Shakespeare's
King John
A story of rightful identity and eyes to see
by Dr. Ren Draya

The Elizabethan passion for history and politics is well reflected in the sheer number of history plays and their popularity during the Renaissance. We note works such as Mirror for Magistrates, Castiglione's The Courtier, compendia of documents, chronicles such as those by Hall and Holinshed—it was an age fascinated by the dynamics of power, the rise and fall of rulers, the question of rightful identity. In building the case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, many Oxfordians have pointed to the accurate depiction of pageantry and court practices in the history plays—details that would scarcely have been familiar to anyone un-versed in the ways of the nobility.

I wish here to recommend a closer look at The Life and Death of King John. It is "the unique history" because it is unattached to the series of plays, from Richard II to Richard III (and, perhaps, to Henry VIII) which examine the turbulent Wars of the Roses and ascendency of the Tudors. King John stands apart. It is set in the early thirteenth century, not the fifteenth century. It never mentions the Magna Carta—for many Americans, our only association with King John. It does not wrestle with the ups and downs of the Lancaster and York families. It deals even-handedly with the power of the Catholic Church. And foremost, it is a play about rightful identity.

We can see de Vere’s insistence on that theme in so many of his plays: who is the "correct" duke, who the usurper? which daughter is the true, loving daughter? Con-
(Continued on page 13)
Shakespeare’s invention: the royal story of The Sonnets

Hank Whittemore makes his case that most are post-Essex Rebellion “written ambassages” to the Earl of Southampton and Queen Elizabeth

Author and Oxfordian researcher Hank Whittemore gave the first formal presentation of his new interpretation of Shakespeare's Sonnets at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable on June 5th in Los Angeles. Whittemore reads the sonnets from the perspective of his acceptance of the “Southampton as royal heir” theory. Thirty-five Oxfordians attended the concluding lecture of the Roundtable’s 1998-1999 season.

Several weeks before his talk he distributed a 75-page synopsis of his work to all members of the Phaeton Internet discussion group. He is also presently putting his thesis into a full-length book format, and hopes to see it published in the near future.

The word from those in attendance in LA is that Whittemore’s presentation made quite an impression, even on those who had been skeptical of the Southampton theory. In fact, several attendees have since written to Whittemore saying that while they had in the past had serious reservations about the royal heir theory, they are now re-thinking their position in light of his presentation.

Overall, his work on the sonnets has so far met with a broad range of reaction, from “You’ve done it!” to “Oh, no, not Southampton as the royal heir...not again!!”

Our readers may wonder why another book on the sonnets should be any big deal, or why an interpretation of the sonnets that embraces the “Southampton as royal heir” theory should even be given the time of day. Such books have been done before, most recently Betty Sears’ Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose (1991), and controversy always stalks these royal heir theories. Critics’ key counter-argument to such theories is that interpretation of the Shakespeare works is not—and cannot be—evidence in the authorship debate, and that controversial theories derived from such interpretation may actually hinder rather than help us.

So then, is Whittemore’s contribution to this corner of the Shakespeare authorship universe really any different from previous efforts? In the opinion of many, including those who attended the June 5th session in LA, the answer is: yes.

Whittemore’s overall thesis is, simply, that the vast majority of the so-called Fair Youth sonnets (1-126)—as published in 1609—were written (or re-worked and/or re-written, “dressing old words new” (76)) following the failed Essex Rebellion in 1601, and that the author followed a carefully crafted scheme of arranging them chronologically to reflect Southampton’s birthdays (e.g. 1-26), and then, starting with 27, to record in multi-level “written ambassages” (26) day by day and month by month the emotional turmoil the author and his beloved were in following the Essex Rebellion, with Southampton first doomed to death, then doomed to life in prison, then suddenly released, and culminating in sonnet 125 as a commemoration of Elizabeth’s funeral on April 28th, 1603, with 126 being a final farewell.

Elizabeth as The Dark Lady

The second sequence (127 to 154), popularly known to most Shakespeare readers as the Dark Lady sonnets, repeats some of the same chronological ground, but are they now all addressed to Elizabeth, whose darkness is in her duplicity and complexity, not her complexion.

Whittemore makes a persuasive case that the recurring images of dark and black are metaphors for the bastard shame she has consigned on both father and son with her refusal to acknowledge him (127) or to honor promises made (152), and finally ends with the same dark metaphor describing the author’s own self-loathing that he has “sworne thee fair and called thee bright, who art as black as hell and dark as night.” (152)

As Whittemore sardonically notes in his discussion of the Dark Lady sequence, the great author’s greatest poetry is—in his view—obsessed with such great issues as truth and honor, right and wrong, promises and betrayals—not hair color.

It is, in Whittemore’s estimation, the love-hate relationship between the author and his Queen—compounded by the fate of their unacknowledged son Southampton—that is the driving force that begat these brilliant poems. His unique contribution to the scholarship of The Sonnets is the thesis that the sonnets’ greatness was forged in the brief, intense heat of the Essex Rebellion crisis, with Southampton’s life on the line, and when both the author and his Queen were themselves close to death (or, as Shakespeare also wrote during this same period, “For these dead birds sigh a prayer”—Phoenix and Turtle).

Sonnets as letters to a man in—and then out—of prison

It is the reading of individual sonnets from this point of view that lends the most credence to Whittemore’s approach. In particular, certain sonnets that have not fit any particular theory before now fairly fly off the page when read from this new perspective.

For example, Sonnet 63’s “For such a time do I now fortify/Against confounding age’s scruellknife...” hasnever—to our knowledge—been interpreted as a reference to Southampton’s imminent execution by beheading (which would also firmly date it to the first half of March 1601). When this sonnet is then juxtaposed with Sonnet 87 and its “misprision” reference (which is a reference to a treasonable offense that falls short of capital punishment, therefore placing it in the period after Southampton’s fate goes from death to life in prison), a pattern begins to emerge.

Add then Sonnet 107 (the so-called “Dating” Sonnet), which many critics link to April 1603 and Southampton’s release from the Tower upon Elizabeth’s death, and finally go on to Sonnet 125 as Elizabeth’s funeral on April 28th, 1603...well, one can start to see how such individual interpretations both make sense of key words, images and references in each sonnet and lend themselves to a chronological sequence for at least these four aforementioned poems.

The question then becomes, can each and every sonnet be fit into this pattern? Whittemore believes, “yes,” and he is now ready to try to convince the world of it.

Our newsletter will feature a major essay from Whittemore on his thesis. He will also be giving a paper at the 23rd Annual Conference this fall on his work.

—W. Boyle
**Media Notes**

*Harper’s* story generates commentary, coverage; *Chronicle of Higher Education* weighs in

With the *Harper’s* Magazine articles following close on the heels of *The Washington Post* and *Time* stories, media coverage of the authorship continued on the upswing well into the spring.

One of the key recent highlights was an op-ed piece in *The Washington Post* on March 21st in which columnist David Ignatius, responding to the *Harper’s* articles, said he had seen enough.

“After reading this month’s *Harper’s* magazine... I am convinced,” he wrote, “that the answer [to the question, ‘Who in fact was the Bard?] is de Vere.”

Ignatius was one of a number of columnists around the country who picked up on the story and wrote about their views. Results ranged from those such as Ignatius switching sides, to columnists such as David Sarasohn (*The Oregonian*, Portland) defending—more or less—the status quo, even to a mention on 60 minutes in which Andy Rooney held up the *Harper’s* issue, but only to complain that he wanted answers from magazines, not questions. “Didn’t they watch the Oscars before they wrote this?” he griped.

A mention of the debate was also heard on National Public Radio during an interview with Martin Goldsmith about his book on classical music based on Shakespeare’s plays. At one point Goldsmith remarked, “Well, whoever wrote the works... we’ll let the Oxfordians and Stratfordians wrestle that one out.”

*The Oregonian*, in addition to such commentary as columnist Sarasohn’s, also ran a front page feature story (March 21st) on Concordia’s Edward de Vere Studies Conference and Dr. Daniel Wright.

The July issue of *Harper’s* is now out, and it contains 20 letters in response to the April issue’s Shakespeare authorship folio. The letters are roughly divided by thirds among Stratfordians, Oxfordians, and middle-of-the-road and/or “Who cares?” responses. Mark Anderson’s page one story draws on both these letters and some of the unpublished letters received by *Harper’s*. The magazine’s New York office has told us that the overall response—nearly 150 letters—was one of the largest they’ve ever received for a feature story.

### Canadian coverage

In anticipation of the *Harper’s* articles, the Society sent out a number of press releases in early to mid-March to media outlets throughout the US and Canada. Interestingly, it was only the Canadian media that responded to this story with any significant national coverage.

Through contacts with our home office in Massachusetts, arrangements were made for live radio and TV interviews conducted on the April 23rd traditional birthday. Featured were Dr. Daniel Wright (on CBC radio) and the De Vere Society’s Christopher Dams (on CBC-TV’s Midday program), both debating academic counterparts in broadcasts heard and seen throughout Canada.

*The Globe and Mail* in Toronto also responded to the press releases, and featured several stories this spring, including a short column on April 22nd giving five possible messages Shakespeare might have received on his telephone answering machine if he were alive today. Message number three was:

“Mr. Shakespeare. My name is Jack Cade, and I represent the descendants of the 17th Earl of Oxford. It has come to my attention that you have been passing off their ancestor’s work as your own... since you have ignored our request to cease and desist from these claims... I will be forced to seek a restraining order.”

### Chronicle of Higher Education

Probably the biggest news story generated by all the recent authorship coverage appeared in the June 4th issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, which carried a feature story by *Chronicle* staffer Scott Heller on the Oxfordian movement. Heller interviewed a number of Oxfordians and Stratfordians in preparing this story, and was in attendance at the April 23rd Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge, Massachusetts (story page 17).

The story overall clearly leans towards defending the status quo of Stratford, and is sprinkled throughout with such asides as the Banquet being held in the “basement” of the Harvard Faculty Club, Society President Aaron Tatum being a “Newt Gingrich lookalike (to which Tatum has responded, “yes”), or the sign at Concordia for *Romeo and Juliet* (see page one) being a “cheeky gesture.”

Stratfordian “authorship” regular Prof. Alan Nelson is quoted, and Heller also interviewed several members of the committee overseeing Roger Stritmatter’s Ph.D. thesis at UMass-Amherst.

Dr. Daniel Wright and Roger Stritmatter are prominently featured—in fact the story begins by mentioning them both in the context that they are scholars who are finding comfort in the company of friends at the Oxford Day Banquet, since within the academy they are, “looked on skeptically, if not laughed out of the room.”

This opening is the benchmark for Heller’s take on the whole authorship debate—namely that it is taking place outside of the academy. And it is this stance that therefore results in the strongest critique that both Wright and Stritmatter have about the article, i.e. that where Heller could have highlighted both department head Wright and Ph.D. candidate Stritmatter—not to mention others such as department head Dr. Jack Shuttleworth at the Air Force Academy—as representing a new cutting edge in academic acceptance of the authorship debate, he instead takes a stance of viewing the whole matter as still peripheral, and only at the conclusion of his piece notes—quoting Stritmatter—that big changes “may” be occurring in academe.

Still, on the whole, the article is mostly fair about the debate, and the coverage of the issue in such a major publication as *The Chronicle*—read on virtually every campus in America—is priceless.

One important issue of that Stritmatter has taken exception to is Heller’s reporting on why one of his Ph.D. advisory committee members (David Barrington) resigned from the committee. It was, Roger tells us, because he (Roger) had requested it, not (as the article implies) because Barrington had already passed judgement on the validity of Stritmatter’s work.
Anderson (Continued from page one)
certainly an unprecedented show of hands for a literary story. (Arthur Miller’s insightful nine-page essay on the state of the American theater in the previous month’s issue, for instance, generated comparatively little response.)

As a participant in the fray, I’ve had the opportunity to read through all those responses firsthand. And, for starters, let me say one thing: Enough with the UFO jokes already!

I’m probably not the most patient audience when it comes to cheap shots (e.g. Abraham Lincoln as a favorite real-life “bumpkin” cited as a precedent against the Oxfordians), but after a few airings of the familiar red herrings, the strutting of Stratford’s most cocksure defenders was enough to make me yearn for Harold Bloom’s tweed-elbowed wit. At least his chalky fabrications and groundless assertions were entertaining.

One Canadian philosophy professor castigated the magazine for airing a debate that “could not be more depressing.” He assured his assumed readership that with the Looney theory, “Here we see the frenzied thought patterns of the conspiracy theorist—much is made of small things—and, where nothing can be found, so much the deeper must the conspiracy be.” He went on to put forward the stereotypical anti-Oxfordian slander that “Once you drop the idea that only aristocrats are smart and well-educated enough to do important work, the whole motivation for the Oxford hypothesis disappears. Good riddance.”

The rhetoric of disbelief permeates most of the Stratfordian responses. Where some readers wrote in to express their surprise in learning the true author’s identity, dogmatic Stratfordians characteristically refused to grant that the heresy is even worth pondering. “If anyone is convinced by their desperate rationalizations, that is certainly their right,” stated one Texan, “but that is certainly no justification for imposing their fantasies on the rest of us.”

“The argument for the Earl of Oxford is a work of tortured, melodramatic plotting,” an assured Angelino claimed. “It’s a lot of fun, but let’s be honest: It would have been laughed off the stage at the Globe.”

Curiously, some anti-Oxfordian diatribes sagaciously call for evidence that is already available but wasn’t included in the forum. While Peter Dickson’s work on the heated politics of the First Folio’s publication provide an Oxfordian trump card, they also had to be cut from the Harper’s folio for space reasons. Nevertheless, one Seattle Stratfordian chewed his own foot in anticipation:

Harper’s Shakespeare Folio articles: A summary

Five Oxfordian scholars went one-on-one with leading Stratfordians in the April issue of Harper’s Magazine, and even the most cautious, conservative Oxfordians would agree that for the general reader the 17th earl of Oxford came out ahead. Harvard Professor Marjorie Garber’s contribution on the Stratfordian side was the most surprising.

In his own essay the editor Lewis Lapham tells how Charlton Ogburn, author of The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality, introduced him to the authorship issue. Lapham says he cannot find Shakespeare in the biography of the man from Stratford and he does find “conclusive” Ogburn’s arguments for Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare’s works.

Harper’s paired the Oxfordians with five Stratfordians and gave each 1,500-2,000 words to state their positions in five areas: Life, Mystery (the pseudonym), Drama, Love (the sonnets) and Death. No one saw their adversary’s article before publication, so the pairings did not result in a one-to-one debate.

Oxfordian Tom Bethell, Washington correspondent of The American Spectator, opens the magazine’s special section by showing how unlikely Will Shakespeare was as an author in contrast to Oxford’s life. For her part Professor Gall Kern of Georgetown University elevates the Stratfordian’s status and concludes that Shakespeare’s “main purpose in undertaking the business of writing plays was personal and familial” advancement in Stratford-upon-Avon.” Which even Stratfordians may find incredible.

Professor Daniel Wright of Concordia University, a trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, argues the case for author anonymity in Elizabethan times and why and how Oxford took the pen name William Shakespeare. His “partner,” Professor Garber of Harvard University, adopts a position of closet agnostic, If not skeptical of the Stratfordian position. She outlines the “investigation” that each side has in its position, calling the controversy a “cultural symptom.” (Her latest book, Symptoms of Culture, is reviewed in this issue.) She ends her ostensibly Stratfordian article with the Dickers quote that is a favorite with Oxfordians: “The life of Shakespeare is a fine mystery and I tremble every day lest something should turn up.”

Mark Anderson, Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter columnist, summarizes the research that Roger Stratininer has done on parallels between marked passages in Oxford’s Bible and passages in Shakespeare. He also sketches the parallels between five Shakespeare characters and Oxford’s life. Stratfordian Irvin Matus, author of Shakespeare: In Fact, critiques a variety of Oxfordian arguments, sometimes even without much rebuttal.

Joseph Sobran draws on his book Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time to summarize the case for Oxford as the author of the sonnets. Professor Harold Bloom of Yale, true to form, chose to ignore the authorship issue so he could celebrate the “poetic power” of the sonnets.

The paired contributors who come closest to debate are Richard F. Whalen, author of Shakespeare: Who Was He?, and Professor Jonathan Bate of Liverpool University, author of The Genius of Shakespeare (reviewed by Whalen in the Winter 1999 of this newsletter).

The two had corresponded on Bate’s book and so knew each other’s arguments for the “Death” segment in Harper’s. These included Will Shakespeare’s burial, his will, the Stratford monument, the evidence of the First Folio, dating the so-called “post-1604” plays and even the background and role of Leonard Digges. Whalen found more than a dozen factual errors in Bate’s detailed article and is continuing the correspondence with him in what he says is a firm but non-confrontational manner.

Placed throughout the magazine’s special section are boxed quotations on the authorship controversy by eminent writers who thought there was something to it: Walt Whitman (twice), Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry James, Mark Twain, Charles Chaplin and Sigmund Freud. With a circulation of about 200,000 Harper’s certainly brought the authorship controversy and the case for Oxford to the attention of a significant audience, one that is especially interested in literature and intellectual pursuits. The editor says the issue sold out.

—Richard F. Whalen
Another problem that the anti-Stratfordians love to put forth is the inexplicable seven-year span between Shakespeare's death and the publication of the Folio in 1623. But isn't this an even larger problem for Oxfordians? Why on earth would his friends wait nineteen years to set the record straight, yet still rob him of the credit by supporting his alleged pen name? Why the need for secrecy two decades later? This is a question for which the Oxfordians will never have a credible answer.

The lectures were abundant, too. One Ivy League English graduate student admitted that she didn't tread past Gail Kern Paster's pliant lamentations. But he wrote in all the same to inform us that the Oxfordian arguments—or what he assumed the Oxfordian arguments would be—were "the same old commonplaces."

"And this is just the impression I get from a cursory glance," he chirped. "I foresaw my fury steadily rising, in equal proportions with my boredom, were I to slog through the remaining columns."

Good thing he got out when he did. However, some not only finished the reading but even entertained a new position after the experience. "I long ago dismissed the [Oxfordians] as loopy lemmings," one Chicagoan notes. "After reading the 'folio,' could I be a bit hasty."

Another Canadian academic went further: "With my limited knowledge of the bard's history, I had no reason to doubt that William of Stratford was the true author," he states. "To my shock, however, having read the final line of the fifth 'act,' it seemed clear to me that the Oxfordians had clearly and convincingly won this battle in the authorship war. The Stratfordians failed miserably. Whereas I expected them to be the aggressors, and the Oxfordians the underdogs, the former were back on their heels for all five depositions. At each turn, the Oxfordians presented fact after fact, and supported their argument with more evidence than I could ever imagine existed, while the Stratfordians garnished their essays with ineffective sentimental jargon and completely lacked any substance. By the time I got to Harold Bloom's piece, I was desperate for any of William's supporters to provide me with any plausible piece of evidence that might rekindle my faith in the poor grain hoarder. Once again, I was disappointed. Bloom, much like the three who preceded him, chose to point out a few of the shortcomings of an otherwise solid case for de Vere, and did absolutely nothing for Shakespeare's case, and his weak attempt at sarcasm by declaring Lucy Negro as the author fell just short of waving the white flag."

One Oxfordian writes that the Folio showcases all "the old Stratfordian tactics: Ad hominem attacks... unsupported statements expected to be taken at face value... backpedaling when their own evidence is found to support Oxford."

"Among Stratfordians," he continues, "Irvin Matus was the only one to honestly attempt to address the evidence... ironically, he is also the only non-professional scholar..."

"Why is it that those who subscribe to this viable author [Oxford] do not need to resort to self-revealing psychobabble or coded academic stretch-words?"
The annual Portland conference convened the first weekend in April at Concordia University on the crest of a wave of national interest in the authorship issue generated by the recent articles in Harper's Magazine and Time. In addition, a spate of articles about the conference in local magazines and newspapers resulted in a substantial turnout of local people.

Further evidence of increased interest was demonstrated by the record-breaking turnout for Richard Whalen at Powell's City of Books, a Portland landmark institution, where he and conference director Dr. Daniel Wright spoke to an enthusiastic capacity crowd on the authorship issue, and Whalen signed many copies of his book, Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Powell's event was organized by Steffen Silvis.

The papers were all received with enthusiasm as well, particularly Richard Paul Roe's revelations of some of the fruits of his years of travel and study in Italy whereby he demonstrated—through a number of maps and slides—the many locations in Italy that are still to be seen where events depicted in Shakespeare's plays occurred, among them the little church in Padua where Petruchio married Katherine in Taming of the Shrew.

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, Editor of THE OXFORDIAN, continued the discussion of Shrew with her possible scenario for dating Taming of the Shrew, from its first incarnation as Gascoigne's translation of I Suppositi in 1566, through its subsequent evolution, first as a "roast" for the 1579 wedding of Ferdinando, Lord Strange, to Alice Spencer and finally to its final version in the early 1590s as another thrust at Lord Strange and his playwright, Christopher Marlowe, the Christopher Sly of the induction scene.

Eddi Jolly, a lecturer in English from Barton-Peveril College in Southampton, England, kept listeners riveted with the important work she is doing on the provenance of Hamlet. Eric Altschuler, a physicist at the University of California at San Diego, showed how Shakespeare's awareness of current scientific developments ended abruptly after 1604, the year of Oxford's death.

Dr. Jack Shuttleworth, Chair of the English Department at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, was entertaining as well as informative with his paper on the British scholar, Sir George Greenwood. Dr. John Rollett, retired physicist for British Telecom, demonstrated the incontrovertible evidence that the names of Edward de Vere and Henry Wriothesley are buried in the peculiar wording and typesetting of the 1609 dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets, while Roger Parisious, longtime independent scholar and Oxfordian, held everyone's interest with his discourse on three parodies of Venus and Adonis.

Dr. Daniel Wright, conference organizer and director and Professor of English at Concordia, impressed the audience with the significance of the absence of the kind of theatre director at the Court of Elizabeth I that is to be found at the Court of every other monarch of the period; while Andrew Werth, a recent Concordia graduate, gave a moving explanation of the importance of knowing the life history of a writer. An enthusiastic question and answer period followed Werth's talk, as a number of those in the audience said it was as good a presentation on the importance of knowing an author's life as they had ever heard. His paper will be published in the 1999 issue of The Oxfordian.

Dr. Ren Draya, Professor of English at Blackburn College in Illinois,
Recent Concordia graduate Andrew Werth was a big hit with his eloquent presentation on why knowing about an author’s life and beliefs does matter.

English lecturer Eddi Jolly gave a fascinating presentation on how Shakespeare’s Hamlet is clearly anchored in the 1580s.

Dee Hartman’s conducted a “Mystery Writer’s Workshop” on Sunday and delighted the audience with her wit and style.

Prof. Jack Shuttleworth, a member of the Conference’s advisory board, lectured on the recent Shakespeare Quarterly article on Sir George Greenwood and Mark Twain.

Richard Roe gave attendees a preview of his research on Shakespeare/Oxford in Italy, and how such research could clinch the Oxfordian claim in the authorship debate.

discussed the Oxfordian implications to be found in King John (Draya’s paper is published on page one of this issue of the newsletter); while Richard Whalen, author and long-time Oxfordian scholar, pointed out the Oxfordian implications to be found in the work of the Stratfordian scholar, Dr. Samuel Tannenbaum.

Elizabeth Appleton van Dreunen, author of Edward de Vere and the War of Words, again discussed Oxford’s role in the Martin Marprelate controversy; and Dr. Frances Rippy, Professor of English at Ball State University in Indiana, lectured on the evidence that Webster’s Duchess of Malfi was based on Aristotle’s Poetics.

Dr. Timothy Dost, Adjunct Professor of History at Concordia, showed the humanistic connections between Oxford and Martin Luther and John Foelster, English Major at the University of Richmond in Virginia, lectured on the financial decline of the de Veres.

Those who arrived on Thursday were treated to a marvelous production of Romeo and Juliet, performed by the Concordia Drama Department under the direction of Professor Carmela Lanza-Weil. The production was highlighted by the fact that the 13-year-old Juliet was played by 13-year-old Haley Sales and the 15-year-old Romeo by 15-year-old James Cody Birkey, a casting decision that brought a deeply moving realism to the performance (see the photo on page six).

Sunday afternoon, the conference was entertained with a recital on the harpsichord by Sally Mosher, keyboard musician and longtime independent Oxford scholar, of William Byrd’s “The March Before the Battle,” preceded by her thoughts on Oxford’s friendship and musical partnership with the famous composer.

In addition, the assembly was entertained by an extemporaneous after-dinner speech by Elliott Stone, a Boston attorney and long-time Oxford scholar, at the banquet on Saturday night, and also by the closing “Mystery writer’s workshop” in which Dee Hartman, a former instructor at Purdue University, had everyone in stitches as she solicited suggestions from the audience for helping her to create a mystery story that would tell the authorship story.

As the response from the media and the public clearly shows, this conference, the only academic conference devoted entirely to the authorship question, continues to grow in size and importance every year. Those who haven’t had a chance to make it to Portland for this important annual event must put it on their agendas for next year.
Are British scholars erasing two heroic earls from Jacobean history to protect the Shakespeare industry?

A case study in how history is written

by Peter W. Dickson

Although most Oxfordians have been slow to recognize the implications of the Oxford-Southampton imprisonments in 1621-22 for the First Folio project and the Shakespeare authorship debate, British historians seem well aware and quite nervous about those facts which they ironically brought to light not long before Charlton Ogburn's work, The Mysterious William Shakespeare (1984).

Circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the revival of the Oxfordian challenge in the 1980s has caused these British historians to make a deliberate effort in the 1990s to obscure these basic facts, and even to sanitize their more recent works to avoid any collateral damage to the Shakespeare industry.

The two British historians most suspect in this regard are S.J. Houston and Roger Lockyer, who made major contributions in rediscovering the vendetta between the Oxford-Southampton-led Patriot coalition against the proposed Spanish marriage policy (i.e., a marriage between England's Prince Charles and a sister of the Spanish King) and the policy's chief promoters: King James, his homosexual lover (Buckingham) and the notorious Spanish Ambassador Count Gondomar.

Houston and Lockyer are major figures within the Revisionist School of historiography which since the 1970s has sought to re-evaluate the reign of King James with the benefit of more in-depth archival research. Prior to Houston's biography of James (1973) and Lockyer's on Buckingham (1981), one had to look much harder to find data about the pivotal roles which the two Earls played in the Spanish Marriage crisis.

Although James and the Stuarts were never popular with the so-called Whig school of British history which focused intensely on the rise of parliament, this mainstream tradition never made much effort to unearth the rich history surrounding the Patriot Coalition's struggle to resist the King's plan for a dynastic union with Spain. The Whig historians probably saw little need to tell this story in detail because the marriage negotiations collapsed in 1623; and because Oxford and Southampton died soon thereafter on the battlefield in the Lowlands.

So Henry de Vere and Southampton slipped through the cracks and it was not until about 1970 when under the leadership of Conrad Russell, British historians began...
to reconstruct in more detail the court politics, especially the struggle of the Herbert-de Vere-Southampton faction against the King and Buckingham.

To appreciate the post-Ogburn sanitization in the 1990s, we should consider the following. In the 1973 edition of his James biography, Houston devotes two passages to the initial round of imprisonments of the Patriot leaders in the spring of 1621. They are as follows:

The effect of these attempts to meet the wishes of parliament was spoilt when the Earl of Southampton and Sir Edwin Sandys were arrested for meeting secretly to discuss parliamentary business. Lord Oxford was detained for criticizing the King’s plan for a Spanish marriage. These men were soon released, but at a time when the government wanted a generous supply, the arrests made the Commons very sensitive about its privileges. (page 81)

This and the arrest of Southampton and Oxford during the summer recess underscored the seriousness of the King’s statement. (page 85)

Houston makes no mention of the second, more ominous imprisonment of Oxford in the Tower from April 1622 to December 1623 or the reconciliation between Southampton and Buckingham which led to his release. In the early 1970s, more archival research was necessary to illuminate this end-game in the vendetta just before the First Folio hit the London bookstores.

Yet, once Houston had the benefit of such research as reflected in the American Professor Thomas Cogswell’s work, The Blessed Revolution (1989), this British historian chose to remove any previous references to the 18th Earl of Oxford (Henry de Vere) from his second edition of his James biography in 1995. In their revised passage, Oxford simply disappears:

The good effect of these efforts to meet the wishes of parliament was spoilt when the Earl of Southampton was arrested for being party to a practice to hinder the King’s ends at the next meeting. He had promoted an attack on Buckingham, working closely with the Commons in the proceedings against monopolists and the Lord Chancellor (Bacon). Both the Earl and Sir Edwin Sandys, who was also arrested, favored a more anti-Spanish foreign policy and were rumored to have been “active to cross the general proceedings and to asperse and infame the present government.” Both men were soon released, but the arrests cast a shadow across the second session and made the Commons sensitive about their privileges. (pages 80-81)

Nevertheless, a few pages later Houston betrays his new knowledge of Cogswell’s research with the following one sentence insertion:

The Earls of Southampton and Oxford, who had been so militantly anti-Spanish in the previous parliament, were restored to favor, as was William Fiennes, Lord of Say and

(Continued on page 24)
Oxford and Palamon and Arcite

Could this 1566 play actually be an early work by Edward de Vere?

by Katherine Chiljan

During the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, three plays were produced based on Chaucer’s “The Knights Tale.” Palamon and Arcite, the main characters, are royal cousins whose close friendship is tested when they fall in love with the same woman. Military honor, symbolized by Arcite, and true love and passion, symbolized by Palamon, are also put to the test when the cousins duel for the hand of Emilia. The gods decide the outcome. This is the essential plot of the story, which has origins in Boccaccio’s La Teseida and the epic poem Thebaid by Statius (d. 90 AD).

The first play, Palamon and Arcite, debuted at Oxford University in honor of Queen Elizabeth’s visit of 1566, and has the distinction of being the first dramatization of The Canterbury Tales. In 1594 a play of the same title had four performances at the Rose theater, according to Henslowe’s diary. In 1634, a third play about the royal cousins is printed, titled The Two Noble Kinsmen by John Fletcher and William Shakespeare—a first for Shakespeare to share billing on a title page. Both authors had been dead for several years. The “Stratford Shakespeare’s” vital statistics of 1564-1616 has rendered it unthinkable that these three plays were related, but if the Earl of Oxford’s pen name was “Shakespeare,” evidence suggests that they were essentially the same play by Oxford with later additions by Fletcher.¹

The problems of Two Noble Kinsmen

After years of controversy, most scholars agree that TNK’s main plot (Acts I & V) was composed by Shakespeare, and that the subplot—the play’s majority—was written by Fletcher, explaining why his name topped Shakespeare’s on the title page. By assuming the two collaborated, scholars conclude that TNK was Shakespeare’s very last effort, yet they’re puzzled why the play lacks the quality of his late works. Shakespeare’s abandonment of this art, wrote Harold Bloom of this play, is virtually unique in the annals of Western literature.

There’s no evidence, however, that the two collaborated. According to Paul Bertram, the prologue and epilogue is where dual authorship would be acknowledged; in TNK it is not. In fact the prologue explicitly makes reference to a single writer:

Chaucer of all admired, the story gives...
If the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
How will it shake the bones of that Goodman
And make him cry from under-ground, Oh fan she me
From the witless chaff of such a writer
That blasts my bays and my fam’d works makes lighter
Than Robin Hood

Bertram’s argument is further supported by Leonard Digges’ commendatory poem to Shakespeare(1640):

Nor begs he from each witty friend a scene
To piece his acts with, all that he doth write
Is pure his own; plot, language exquisite.

It’s most unlikely that Fletcher’s subplot about the daughter of Palamon and Arcite’s jailer—a poor imitation of Ophelia—was part of the original play, as it had almost no relation to the main plot. One can only conjecture that the first and last acts of Shakespeare’s original version had survived, and that later Fletcher filled in the rest. Fletcher rode on the coattails of Shakespeare before—as late as 1611 he wrote a sequel to Taming of the Shrew called The Woman’s Prize, or the Tamer Tamed.

Scholars are unsure about the dating of TNK, but place it no earlier than 1613 because the morris dance in Fletcher’s subplot was virtually copied from a masque by Francis Beaumont acted before King James in the same year. That composition date may be true about Fletcher’s portion of the play, but there’s evidence that Shakespeare’s portion was written earlier. In 1606, Barnabe Barnes in his Four Books of Offices wrote that war “is the noble corrector of all prodigal states, a skilful bloodletter against all dangerous obstructions and pleurases of peace”—a clear echo of Arcite’s prayer to Mars in Act V, scene 1 of TNK:

Oh great corrector of enormous times;
Shaker of o’er-rank states; thou grand decider
Of dusty and old titles, that heal with blood
The earth when it is sick and curst the world
O’th’ pleurisy of people

In 1605, Palamon was the main character in Samuel Daniel’s The Queen’s Arcadia, which, if this is another allusion to the play, pushes TNK’s date back a year more, and into a period when Fletcher was not known to be writing. The way then is cleared to link TNK with performances of Palamon and Arcite by the Admiral’s Men in 1594 at the Rose Theater.

Now here’s a true connection of the 1566 play to TNK. In TNK when Palamon is called down from the scaffold, no longer condemned to die as the loser of the duel, he says in disbelief, “Can that be, / When Venus, I have said, is false?” (V, iv, 44).

In TNK, Palamon never berates the goddess, but he did in the 1566 play, according to the summary by spectator John Bereblock. Palamon, “having failed of every hope...casts reproaches upon Venus, saying that he had served her from infancy and that now she had neither desire nor power to help him.” The absence of this important detail indicates that TNK was not a coherently written play and that original material had probably been lost or censored. An even more convincing link of TNK to the 1566 play occurs in the last lines of the prologue:

If this play do not keep,
A little dull time from us, we perceive
Our losses fall so thick, we must
Needs leave.

The reference to “our losses,” says Bertram, was probably

an allusion to some public misfortune.
that befell the acting company. It is unlikely that a dramatist would go out of his way to be unintelligible in a prologue designed to court the favor of his audience, and the “losses” would presumably have been well enough known for the audience to recognize the reference and respond to it.

There are various interpretations for our losses but critics are far from consensus on this mysterious reference.

**Earlier play answers the questions**

Let’s turn to Oxford University in 1566. The biggest event is the play, *Palamon and Arcite*, to be acted by students. Rehearsal previews are outstanding, spectacular scenery and effects are eagerly anticipated, as is the Queen’s attendance. After the Queen and her train are seated, a crowd throns into Christ Church hall by way of a staircase, which, from the pressure, rips out of the wall, killing three people and injuring more. (John Elliott, Jr. discovered that for aesthetic reasons, a new coat of lead had been laid on the steps.) Remarkably, after the rubble had been cleared, the show went on! Bereblock wrote,

> This untoward happening, although touching everyone with sadness, could by no means destroy the enjoyment of the occasion. Accordingly, taught by the misfortune of the others to be more careful, all turn again to the play.

The reference to our losses from the staircase disaster would have been clearly understood by the audience—a somewhat necessary insertion considering that three deaths weren’t enough to halt the entertainment. These two examples present in my opinion strong evidence that *TNK* is comprised of parts of the 1566 play.

What hasn’t been explained is that the authorship of the 1566 play in contemporary accounts was attributed to Master Richard Edwards. Two months before the Queen’s visit to Oxford, Edwards was preparing the entertainment at the university. It’s recorded that he rehearsed and directed three plays, trained actors, and supervised the construction of stage and scenery in Christ Church hall. Edwards’ biographer, Leicester Bradner, believed he—alone—would have been unable to write a play of two long parts in two months with that workload. Of course, he may have written it earlier, but there are other considerations to be looked at.

Edwards’ previous play was *Damon and Pithias*. Is it likely that an author would write two consecutive plays on the similar theme of friendship between two young gentlemen from ancient Greece? Both plays were compared by spectators, who agreed that *Palamon and Arcite* far surpassed *Damon and Pithias*; yet scholars have noted with surprise that in 1568 the students at Merton College, Oxford, chose to put on a revival performance of *Damon and Pithias* instead of Edwards’ more celebrated play. The same is true for printed editions: there were two editions of *Damon and Pithias* (1571, 1582), and several of Edwards’ poems were printed, but no effort was made to print *Palamon and Arcite*—resulting in the lost manuscript of the superior play.

*TNK*’s prologue, besides expressing insecurity about the worthiness of the play, metaphorically implies it was the author’s first effort: “New plays and maidenheads are near akin.” Edwards had been writing plays for at least 5 years—but what about the 16-year-old Earl of Oxford, who later was recognized as a top playwright?

**Oxford as author?**

It is indisputable that Oxford was present at the university during the Queen’s visit, as he received his master’s degree the day following the performance of *Palamon and Arcite*. We know that from his earliest years Oxford was deeply involved in literature. Arthur Golding (in his translation of Justin’s *Histories of Trogus Pompeius*, the first of many books Oxford patronized) attested to the Earl’s “earnest desire...to read, peruse and communicate with others as well the histories of ancient times, and things done long ago... and that not without a certain pregnancy of wit and ripeness of understanding.” Oxford was only 14. At 16 Oxford was writing polished poetry, and Edwards was collecting it (seven pieces were in his personal collection, later published as *Paradise of Dainty Devices*).

One portion of the 1566 play—Emilia’s song—has survived, and it very closely echoes Oxford’s early poetry:

> Come follow me you nymphs, whose eyes are never dry. Augment your wailing number now with me poor Emelie.

> Give place ye to my plaints, whose joys are pinched with pain. My love, alas, through foul mishap, most cruel death hath slain.

> What wight can will, alas, my sorrow now indict? I wail and want my new desire, I lack my new delight.

> Gush out my trickling tears, like mighty floods of rain: My knight, alas, through foul mishap most cruel death hath slain.

> Oh hap, alas, most hard, oh death why didst thou so? Why could not I embrace my joy, for me that bid such woe?

> False fortune out, alas, woe worth thy subtle train.

(Continued on page 12)
Chiljan (Continued from page 11)

Whereby my love through foul mishap, most cruel death hath slain.

Rock me asleep in woe, you woeful Sisters three, Oh cut you of my fatal thread, dispatch poor Emelie.

Why should I live, alas, and linger thus in pain? Farewell my life, sith that my love most cruel death hath slain.

Oxford's early poems reveal a fondness for the words wail, plaint, wight, foul, hap, cruel, woe, pain and linger. Two poems contain the phrase "trickling tears," and compare also Oxford's "Patience perchance is a pinching pain" with the above "Whose joys are pinched with pain."

An excerpt from Oxford's "A crown of bays" encompasses much of the above word usage:

Melpomene, alas, with doleful tunes help then, And sing his woe worth on me, forsaken man. Then Daphne's bays shall that man wear, that triumphs over me, For black and tawny will I wear, which mourning colors be. Drown me you trickling tears, you wailful wights of woe. Come help these hands to rend my hairs, my rueful lumps to show.

Perhaps it was no accident that in The Arte of English Poesie "Th' Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of Her Majesty's Chapel" were named together as deserving "the highest prize...for Comedy and Interlude." (John Stow used the word comedy to describe the 1566 play Palamon and Arcite.) It could suggest that they collaborated, perhaps as writer and director respectively. Richard Edwards may have been Oxford-Shakespeare's playwriting mentor, and as convention prevented nobility from publicly associating with the theater, perhaps Oxford allowed the Edwards attribution of Palamon and Arcite. But it appears that Oxford, whose family name was de Vere, implanted his signature in line 7 of TNK's first act: Primrose, first-born child of Ver—a most uncommon word for spring.

In conclusion then, given what is known about the 1566 play Palamon and Arcite and its connections to TNK, it is reasonable to postulate that it was written by Oxford, probably his very first play, as the prologue suggests. His source may have been the new 1561 edition of The Canterbury Tales, which had long been out of print. The play's success, with royal approbation, undoubtedly encouraged the young playwright. Oxford revised the play (along with others) in the 1590s and it was performed at the Rose Theater. After Oxford's death, only part of the play survived, or censored portions were lost. Fletcher replaced the missing parts with a subplot, circa 1613, and this was the version that was finally printed in 1634, with the new title, Two Noble Kinsmen. As over half of the surviving play was Fletcher's, it was purposely left out of Shakespeare's First Folio (1623).

Notes

1. John Fletcher (1579-1625) was educated at Cambridge University. He wrote about 16 plays solo, and collaborated with Beaumont, Massinger, Rowley and others on several more. His father was the Queen's personal chaplain and later Bishop of London.

2. Miles Windsor, d. 1624, acted in the play (Perithous, according to Elliot) and wrote an important historical account of it. Windsor began study at Oxford in 1556, and was awarded an M.A. in 1556. He was the first cousin of Edward, 3rd Lord Windsor—Oxford's brother-in-law. Unfortunately, Miles Windsor made no mention of Oxford in his account—perhaps he was reluctant to mention nobility in association with theater. The day after the Queen left Oxford, Lord Windsor (1537-1575) entertained her at his estate in Bradenham, Buckinghamshire.

A fascinating note is that the Queen allowed royal garments to be used as costumes for this production. Windsor mentioned King Edward's cloak, presumably that of Edward VI, and according to the logbook of the Queen's Wardrobe, there was occupied and worn at Oxford in a play before Her Majesty certain of the apparel that was late Queen Mary's. The forequarter of a gown without sleeves of purple velvet with satin ground was lost.

3. Richard Edwards (1529-1566) died two months after the performance of Palamon and Arcite at about age 40. The circumstance of his death is unknown. He was master of the Children of the Chapel (choirboys that entertained the Queen with plays and concerts) from 1561 to his death. His acquaintance with Oxford may have begun at the wedding of Lady Anne Russell and the Earl of Warwick in August, 1565, where Oxford was a page and Edwards took part in the entertainments. Possible mis-attributions of Oxford's work to Edwards are two songs: (1) "In Commendation of Music," part of which was featured in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (IV,v,155); and (2), a song from Edwards' Damon and Pithias, probably first performed during Christmas, 1564. Both pieces are reproduced below (following footnote 4)."}

4. Arbor of Amorous Devices, registered Jan. 7, 1594 (unsigned), and British Museum Additional MS 26,737, fol. 106, signed "The song of Emelye per Edwards."

In Commendation of Music
Where gripping griefs the heart would wound And doleful dumps the mind oppress, Then music with her silver sound, Is wont with speed to give redress. Of troubled mind for every sore, Sweet music hath a salve therefore. In joy it makes our mirth abound, In grief it cheers our heavy spirts, The careful head release hath found, By music's pleasant sweet delights. Our senses, what should I say more, Are subject unto music's lore. The gods by music hath their prey, The foul therein doth joy, For as the Roman poets say, In seas whom pirates would destroy, A dolphin saved from death most sharp, Arion playing on his harp. A heavenly gift, that turns the mind, Like as the stern doth rule the ship, Music whom the gods assigned To comfort man, whom cares would nip. Sith thou man and beast dost move, What wise man then will thee reprove?

Song from Edwards' Damon and Pithias (line 588+)

Awake ye woeful wights, That long have wept in woe: Resign to me your plaints and tears, My hapless hap to show. My woe no tongue can tell, Ne pen can well descry, Oh, what a death is this to hear: Damon my friend must die.

The loss of worldly wealth, Man's wisdom may restore, And physic hath provided too, A salve for every sore: But my true friend once lost, No art can well supply, Then what a death is this to hear: Damon my friend must die.

My mouth refuse the food,
That should my limbs sustain,
Let sorrow sink into my breast,
And ransack every vein.

You Furies all at once,
On me your tortments try:
Why should I live, since that I hear:
Damon my friend should die.

Grip me you greedy griefs,
And present pangs of death,
You Sisters Three, with cruel hands,
With speed now stop my breath.

Shrine me in clay alive,
Some good man stop mine eye:
Oh death come now, seeing I hear,
Damon my friend must die.

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Draya (Continued from page 1)

sider the lyrical mix-up of lovers in A Midsummer's Night's Dream, the merry confusion of twins in A Comedy of Errors, the troubling ambiguities of Measure for Measure—we could go on and on, listing plays in which questions of identity dominate. But in the histories, where claims and conflicts are invariably based on the argument of rightful inheritance, the stakes are much higher: thrones are toppled, kingdoms are won or lost, heads roll.

In King John, the theme of rightful identity has several manifestations: the suit brought by the Bastard, who wishes his paternity to be known, provides the play with a rich character and moments of comic bravado; the struggle between John and his young nephew, Arthur, forms the central and more serious conflict.

Let's break it down. "Who am I?" "Who is the rightful monarch?" Do we see the plays of Christopher Marlowe or John Webster or any of the other early modern dramatists constantly asking these questions? No. This is, then, additional evidence—yes, strongly circumstantial—that a writer who must conceal his identity is also one who would include the theme of recognition so often, so prominently. And that writer is Edward de Vere.

To strengthen this point, I would also cite the scholarship done by Roger Stritmatter on the annotations found in de Vere's Genevieve Bible. Among the five major themes he identifies from the annotations is the distinction between inward truth and outward deception—in short, the theme of rightful identity. I am grateful, also, to George Anderson for his musings on Richard II and the questions of identity therein.

In an extended consideration of King John, there are four things I would wish to do: 1) consider more deeply both the philosophical and practical implications of this theme of rightful identity, showing it to be properly assigned as a hallmark of de Vere; 2) talk about the stage-worthiness of this play, with an emphasis on the roles of women and an analysis of its dramatic contrasts; 3) look at both the child (Arthur) and the engaging Bastard as, in part, alter egos for de Vere; 4) focus on the unusual tears in the play.

Perhaps I can whet your appetite to look into those first three ideas on your own, but for now I shall examine just the final one—the watery element of tears. It happens to everyone in this play—a repeating motif that seems to leap out at you.

In studying and teaching King John, I was struck with the frequent mention of tears—of males who cry. The first weeping is that of a nine-year-old boy, Arthur, the rightful heir to England's throne (II,1,165). And throughout the play, there's a deluge of male tears. I then re-read the sonnets: there are dozens of lines, images, and conceits based on eyes, tears, the act of seeing! (see the endnotes for a complete list.) As just one example, here is Sonnet 137:

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes
That they behold and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is take the worst to be.
If eyes corrupt by over-partial looks
Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?
Why should my heart think that a several plot
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?
Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not,
To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

And to this false plague are they now transferred.

"Eyes' falsehood"—the sonnets repeatedly warn us not to trust to our eyes alone, repeatedly suggest that true identity is often disguised. I have made note of those sonnets which I believe to be most helpful in pursuing this line of investigation: why the frequency of tears and the metaphors connected with vision/sight/eyes do point to the authorship of Edward de Vere.

In medieval and Renaissance physiology, tears were considered a means of ridding the body of excess melancholic humors (Frey 6). Edward de Vere understood that both men and women could—and would—cry in the face of overwhelming emotion. When Brutus seeks to explain the death of Julius Caesar to the unruly plebeians, he states, "As Caesar loved me, I weep for him" (Julius Caesar, III,i,24-5), and Marc Antony (Continued on page 14)
Draya (Continued from page 13)

advises the crowd, “If you have tears, prepare to shed them now” (170). Still, for Renaissance theatergoers, tears were primarily “a woman’s gift” (The Taming of the Shrew, First Induction, 123); as Celia tells Rosalind, “tears do not become a man.” (As You Like It, III, iv, 3) Richard III woos Lady Ann by admitting that his eyes, “which never shed remorseful tear” (I,ii,158) are willing to cry “repentant tears” (218) if she will accept his hand. In King John, I believe that the usual tearful associations are overturned.

A quick summary: Acts I and II delineate the main players and their conflicts. John is the king, but, as his mother Eleanor reminds him, he rules more by might than by right. The rightful heir is his young nephew, Arthur. Arthur’s mother is the wonderfully dramatic Constance, widow of John’s brother. She does all she can to protect her son and call attention to his claim. Originally from Brittany, Constance has gained the support of the Kings of France and Austria to oppose John. But the kings, behind her back, arrange a treaty with England; further, a niece of John’s is offered in marriage to the prince of France.

The motif of tears

Let’s look closely at this point of the play and the motif of tears. An English earl, Salisbury, has been sent to apprise Constance of these important decisions. Constance’s reaction opens Act I—her response to the news that Blanche and the French prince are to be married is spirited. She is frightened, upset, repeats four times that she is “full of fears”—labeling herself “a widow, husbandless, a woman, naturally born to tears…” (13-15). Nonetheless, it is a man who weeps to whom she speaks, Salisbury. Here is the play’s second mention of crying, and it is a man (a nobleman) whose eye holds “that lamentable rheum, Like a proud river peering o’er his bounds” (22-23).

Constance is stunned by the news that her son’s claim has been denied and tries to dismiss Salisbury: “Fellow, begone! I can not brook thy sight. This news hath made thee a most ugly man” (36-37). The sight of a man crying is ugly—by implication, unnatural. Although Salisbury insists she come with him to the kings, Constance refuses and sits on the ground: “I will instruct my sorrows to be proud, For grief is proud and makes his owner stoop” (68-69). It is a stubborn action and a strong visual statement on stage: “Here I and sorrows sit. Here is my throne; bid kings come bow to it” (73-74).

As in Richard II, when the king—similarly frustrated and thwarted—laments, “Let us sit on the ground and tell sad stories…” (III,ii,155-56), Constance, too, feels helpless, caught up in machinations beyond her control. Yet the cause she pleads is utterly just: her son, Arthur, is indeed the rightful king.

The two kings do come to her. Walking arm in arm, surrounded by attendants and symbols of military power, accompanied by Queen Eleanor and the affianced Blanche, they must somehow contend with this woman who sits. Picture Constance’s despair seeing arm in arm King John of England (whom she considers the usurper) and King Philip of France (whom she has, up until this moment, considered her ally). During her passionate protest she objects to the “counterfeit resembling majesty” (99-100); I would imagine the actress throws up her arms to the heavens: “A widow cries” (108). But I interpret her to mean “a widow cries out to you,” not that she sheds any tears.

Until the Papal legate’s entrance, neither Eleanor nor Blanche speak, and tensions are heightened. The Legate (Pandulph) seeks to persuade King Philip that his “truce” with England is with a heretic. Constance is quick to call Eleanor “devil” (196) and, at the climactic moment, King Philip lets go of King John’s hand. The three women contribute to the scene: Blanche desperately wondering if the prince’s love for her is a charade, Eleanor accusing the French of inconstancy, Constance speaking for the honorable course of action.

When young Arthur is captured by the English, Constance displays classic signs of grief for her son. She is described as entering “with hair about her ears” (IV,iv,16) and she is inconsolable. When Philip offers comfort, she sobs out, “No, no, I will not, having breath to cry” (37), and she tears at her hair. In a lyrical image, Philip notes “a silver drop” (63), a teardrop on her hair, and she makes an attempt to pull up her hair. Constance’s single teardrop is the only time in this play that a woman cries. The other men chide Constance for holding “too heinous a respect of grief” (90). Defiantly, she unpins her hair, explaining:

I will not keep this form upon my head
When there is such disorder in my wit.

For the audience, Constance offers strong images of sorrow: a woman who sits resolutely, a woman who carries on with tearing of hair and ranting—but not someone who cries copiously. Shakespeare gives us the image of this grieving woman juxtaposed against the images of unruffled masculine deal-making. The Legate, for example,
dissuades the naïve French Dauphin (Lewis). Their matter-of-fact dialogue—the practical realist informing the young idealist—prefaces one of the most tear-jerking moments in all Shakespeare’s works: Hubert (King John’s hapless henchman) giving instructions to the executioners before the captured prince is led in:

Heat me these irons hot, and thou stand
Within the arras. When I strike my foot
Upon the bosom of the ground, rush forth
And bind the boy......... (IV,i,1-4)

Victorian melodrama can scarcely top the pathos here—a scared boy facing these burly men (I can’t imagine them being lean), thick cords to bind him, irons being heated to burn out his eyes before he is killed. Arthur—either from instinct or despair—recognizes the distress on Hubert’s face.

Hubert gives the boy the official paper to read, and Hubert then turns away, weeping. His aside, “How now foolish rheum?” (33) is poignant—“foolish” meaning fond; he is ashamed, not that he weeps but that he has agreed to his King’s cruel orders. Arthur begs for his life, offering the image of the iron “heat red-hot, approaching near those eyes,” the iron “drinking” (61-62) his tears. The repetition are telling—eyes, tears: “Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue, so I cannot hurt the child: “Well, see to live. I have a kind soul that would give you thanks” (100-101).

The eyes know friends from enemies

On the dramatic level, Arthur’s insistence surely springs from fear of terrible pain—and the prospect, if he survives, of blindness. But I believe that the playwright, as importantly, uses tears/eyes metaphorically: eyes give us our knowledge of the world—to see is to know our friends and enemies. It is the same point made again and again in the sonnets. Arthur argues that if Hubert takes his eyes, he won’t be able to look on Hubert. And, in the end, Hubert cannot hurt the child: “Well, see to live. I will not touch thine eyes” (121).

Next, a marvelously shift to King John on his throne. Believing Arthured, he smugly pronounces, “Here once again we sit, once again crowned, And looked upon, I hope, with cheerful eyes” (IV,ii,1-2). But John’s world is about to collapse. Both Eleanor and Constance have died, and this news rattles the king. Further, the French have landed and are advancing. Then, King John learns that the nobles wish to avenge Arthur’s “death.” Two lords are on their way “with eyes as red as new-kindled fire” (163), and Hubert reports that the common people, too, mourn the child “with wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes” (193). The King’s behavior at this point is especially despicable: he turns on Hubert and blames him for looking like a killer! John tries to deny his own guilt, criticizing Hubert:

Hadst thou but shook thy head or made a pause
When I spake darkly of what I purposed, Or turned an eye of doubt upon my face ... (232-34)

This is the same John who, when directing Hubert to do the killing, used the phrase “throw thine eye on your young boy—He is a very serpent...” (III,iii,58-62).

Ironically, Arthur did not die at the hands of Hubert and the burly executioners—Hubert showed the boy a way to escape. But Arthur does die, accidentally, in leaping from a wall. When the nobles find his crumpled body, Salisbury voices their outrage:

... This is the bloodiest shame,
The wildest savagery, the vilest stroke
Presented to the tears of soft remorse.

Wall-eyed, staring, tears—throughout this play, references to eyes and tears call our attention to moments of heightened intensity. When Hubert defends himself to the nobles, he uses the simplest of terms: “I honored him, I loved him and will weep...” (105).

Finally, in the pageantry of Act V, with a formal pact about to be signed between the French and the English, Salisbury reacts to the possibility of the nobles turning against their monarch:

O my grieved friends,

That we, the sons and children of this isle,
Were born to see so sad an hour as this,
Wherein we step after a stranger, march
Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up
Her enemies’ ranks—I must withdraw and weep ...

(V,ii,24-9)

Interestingly, the French Dauphin acknowledges both Salisbury’s “noble temper” and his tears; the Dauphin wipes away the English man’s “manly drops” (49).

As it turns out the pact between England and France is a dishonorable one—the French would have killed all the Englishmen. King John, poisoned by a monk, lies dying. His nine-year-old son (Prince Henry) cries—of course, cries—“O that there were some virtue in my tears that might relieve you!” (V,vii,44-5).

And at the close of the play, with all the nobles kneeling in loyalty to him, the boy says:

I have a kind soul that would give you thanks
And knows not how to do it but with tears. (108-109)

England’s new king, Henry III—he too is a male who weeps.

Notes:


To tears: 9, 30, 31, 34, 42 (wailing), 44, 64, 119

To seeing: 3, 12, 18, 27, 33, 61, 64, 68, 73, 75, 83, 96, 103, 104, 106, 116, 121, 127, 132, 137, 139, 148, 149, 150, 152.

Underlining indicates sonnets with extended use of the motif.

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Oxfordian News

Prof. Felicia Londre introduced as a “lecturer on Oxford” at SAA; 12th Annual Oxford Day Banquet in Massachusetts

California

Felicia Londre, professor of theater history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, is the first Oxfordian to deliver a paper at a plenary session of the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA), the organization of the Stratfordian establishment professors, in San Francisco in April (earlier in the 1990s Oxfordians such as Charles Boyle, Charles Burford and Andrew Hannas had participated in seminar panels, which include presentation of papers on the seminar topic).

Londre was introduced not only as an accomplished and widely published scholar, but as a lecturer who often speaks on the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare. She was warmly received by the overwhelmingly academic audience.

Professor Londre’s presentation came during one of two paper sessions on the first day of the conference, held in early April in San Francisco. The session was on “Shakespeare into Music.” Her paper, “Where the Words Go: Shakespeare into Verdi, Gounod, et al.” exposed how opera librettists did violence to Shakespeare’s story and characters. She even managed to work Al Jolson into her provocative presentation. (You had to be there.)

She was scheduled to deliver another paper at the de Vere Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon, the following week but was unable to do so because of illness.

As usual, the plays and the playwright were mostly missing from the SAA conference, which drew about seven hundred professors. Out of more than fifty sessions and seminars only two had Shakespeare plays for the main topic of discussion. One was on Pericles, the other on Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure. Neither the Sonnets nor any other Shakespeare poetry was addressed at the conference.

Seminar topics ranged from “Jonson, and Jonson and Shakespeare” (sic) to “Reconsidering Rape: Sexual Violence on the Renaissance Stage.”

Shakespeare may be going into partial eclipse at the SAA. The speaker at the annual luncheon, Professor James D. Bulman of Allegheny College, suggested that since there are so many editions of Shakespeare—more than a dozen—Shakespeare scholars should switch their attention to other dramatists of the time. As if Shakespeare could ever be exhausted.

In the book exhibit publishers were selling six editions of Shakespeare in paperback volumes. Five had no biography at all; the sixth had a short, pro forma biography. Absent was the new Signet edition of Shakespeare—has added almost four pages on the authorship controversy in the general introduction by Sylvan Barnet, retired Tufts University professor. Unfortunately, his account contains about a dozen serious errors and misrepresentations. They have been called to his attention.

Besides Felicia Londre Oxfordians at the conference included society past presidents Richard Whalen and John Price and Professor Stephen Ratcliffe of Mills College. They found that with careful selection of sessions and a little luck the SAA conference could be an instructive experience, if only to observe the Stratfordian professors wrestle with various issues when they’ve got the wrong author.

Among the most entertaining sessions were those on Shakespeare in the movies. One speaker discussed Ernst Lubitsch’s To Be or Not to Be, a black comedy on the Nazis made and released at the start of World War II. She showed excerpts to illustrate the controversy generated by the film, not the least of which was Hamlet as portrayed by the comedian Jack Benny.

The next SAA conference will be in Montreal April 6-8, 2000. For information write to the SAA at the University of Maryland, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore MD 21250 or email saa@umbc.edu.

The Carmel Shakespeare Festival, dedicated to the proposition that the Shakespeare plays were written by the 17th Earl of Oxford, will stage two of the Bard’s plays this year: The Merry Wives of Windsor from September 11th to October 16th, and King Lear from October 1st to October 17th.

Stephen Moorier is the founder and producing artistic director of the Pacific Repertory Theatre, parent of the festival. An Oxfordian (along with his cast and staff), Moorier was the host of the 1994 conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.

The festival also offers lectures and discussions on Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare’s works. For further information: P.O. Box 222035, Carmel CA 93922, 408-649-0340, PRDEBBY@aol.com.

Massachusetts

The 12th Annual Oxford Day Banquet was held in Cambridge on April 23rd. Sixty Oxfordians and their guests attended, one of the largest turnouts in recent years. Among the guests were the producers of a proposed cable TV documentary on the authorship. Also on hand were George Anderson, Lisa and Laura Wilson from Minnesota and Society trustees from around the country.

For the second year Dr. Daniel Wright was the featured speaker, and once again he
delivered a wonderful talk on the importance of the authorship debate, this time emphasizing the high stakes in getting the Shakespeare authorship right by comparing the situation with other academic disciplines (“Which other departments would embrace such weak standards of evidence,” Wright asked). He also emphasized the undoubtedly pernicious effects of having the wrong author has had on all literature studies over the past centuries.

Among other guests this year were the producers of a documentary on Edward de Vere and the authorship debate. Patrick Prentice has been a Society member for several years, and in the past has produced documentaries for the National Geographic Society. Also on hand were the project’s executive producers Tom Wentworth and Jane Latman. Wentworth video-taped throughout the evening, gathering material and ideas for the project. The full production team is expected to be on hand at the 23rd Annual Conference this fall, shooting film to be used in the final version, which will be broadcast on the Bravo cable channel.

Scott Heller, a reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education, was present as he prepared his story on the authorship for the Chronicle (the story appeared in the June 4th issue, and is discussed on page three of this issue of the newsletter).

A number of guests spoke during the open-microphone session, including Mr. James Hardigg, Society President Aaron Tatum, and Banquet founder—and Society trustee—Charles Boyle.

One of the extemporaneous speakers was 90-year-old Victor King, who had traveled from New Jersey accompanied by his grandchildren to be on hand. He delighted the audience with his presence and his story telling, especially when he told of the moment during the train ride from New Jersey when he turned to someone sitting next to him and mentioned the authorship debate. His seat companion gave him the cold shoulder for the remainder of the trip.

In Amherst, the Hampshire Shakespeare Company, under the guidance of Society trustee Tim Holcomb, will be adding an exciting authorship dimension to its summer schedule.

In addition to the usual Shakespeare fare (this year Comedy of Errors), the company will also be putting on Thomas of Woodstock, a significant apocryphal play from the Elizabethan era that some think may be by Oxford. The play will run from July 15th to July 31st.

Thomas of Woodstock has been described as “Richard II, Part I” by some, and is described in the Hampshire promotional brochure as a “searing satirization of Richard’s ascendency to power and the struggle between the entrenched old guard and the new generation.”

As part of the publicity campaign this spring, the company invited all comers to write their own ending to the work (which has come down to us in a sole surviving copy that is missing the title page—and along with it the author’s name?—and the final page of the playtext). To date, eleven new endings have been submitted, five from Oxfordians.

To see this play and its new ending, call the Hampshire Shakespeare Company at (413) 548-8118, or visit their website at: www.hampshireshakespeare.org

OXFORDIAN editor Stephanie Hopkins Hughes is spending the summer with family on the east coast before leaving for England to join Dr. Daniel Wright and other Concordia students for a semester’s study at Oak Hill College in London. Hughes will speak on the authorship question on August 3rd, at Featherstone for the Arts (Barnes Road) in Oak Bluffs on Martha’s Vineyard, starting at 7:30. For further information, phone (508) 693-1850 or send email to her Society work address: editor@oxfordian.com.

Even though on the road she continues to work on the 1999 OXFORDIAN, to be published this fall.

New York

Such was the stature of the late Charlton Ogburn, the dean of Oxfordians, that he has been memorialized in The Shakespeare Newsletter, the Stratfordian quarterly published by the English department of Iona College in New Rochelle.

The newsletter, which printed a brief obituary in its previous issue, has more than 2,000 subscribers, most of them university English professors.

The current issue carries a 950-word excerpt from an unpublished paper that Ogburn wrote about two years ago, an essay that he said would probably be his final statement on the authorship issue. The editors graciously found it “appropriate to honor a man who loved Shakespeare and labored long and hard, even if in the wrong vineyard.” They allowed him “the last word without rebuttal.”

Preceding the excerpt is a lengthy appreciation of Ogburn by Richard F. Whalen, author, society past president and regular contributor to this newsletter. Whalen noted that Ogburn, while impatient with unfair or uniformed criticism, was able to maintain amicable relations with a number of leading Stratfordian scholars. These included O.B. Hardison, former director of the Folger Shakespeare Library; author E.A.J. Honigmann; Louis Marder, founder of The Shakespeare Newsletter; and even—late in their lives—Sam Schoenbaum, the scholar of Stratfordian biography.

Canada

King Lear starring Burgess Meredith, Molly Ringwald, Woody Allen, Norman Mailer and Peter Sellers, directed by Jean Luc Goddard. Jack Benny playing Hamlet. A Comedy of Errors starring Bette Midler, Lily Tomlin and Fred Ward in a rough adaptation called Big Business. These and other old, odd and classic films that may never have made it to your neighborhood theater are offered by Poor Yorick (Stratford, Ontario) in their new video and CD catalog.

Also available is the 1992 satellite broadcast of the Shakespeare authorship issue, Uncovering Shakespeare: An Update, moderated by William F. Buckley Jr. and featuring a large cast of Oxfordians. It goes for a hundred dollars but most of the video prices range from $8 to $20, with a few much higher. Poor Yorick is at 89A Downie St., Stratford, Ontario, Canada N5A 1W8; 519-272-1999.

England

Filming for the long-awaited authorship documentary by Austrian Michael Peer will begin this July. De Vere Society patron Sir Derek Jacobi and Lord Charles Burford will be among those participating in the project, which is tentatively scheduled to be broadcast sometime in 2000.

The De Vere Society continues to research an Oxfordian chronology of the Shakespeare Canon, with plans to publish sometime in the not too distant future. This is something that has long been needed by all Oxfordians. Christopher Dams, who will attend the Society Conference in November, plans to present a preliminary overview of the project and how it’s being put together by Oxfordians in England.

Among the Society’s spring activities was a talk by Verily Anderson on June 13th at Templewood, and this summer (July 27th) the Society’s annual summer meeting will be held at Montacute House near Yeovil, which is the home of the National Portrait Gallery’s collection of Elizabethan court portraits, including the Welbeck portrait of Oxford.
Book Reviews:


by Ramon L. Jimenez

Oxfordians will be intrigued by the title of David Honneynan’s book because any demonstrable connection between the Sonnets and the Court of Navarre suggests an even greater distance between Shakesper of Stratford and the Shakespearean canon. But even with the title as a tip-off, the reader is likely to be startled by this sentence in Honneynan’s Preface: “The Sonnet people are not to be found in England…”

Otherwise an orthodox Stratfordian, Honneynan acknowledges that the experiences, personality, attitude, and style of the writer of the Sonnets were totally at odds with anything we know of Shakesper of Stratford. Although plainly autobiographical, the Sonnets reflect someone other than the down-to-earth and hardworking playmaker envisioned by orthodox scholars. How can this be? Honneynan’s answer is that Shakespeare did not write them, he translated or “recomposed” them.

By a series of leaps of faith, and several “must haves” and “most likelys,” Honneynan connects the writer and the three “characters” in the Sonnets (Fair Friend, Dark Lady, and Rival Poet) to four “characters” in the Sonnets (Fair Friend, Dark Lady, and Rival Poet) to four actual people in French royal circles and to a series of historical events that took place at Nerac—the site of the Court of Navarre, an independent state dominated by France.

Honneynan’s Navarre Hypothesis is that the sonnets we know as Shakespeare’s were originally written in French during the 1570s by the scholar/soldier/poet, Agrippa d’Aubigné, who had a close relationship with Henry de Bourbon, Prince and then King of Navarre, who is himself identiﬁed as the Fair Friend. The Dark Lady and the Rival Poet are Hemy’s Queen, Margaret of Valois, and Guillaume du Bartas, the leading poet at the Court. Never mind that d’Aubigné, the supposed sonneteer, was only two years older than Henry, and that he is supposed to have written nearly all the sonnets while in his twenties. Never mind that the only evidence for his supposed relationship with Dark Lady Margaret (Fair Friend Henry’s wife) is his affair with her cousin, Diane Salviati. (According to Honneynan they were “very similar in appearance.”)

The rest of the argument proceeds in a similar fashion. The frequent characterizations of the Fair Friend as “crowned” (Sonnets 37 and 114), “sovereign” (57), “king” (63, 87, etc.) reveal that he is of royal blood. The “sun” and “lilies” metaphors point to Henry of Navarre because the sun was the main feature of his mother’s coat of arms and the lily was the emblem of the Bourbons, his father’s family. The Fair Friend’s “errors” in Sonnet 96 refer to Henry’s reputation as a womanizer.

Margaret of Valois was known for dark and seductive eyes, loose morals, unreliability, and “intransigent Catholicism,” and thus meets Honneynan’s requirements for the Dark Lady. On the basis of other references in French poetry of the time, she is also identiﬁed with the “pearl” of Sonnet 34 and the “mortal moon” of 107.

Nailing down the Rival Poet is a little harder, but since Guillaume du Bartas was an “ofﬁcial Court poet” at Nerac, and was older and more renowned than d’Aubigné, Honneynan identiﬁes him with the “wor-thierpen” and “better spirit,” of Sonnets 79 and 80. Du Bartas was of such value to the crown that he was given a pension of 440 livres a year in 1580.

On top of this shaky structure Honneynan places his ﬁnal supposition—that Shakespeare somehow gained access to a manuscript copy of d’Aubigné’s “Ur-Sonnets,” and recomposed them as a literary exercise. This manuscript is unfortunately now lost, and Honneynan admits was most likely never published. The last two Sonnets, 153 and 154, which have been shown to be direct adaptations of a Greek epigram, are explained by the fact that d’Aubigné was “a considerable Greek scholar” and as a student resided in Geneva, where an edition of the Greek Anthology was published. As for the “Will” Sonnets, 134 and 136, these must have been original with Shakespeare, or “much adapted.”

Along the way, Honneynan provides us with a new solution to the “W.H.” initials in the dedication. By a tortuous process involving a diagonal misreading of a calligraphic doodle, the initials “N.H.” (Henry of Navarre) somehow became “W.H.”

According to Honneynan, it was his investigation of Love’s Labour’s Lost and its stylistic associations with the Sonnets that led him to develop his Navarre Hypothesis for the “Sonnet people.” The same reasoning that convinced him about the “Ur-Sonnets” imagined a French predecessor to LLL that featured the same Henry and Margaret, and a cast of characters from the French court. This play is also lost. The Hypothesis extends to “A Lover’s Complaint” and “The Phoenix and Turtle,” which Honneynan also explains as translations of poems by d’Aubigné about Henry and Margaret.

Although Honneynan’s Navarre Hypothesis is woefully short on evidence, Oxfordians might ﬁnd it provocative because it trades on the obvious familiarity with French royal circles and the Court of Navarre displayed by the writer of the Shakespeare plays. While Honneynan dismisses the Oxford argument (in an earlier book, Closer to Shakespeare, 1990), one wonders if his research into the Navarre connection led him to the facts that Edward de Vere was well acquainted with the leading ﬁgures of contemporay France, and had even visited the Court of Navarre.

Shakespeare’s Sonnets and the Court of Navarre is another example of the tunnel vision of orthodox scholars who try to account for the hidden meaning of the Sonnets and their total remoteness from the man they think wrote the plays. If the two cannot be reconciled, what better way to account for the Sonnets “obvious autobiographical content” than to acknowledge it, and then attribute it to someone else? But in strange way the Navarre Hypothesis tends to support the Oxford argument. Edward de Vere’s interest in and debt to French poetry is well known. And if, in a fantasy world, Shakespeare’s Sonnets were, indeed, written in French about figures in a French court, who but Edward de Vere would have been most likely to have had access to them, have known the principals, and have translated or “recomposed” them for an English reader?

By Richard F. Whalen

Sigmund Freud’s decision to get into bed with Oxford masquerading as Shakespeare comes under analysis in the latest book by Professor Marjorie Garber of Harvard University.

Garber, a professor of literary and cultural studies, is no stranger to the Oxfordian proposition. In Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers (1987) she declared that she takes the authorship question seriously. She does so, however, not so much to answer the question as to explore the significance of the debate. She has read widely in Oxfordian literature, defines the issue fairly and rarely makes a mistake. Her contribution to the April Harper’s Magazine section (reviewed on page four in this newsletter) can be accepted by Oxfordians, even though she is ranked on the Stratfordian side.

In her latest book she uses the probes and scalpels of modern literary criticism to dissect contemporary cultural phenomena. She deconstructs texts, spots over-determined Freudian symbols, discloses unintended ironies and diagnoses cultural anxieties. Baseball, Jell-O, Anita Hill, Madeleine Albright, and various movies figure in her analyses. A Shakespeare lecturer at Harvard, she often refers to his work in her writings.

At one point she astutely observes how Shakespeare has been “fetishized” by politicians and others who quote him out of context to support their views without realizing he was exposing the hypocrisy of the sentiment. She cites Polonius’ advice to his son, “Neither a borrower nor a lender be...,” Iago’s “Who steals my purse...,” and “What’s past is prologue...” from The Tempest.

One of her chapters is entitled simply “Second-Best Bed,” and everyone knows whose bed that is. Garber, however, finds links with Lincoln’s bed in the White House twin beds in Hollywood movies, Plato’s ideal bed, and inevitably Hamlet’s mother’s bed and Freud’s couch. The operative line is the Ghost-King’s in Hamlet: “Let not the royal bed of Denmark be/A couch for luxury and damned incest.” Bed and couch.

Garber suggests a clever parallel and reversal. Just as Freud revised his theory of the incestuous seduction of a child by a parent, he revised his opinion about the identity of Shakespeare. The parental...

(Continued on page 23)
**From the Editor:**

**The Invisible Men**

There is a moment in *Twelfth Night* when Feste remarks to Viola, “I would it would make you invisible.”(III,i)

When Charles Boyle was directing several different productions of this play in the early 1990s in Boston he was struck by this line, and several times struggled with actors playing Feste to get them to give the reading that he considered to be just right, i.e. that Feste (a.k.a. the author Shakespeare/Oxford) was perhaps commenting sardonically on his role as an “invisible” playwright.

Therefore, Charles would carefully explain to the actor, the line should be read with an emphasis on “you,” i.e. “...make you invisible” — as opposed to me, Feste, the invisible playwright. It’s the sort of moment and reading of Shakespeare that only an Oxfordian could appreciate, or even conceive of.

And now, thanks to the further efforts of researcher Peter Dickson, it seems safe to say that invisibility was not just a problem for the play-writing 17th Earl of Oxford in the late 16th century.

As reported on pages eight and nine in this issue Dickson has uncovered some significant historical facts about the 18th Earl of Oxford (Henry de Vere) and his close companion the 3rd Earl of Southampton (Henry Wriothesley) and the crucial roles they played in Jacobean history, especially how all the recent biographies of King James were treating the early 1620s, the Marriage Crisis, the two Earls and the First Folio.

As Dickson emphasizes in his article, the clear pattern of “no Oxford, no Southampton” that he found is incredible, and the more one thinks on it, the more incredible it becomes. “Disappearing” these two Earls from this critical period of Jacobean history reeks of a deliberate plan of action, and one can only conclude from it that our history lesson for the day is “out of sight, out of mind.”

There are many Oxfordians who have argued for years that the authorship story is a political story above all else, and has great repercussions in the power centers of England. It is undoubtedly regarded as an extremely sensitive issue within the Establishment because it affects not only the nation’s premier cultural icon, but also because it has serious political implications for the Crown. And now, Oxfordians — and the world at large — have clear evidence of the suppression of evidence to protect those interests.

One can’t help but think that this obscure but undeniable pattern discovered by Dickson will add more fuel to the political fire already surrounding the authorship debate.
Letters:

To the Editor:

Henry Peacham’s works have recently (Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter, no. 3, Fall 1998 and no. 4, Winter 1999, and The Washington Post, Sunday, January 24, 1999) been taken into consideration as evidence of the fact that at the end of the 16th and in the first decades of the 17th century William Shakespeare (or Shaksper) from Stratford was not known as a poet or playwright. Actually, Peacham does not even mention him. In particular [these stories have featured] the front-page of Minerva Britannia (1612) with its peculiar picture—a hand stretching out from behind a theatre curtain—and with its Latin mottoes—the latter still being a source of misinterpretation—[seeming] to refer to a dramatist’s concealed identity. This is an allusion which some Oxfordians—not without reason—[believe] refers to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. My purpose in writing is to give the reading and the translation [of these mottoes] so as to clarify their meanings.

On the top of the Minerva Britannia front-page, between two burning candles—one on the left corner, the other on the right corner—reads the following inscription:

UT ALIJS ME CONSUMO

The literal translation is: “I consume myself for the others in a similar way” (with ut translated as “likewise” and alijs plural dative case) translated as “for the others”).

In other words, “In the same way as these candles burn out giving light to others I do burn myself out giving other people the light of my knowledge and learning.” This may fit de Vere’s liberality in sharing his knowledge with, and lavishing his fortunes on, fellow dramatists and writers.

Further down on the page two scrolls are wound around a wreath. The one on the left reads as follows:

VIVITUR INGENIO

The two words are separated by an interpunct as lIsed in Latin inscriptions from Roman throughout Renaissance time and onwards. The double hyphen shows that vivitur is one word, and so is ingenio.

Literally, they translate as: “One lives by means of his genius.” That is, “One remains alive in the memory of posterity by means of what his genius has produced; only genius, i.e. one’s works, remains [after death].”

Vivitur is a passive verb form, third person singular of the present tense indicative of vivere “live”; it takes no subject because it has impersonal meaning. Ingenio is instrumental ablative case, implying “by means of,” also “because of.”

The concept of immortality acquired through the greatness of the works is completed by the inscription on the right scroll:

CAETERA MORTIS ERUNT

Literally, these words translate together as: “The rest will be Death’s.”

Caetera, “all the other things, all the rest,” is neuter plural nominative case. Mortis is genitive case, expressing possession: “of Death.” Erunt, “will be,” is the future simple indicative of the verb esse “be,” third person plural.

In other words: “all the rest will belong to Death; everything else will be destroyed by Death, except genius; only the great works will survive, will be immortal.”

This concept is reinforced by the motto written by the hand on the scroll in the oval picture of the theatre curtain:

MENTE VIDEBOR

Literally, this is: “I will be seen in the mind,” that is, “I will be seen only in the mind’s eyes, with the use of imagination, with the power of thought.”

This is said by, or referred to, someone who wants to remain in concealment. Mente is instrumental ablative case: “by means of the mind.” Videbor is the passive verb form of the verb videere “see,” future simple indicative, first person singular.

Closer inspection of the word videbor [as written on the title page] clearly shows that what seems to be an ‘I’ written by the hand at the end of the word is nothing but the quill’s point. The hand is simply placing an interpunct at the end of the motto. The verb videbor is complete in itself: no letter is missing. (A motto, in spite of its conciseness and possible obscurity, always ex-
England) was a different time for artists and writers. Collaborative effort reigned, "schools of" flourished and freer attitudes toward plagiarism prevailed. "Sir Thomas More," one of the few surviving 16th century playtexts in authorial hand, features the handwriting of six playwright collaborators.

That Edward de Vere was the master, most involved and greatest influence on the "Shake-speare" writings in no way precludes the assistance of those with whom he surrounded himself, like Lily, Munday and Shaksper. The fact that Edward de Vere chose to conceal his authorship [should] in no way conflict with the premise of the collaborative way in which the "Shakes­peare" works were developed.

Ron Allen
San Diego, California
18 February 1999

Letters (Continued from page 21)
presses a concept or sentiment or rule of conduct which must be understood at least by its bearer or its addressee; therefore it must be complete in itself. If its meaning should be worked out through the addition of words or part of a word, there follows that it might vary according to not only the reader’s imagination but also the various historical, social, literary situations of the time. If it were so, the use of a motto would be pointless and lose its own significance.)

In conclusion, on the semantic basis the Latin mottoes with their corroborating visual representation of the theatre curtain might lead to the identification of Lord Oxford. Moreover, the concepts expressed in the inscriptions can rightly be applied to his life: the forbiddance to publish his works under his own name, the concealed identity, immortality reached through the works, the destructive power of Death: these are the themes present in all the works of Shakespeare.

Noemi Magri
Mantova, Italy
15 May 1999

To the Editor:


In Who Were Shakespeare? I have tried to document Stratford Will’s literacy, early theatrical experience with Oxford’s Men (the leading London theatre company when Will arrived in London), Will’s theatrical tute­lage by Edward de Vere and his circle, and Will’s functions as prompter, artistic director and playewriter at the “Chamberlain’s Men” and “King’s Men.” To denigrate or not carefully consider Stratford Will’s place in the “Shake­speare” play-poetry puzzle may hamper efforts to recognize the genius of Edward de Vere. Stratford’s Will Shaksper, in London for over 20 years during the presentation of virtually all the “Shake­speare” plays in the First Folio, contributed his name to the title pages of the “Shakes­peare” plays, and was a sharer/member of the “Chamberlain’s Men”/“King’s Men,” the premier London theatre companies.

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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 De Veres of Castle Hedingham. By Verity Anderson. Item 122. $35.00

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


Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford. Edited by Katherine Chiljan. A new edition that brings together the poems and the letters with updated notes about original sources, provenance, etc. Item SP22. $24.00

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


Oxford and Byron. By Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. Item SP20. $8.00

The Relevance of Robert Greene to the Oxfordian Thesis. By Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. Item SP21. $10.00


To Catch the Conscience of the King. Leslie Howard and the 17th Earl of Oxford. By Charles Boyle. Item SP16 $5.00

Who Were Shakespeare? The ultimate who-dun­it. By Ron Allen. Item SP15 $14.95

Compact Disc

Her Infinite Variety. Irene Worth and the Women of Shakespeare. Readings of Selected Passages (with music by Arif Mardin). 70 minutes. Item SP10 $10.00

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Anderson (continued from page 5)

responses now and again, even if I disagreed with them.

One two-paragraph missive expresses the author’s frustration in cutting through the careerism and to the substance of the matter: “This feud, which has fueled professional hatreds and alliances, given birth to committees and feathered CVs, has precious little to do with the study of ‘Shakespeare’s’ body of work,” she asserts. “Both camps take on annoying tones ... the Stratfordian arguments sound like defensive snits, while the Oxfordians invariably come across as smug kill joys. The debate becomes one of personality, and I can’t say that I would want to be at a dinner party with any of them.”

Another reader points out, “I am convinced the arrangement and inclusion of the papers went a long way to clarifying what at first glance are sufficiently dubious waters. I am wholly delighted to suddenly have a biography and know something of the character of Oxford, who now becomes a very interesting Great Man.”

Still another asks for our nominative indulgence: “In contrast to the Stratfordians’ circumlocution and dearth of data for the authorial candidacy of William Shakespeare, the evidence put forward in the Oxfordians’ articles points to a factually grounded, logically valid theory for the authorship of the Shakespearean canon. But even so, let us never replace ‘William Shakespeare’ with ‘Edward de Vere’; let us duly respect the author’s choice of a funny nom de plume.”

And here, in closing, are three final prophetic salvos from three frustrated readers:

“After reading all the essays it seems as though [Gail Kern] Paster is leading a lost cause, almost as if she were standing alone holding up a crumbling stone wall, yelling ‘Hold the fort! Hold the fort!’ whilst the remains of this defeated bastion of scholarship lie strewn about her, having fallen long ago.”

“The supporters of Oxford offered a mountain of facts; the supporters of Shakespeare mostly offered social theory, pseudo psychoanalysis, mischaracterization and bombast. In the long run, facts win. Stratfordians should switch sides in time to survive the harsh judgment of history.”

“I gather from your authors that mainline academics are on the whole Stratfordians while journalists and independent writers tend to be Oxfordians. Are we witnessing an actual paradigm shift here?”

Whalen (continued from page 19)

duction, he had realized, was not always real but more likely a fantasy, a false memory. He decided “in favor of fantasy over history,” says Garber.

Freud changed his mind about Shakespeare’s identity after reading J. Thomas Looney’s book nominating Oxford. He then performed “a very similar act of disavowal,” says Garber, “though apparently in the opposite direction (seeming, that is, to choose ‘history’ over ‘fantasy’).”—choosing, in fact, the Earl of Oxford over William Shakespeare. And in a summing-up of this subtle thinking she writes: “The family romance of Oxford as the better Shakespeare reverses the pattern of fantasy as the better seduction.”

So what does Garber think would happen if some hard evidence were to prove in fact that Oxford wrote Shakespeare? In another chapter, “Shakespeare as Fetish,” she implies that she would expect “a massive campaign of disavowal.” Coming from one of the leading Shakespeare scholars and one who understands the case for Oxford, that is a dismaying prospect. Meanwhile, to her credit Professor Garber takes the evidence for Oxford seriously, and in this book she recognizes that Freud, himself a literary genius, found Oxford the better Shakespeare.

Join the Shakespeare Oxford Society

If this newsletter has found its way into your hands, and you’re not already a member of our Society, why not consider joining us in this intriguing, exciting adventure in search of the true story behind the Shakespeare mystery? While the Shakespeare Oxford Society is certainly committed to the proposition that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is the true Shakespeare, there is much that remains to be learned about the whole secretive world of Elizabethan politics and about how the Shakespeare authorship ruse came into being, and even more importantly, what it means for us today in the 20th Century as we complete our fourth century of living in a Western World that was created during the Elizabethan era.

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Sele, who had offended James by resisting the benevolence in 1622. (page 90)

However, Houston in his 1995 edition never gives the reader any sense that Oxford had been imprisoned twice, the second time for twenty months in the Tower.

Lockyer’s sanitization of both Oxford and Southampton is harder to detect because it is so total. In his landmark biography, *Buckingham* (1981), he devotes many passages to describing in rich detail the Buckingham versus Oxford-Southampton rivalry and devotes one long passage to describing how King James regarded Oxford as a grave threat to the Crown:

When the Earl of Oxford was imprisoned in the spring of 1622—allegedly for saying, in a drunken moment that he wished the King were dead—it was widely believed that his real offense was crossing the favorite. It was in his house that Elizabeth Norris [Ed. note: Oxford’s niece] had taken refuge after escaping the attention of Kit Villiers [Ed. note: Buckingham’s brother!], and Oxford refused to hand her over. Worse than this, he was also reported to have told Buckingham that he “hoped there would come a time when justice should be free and would not pass through his hands only.” The imprisonment of Oxford suggested that the King regarded opposition to his favorite as opposition to himself. (page 121)

Yet, when Longman’s commissioned Lockyer to prepare a biography for its series called *Profiles in Power* in 1998, Lockyer never once mentions either Oxford or Southampton. The book’s index shows only one citation under Southampton, and that’s for the Port of Southampton! That’s it.

Lockyer (an Emeritus Reader at the University of London) might respond that his James biography was only permitted a little more than 200 pages, and therefore he had to be selective. But this lacks credibility given his exhaustive, detailed discussion of how the King and Buckingham regarded the two Earls as their primary enemies during the Spanish Marriage crisis in his earlier work from 1981.

Furthermore, any awareness of the revival of the Shakespeare authorship dispute in the late 1980s would have made Lockyer quite sensitive to the close timing between the imprisonments of the two Earls and the *First Folio* project. Certainly, unlike many political historians, Lockyer has shown an interest in literature because he collaborated in 1989 to produce an anthology of original source material entitled *Shakespeare’s World, Background Readings in the English Renaissance*.

Lockyer and Houston are not alone in their sudden aversion to any extensive discussion of these two Earls, especially Oxford, and their challenge to King James. Nine other biographies of James have appeared since 1988 (see the box on page nine), and while all mention the Spanish marriage crisis, none make any mention whatsoever of the roles of Oxford-Southampton in this powerful political drama.

It seems reasonable to conclude that following the revival of the Oxfordian claim in the Shakespeare dispute in late 1984, British historians became quite sensitive to any discussion of the imprisonments of these two Earls in the same time frame when the *First Folio* project got underway. The sudden shift in attitude concerning the two Earls gives strong reason to believe that there is in effect a *de facto* policy of self-censorship to make it more difficult for others to sense the possible negative implications for the Stratfordian position in the ongoing Shakespeare authorship dispute. ©1999, Peter W. Dickson All Rights Reserved

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