characters will not reveal their inner truth and there is an endless mystery to his plays that is very near to Campion's world."

The *Post* article concludes by noting the inevitable fact that "all theories about the Bard's lost years [are] controversial." Eamon Duffy, professor of English at Magdalene College, Cambridge University, gets the last word: "It would be wonderful to know what Shakespeare was doing as a young man, but the point is we just do not know."

The Blue Boar

Books and Publications

Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time. By Joseph Sobran. Item SP7. \$25.00

The Anglican Shakespeare: Elizabethan Orthodoxy in the Great Histories. By Prof. Daniel L. Wright. Item SP11 \$19.95

The Elizabethan Review. A Scholarly Oxfordian Journal. Editor: Gary Goldstein. Two issues per year. Item 125 \$35.00 (individuals); \$45.00 (institutional, US); \$55 (overseas).

Freeing Shakespeare's Voice. The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text. By Kristen Linklater. Of special interest is the last chapter, "Whose Voice?", in which Linklater acknowledges her Oxfordian beliefs. Item SP8 \$12.50

A Hawk from a Handsaw. A Student's Guide to the Authorship Debate. By Rollin De Vere. Item SP13 \$12.00

The Man Who Was Shakespeare. By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (94-pp summary of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*). Item SP5 \$5.95

The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality. Revised 2nd Edition. By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. Item 121 \$37.50

Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose. By Elisabeth Sears. Item SP3. \$12.50

"Shakespeare" Identified in *Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.* By J. Thomas Looney. Paperback facsimile reprint of the 1920 edition. Item SP4. \$20.00

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Wright (continued from page 15)

As the speech unfolds, it becomes clear that this "Tree of the Sunne" represents Elizabeth. It is unique like the Phoenix, and it eclipses all other trees. In an allusion to Elizabeth's virginity, we are told that "Vestas bird sitteth in the midst, whereat Cupid is euer drawing, but dares not shoot, being amazed at that princely and perfect Maiestie." In the shade of the tree, the knight has found "such content, as nothing could be more comfortable," and has "made a sollemne vowe, to incorporate hys harte into that Tree, and ingraft hys thoughts vpon those vertues. Swearing, that as there is but one Sunne to shine ouer it, one roote to glue life vnto it, one toppe to maintaine Maiestie: so there should be but one Knight, eyther to lyue or die for the defence thereof. Where-vpon, tree swore himselfe onely to be the Knight of the Tree of the Sunne, whose life should end before his loyaltie."

Young concludes his recital of the record of Oxford's speech to the Queen by pointing out that "[I]ack of any detailed account of the other defendants' tiltyard speeches and pageants makes it impossible for us to know whether the fictions of the responses by [the others] were also developed with such imaginative fervour...." However, given the relatively uninspired and indifferent

appellations selected by Oxford's counterparts in the lists for this festive entertainment, compounded by the failure of the chronicler of the event to note, even in summary, anything offered by the other participants in tribute to or in praise of the Queen, we might well be safe in assuming that they were not comparably distinguished.

Oxford's stately pavilion, spirited oratory, and imaginative nomenclature were lustrous and rare contributions to the dignity of such an occasion, and their evocation of imaginative worlds of colour, fantasy, and high drama expresses the temperament of one intimately companioned to, fond of, and perhaps even practiced in the arts of the stage; indeed, of Oxford's particular love of ostentatious show and high theatricality—singular qualities among his peers—Young attests,

It was rare for an individual to invest so much in a pavilion at Tudor and Stuart tournaments... [and while i]t is just possible that pavilions such as Oxford's were a fairly commonsight at Tudor and Jacobean tournaments, . . . this idea is not supported either by the evidence of surviving descriptions or by the household accounts of even such lavish spenders as the Earl of Essex and the Earl of Rutland.

Here, at Whitehall, therefore, in addition to Oxford the "knight," we see Oxford in the role of just that kind of person whom we would expect to find at court in charge of the Queen's entertainments. Here is our missing impresario, the elusive courtier, conjuring one of those dramatic spectacles that made the Elizabethan court the talk of Europe. Here is the wordsmith, the allegorist, the allusive classicist, the maker of theatrical magic. Here is the spendthrift dramatist, ever ready to produce the most opulent of courtly feasts for eyes and ears that ever Elizabeth and her court were graced to see and hear. Here—here—we find our missing Shakespeare. Here we find Edward de Vere.

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Anderson (continued from page 18)

cheeky translation of the epigram as follows: "Kneel hinds to trash: me let bright Phoebus swell/With cups full flowing from the Muses' well."

Together, Jonson and Marlowe's translations at least suggest the basic storyline. Ovid first notes—with more than a hint of irony—what he's not saying. The vulgar folk, the "base-conceited wits" (Jonson's "trash") will always admire vulgar things, he says.

On the other hand, the epigram continues, we all are above that. (Here one might imagine a Jonsonian courtier fop like Sir Fastidious Brisk or a more modern effete stereotype such as Percy Dovetonsils or *Saturday Night Live's* "Master Thespian" uttering these lines.) We know that there is no such vulgarity to be found in these pages. Instead, we are up on Mount Parnassus, filling our chalices with draughts of pure inspiration courtesy of the Muses themselves. And they would certainly condone no base-conceited things to be uttered in their presence.

Right?

The message, in short, is a joke for whomever wants to get it. It officially disavows any "vulgar" (i.e. topical) reading of

the poem while at the same time unofficially encouraging it.

In that sense, Shakespeare provided an English translation of his *Venus & Adonis* title page epigram, although it's less literal than Jonson's or Marlowe's. It's in Hamlet, when the Prince is "discouraging" his fellow courtiers from reading any topicality into his production of *The Mousetrap*.

"His name's Gonzago," Hamlet says of his fictional doppelganger for the late King. "The story is extant and writ in choice Italian." (III.ii.262)

Indeed, Hamlet could just as readily have gone on to say, "Let base-conceited wits admire vile things. Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses' springs."

Or, in modern legal parlance, Hamlet is saying, "The story, all names, characters and incidents portrayed in this production are fictitious. No identification with actual persons, places, buildings and products is intended or should be inferred."

Of course, in Hamlet's case, the meaning of such "warnings" are transparent. After all, the Prince says straight out that his purpose of *The Mousetrap* is to "catch the conscience of the King."

The author gives no similarly explicit exposition of his intent in *Venus & Adonis*.

That he leaves to his readers who know their Ovid—and who know irony when they see it.

The epigram that introduced the world to the Shakespeare pseudonym, in fact, could grace the title pages of all his works. It is an abstract and brief summary of the Oxfordian case for appreciating the topical and allegorical dimensions of the Shakespeare canon.

"Don't worry, fair readers," it says. "There's nothing to be found herein but ancient tales and timeworn legends... and if you actually believe that old lie, you may want to consider a career in Shaxperotics."

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