



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



Vol.35: no.2

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

Summer 1999

Edward de Vere and the Shake- speare Quartos (Part I)

by Robert Brazil (©1999)

My interest in the authorship of Shakespeare began in the mid 1980s when I was teaching history to high school students, and started reaching deeper into the Elizabethan era to find interesting term paper topics, beyond the usual Sir Francis Drake, or Sir Walter Raleigh. What began as a hobby has become a life-long research project.

Once I had worked my way through all of the voluminous available material on the Oxford Theory, I was shocked to realize that there were so many intriguing research avenues that had not been yet been explored. Because the entire inertia of Academia has been studiously avoiding all Oxford research vectors, obvious work that needs to be done, with available historical documents, has been left to the hands of volunteer amateurs, and a few motivated free-lance professionals.

I have been working on building a database of all available knowledge on the printers and publishers of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era in general, but with a specific first focus on the professional output of the men who printed Shakespeare quartos, and those bookmen who are connected to the 17th Earl of Oxford.

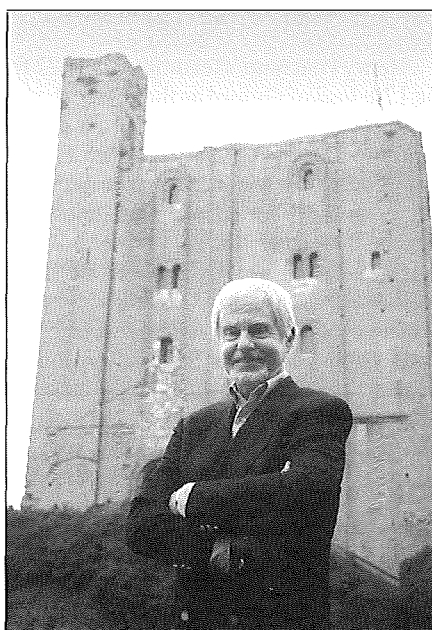
This project may take years to complete. I must also collate the data of all the non-Shakespeare printers (the majority), as controls. I have, however, at this point uncovered enough interesting data to begin sharing it with others in the field, in part to see how things hold up to brutal scrutiny. I will be presenting some of my preliminary findings at the Shakespeare Oxford Society's 23rd Annual Conference in November, and even-

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Abstract & Brief Chronicles

*The Sonnets seen as Shakespeare's true
testimony about the end of the Tudor era*

by Hank Whitemore (©1999)



Courtesy, Essex County Newspapers

Sir Derek Jacobi was featured in the Essex County Halstead Gazette last August during filming of Austrian Michael Peer's authorship documentary. The paper's headline asked, "Who was the Bard?" See story in *Oxfordian* news, pages 18-19.

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I wish to present a structure for *Shakespeare's Sonnets* based on the hypothesis that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the son of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth I.

The structure provides an overall view of *The Sonnets* as a "dynastic diary" within the context of the inevitable succession to the throne and Oxford's attempt to preserve "the living record" (55) of Southampton's royal existence.

This proposed solution goes beyond personal interpretation to provide a consistent conceptual framework, linked to the historical record, within which existing but long-neglected evidence can be seen. It includes both an internal dynamic and an external context for the entire collection of 154 verses. In doing so, it brings together all the puzzle pieces to form a clear picture of who wrote *The Sonnets* and what they were about, along with a coherent story of why, how, when and under what circumstances they were written.

While this solution increasingly yields new evidence in its support, it also continues to provide unexpected insights and information. In the end, it allows these masterpieces of poetry to be placed as a kind of stencil over real events in real time, so the history complements and illuminates the verses while the verses, in turn, complement and illuminate the history.

A basic conclusion I have reached is that *The Sonnets* go beyond any normal definition of literature and must be placed in a unique category. One reason is that the author used an ingenious method that he called "his invention," allowing each line of each verse to be read in either of two differ-

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Media Notes

Follow-up to *Harper's*, *Chronicle of Higher Education* stories

The buzz created by the *Harper's Magazine* forum on the Shakespeare authorship controversy continues to resonate.

An editorial writer on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was deeply offended by the *Harper's* forum and went on at length in a way that even betrayed ignorance of the Stratfordian tenets of faith. And despite ample evidence to the contrary the editorial tried to deny the many eminent authorities who have questioned the credentials of the Stratford man.

To the newspaper's credit (or perhaps it was regretful hindsight) the editors printed four long letters of rebuttal, but none in support of the editorial. And it's often thought that letters to the editor draw more readers than editorials.

One was from Warren Hope of Havertown PA, co-author of *The Shakespeare Authorship Controversy* (1992). He countered the main points of the editorial and deplored the anti-intellectual attitude that resists "cool-headed, public examination of an issue." Another letter writer was a high school teacher who, although not an Oxfordian, uses Hope's book in class.

In the June issue of *The Washington*

Monthly the editor, Charles Peters, says he was distressed to learn that his friends Tom Bethel and David Ignatius are Oxfordians. Bethel had the lead article in *Harper's*. Ignatius declared in his *Washington Post* column that the *Harper's* articles, five by Stratfordians and five by Oxfordians, persuaded him that Oxford was the true author.

In an item in his column, called "Tilting at Windmills," Peters tried to use John Heminges as a witness for the Stratford man and, in quoting some of Marchette Chute's fantasizing on this subject, his column seems aptly titled.

Chronicle of Higher Education

Henry Peacham's testimony in 1622 for the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare's works was reported prominently in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (6/4/99), the widely read trade journal of academia. As reported in our last newsletter (Spring 1999), Heller also wrote a major article—highlighted by a page one headline—on the case for Oxford, citing the evidence of Oxford's Bible described by Ph.D. candidate Roger Stritmatter, and the

growing involvement of professors such as Dr. Daniel Wright of Concordia University.

The separate boxed report on Peacham, although brief, accompanied a major news story about a cryptic drawing with Peacham's name on it. The drawing has long been thought to depict a scene from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. However, a Lafayette College professor suggests now that the scene is from a German play based on the same sources Shakespeare used.

Peter Dickson had made the Peacham attribution of this portrait part of his argument in his article "Henry Peacham on Oxford and Shakespeare" (Fall 1998 newsletter) as he argued that Peacham's decision to leave Shakespeare's name off his list of poets who made Elizabeth's reign glorious is of the greatest significance in the authorship debate.

In the four-paragraph box the reporter, Scott Heller, does note that Peacham also figures in the Shakespeare authorship controversy. Heller cites Charlton Ogburn, "whose research helped propel the Oxfordian cause," as saying that Peacham would have known that Oxford and Shakespeare were "one and the same."

Obituaries

Clifton Fadiman

Renowned critic, Oxfordian

Clifton Fadiman, a renowned critic and editor who came out strongly for the 17th earl of Oxford as the true author after reading Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, died in June at age 95.

"Count me a convert," he wrote for the cover of Ogburn's second edition (1992). He said the book's "powerful argument should persuade many rational beings, who, well-acquainted with the plays, have no vested interest in preserving the rickety tradition."

Fadiman helped establish the Book-of-the-Month Club and served on its editorial board for more than half a century. He was also on the board of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* for many years. His encyclopedic knowledge won him a place on "Information Please," "Quiz Kids" and similar radio programs, remembered by anyone over forty.

In 1993 the National Book Foundation awarded him its medal for distinguished contribution to American letters.

J. Allan Hovey, Jr.

Author of Aye, Shakespeare

J. Allan Hovey, Jr., of Green Spring, West Virginia, died Wednesday July 21, 1999 at Sacred Heart Hospital, Cumberland, Maryland, of a heart attack at age 76.

Mr. Hovey, a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society for many years, had just recently in his life become a playwright. His play *Aye, Shakespeare!* premiered at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco in November 1998 as part of the Society's 22nd Annual Conference. The play told the authorship story through the device of a one-man show, with the one man being Edward de Vere, talking about his life and times as a courtier in Elizabeth's court, and of course, as Shakespeare. It was warmly received by both critics and Oxfordians attending the conference.

Mr. Hovey was born on May 13, 1922 in Cambridge, Mass., and held a BA (Phi Beta Kappa) from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, and Ph.D. and Masters Degrees

from Columbia University in New York City.

His career included work as an International Relations Specialist with the Government Accounting Office (GAO) from 1976 until he retired in 1993. He was previously President of Radio Free Europe and Executive Director of the American Committee on United Europe, which laid the groundwork for what is now the European Union.

During World War II he served as a 1st lieutenant, including duty during the occupation of Japan.

Mr. Hovey is survived by his wife, Peggy Streit; a daughter, Anne Elizabeth; a step-daughter, Devon Streit, and two brothers; Monroe A. Hovey of Romney, West Virginia, and Robert I. Hovey of Horseheads, New York.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests friends to donate to WETA Public Television, 2775 South Quincy St, Arlington, VA, 22206. Attn: Ms. Keremy Bachelor.

Shakespeare and religion

*To be or not to be
...a secret Catholic*

We have reported in these pages several times in the past year on an interesting development that is taking place among mainstream Shakespeare scholars. This is the movement to revisit the 1580s (known as the "Lost Years" in traditional Shakespeare biographies), and fill in the blanks with a controversial theory about how the young Shakespeare may have been in training as a Jesuit, and wound up living his life as a recusant Catholic in an era when open Catholic sympathies could be seen as treason.

A major signpost of this trend took place this past July, when the Lancastrian Conference, hosted by the University of Lancashire, took place at Hoghton Tower, in Lancashire. Hoghton Tower is where a young man named William Shakeshafte is mentioned as having been present at some time in the early 1580s.

From this one fact (plus the well-documented Catholic sympathies in and around Stratford-upon-Avon and John Shakespeare's possible recusant Catholic sympathies) some current Shakespeare scholars are now hypothesizing that "Shakeshafte" was in fact the young "Shakespeare," and that the then teen-aged Stratford boy lived and worked at Hoghton Tower—possibly training to be a priest—thus setting out on the life eventually leading to the Shakespeare Canon. But not all Shakespeare scholars agree with this theory.

This issue raises a host of questions about Shakespeare, some of which are quite pertinent to the authorship debate. For example, just what exactly were the true religious sympathies and beliefs of the true author? Can these sympathies and beliefs be learned from the Shakespeare text alone?

And just as importantly, how do these sympathies/beliefs relate to the politics of the time, when the Anglican Church was the "official" English religion, the Pope had placed a price on Elizabeth's head, and open Catholicism (often associated with Spanish intrigue for decades) could be considered treason and punished by death.

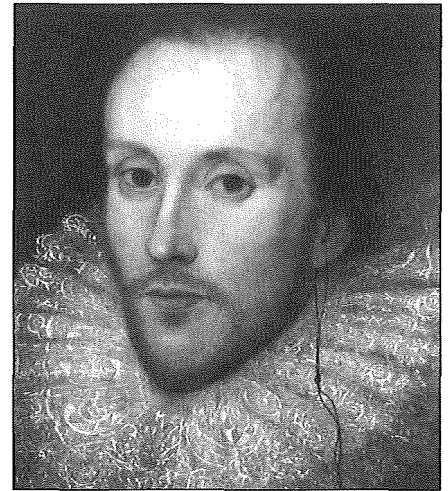
Some of these questions will be explored at the panel "Shakespeare and Religion" at the conference, and we will be following up in depth in future issues of the newsletter.

Meet the new Shakespeare?

During this past summer it was brought to our attention by a Society member who had just returned from Washington, DC, that the Folger Shakespeare Library's gift shop was offering some items that featured a new portrait of Shakespeare.

This portrait—shown on the right—is known as the "Bath" Shakespeare portrait. It is one that has been in the Folger's vaults for decades, and has just recently been released for public use. They list it as "Unknown man, once thought to be Shakespeare," with the additional remark, "too good to keep locked away." The portrait appears on a mouse pad (and other small gift items) for sale through the Folger's gift shop. This decision by the Folger seems to continue a recent trend—a distancing from the notorious Droeshout portrait.

For example, when the new *Riverside Shakespeare* was published in 1996-97, the "Jansen" portrait of Shakespeare—which looks very much like the "Bath" portrait—was used on the cover. The fact that both these portraits feature individuals who appear to be aristocrats is left unremarked



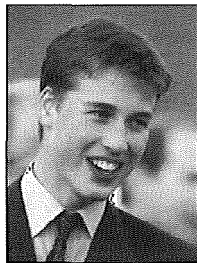
The "Bath" portrait

upon in the *Riverside*, and at the Folger.

Sometime next year, we will be taking a closer look in the newsletter at all these putative Shakespeare / unknown man portraits (including the famous—and still unresolved—case of the Ashbourne portrait).

And meet the once and future descendant?

Is Prince William descended from Shakespeare?



Prince William

no surprise—seems to have noticed.

The headline asked, "Is Britain's Prince William descended from Shakespeare?" and reported (quoting the *Sunday Times*) that a German academic—Hildegard Hammer-schmidt-Hummel of Mainz University—claims to have found clues to a blood link between the bard and Britain's royal family.

The book, *The Secrets of Shakespeare's Dark Lady*, argues that evidence hidden in paintings indicate that Shakespeare had an illegitimate daughter Penelope who grew up to marry the second Baron Spencer, from whom William's mother the late Princess Diana was directly descended.

Secrets (scheduled to be published in September) also names the woman with

The Reuters wire service carried yet another interesting Shakespeare story last August, one that also touches on the authorship story, though no one in the media that picked up the story—which should come as

whom Shakespeare had the affair as Elizabeth Vernon, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth I. This is, of course, the woman whom the Earl of Southampton secretly married in 1598, *after* she was pregnant.

The *Sunday Times* also reported that the book claims that a portrait known as "The Persian Lady" in Hampton Court Palace is of her [Vernon], and bears a sonnet claimed to be by Shakespeare [this portrait is well-known in some Oxfordian circles because for many decades it was called a portrait of Elizabeth I, but was then redesignated into that comfortable zone of "unknown"—Ed.]

The reason this story is of special interest to Oxfordians is that Prince William is descended from Shakespeare, through the marriage of Elizabeth Vere to William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby in 1595. Their descendants married into the Spencer family in the late 17th century, and the line of descent from there goes straight to Princess Diana.

That this "Prince William descended from Shakespeare" story should come out now, but with the Stratford man as the progenitor, is, well, "wondrous."

And one can only wonder, "What next?"

Column
The Paradigm Shift
 by Mark K. Anderson

Thomas of Woodstock - a “prequel” to Richard II?

The case for this apocryphal play being early Shakespeare

It's hard to believe that nearly four centuries after the author's death a work of Shakespeare would still lie unproduced, unacted and unregarded. But in the anonymous Elizabethan historical drama *Thomas of Woodstock*, Hampshire Shakespeare Company has unearthed one of the most promising contenders for anointment with the million-dollar tag “Written by William Shakespeare.”

The arguments for Woodstock's canonization are compelling, though they can be touched upon only briefly here. The drama also provides the missing piece of a historical puzzle famously set out by Shakespeare. And it proves to be a surprisingly accessible, clever, fun, tragic, humorous and engaging text—long overdue for the public's consideration and entertainment, regardless of author.

Thomas of Woodstock is named after and centers on one of the infamous seven sons of the 14th-century British monarch Edward III. King Edward's offspring ultimately led the country through a century-long soap opera of intrigue, treason, greed, revenge, lust and war. And Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester and Lord Protector of the Realm, played a crucial role in unfolding the drama at the outset.

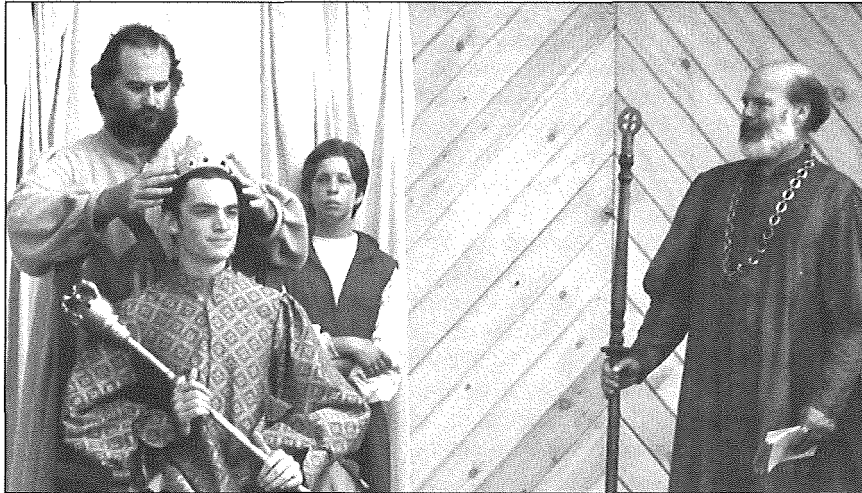
By the time of Queen Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603), the nation had put the War of the Roses into its collective past. But the populace had certainly not forgotten the battles and generations' worth of strife. And, as the country endured a long-simmering war against Spain, Shakespeare's reca-

pitulation and contemporization of the civil tumult was a popular and widely praised enterprise. Some even think the Queen hired

It's the prequel to Shakespeare's history plays that Shakespeare should have written—and, perhaps anonymously, did.

One of the chief problems of staging *Thomas of Woodstock* is that the play has no end. The only extant copy of the drama is a manuscript in The British Museum in London, and the final page or pages are missing. (The document is a prompt-book script, used for drama troupes of the Elizabethan period, and does not, unfortunately, appear to be written out by the author himself.)

When the Hampshire Shakespeare Company decided to take on *Thomas of Woodstock*—a play that, according to every source yet consulted, appears to have



Richard (Art Goyette) is crowned King by the Duke of York (Marc Osten), one of his four uncles, as another uncle, Thomas of Woodstock (Dan Popovich), looks on. In the play's action, Richard—now King Richard—starts replacing his uncles with his own sycophant friends within minutes of the coronation, thus setting in motion the chain of events leading to Woodstock's eventual murder, and in Shakespeare's Richard II, his own eventual downfall.

the author to craft patriotic propaganda for both the church and state that would arouse public sympathy for the crown and help the nation stave off the Spanish, Catholic menace.

Whether created for his own edification or for the Elizabethan state's self-interest, Shakespeare's history plays tell a nearly complete story of the War of the Roses from beginning to end.

It's “nearly complete” in that part of the beginning—one of the crucial events leading up to the deposition of Richard II in 1399—is left untold. The first of Shakespeare's “Lancastrian history cycle” is *Richard II*, and opens with a trial whose ostensible purpose is to discover who killed Thomas of Woodstock.

The background and the eventual enactment of Woodstock's murder are precisely what *Thomas of Woodstock* is about.

never been staged on these shores—it cleverly solved the problem with a contest.

The company spread the word earlier this year that it needed a late-20th-century bard to finish the late-16th-century Bard's handiwork. If *Woodstock* had come from a later period in the artist's development, of course, the contest would have been a cruel taunt. Since the work is still leagues away from the pinnacle of Shakespeare's development, though, the task was daunting but certainly not insurmountable.

The winning entry—written by Frederick Carrigg of Agawam and chosen by a panel of three local judges—sews up the drama comfortably and sets the stage for the political unraveling that begins with Shakespeare's *Richard II* and ends with soon-to-be Henry VII's slaying of Richard III and rout of Richard's forces on the field of Bosworth in 1485.

The other unusual dramatic challenge *Woodstock* posed was that the script calls for a courtier to ride onstage on horseback. And, while the director admits the parts would have been simple enough to cut, the comic exchange between Woodstock and the horse is so much fun and so Shakespearean—a la Launce's harangue to his dog in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—that director Timothy Holcomb opted instead to ransom his kingdom for a horse and proceed with the play as written.

The equine role, incidentally, will be handled by a gelding named Poco. "Has a wonderful temperament. Very agreeable," Holcomb said. "Nothing phases him. Does what he's told. Never misses a line."

For those who follow the new discoveries surrounding Shakespeare's life and works, *Woodstock* represents a small part of a truly monumental paradigm shift now under way.

Newly rediscovered Shakespeare works have been cropping up like wildflowers over the past few decades. Some, in the case of the anonymous Elizabethan plays *Edmund Ironside* and *Edward III*, are slowly being integrated into the officially sanctioned Shakespeare canon after the publication of comprehensive attribution studies (both, in this case, undertaken by the British scholar Eric Sams; the former in 1986, the latter in 1996).

We can only hope that others—such as the imitative, dry and ineffectual poem *A Funeral Elegy for William Peter* (a nearly-17th-century
(Continued on page 6)

Adventures of a Contestant

by C.V. Berney

Timothy Holcomb and the Hampshire Shakespeare Company have done a great service to the Shakespearean community by staging the early history play *Thomas of Woodstock*, which illuminates the later play, *Richard II*, just as *3 Henry VI* illuminates its sequel, *Richard III*. As Mark Anderson mentions in his column (page 4), one of the problems in staging *Woodstock* is that the ending is missing. At the Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge last April, Tim Holcomb announced a contest to supply an ending, and I signed up.

Contestants paid an entry fee of \$10, and were then supplied with a copy of the play, accompanied by A. P. Rossiter's 76-page introduction (which itself is worth the price of admission). The main theme of the play is the conflict between Richard and his uncles, which intensifies as Richard comes of age and climaxes with the kidnapping and murder of Woodstock, leading to a battle between the King's forces and those of the remaining uncles. The political picture is further developed by conversations between the King and his favorites (Bushy, Bagot, Green, Scroop, and Tresilian), and by the extortionate activities of Tresilian and his assistant Nimble.

The problem of writing an ending resolved itself into two parts: (1) bringing the currents of *Woodstock* to a satisfying close, and (2) dovetailing with *Richard II*. A seamless join between the two plays is not possible, since Green is killed onstage in *Woodstock* but turns up unscathed in *Richard II*. The author of *Woodstock* is very explicit about the greed and shallowness of the favorites, so it is essential that they be overthrown; conversely the nobles (Lancaster, York, Arundel, Surrey, and Woodstock himself) are consistently shown to be patriotic and loyal to the King, so the play must end with their hegemony re-established. However, it is not the time for Richard to be deposed—that is the theme of *Richard II*, and too mighty a theme to be worked out in a two-page ending (one does not compete with Shakespeare at the height of his powers). So a workmanlike conclusion was crafted in which the nobles approach Richard and require him to sign a statute relegating power to a Royal Council. The last lines of my version are:

KING: So am I hedged about with traitors!

YORK: Not traitors, good king, but loyal subjects,
Whose first care has ever been the country's good.
The traitors are the false chatteringers who misled your
majesty,
Whose malicious counsel caused the grievous death
of Woodstock,
Our noble brother, and as true a man as ever drew
breath.

KING: Ay, Woodstock. There's the matter that brought
us low.
(signs document, hands it back) Do what you will,

It matters naught to us, for good or ill.
I am a shadow king, and this a puppet show:
My friends are gone, my queen, and I'm o'er-crushed
with woe.

LANCASTER: Despair not, noble king.
With these, thy loyal subjects, at thy side again,
No other king shall have a happier reign
The country's whole again, and seeks a happier fate,
As Commons, king and nobles will make our England
great.

Good? Yes, but not quite good enough. This entry came in a close second. All of the endings submitted for the contest have been posted at www.hampshireshakespeare.org.

The Curious Case of the Missing de Vere. In his illuminating essay in the *Thomas of Woodstock* program, Roger Stritmatter points out that the most notorious of Richard's favorites has been left out of the play—Robert de Vere, the 9th Earl of Oxford, the only favorite to be mentioned by name in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s biography of Richard II. De Vere led the forces loyal to the King in the battle of Radcot Bridge; facing defeat, he doffed his armor and swam across the river, escaping to France, where he was killed during a boar hunt in 1392. Richard had his body brought back to England, where it was reinterred with elaborate ceremony. In a gesture emphasizing de Vere's absence from the play, the author of *Woodstock* includes the armor-doffing incident, but shifts it to the comic duo of Tresilian and Nimble.

If de Vere is the most prominent of the historical courtiers, Sir Henry Green (who really existed) is preeminent among those on stage. He has half again as many lines as Bagot and Bushy, and three times as many as Scroop (Tresilian is in a class by himself since he has so many scenes with Nimble). His lines are not only more numerous, but are more audacious, pointed and witty than those of his confederates. He is the only favorite to have his own death scene, a sure mark of authorial regard. It is almost as if the author intends Green to be de Vere's stand-in.

Richard Whalen (among others) has taught us to look behind the plain English of the Shakespearean plays for the shadowy wordplay of the French equivalents. In a previous *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Summer 1998), Whalen draws our attention to the scene late in *Antony and Cleopatra* when the Clown brings a serpent in a basket for Cleopatra's eventual suicide. Using an archaic term, the Clown continually refers to the serpent as "the worm." The French for worm is *ver*, and so the archaism enables Shakespeare/de Vere to make punning comments about his place in the court ("But this is most falliable, the worm's an odd worm").

In this spirit, it is worth noting that the French for green is *vert*. Native French speakers, with their characteristic passion for the conservation of pronunciatonal energy, leave the "t" silent.

Anderson (Continued from page 5)

Shakespeare rip-off that, nevertheless, is included in the current edition of the industry-standard textbook *The Riverside Shakespeare*—are temporary lapses in the critical judgment of the “experts.”

As the Hampshire Shakespeare Company’s production bravely sets forth, *Thomas of Woodstock* belongs with *Edmund* and *Edward* as an example of the bard’s early dramatic output. The troupe’s promotional material for the show does not attribute *Woodstock* to anyone—save, in the play’s program, where it’s attributed to “Anonymous.” Nonetheless, following a literary manhunt that stretches back into the 19th century, the program notes encourage what promises to be an exciting line of inquiry.

Although no definitive study advancing a Bard-authored *Woodstock* has yet been done, the program’s introduction to *Woodstock* quotes Shakespeare scholar Ian Robinson’s 1988 study of the play: “Who else but Shakespeare writes like this?” he asks. Essayist Roger Stritmatter of UMass’ comparative literature department, who also first brought *Woodstock* to Hampshire Shakespeare’s attention, replies, “The question is rhetorical: the only answer—with exception taken for the anonymous composition—is ‘nobody.’”

To those familiar with Shakespeare’s hallmark style, the play resounds with language, characters, rhetoric, scenes and allusions that sound suspiciously like our man, albeit in a youthful outpouring of his raw talent. If you go to this *Woodstock* expecting *Hamlet*, *Richard III* or even one of the comparatively unrefined *Henry VI* trilogy, you will be disappointed. No question.

But if you go to the show with a curious, skeptical mind, expecting a sampling of the Bard’s juvenilia, you may walk out at the end of the night saying, “So that’s how Shakespeare started out ...”

The play, in short, is pockmarked with the rough pavement and potholes that young writers inevitably leave behind when first developing their art. It also contains moments of genius, transcendent wit and youthful exuberance that would recommend this production to any lover of historical—and literary—mysteries.

As Holcomb put it, “Here’s something

that’s sat on the shelves, and the damned thing plays. It’s good theater.” Just as Shakespeare’s *Richard II* presents the titular monarch as an early draft of *Hamlet*—pensive poet-like royalty whose thoughts prove a truer kingdom than anything the real world presents—*Woodstock* casts through plot lines and character sketches that prefigure *King Lear*. Here King Richard II displays a Lear-like penchant for indulging sycophants and banishing the voices of truth. In

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that sense, *Woodstock* becomes a figure like Lear’s Kent—a man almost tragically predisposed to call everything for what it is.

When I pointed this out to Holcomb, he added, “It’s got this static-ness that finally breaks in Act Five. There’s the suggestion of a paring away that our playwright picks up—and the last actors on stage are York and Lancaster. It’s the same kind of ‘what are we going to do now?’ question that gets posed at the end of *Lear*.”

Still, *Woodstock* chooses a Hamlet-like course of inaction—and loses his life as a result. Ultimately, the line that best summarizes the play (spoken by *Woodstock*) resonates with one of the great overriding themes that pervades the Shakespeare canon: “When kingdoms change, the very heavens are troubled.”

When Richard’s queen dies, in the words of *Woodstock*’s servingman, “The lights of heaven are shut in pitchy clouds/ And flakes of fire run tilting through the sky/ Like dim ostents to some great tragedy.”

Woodstock’s multi-hued use of language also reveals a Shakespearean love of words, setting forth the same kind of idiosyncratic wordplay that define Shakespeare’s style—in more elemental form than what can be found in his mature works. The Shakespearean trick of antithesis and verb-noun inversions, for instance, dot the dialogue (“this chain doth, as it were, so toeify the knee and so kneefify the toe, that between both it makes a most methodical coherence, or coherent method”).

And one of Shakespeare’s favorite rhetorical forms—two complementary or even near-synonymous words joined by “and,” such as “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”—is so prevalent in *Woodstock* that I lost count by Act Two (“tax and pill,” “remiss and inconsiderate,” “mickle care and woe”).

Some scholars now argue that *Woodstock* is a 19th-century forgery, that the work indeed has many Shakespearean characteristics but is both too immature and perhaps too Shakespearean to be believed. To that accusation, Holcomb asks why a hypothetical forger would have created a drama that never appears to have been staged and never even states who the author is. History has seen several Shakespeare forgeries—but the forger has always derived some personal, professional or economic gain from it.

“I think there’s way too much stuff in here for someone to put the energy and time into this and then not do anything with it,” Holcomb said. “If it was a hoax, why didn’t it play? Why didn’t somebody make money off it?”

Put such questions of authorship and authenticity to the play itself—or at least to the version that includes Carrigg’s elegant two-page ending—and you find yourself concluding with the closing couplet:

“Only through plainness and truth dare we lay / The fate of the Crown on this field this day.”

(This commentary on Thomas of Woodstock was first published in the Valley Advocate (Springfield, Mass) on July 17th, 1999.)

Bacon begs the two Henries as First Folio appears

by Peter W. Dickson (©1999)

Further research into the historical context of the *First Folio* continues to uncover extraordinary evidence relevant to the authorship dispute. Perhaps none is more astonishing than that which pertains to Sir Francis Bacon and his effort to achieve a reconciliation with Oxford (Henry de Vere) and Southampton as the *First Folio* arrived in London book stores in January 1624.

Scholars on all sides of the authorship debate have overlooked this crucial evidence for two reasons. First, most Bacon scholars ignore his private correspondence in the last two years of his life. His impeachment for bribery and corruption in April-May 1621—which Southampton engineered—brought an abrupt end to Bacon's political career, though he wrote many great works in the last five years of his life.

Second, Oxfordians, having utter contempt for the idea that Bacon was Shakespeare, have generally ignored him and—for the most part—the entire political context of the early 1620s when the *First Folio* project was launched and completed.

The new evidence in question concerns two letters which Bacon had written to both the 18th Earl of Oxford and the 3rd Earl of Southampton just a month after Oxford's release from the Tower on December 30, 1623.

This release concluded a 20-month imprisonment for treasonous speech and/or actions in opposition to the Crown's plan to marry Prince Charles to a sister of the Spanish King, and coincided with the appearance of the *First Folio* in London bookstores—Sir Edward Dering having placed the first known order on December 5, 1623, and the Bodleian library having sent its copy to the binders on February 17, 1624.

These two letters (reproduced in the box on this page) can be found on pages 454-455 in volume VII of James Spedding's famous anthology *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*

(1874). The "re-discovery" of these letters more than 125 years later was made possible because Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart, authors of the latest work on Bacon's life, *Hostage to Fortune* (1999), offer a highly-

detailed account of the last years of the disgraced Lord Chancellor. In the course of that account they cite these letters to the two Earls—with little comment.

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Bacon's letters to Oxford and Southampton

Bacon prepared the letters to the two earls in the midst of the preparations for the new parliament, which King James had been forced to convene in early 1624 for the purpose of breaking relations with Madrid and possibly declaring war against Spain.

The letter to Southampton has a notation at the bottom referring to the end of January 1623. However, following the calendar of the time and the context of the letter's content, this must mean January 1624. Bacon's signature refers to his first name and his title as Viscount St. Albans. Spedding, in a footnote on page 454 in *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon* (1874), indicates that the surviving unsigned rough draft of the letter to Oxford in Bacon's own handwriting contains the following notation—"To Lo. Oxford 2 Feb. 1623"—which means near simultaneous composition. The full text of the two letters is as follows:

To the Right Honourable His Very Good
Lordship The Earl of Southampton

My very good Lord,

It pleased your Lordship when we met last, and did not think, I dare say, that a Parliament would have been so soon, to assure me of your love and favour: and it is true that out of that which I have heard and observed of your noble nature I have a great affiance in your Lordship. I would be glad to receive my writ with this Parliament, that since the root of my dignity is saved to me it might also bear fruit, and that I may not die in dishonour.

But it is far from me to desire this except it may be with the love and consent of the Lords: if their Lordships shall vouchsafe to think me worthy of their company or fit to do them service, or to have suffered sufficiently, whereby I may now be after 3 years a subject of their grace as I was before a subject of their justice.

In this matter I hold your Lordship's favour so essential as if God shall put into your heart to give me your favour and furtherance, I will apply my industry and other friends to cooperate with your Lordship. Otherwise, I shall give over to think of it; and yet ever rest.

Your Lordship's affectionate and humble
servant,

Fr. St. Albans
Last of January, 1623 [sic]

[To the Earl of Oxford]

My very good Lord,

Let me be an humble suitor to your Lordship for your noble favour. I would be glad to receive my writ this Parliament, that I may not die in dishonour. But by no means, except it should be with the love and consent of my Lords to readmit me, if their Lordships vouchsafe to think me worthy of their company; or if they think that which I have suffered now these three years, in loss of place, in loss of means, and in loss of liberty (for a great time), to be sufficient expiation for my faults, whereby I may now seem in their eyes to be a fit subject for their grace, as I have been before of their justice. My good Lord, the good which the commonwealth might reap of my suffering, is already inned. Justice is done; An example is made for reformation; The authority of the House for judicature is established. There can be no further use of my misery; perhaps some little may be of my service; for I hope I shall be found a man humbled as a Christian, though not dejected as a worldling. I have great opinion of your Lordship's power, and great hope for many reasons of your favour; which if I may obtain, I can say no more but nobleness is ever required in itself; and God (whose special favour in my afflictions I have manifestly found to my comfort) will I trust be my pay-master of that which cannot be required by

Your Lordship's affectionate humble servant, etc.

Nudge-Nudge, Wink-Wink: “What Author Would Conceal His Name?”

By James Fitzgerald

The lawyer and writer John Stephens, of a large and politically-active Gloucestershire family, became an “admitted member” of Lincoln’s Inn in 1611. Stephens is remembered by some for his *Satyrical Essayes, Characters, and Others or accurate and quick descriptions fitted to the life of their subjects* (1615). Nicholas Storogenko, in *Notes and Queries* (4th ser., iii, 550-51, 1869), characterized *Essayes* as the most accomplished of several conscious imitations of Bacon’s *Essayes* (1597) which enjoyed considerable eclat among a scandal-attuned readership who strove to make out the personal allusions obscured by a fog of generalities.

Of specific and especial interest to Oxfordians is Stephens’s essay “A Worthy Poet,” his representation of the Poet-Ideal. Storogenko sees a similarity between Stephens’s “Worthy Poet” and Shakespeare, and quotes Stephens:

He only among men is nearest infinite; for in the scenical composures of a tragedy or comedie, he shewes the best resemblance of his high Creator, turning his quicke passions and witty humors to replenish and overcome into matter and form, as infinite as God’s pleasure to diversifie mankind.

Storogenko ignores the boundaries between the categories of poet and playwright in observing that “among the dramatists of the day” only Jonson might be considered a rival, but he then goes on to show that Stephens was at pains to exclude Jonson on the grounds that, unlike Jonson, the “Worthy Poet” was more indebted to the moderns for his sources than to the ancients.

In support of his relay of Stephens’s views, Storogenko quotes one Headley that “were the ancients to reclaim their property, Jonson would not have a rag to cover his nakedness.”

In the *Dictionary of National Biography* entry on Stephens, A. F. Pollard cites Storogenko, remarking that “A Worthy

Poet” has been perceived as a veiled portrait of Shakespeare, but “on no very conclusive grounds.”

A monument to whom?

According to Storogenko, Stephens educes a “biographical fact” in Shakespeare’s life when he observes that...

*“For he cannot die,”
declares Stephens of
the Poet-Ideal.
Would this be said
any more frequently
of the living, one
wonders, than the
“ever-living” of
The Sonnets dedication?*

When he is lastly silent (for he cannot die), he findes a monument prepared at others cost and remembrance, whilst his former actions be a living epitaph.

Storogenko asserts that “this last allusion to Shakspeare is so clear that it needs no further explication,” identifying it as the final encomium to [the Stratford] “Shakespeare” before his death in 1616.

Yet the quoted passage seems better suited to Oxford-as-Shakespeare.

Let us first scotch the objection most likely to be raised to the foregoing proposition, that the present tense of the passage consorts with the still-living state of William of Stratford in 1615 and conflicts with the defunctiveness of Oxford after 1604. In delineating his Poet-Ideal, it is unremarkable that Stephens would employ an eternal-present tense, since the Poet-Ideal is a philo-

sophical entity and so stands outside time. In fact, if Stephens did take the biographical particulars of some living model as the clay from which to shape his Ideal, we are compelled to interpret the gnomic present as a projection from a real historical past. Here that means that the real poet (and dramatist, by Storogenko’s lights) indeed *is* silent, probably because *he has died*; a monument *has already been prepared* for him at others’ expense; and his “former actions”—to wit, his literary works—*continue to exist* as his epitaph.

There are two expressions in the quotation that tend to qualify Oxford (if Stephens did indeed take Shakespeare for his paradigm) and to disqualify William of Stratford.

“For he cannot die,” declares Stephens of the Poet-Ideal. Would this be said any more frequently of the living, one wonders, than the “ever-living” of *The Sonnets* dedication?

“Whilst his former actions be a living epitaph,” he then adds. Who would ever so characterize one who was not yet a tenant of the narrow house? Truly, this passage doth breathe the cypress and the willow.

Owing to its peculiar concreteness, the phrase “a monument prepared at others cost and remembrance” strikes one as a genuine event which Stephens has blithely lifted into the empyrean as a typical characteristic of the Poet-Ideal. Going along with Storogenko—that Stephens has fashioned his Poet-Ideal from Shakespeare—can we avoid reading here an allusion to the Stratford monument?

Supposing it to be the Stratford monument, it must have come into existence after the death of Oxford and before the death of William of Stratford (a possibility that the deep-diving Robert Detobel of Frankfurt, Germany, has already surmised). Stephens could have seen the Stratford monument finished, or in the process of completion, prior to its installation at Stratford, sometime during that period after Oxford’s death in 1604, when the creators of the Stratford

myth were waiting for the Stratford "Shakespeares" to disappear, and thereby relieve the Shakespeare-Folio project of its chief potential embarrassments.

While it may not be wise policy to stray too far beyond the illumination of evidence, we would all the same be too timid and prudential not to at least acknowledge the good fit between the apparent timing of the fabrication of the monument and the Oxfordian hypothesis of a possible larger fabrication: that William of Stratford was eventually to be employed, that is to say, paid off, to serve as the dummy upon which to drape the literary habiliments of the true Shakespeare.

Who—and why—a concealed Poet?

Moving back closer to the fire, there remains the matter of how Stephens might have known that a monument had been prepared for "Shakespeare" by 1615. The solution seems relatively straightforward, even convincing, if we take the following as evidence: John Stephens knew Ben Jonson personally.

Stephens was also the author of a play, called *Cynthia's Revenge, or Menander's Extasy*. The DNB entry (describing it as "long and tedious," and based upon the *Pharsalia* of Lucan and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid) gives it a date of 1613 and reports that it was published on the quiet, without being entered into the *Stationers' Register*. Jonson supplied the following commendatory poem, entitled "To His Much and Worthily Esteemed Friend the Author":

Who takes thy volume to his vertuous hand,
Must be intended still to understand:
Who bluntly doth but looke upon the same,
May aske, *what Author would conceale his name?*

Who reads may roave, and call the passage
darke*,

Yet may as blind men sometimes hit the
marke.

Who reads, who roaves**, who hopes to
understand,

May take thy volume to his vertuous hand.
Who cannot reade, but onely doth desire to
understand,

Hee may at length admire.

*darke: obscure

**roave: shoot to determine the range

Nine of these ten Jonson lines verge on literal non-sense. Three relatively incoherent lines lead up to line four, which asks unambiguously—and momentarily, being uniquely italicized in the original—"what author would conceal his name?"

The concluding six lines are more mumbo-jumbo out of which we can only glean the sense that a hidden meaning in literature (i.e. hidden in "the passage darke") is difficult to bring into the light, with success being a hit-or-miss affair.

Jonson's commendation has little, if anything, in it to connect it to the work to which it is prefixed. His deliberately incondite warning about secret messages is generic. And, finally, what author *would*

*"Where was there a
handy place ... to hide
sensitive or explosive
material? ... the commendatory poem may have
been an almost allowed
"drop" or hollow tree
wherein one might
conceal the goods."*

conceal his name?

The italicized portion of line four has really little to do with the other nine lines of matrix, except that all ten bear upon that which is hidden—and ought, perhaps, to be revealed. Cool as a cuckoo, Jonson has dropped line four into the nest confident that to the inattentive reader of his encomium his lines shall prove to be no more than nine dull and incomprehensible eggs—and one ovate ringer.

The hiding place commendatory

A close investigation of Stephens's book of philosophical satires and his play must await a subsequent article, yet here we see perhaps that this minor and hitherto ignored genre of poetry, the literary-commendatory verse of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, bears examination in the

ongoing Shakespeare authorship controversy. This verse and others like it have been ignored for good reason, as they were the dust jacket blurbs of the age. Read, for example, the grandiloquent English eulogies to be found at the front of Du Bartas' *Divine Weeks* ("How great thou art, how great thine art...").

The ruefully illuminating experience of Ben Jonson supports the view that such commendatory verse is the branch of the McPoetry clan living up in the hollow. Jonson's introductory verse to the *First Folio* probably ranks as the greatest eulogy of one writer for another in the English language. It may be Jonson's greatest poem. But its strange—yet not strange—fate has been to serve as a now well-turned forty acres of Shakespeare research, where the diggers, intent upon the fragment of bone and the shard of pottery, have gone blind to the beauty of the lie of the land.

To end with a question is to end with a beginning, but: where was there a handy place in the Tudor and Jacobean world of letters to cache sensitive or explosive material where it might avoid premature exposure, and where it might enjoy protection from the total destruction or obscurity that is the customary fate of the long passage of time? It begins to look as if the commendatory poem may have been an almost allowed "drop" or hollow tree wherein one might conceal the goods.

To read the standard eulogistic confectations in Josuah Sylvester's *Divine Weeks*, for example, and then, by way of comparison, to re-examine there the Latin eulogy of Edward Lapworth, the bizarre-anywhere eulogy of R.R. (almost certainly by Jonson), and Jonson's own signed eulogy, is to realize how thoroughly atypical are these latter (see *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletters*, Winter 1997 and Spring 1997).

Jonson's weird accolade which we have just looked at seems but one more indication that in such aberrant dedications as these may authorship clues be discovered.

(Every so often we buy an imported article with a tag on it informing us that the components were manufactured in a Ruritania and assembled in a Grand Fenwick. If there had been a tag attached to "Nudge, Nudge, Wink, Wink," it would have stated that the components were manufactured in Germany by Robert Detobel and assembled in the United States by James Fitzgerald.)

Whittemore (Continued from page 1)
ent ways. Another reason is that they were written as a chronicle, tied to the momentum of Elizabeth's ever-waning life, as her body's decay led to her death and the succession.

Time and Nature served as functional, tyrannical dictators linked specifically to the Queen's ever-approaching demise. Appropriately, following her death in March 1603, Oxford in Sonnet 106 referred to his verses as the "Chronicle of wasted time"; and "Nature" in his final farewell, Sonnet 126, became "sovereign mistress over wrack."

Within this structure the Fair Youth is Southampton; the Dark Lady is Elizabeth; and the Rival Poet is the printed pseudonym William Shakespeare, created by Oxford to publicly support the contents of these private, royal verses. Not only *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594 but also *The Phoenix and the Turtle* of 1601 were "heirs" of Oxford's "invention" by which he was creating *The Sonnets* to preserve a legacy of Southampton's "true rights" (17).

In this article I would like to sketch a few of the steps leading to the framework that emerged. These steps are necessarily built of observations, assumptions and premises; but at a significant juncture, as I hope to show, the construct of hypotheses begins to yield new evidence beyond itself. This process, I believe, takes us to an entirely new plateau of discussion and research whereby interpretation is enhanced by previously unnoticed links between Oxford's words and his life.

Background

Shake-Speare's Sonnets, first put up for sale in 1609, quickly disappeared and remained out of sight until 1711, more than a century later. Although thirteen original copies eventually surfaced, no one has uncovered any contemporaneous comment upon their existence. Why would the collection have fallen into such a resounding silence? Why, as a number of scholars have surmised, would the government of King James suppress these verses by removing them from circulation?

Even as late as 1609 the only man publicly associated with the Shakespeare name was Southampton, captain of the Isle of

Wight, who had become a leader of the Virginia Company's expeditions to the New World. It was Southampton to whom the author had dedicated his first published poems, *Venus and Lucrece*, with extraordi-

did, so a reading of "beauty" as the Queen could hardly be avoided; and if Southampton could have saved her dynasty through procreating, he himself must have been her child.

The political danger of these verses would have been confirmed by the very first quatrain of Sonnet 127, opening the Dark Lady series, in which the "fair" Southampton had become "black" although he was "beauty's successive heir" and "Beauty" [capitalized in 1609] was "slandered by a bastard shame." The same author had written in *Henry VI, Pt. 2*, that "as next to the king he was successive heir," referring to an immediate successor by blood to the throne, so the reference to Wriothesley as such was inescapable.

When *The Sonnets* appeared suddenly in 1609, Southampton was in his mid-thirties. If he had possessed a royal claim before the Queen's death, he continued to possess one now. Here was certainly a reason why James—or Robert Cecil, now Earl of Salisbury—would have made sure to swiftly remove these private verses from circulation.

The Invention

It was an act of treason to write about the succession. Oxford testified in 66 that he was "tongue-tied by authority" or prevented by official decree from speaking openly; and in 26 he called his verses "this written ambassage," referring to the dangerous messages memorized by ambassadors and delivered orally. Such messages as "written" needed to be carried by the words themselves, forcing Oxford to create some method of doing so; and in 76 he specifically described this method as his "invention":

Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did
proceed?

Declaring that he was constantly writing about subject matter that was extremely limited to "all one, ever the same," he combined Southampton's family motto (*One for All, All for One*) with Elizabeth's coat-of-arms motto (*Ever the Same*), while glancing at his own signature word, *Ever*, for E. Ver.

Sonnet 27 : Feb. 8, 1601 THE REBELLION

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travail tired,
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired.

Events of the Rebellion continued into the night, with Essex and Southampton transported to the Tower by 3 am. The verse reflects Oxford's mental and emotional fatigue, probably from following reports of events. "Travail" can mean either toil or travel; in this case, the context is clearly the former; i.e., his journey is taken "in my head."

For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eye-lids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see.

Oxford's *thoughts* intend the "zealous pilgrimage" to Southampton in prison; the world has been plunged into darkness.

Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.

In the earlier verses (1-26), Southampton was "the world's fresh ornament"; now, in prison, he is like "a jewel hung in ghastly night." This is the first appearance in the Sonnets of "shadow" and "black."

Lo thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for my self, no quiet find.

"This is the first of a series of five sonnets," says Katherine Duncan-Jones, lending support to the view that Oxford is now determined to write verses daily, corresponding to the days of the calendar. At this point, he has every reason to believe that Southampton's life will be over sooner than later. He equates him with his own self.

nary vows: "The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end... What I have done is yours, what I have to do is yours, being part in all I have, devoted yours."

If authorities knew it was Oxford who had brazenly honored Southampton during Elizabeth's reign, they would have known he had written the private sonnets to him.

And they would have been alarmed by the very opening lines of Sonnet 1, in which Oxford had urged "fairest creatures" to procreate so that "beauty's *Rose* [capitalized and italicized in 1609] might never die." It was Elizabeth's own dynasty of the Tudor Rose that had been destined to die when she

Taking him literally, his topic throughout *The Sonnets* was constricted to the triangular relationship of these three real individuals in real time.

(In correspondence with Leicester, according to Charlton Ogburn, Jr., the Queen signed herself "Ever the same." Oxford could not have written "ever the same" without consciously and deliberately referring to her.)

Meanwhile his method or "invention" was barely hidden within "a noted weed," or the familiar costume of his poetry, so that "every word doth almost tell my name, showing their birth and where they did proceed." That is, on the most basic level, he was maintaining a chronicle in which every word was "almost"—but not quite—revealing his identity as well as the story that kept unfolding. On the surface was the "noted weed" of his universal poetry, while simultaneously an entirely different message was being conveyed by "every word" of the same lines.

How could he accomplish such a feat? His answer was that, while restricting himself literally to the topic of "all one, ever the same," he could use many universal or commonly employed words to express different aspects of the same triangle.

"So all my best is dressing old words new," he explained in 76, "spending again what is already spent." Or, as he added in 105, "...varying to other words / And in this change is my invention spent."

While "beauty" continued to represent the Queen, for example, Oxford could also dress or vary that word by using others to signify her, such as *Fortune, Heaven, Ladies, Mistress, Moon, Mother, Woman* and so on. The key was consistency. Once the specific meaning of any such universal word was adopted, this alternative definition could not change.

But he gained additional flexibility within the family triangle. Southampton, for example, possessed "beauty" because he reflected his mother's royal blood within himself: "Thou art thy mother's glass" (3). And "his Rose was true" (67) because he also shared the blood of his father, Oxford, whose earldom motto was *Nothing Truer Than Truth*.

"Shakespeare's poems, dedications and sonnets were all to *one* patron and *one* friend," wrote Charlotte Stopes, "and that

one was Henry the third Earl of Southampton" [emphasis added by Stopes].

"Three themes in *one*," Oxford declared in Sonnet 105, "which wondrous scope affords" [my emphasis].

Sonnet 63 : March 16, 1601 EXECUTION IMMINENT

Against my love shall be as I am now,
With time's injurious hand crushed and o'er-worn,
When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn

Hath travailed on to Age's steepy night,
And all those beauties whereof now he's King
Are vanishing, or vanished out of sight,
Stealing away the treasure of his Spring.

These two quatrains contain a single flowing, remarkably powerful sentence expressing Oxford's desperate outcry against Southampton's impending doom. Note the echo of Hamlet's description of death as "the undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns."

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

The cruel knife can be seen as the executioner's blade, which may cut Southampton's head from his body in just days. Oxford is here resigned to Southampton's life being lost, while he is powerless to do anything but write and preserve him in his writing.

Therefore...

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

Stephen Booth notes the "funereal" connotations of "black" in this couplet, and glosses "still" in the final line as "after his death." The reading of "beauty" as the Tudor Rose blood link also underscores Oxford's purpose in this couplet.

While Southampton was the constant motive and topic of *The Sonnets*, however, the Queen herself was the very real universe in which he lived. Henry Wriothesley's royal existence depended upon her realm ("the world"), her dynasty ("Rose"), her House of Tudor ("house," "mansion," "roof"), her command ("desire," "pleasure," "will") and her sovereign viewpoint ("my Mistress' eyes") that could turn "light" to "dark" and "day" to "night."

Each verse of *The Sonnets* reflected the viewpoint and will of Southampton's mother the Queen, whose power to acknowledge or deny him was absolute and pervasive.

Southampton was "fair" because he reflected Elizabeth as beauty, but she was also the reason he was *Bright, Clear, Fresh, Heir, Jewel, Light, Lord, Ornament, Rare, Rarity, Sovereign, Sun, Abundant, Beloved, Best, Bounteous, Celestial, Controlling, Crowned, Dear, Divine, Eternal, Excellent, Fragrant, Full, Gaudy, Gentle, Gilded, Glorious, Golden, Gracious, High, Holy, Immortal, Lovely, Precious, Proud, Pure, Purple, Religious, Rich, Right, Scarlet, Silver, Spirit, Sweet, Triumphant, Vermillion, Violet, Virtuous, Worthy*.

Southampton was "The little Love-God" (154); his royal blood was "Love" ("And you and love are still my argument" (76)); as Oxford's son he was "my Sunne" or "my love."

By her supremely powerful attitude, however, Elizabeth could *Blame, Bury, Despise, Disdain, Hate, Kill, Lie, Mourn, Profane, Scorn, Slander, Spite, Spoil, Spot, Stain, Steep, Sully, Weaken and Wound* Southampton with how she viewed him.

The Queen's negative stance made her *Blind, Deaf, False, Poor, Bare, Barren*. Other words associated with her treatment of Southampton included *Brand, Cloud, Dark, Darkness, Forlorn, Foul, Mask, Night, Shade, Shadow, Smoke, Sullen, Unseen and Veil*, not to mention *Bare, Barren, Base, Black, Blot, Canker, Crow, Defect, Disgrace, Dun, Error, Expense, Fault, Foul, Guilt, None, Nothing, Rank, Rotten, Sable, Scandal, Shame, Sin, Stain, Sullen, Sullied, Suspect, Thorns, Ugly, Unfair, Untrimmed, Unseen, Vice, Vulgar, Weakness, Weed, Worst*.

The Chronicle

The substance of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* was inexorably intertwined with its form, as entries of the chronicle reflected Southampton's ongoing dependency upon both the Queen's attitude and her life itself. The seasons were always passing, the hourglass running out:

And all in war with time for love of you
(Sonnet 15)

I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you
(Sonnet 57)

Oxford insisted that within *The Sonnets* he was creating both a "tomb" and a "womb"
(Continued on page 12)

Whittemore (Continued from page 11)

(17, 86) for his son. While the verses served to barely obscure Southampton's royal existence, they also functioned as a means of containing his life: "When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st" (18) and "You live in this" (55).

One of my assumptions all along was that *The Sonnets* were written and/or arranged chronologically within each series: the Fair Youth verses (1-126), the Dark Lady verses (127-152) and the Bath sonnets (153-154).

Looking at the Fair Youth verses (1-126) in light of the previous hypotheses, one thing became obvious: a total change in the Queen's attitude began with Sonnet 27, when the world went from light to dark. Here was the introduction of "black" and "shadow"; and whereas Southampton had been "the world's fresh ornament" (1), now in Sonnet 27 he was "like a jewel hung in ghastly night." In Sonnet 30 he was "precious friends hid in death's dateless night," and in Sonnet 31 he became "the grave where buried love doth live." Expressions of grief, sorrow, disgrace and woe would continue for dozens of verses, indicating that some terrible tragedy must have taken place.

I also noticed that the blackness of Sonnet 27 was mirrored by that of Sonnet 127, at the very beginning of the Dark Lady verses. These two sonnets appeared to be linked to the same point in time. Sonnet 127 opened with Southampton having been turned "black"; and the Queen, suffering from "disgrace," was pictured at a funeral: "Therefore my Mistress' eyes are Raven black / Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem."

Was this not, perhaps, the same funeral depicted in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, published in 1601 as by William Shakespeare? "Beauty, truth, and rarity / Grace in all simplicity / Here enclosed in cinders lie," its final dirge began. "To this urn let those repair / That are either true or fair / For these dead bird sigh a prayer."

Because of its publication date, *Phoenix* seemed to be Oxford's reaction to the Rebellion of Feb. 8, 1601, when Essex and Southampton were imprisoned in the Tower to face charges of high treason. The trial was held on the 19th of that month and both were found guilty. Essex was executed on the 25th, while Southampton awaited the same

fate until after mid-March, when Elizabeth commuted his sentence to life in prison. Although spared from the executioner's axe, he was stripped of his earldom and consigned to the state of an outcast. His

Sonnet 87 : May 1601 FAREWELL

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowst thy estimate.
The Charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.

Oxford is simultaneously saying farewell to the daily verses and to Southampton. He must let go of Southampton, whose stature puts him on a level beyond reach, giving him the power to release himself—from Oxford, from prison. Oxford's ties upon him are ended. What more can he do?

For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.

Oxford, impotent in behalf of Southampton, finds himself undeserving of the latter's "fair gift" of himself.

Thy self thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking;
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgement making.

"Misprision" refers to an offense akin to treason or felony, but not liable to the capital penalty (Oxford Universal Dictionary)—an exact description of Southampton's crime and the overturning of his death sentence to life imprisonment.

Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter:
In sleep a King, but waking no such matter.

Again Oxford refers to Southampton as a king—in his dreams, at any rate.

prospect was to live—imprisoned—in utter disgrace to the end of his days.

Starting with Sonnet 27 and looking at the next verses one after the other, I observed absolutely no relief from the author's misery; and Sonnet 73 was a funeral song echoing *Phoenix*. The "cinders" of the published poem were "ashes"; and the "dead birds" could be seen in the famous sonnet line, "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

Given the 1601 publication date of *Phoenix*, I hypothesized that perhaps both Sonnet 27 and Sonnet 127 had been written in reaction to the February 1601 Rebellion.

I then looked at the landscape of the Sonnets from another angle:

Many scholars were convinced that Sonnet 107 referred not only to the Queen's death on March 23, 1603 and the accession of James, but, more specifically, to the release of Southampton from the Tower on April 10, 1603.

I asked myself these questions:

If Oxford had been chronicling Southampton's life and expressed his profound relief over Southampton's freedom in 1603, is it possible that he had never bothered to react in 1601 to the Rebellion or its aftermath? To the trial at which he himself sat on the tribunal? To the guilty verdict and death sentence? To the execution of Essex? To the terrible waiting period of some forty days until the young earl's life was spared? To the royal decree that Southampton must remain in the Tower for the rest of his days?

No, I finally had to say. He could not have avoided these events.

So I considered that Sonnet 27 itself represented Oxford's initial reaction to the Rebellion, when events had lasted long into the night until Essex and Southampton were transported to the Tower by three in the morning.

Then I listed the dates from Feb. 8, 1601 in columns, covering the rest of that month as well as March and into April that year, jotting down significant events. When I listed the verses alongside the dates, starting with Sonnet 27, words and phrases came newly alive within this new chronological context. For example:

Sonnet 30 / Feb. 11: "Sessions" and "summon up" echoed the fact that the Privy Council now summoned Oxford to sit in judgment at the sessions or judicial proceedings.

Sonnet 35 / Feb. 16: "Thy adverse party is thy Advocate" would be a perfect reflection of Oxford's agony over having to judge his son on charges of treason.

Sonnet 45 / Feb. 26: "Thy fair health" reflected evidence of Southampton's illness in the Tower; and "swift messengers" would indicate how Oxford was receiving reports of it.

Sonnet 63 / March 16: The entire sonnet is an emotion-laden picture of Oxford steeling himself against Southampton's execution (see comments in the box on page 11).

Sonnet 66 / March 19: This virtual "suicide

note" is suddenly explained. Now we can see it as Oxford's exhausted reaction to the sparing of Southampton's life by Elizabeth. The line "And strength by limping sway disabled," suggested in the 1960s by Dover Wilson as a glance at the limping, swaying figure of Robert Cecil could now be seen as an accurate guess.

"Tired with all these, from these would I be gone," Oxford wrote, "Save that to die I leave my love alone"—alone, that is, in prison for the rest of his life.

Sonnet 67 / March 20: Most significant here is that Oxford immediately recovers from his relief to ask (about Southampton), "Wherefore should he live..." (1), and later, "Why should he live..." (9). His life is spared, but the question now is, "Is life in prison that much better?"

So far my columns indicated exactly forty verses (27-66) corresponding to exactly forty days, as if they had been postcards from the edge of doom.

On a parallel track were the so-called Dark Lady verses (127-152) to Elizabeth. These were written far less frequently, but, within this same chronological context, they also came alive in new ways.

It suddenly appeared to me, for example, that the second verse (128) of this series related directly to the execution of Essex on Feb. 25, 1601. On that day, Oxford waited with others while Elizabeth played on the virginals. When a messenger arrived to confirm that Essex was dead, Agnes Strickland writes, the Queen continued to play while Oxford, casting a dark glance at Raleigh, sent up a bitter pun: "When jacks start up, then heads go down."

Sonnet 128 is all about the virginals, with Oxford declaring to Elizabeth that he envied "those jacks that nimble leap / To kiss the tender inward of thy hand..." (5-6)

Such an exact correlation with an actual event of history came as a complete surprise. Many explications of *The Sonnets* by Stratfordian scholars now also made powerful sense as well.

Here are two examples related to Sonnet 131, when Oxford would have been begging Elizabeth to spare their son. First we have, "A thousand groans but thinking on thy face / On one another's neck do witness bear" (10-11). Booth perceives in these lines "an image of vaguely personified groans weeping on one another's shoulders," which

would translate into a picture of Oxford and Elizabeth groaning and weeping together at Southampton's impending execution.

Then comes, "Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place" (12). Duncan-Jones com-

Sonnet 107 : April 10, 1603: SOUTHAMPTON'S RELEASE

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

The dating of this sonnet has been widely recognized, with much agreement that it refers to Southampton as having been released on April 10, 1603, from his "confined doom" in the Tower of London. Among the Stratfordians who have agreed are G.P.V. Akrigg and Robert Giroux. Both the Folger and the Arden editions of *The Sonnets* have also leaned to the 1603 dating.

My love looks fresh... (line 10)

Southampton is once again "fresh," as he had been during the time before the Rebellion; that is, within Sonnets 1-26.

As it turns out, the number of verses between Sonnet 107 and Sonnet 125 is the same as the number of days between April 10 and April 28, 1603, the date of Elizabeth's funeral procession.

April 10 to April 28 = 19 days
No. 107 to No. 125 = 19 sonnets

Having postulated that the first 60 verses of this long series had corresponded to continuous days, I was still surprised to have found the present correlation. Why had I never seen it before? Here are two highly significant dates, marking Southampton's release and Elizabeth's funeral, with a sonnet for each day between them. While this part of the chronological framework was developed relatively late, it fell easily into place as if to confirm my previous work. On this basis, it became impossible to avoid dating Sonnet 107 to Sonnet 125 in another way.

combines the previous "neck" and "witness" with "black" and the reference to "place of judgment" to see this line "as an allusion to a condemned person being hanged."

Sonnet 133 provides more such revelations—an outpouring of them—as Oxford can be seen railing at Elizabeth to spare their son:

Me from myself thy cruel eye hath
taken,
And my next self thou harder hast
engrossed:
Of him, myself and thee I am foresaken,
A torment thrice threefold thus to be
crossed.

In the next verse (134) Oxford can be viewed as offering his own life in exchange for Southampton's: "Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine / Thou wilt restore..."

And Sonnet 145 came as a complete—even shocking—revelation. This verse can be read as parallel with Sonnet 66, as Oxford again expresses his reaction to the Queen's decision in March 1601 to spare Southampton from execution. The words are his, and his son's as well:

But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come...
'I hate' from 'hate' away she threw,
And saved my life, saying, 'Not you.'

This series continues, however, exhibiting no less anger and grief by Oxford, whose last verse to Elizabeth (152) stands as the testimony of a broken-hearted man who feels utterly betrayed by her: "And all my honest faith in thee is lost." According to the structure being put forth here, these final verses to the Queen were written from March 1601 to near the end of her life in March 1603. Did Oxford still expect her to release Southampton from the Tower? To name him as her successor? Did she ever see these bitter sonnets?

Returning to the Fair Youth series, the sonnets corresponding to days on the calendar appeared to continue for another twenty verses to 86, the end of the Rival Poet series, coordinating with April 9, 1601—an astonishing sixty sonnets corresponding to sixty days. Then came the conspicuous "Farewell" that opened Sonnet 87, which refers to Southampton's "misprision" (involvement in a treasonous act for which he did not deserve capital punishment) and concludes with, "Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter / In sleep a King [capitalized], but waking no such matter."

Apparently the daily sonnets were over. In Sonnet 96 the author says of Southampton: "As on the finger of a throned Queen [capitalized] / The basest jewel will be well esteemed"—coinciding with the younger earl's base condition, having been stripped of his nobility. When I came to Sonnet 97 and the line "How like a Winter hath my absence been / From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year," it was easy to relate the passing year to the Queen's wan-

(Continued on page 14)

Whittemore (continued from page 13)

ing life, i.e., to "Her Majesty's pleasure."

Moreover, it became clear that Sonnets 88 to 97 had represented ten verses in as many months, leading to the anniversary of the Rebellion.

In other words, within this framework, Sonnets 27-97 represented the single year from February 1601 to February 1602.

Reading the next verses within this context, perhaps you will feel Oxford's growing agony and anxiety as the Queen's life ebbs away while Southampton remains in the Tower.

In Sonnet 100 his Muse, losing strength, can barely continue to "lend base subjects light"; and "time" appears in four places. Struggling against the inevitable, Oxford finally begs his Muse to "Give my love fame faster than time wastes life / So thou prevent'st his scythe and crooked knife."

Sonnets 100-104 reflect the rapid disintegration of Elizabeth's life in the latter part of 1602 and during the first few months of 1603.

Sonnet 104 indicates "three winters" since Southampton had been "fresh" in *The Sonnets*. These winters would have been 1600-1601, 1601-1602, and 1602-1603.

Sonnet 105 represents the death of the Queen on March 23, 1603: the family triangle had never "kept seat" or sat on the throne "in one" or through Southampton's succession.

Sonnet 106 represents the March/April period when James had been named her successor; and it indicates that Oxford may already have made a bargain for Southampton's release and appointment to the Isle of Wight: "When in the Chronicle of wasted time / I see descriptions of the fairest wights..."

Sonnet 107 then celebrates Southampton's release on April 10, 1603: "My love looks fresh..."

The next 18 verses to Sonnet 125 coincide with the 18 days until Elizabeth's funeral on April 28th. Within that framework, Sonnet 109 corresponds to April 12th, and we find the line, "So that my self bring water for my stain." This has been seen by many Oxfordians as an allusion to Edward de Vere's hereditary rank of Lord Great Chamberlain and his role as "water bearer to the monarch." Perhaps few

have realized, however, that the honor "only involved duties at coronations," as B.M. Ward states. Now, within this chronological context, Oxford can be seen in Sonnet 109 looking ahead to James' coronation and the

would tend to confirm the chronological framework itself.

And finally, Sonnet 125, opening with the famous line, "Were't ought to me I bore the canopy," could now be confirmed as referring to Elizabeth's funeral—for which there is, in fact, significant commentary from both Oxfordians and Stratfordians concerning its "funereal" language. All the preceding private, royal verses have been swept toward this moment when the Queen is finally laid to rest.

Sonnet 126, the final farewell verse, can be taken as Oxford's dying words in 1604 to his son, ending with a pair of empty parentheses signifying their open graves.

Summing up

I hope that, through this brief overview of my proposed hypotheses for how and why these sonnets were written, and also for how and why they were published in the form handed down to us from the 1609 quarto, that I have caught my fellow Oxfordians' interest enough to begin their own rereading of these exquisitely written and crafted verses. I have already found that it takes time for this new perspective to sink in, just as it once took time for all us—after we had abandoned the Stratford story—to appreciate viewing the Shakespearean world anew as Oxfordians.

Anyone who sees these verses as autobiographical has had the experience of wondering just what precipitated the composition of any *particular sonnet*, and over the years all such attempts—by both Oxfordians and Stratfordians—have led readers to any number of possible years and/or possible addressees. I was one of those readers for many years. But it was not until I could place individual sonnets in the right time and place that any meaningful individual interpretation was possible. *The Sonnets* had been like a treasure map without a key to tell us *which terrain* to dig in. So we have all littered the landscape with numerous holes, spanning all the decades and events of Oxford's life.

The breakthrough for me came in reconsidering Sonnet 107 (linked by many com-

(Continued on page 22)

Sonnet 125 : April 28, 1603: QUEEN'S FUNERAL

Wer't ought to me I bore the canopy

Except for the farewell verse (126) to follow this one, herethen is the final sonnet to Southampton—linked to the exact day of Elizabeth's funeral, when time has run its course and the clock has wound completely down. Oxford may or may not have been one of the four noblemen in the procession who "bore the canopy" over the Queen's coffin; either way, he is expressing profound sorrow and even bitterness; the end has finally come and all hopes have been lost. The story is over.

As this framework for the Sonnets was falling into place, I realized that I no longer remembered what J. Thomas Looney had written about the "canopy" verse, so it was with some excitement when I re-read his opinion that Sonnet 125 "seems to be pointing to de Vere's officiating at Queen Elizabeth's funeral."

No, let me be obsequious in thy heart (line 9)

"Queen Elizabeth was most royally interred in Westminster Abbey on the 28th of April 1603," writes Strickland, who quotes John Stowe (1525-1605) as recording how the multitudes came to see the "obsequy."

Booth points out that "obsequious" relates to "obsequy" or "funereal" and, in this sonnet, gains the specialized meaning dutiful in performing funeral rites—which, he says, invites a reader "to think of the canopy as borne in a funeral procession." (In *Hamlet*, Act I, scene ii, for example: "To do obsequious sorrow."). Duncan-Jones writes of obsequious: "Obedient, dutiful, especially with reference to the dead and their funeral 'obsequies'."

Why, given such internal evidence, have Oxfordians remained unclear about the correct dating of Sonnet 125? The answer, perhaps, is that only within this chronological framework does the very same evidence (from Stowe, Booth, Duncan-Jones, etc.) become noticeable.

Hence, thou suborned *Informer*, a true soul
When most impeached, stands least in thy control.

"Informer" was capitalized and italicized in the original. "Suborned" means bought, paid to bear false witness. Booth acknowledges that the final couplet can be seen as "addressed to the beloved," which makes it "disconcerting" for a reader; but, viewed as Southampton having made a deal by which he must bear false testimony against himself, "suborned *Informer*" becomes clear.

only time in his life he would perform this function. Again, finding such an allusion within this place in the proposed time frame

Another View of Sonnet 20

by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

Most of Shakespeare's sonnets appear to be love poems to a male youth, although a number of them concern female lovers. As Shakespeare's plays are distinctly rendered from a heterosexual point of view in their portrayals of men and women and their relationships, the sonnets have proved a quandary to some readers who suspect a homosexual liaison between the poet and his male subject, which would indicate that Shakespeare was bisexual. On the other hand, some of the sonnets specifically refer to a father-son relationship.

The elder Ogburns in the 1950s postulated a controversial solution to the quandary by hypothesizing that the subject of the sonnets, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, may have been Edward de Vere's son by Queen Elisabeth. The sonnets, according to this view, would then be love poems from father to son, magnified by the agony of their state-mandated separation from birth.

However, as Charlton Ogburn, Jr. worried in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Sonnet 20—among all 154 sonnets—is the only one that might make “the postulation of a father-and-son relationship come crashing.” But, is this necessarily true?

It is usually inferred from sonnet 20 that the poet is hopelessly attracted to the young man but cannot have him because nature made the youth (“by addition” of his male organ) a man instead of a woman, which he otherwise resembles.

Ogburn half-heartedly argues that this sonnet was included deliberately to throw readers off the trail that the youth was the poet's son while simultaneously quashing the idea that anything physical had transpired between them. He considers this solution “the only one possible.” As these were private communications, and as the poet pours his heart out throughout the sonnets (“intimate” and “confessional,” says Sobran in *Alias Shakespeare*), this explanation appears strained at best.

Unfortunately for those who believe that Oxford was bisexual and that the male youth was his lover, this sonnet actually

pretty well destroys that case, although no one seems to have noticed. If the youth were truly the poet's lover, indeed clearly his most prized, then the poet would not be *bewailing* the presence of his male organ,

tion. If we read the sonnet to take into account the Ogburns' solution of Wriothesley's parentage and the heart-rending human *story* and Elisabeth's part in it, the meaning of the pertinent lines changes.

Here is the way I see them:

Sonnet 20

A woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes, and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And, by addition, me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

he would be extolling it, in his hyper-eloquent style, as grander than the statue of David.

It will not do in this context to argue that the poet is *both* sexually attracted by the youth and repulsed by his maleness, as such a situation is incompatible with both heterosexuality and bisexuality. This fact appears to force the “bisexual camp” into the same position as Ogburn in having to presume that the sonnet is a ruse designed to throw readers off the trail, this time only of their physical relationship.

The only other explanation under the standard interpretation of the sonnet is that the poet was a psychological mess who was perhaps bisexually inclined but unable to accept the fact. If so, it is not easily accepted as the same Shakespeare who so finely expressed both war and peace between the sexes in his plays.

The dilemma is this: If the sonnet means what appears quite clearly intended at first exposure, it makes no real-life sense. If it was designed as a ruse, it is an exception to all the other sonnets. If it reflects a tortured sexual soul, then it is not the same Shakespeare who wrote the plays.

However, there may be another explanation.

“A woman's face... hast thou,”
You look like your mother.

“The master-mistress of my passion,” *In resembling her, your face harbors both my loves: for you (my son) and for her.*

“A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted with shifting change, as is false woman's fashion,” *You have your mother's gentle heart, but not her falsity in loving, then spurning me.*

“An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,” *[Elisabeth turned her false eye to another.]*

“Gilding” through “amazeth”: *You're one great kid. [I'm so proud of you, I could burst, and anyone who sees you knows you should be a prince.]*

“And for a woman wert thou first created,” *For love of Elisabeth you were conceived.*

“Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting, and, by addition, me of thee defeated,” *But then, your very addition to the world—your birth—defeated me of you [because the Queen orders us to remain apart to keep the birth secret].*

“By adding one thing to my purpose nothing,” *Ironically, by adding you, Nature added nothing to my ideal purpose of marrying Elisabeth, becoming king and raising my son as prince [because the pregnancy derailed our love affair, as the Virgin Queen had to keep up appearances].*

“But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,” *But since Nature produced you as a result of my pursuing the pleasure of women....*

“Mine be thy love,” *You have the love of your father.*

“...and thy love's use their treasure.” *While only women may enjoy the treasure of your love [as I am forbidden from doing so].*

This interpretation of Sonnet 20 removes what Charles Ogburn considered the single most serious impediment to accepting the hypothesis that *Shakespeare's Sonnets* address the Earl of Southampton as the son of Oxford and Elisabeth.

Brazil (from pg. 1) tually plan to publish all my research in the form of a book.

In the meanwhile, however, let me share with the readers of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, some of the topics and discoveries that I have been working with.

What I shall present in Parts I and II of this article—and at the Conference—are the following data-generated observations:

1) Oxford's association with specific printers and publishers links him to the men who first printed "Shakespeare," and to many of the books printed from circa 1565-1595 that are known to have "inspired Shakespeare." Oxford can be linked to such principal Shakespeare quarto printers as Thomas Creede, Richard Field, and James Roberts.

2) Following the existing paper trail, "Shakespeare" can be shown to have edited some of his own books, for improved published editions, from only 1598 to 1604. After 1604, access to texts and to the original editor was—for some reason—permanently interrupted.

The 17th Earl of Oxford can be linked to key Elizabethan publishers and printers for over four decades. It began with his relationship with William Seres. Seres was a big shot in publishing, from the earliest days of Elizabeth until about 1578. He was the original printer of the Golding (Vere) version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in its first (1565) and fully developed versions (1567 & 1575).

And there is also that famous record of the payment to Seres from Oxford's youth (when he was a ward of the State in Cecil's household), which includes a large purchase from Mr. Seres, including—almost certainly—the very Geneva Bible, annotated by Oxford, that survives at the Folger Shakespeare Library today.

That famous pay-entry reads:

"To William Seres, stationer, for a Geneva Bible, gilt, a Chaucer, Plutarch's works in French, with other books and papers..." (See Charlton Ogburn Jr.'s *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, p. 447)

Quartos published in the 40 years from 1593 to 1623

1593 -1604 : 17 first quartos & 22 assorted reprints = 39 accepted "Shakespeare" books

1605 -1616 : 4 first quartos & 17 assorted reprints = 21 accepted "Shakespeare" books

1617 -1623 : 1 first quarto & 12 assorted reprints = 13 accepted "Shakespeare" books

The Quartos that "Shakespeare" Edited (or so say the title pages):

Loves Labors Lost, Q1, 1598

Henry the 4th Part 1, Q2, 1599

Romeo & Juliet, Q2, 1599

Richard III, Q3, 1602

Hamlet, Q2, 1604

printed by William White for Cuthbert Burby

printed by Simon Stafford for Andrew Wise

printed by Thomas Creede for Cuthbert Burby

printed by Thomas Creede for Andrew Wise

printed by James Roberts for Nicholas Ling

There are dozens of important books from this era that praise Oxford for his patronage of literature in general, and for encouraging the creation and publication of the work in question. The Earl of Oxford was one of several major patrons of literature in his day. In terms of sheer numbers, both

total pieces of the literary Renaissance in England, and these books are found reflected in the themes and language of the Shakespeare plays. *Cardanus Comfort* is the book Hamlet is holding and quoting from when he gives his "To be or not..." speech. *Hekatompathia* is a source for Othello. *Zelauto* inspired plot elements of *The Merchant of Venice*.

If you have a copy of Stephen Booth's edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, take a look at pages 398 and 399. Here Booth displays the title page of *The New Jewell of Health* (1576). Booth relates the alchemical equipment in the drawing to Sonnet 119, which uses an extended alchemical metaphor, naming devices and methods described in the *New Jewell*.

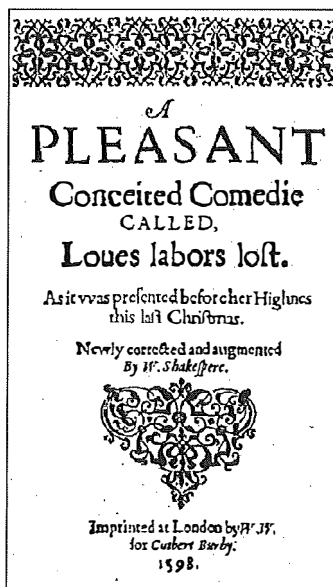
What Booth never mentions, however, is that the author, George Baker, was the family doctor to Edward de Vere, and that the book has both a lavish dedication to Oxford's wife, the countess Anne, and a full page depiction of the Vere Arms and motto: *Vero Nihil Verius*. The book was an expensive production, with many made-to-order woodcut illustrations.

In plain language, a book that Stratfordians think "may have inspired Shakespeare," turns out to have emerged from Oxford's household, at a time when the Stratford man was only 12 years old. It is much more likely that this alchemy book inspired the author of the Shakespeare plays because it was his own project.

Oxford's name, and talent, were either on display, or being praised by name overtly, in over 80 books while he was alive (including reprints and revised editions). The names Henry Bynneman, Thomas Marshe, and Thomas East, John Alde, Gabriel Cawood, John Wolfe, John Charlewood, Robert Waldegrave, William Ponsonby, Richard Jones, William Wright, Abel Jeffes, Thomas Orwin, Thomas Creede, Richard Field,

sided in.

These Oxford-related Books—*The Courtier* (1571, in Latin); *Cardanus Comfort* (1573); *The New Jewell of Health* (1576); *Zelauto* (1580); *Hekatompathia* (1582); *Euphues and his England* (1580); *The English Secretary* (1586)—are all piv-



The first quarto to bear the name "Shakespeare" was Love's Labor's Lost, published in 1598 by Cuthbert Burby, who, interestingly, was also the publisher of Francis Mere's *Palladis Tamia*, also published in 1598.

William Cecil, and the Earl of Leicester, were honored by, or patronized more books.

But "Oxford's Books," have a robust, hyper-intelligent and even bawdy character, a special collection in publishing history because they can be shown to be the reading matter and the linguistic universe that "Shakespeare," as poet and wordsmith re-

Cuthbert Burby, Peter Short, James Roberts, Simon Stafford, Edward White, John Danter, John Harrison, and many others are associated with Oxford publications.

From the above list, take note of the last nine names. For Creede, Field, Burby, Short, Roberts, Stafford, White, Danter, Harrison, were *all* printers or sellers of Shakespeare Quartos.

These printers and sellers, who are linked both to Oxford-patronized books and to some of the Shakespeare texts, also turn out to be key suppliers of works classified as "Shakespeare apocrypha," as well as works that Shakespeare drew upon, the so called "Sources of Shakespeare," which include everything from Holinshed's chronicles, to translations, anonymous plays, poetry, and editions of the Psalms.

Did Shakespeare stop editing books in 1604?

The standard story about Shakespeare the playwright is that he had no monetary or commercial rights to his plays once they had been purchased by a theatrical company. The theaters or acting companies owned the plays, and would only sell a manuscript to a printer after the play had lost its box office appeal. In seasons where the theaters were shut by plague or by city edict, a larger number of popular plays were printed, as a way of generating income from these "properties," which at the time could be capitalized on in no other way.

Because there is nothing in the way of a historical paper trail to connect William Shaksper of Stratford to the printers of the Shakespeare plays, historians have had to completely invent, through conjecture and extrapolation, what happened in the case of Shakespeare's plays. *The Readers Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* sums up the problem from the conventional point of view: "Once sold, the rights to a play belonged in perpetuity to the printer, even if the play had been sold without the author's knowledge

or consent. Without an author's supervision of the printing, the correction of errors, or the initiation of necessary changes, texts suffered corruption in the publication process."

In the case of the Shakespeare Quartos published prior to 1623, there were first-time publication of 19 individual "accepted" plays, and 3 works of poetry, which adds up to a total of 22 separate Shakespeare works

first appearing before the *First Folio*. These works were reprinted and often modified or updated in a variety of editions. Counting up all the original and reprint editions of these works from 1593 to 1623, I found that there were no less than 73 individual publications of Shakespeare texts over those three decades.

Shakespeare the playwright is supposed to have hit his peak of artistry and theatrical success during the 1605 to 1616 era. Yet there is scant record of new Shakespeare plays being popular or regularly performed for the paying public at that time. Shaksper the man was in business in the country and cannot be connected to the Jacobean London activities imagined for him in retrospect by desperate biographers.

And then there is the puzzling matter of the 18 other Shakespeare plays, that emerged from oblivion in 1623, but had never been printed in the author's lifetime. How Shaksper could have resisted selling or profiting from these properties, if he had them, is incompatible with the record of his petty lawsuits and lust for payment.

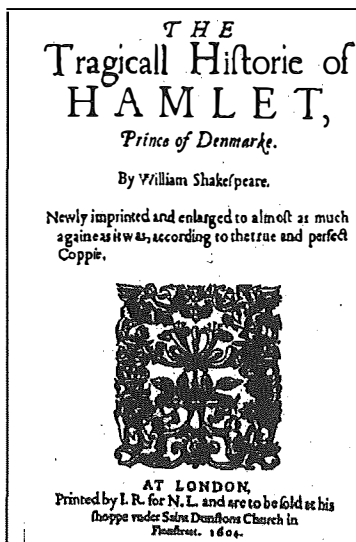
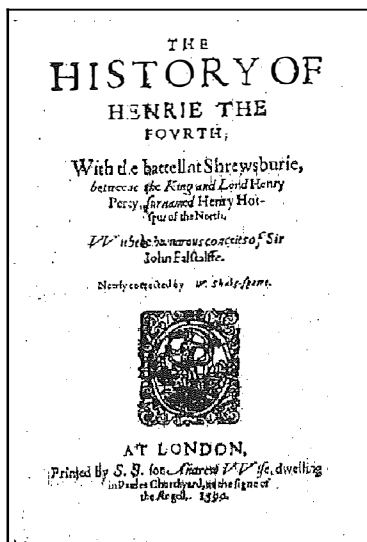
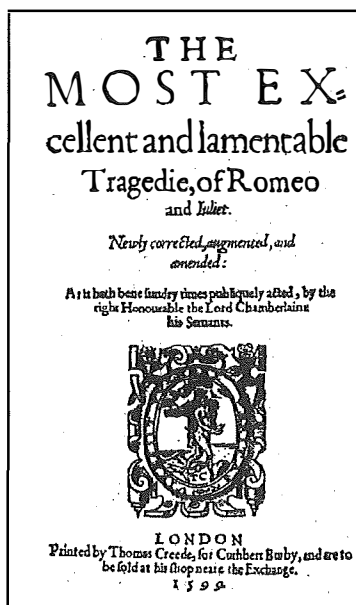
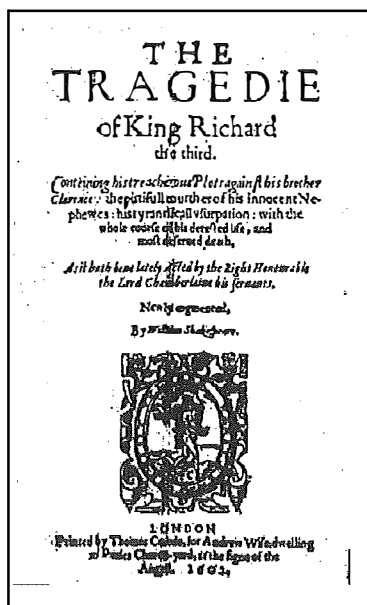
So the standard story is that Shaksper had no access to these plays. Yet that scenario leaves us with an equally puzzling question: why didn't the King's Men—or other alleged theatrical owners—sell *any* of the 18 unpublished scripts to printers during these lean times?

If they really owned them, there would seem to have been all the incentive in the world for the company to have sold them at some time before 1623, and no

apparent incentive at all to have just "sat" on them for nearly 20 years, which is what they—or someone—did.

Many of the Shakespeare plays which are assumed to have been popular in the Jacobean age were demonstrably not. *Timon of Athens* has no performance history until 1678. *Coriolanus* has no stage history until 1682. *King John*, although mentioned by

(Continued on page 19)



The other four quartos published with title page notes indicating that the author had been involved in "correcting," "amending," "enlarging," or "augmenting" the text included Henry IV (part one), Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, and Hamlet. Two of these four title pages (on top, Richard III and Romeo and Juliet) bear the emblem identified as "Wounded Truth," most often associated with Thomas Creede, another one of the key publishers and/or printers in the story behind the quartos of 1598-1604.

Oxfordian News

Authorship Roundtable begins new season; authorship documentary filmed in England; Shakespeare Renaissance Festival in Vermont

California

The Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable begins its 15th season this fall, meeting at the library in **Beverly Hills**. The first lecture of the new season took place on Sept. 25th, with Prof. Alan Nelson (UC-Berkeley) speaking on, "Shakespeare, Oxford, and Spain: New thoughts on the First Folio (1623)," a timely topic that undoubtedly was inspired by Peter Dickson's research into this area, as reported several times in the past year in the newsletter.

Other scheduled talks include "Shakespeare and Giordano Bruno" by Julia Jones (Dec. 4th), "The Semiotics of Renaissance Jewels" by Sally Mosher (Feb. 26th), "Shakespeare and Torquato Tasso" by Ronald Watts (April 22nd), and "Shakespeare's Roman History Plays," by Alisa Beaton and Mark Goggin (June 10th).

Phone Alisa Beaton at (310)452-7264 or Carol Sue Lipman at (541)488-2475 for further information.

Massachusetts

Richard Whalen of **Truro**, author of *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*, gave a six-lecture course on the case for Oxford as the true author in the Lifetime Learning Program at Snow Library in **Orleans** this fall. About twenty-five participated in the course. The program, now in its 20th year, draws students from throughout the Lower Cape.

In August his lecture at the Wellfleet library drew eighty-five people, and they extended the Q&A to forty-five minutes. The *Harper's* and *Time* magazine articles have created a surge of interest in the authorship question.

Whalen is also a founding member of a group of Oxfordians and non-Stratfordians on Cape Cod who have met monthly for more than six years. They have studied all the plays (several more than once), the narrative poems and some of the sonnets.

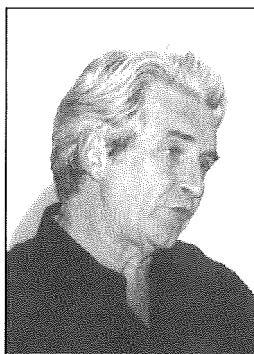
A new member is Raymond Frost, who also gave a course on Shakespeare at Snow Library in Orleans. His course was an intensive reading of *Richard III* with participants taking roles.

Washington, DC

Oxfordian researcher Peter Dickson was published in the September 12th *Washington Post*, in a feature story about some interesting statistical research that Dickson had been conducting at the Library of Congress over the past year.

What Dickson did was rank world famous figures by the number of books owned by the Library of Congress about them. The resulting list was quite interesting, as Shakespeare finished a solid second (with 9,803 books), trailing Jesus (17,239 books) by a wide margin, but far out-distancing a virtual tie for 3rd between Lenin (4,492) and Lincoln (4,378). God (as a topic) was actually third with 7,719, but is—of course—not considered a real person.

Vermont



Hank Whittemore

Chamber of Commerce, who hope that it will become a regular summer event in the famous ski resort terrain of Vermont. The turnout for this first year was promising, as approximately 100 guests arrived for the Saturday evening schedule of music, lectures, and performances of several scenes from the plays illustrating the Oxfordian perspective on Shakespeare.

The Renaissance (a trio of musicians, featuring John Tyson, playing Elizabethan era music on period instruments) opened the evening, and delighted the audience with both their musical performance and their knowledgeable commentary on Elizabethan music and instruments of the period.

The First Annual Shakespeare Renaissance Festival was held in **Killington** on August 24th to 25th. It was sponsored by the Friends of the Oxford Library and the Killington

Hank Whittemore presented his new thesis on *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (see page one of this issue) in the manner of a one-man show—both lecturing and at times performing as he read key sonnets—accompanied at times by the Renaissance Sonnets. Whittemore, a professional actor at one time in his life, commanded the audience's close attention as he deftly wove his take on the story the sonnets tell.

Mildred Sexton concluded the evening with a lecture on the topical and satirical nature of the plays, with scenes from several different plays performed during her talk to illustrate key points.

Former Society trustees Betty Sears and Sexton had organized and promoted this event, and are already at work on planning the 2nd Annual Renaissance Festival for next summer.

England

The De Vere Society held its annual summer meeting at **Montacute House** on July 27th. Fifty-eight DVS members and their guests attended the all-day event, which featured papers on the Society's "dating of the plays" project, followed by an "Elizabethan Lunch," and a tour of the House. Montacute House is home to the National Portrait Gallery's collection of Elizabethan court portraits, which include the Welbeck portrait of Edward de Vere.

The papers presented at the meeting involving the Society's ongoing project to produce an Oxfordian chronology for the Shakespeare Canon were published in a separate supplement to the Society's August 1999 newsletter. De Vere Society Secretary Christopher Dams will update Oxfordians on this project at the Shakespeare Oxford Society's 23rd Annual Conference in Newton, Mass., this November.

One other paper of interest presented at Montacute House was from Charles Bird, who reported on his researches into some striking similarities between a heraldic symbol—the "caley greyhound"—first devised by the 13th Earl of Oxford (and present on his tomb, and referred to in his will), and the title-

page woodcuts used in both the 1582 *Hekatompathia* (a work dedicated to Oxford by Thomas Watson and also thought by some to reveal the presence of Oxford's hand guiding Watson's pen), and the *First Folio*. The similarity of the *Hekatompathia* and *Folio* title-page woodcuts is striking.

That this "caley greyhound" (unique to the de Vere family) is present in *both* these publications would appear to be another strong piece of circumstantial evidence linking the Earl of Oxford (and his heirs) with the publication of the Shakespeare Canon.

Bird has been active in alerting the media to his work, and as a result has received some coverage in local newspapers. *The Halstead Gazette*, for example, ran a story on August 6th, "New theory on true identity of Bard," which included the report of his findings about the "caley greyhound" image.

Castle Hedingham was the site of several authorship related events this past summer. First, filming of Michael Peer's authorship documentary took place there, with Sir Derek Jacobi (photo, page one) and former Society President Charles Burford—among others—participating.

The finished program (titled *The Shakespeare Conspiracy*) was broadcast in Austria on September 12th, and in Germany on October 3rd. A dual language version (English-German) will be available in December, with the possibility of a broadcast in the UK by Granada. Tapes will be available for purchase sometime next year.

Another recent Hedingham event was the live TV broadcast of the morning show "The Big Breakfast" from the Castle in August. The commentator stated at one point that the broadcast was from the home of "the real William Shakespeare."

In **Warwick** the University of Warwick offered a ten-week course for university credit on the Shakespeare authorship controversy this fall.

The course, which was in the Open Studies Programme for continuing education, may have been the first accredited course in the controversy. Angel McGarry, a journalist who is writing a book on the subject, was the instructor. She has read Charlton Ogburn's book, and the De Vere Society provided additional Oxfordian materials.

Brazil (Continued from page 17)

Meres in 1598, has no stage history until 1737. Perhaps most shocking are the first performance dates for three of the most well known plays in the Canon: *All's Well That Ends Well* in 1741; *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1759; and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, not known to have been played until 1762.

Troilus & Cressida is more complicated. It was printed in 1609 in two variant editions. Version One claims that the play had been performed by the King's Men at the Globe. Version Two, which contains the preface "A never writer, to an ever reader. Newes.," claims that the play is brand new and was "never staled with the Stage, never clapper-clawed with the palmes of the vulgar." The first documented performance of *Troilus & Cressida* wasn't until 1679.

How does the standard model of Shakespeare's career address the non-performance of these and other so-called "Late Plays," given the standard chronology used for their composition, and the premise that Shakespeare wrote for money, and to order?

In the Oxfordian scenario, these "Late Plays" were Court productions from the 1580s and 1590s with which Oxford had originally entertained Queen Elizabeth and the Court, and which were finally being printed years after their first performances. They are, of course, not picked up by Stratfordian radar, because they are looking for performances in the wrong era.

After 1604, access to authentic Shakespeare material, whether "new" or old, seems to have dried up. There is really no reason to believe that any post-1604 publications—such as *Troilus & Cressida*—were written after 1604.

Troilus & Cressida, for example—which was first printed in 1609, and is often held up as proof that Shakespeare was still writing at that date—was actually entered in the Stationer's Register as an existing text on Feb. 7, 1603.

Again, the Orthodox position on Shakespeare's relationship to the publishers of his plays is that he had virtually none. In the course of looking at all these publications on microfilm, and assembling a database of information about the books, I have come across some peculiar facts that alone seem innocent, but—when assembled together—point a reasoning mind to the conclusion that the standard view of the Shakespeare publications is completely in error. The author *did* interact with the publishers, and in a powerful way, at least on several occasions.

The five author-edited "Shake-speare" texts

Among the many individual Shakespeare Quartos that appeared from 1593 to 1622 (at least 73 different editions) there are only a small number—five—that indicate on the title page that the text had been altered, improved or enlarged, with the additional statement or suggestion included that the changes had been made by the author.

Because—within the Orthodox view—the author was not involved in the quarto publications, the academic spin about these announcements of corrections and additions by the author is that they were a marketing gimmick coming from the commercial mind of the publisher. But these are not just modest corrections, that any copyist could accomplish. We are talking, for instance, about the complete authentic texts of *Romeo & Juliet* and *Hamlet*. And also to be considered here—if one adopts the approach that these statements about authorial emendations to the text were only marketing gimmicks—is that one cannot then explain why *Romeo & Juliet* (Q2, 1599) *fails* to mention Shakespeare's name.

The most remarkable thing about these five instances of advertised authorial corrections and additions is that they *all occurred* during the time period of 1598–1604. In other words, there appears to have been a short window of time—six years—during which "Shake-speare the author" showed an active involvement in improving printed versions of his works, long after the plays had been popular on stage originally.

And then—as the existing printing/publication record clearly demonstrates—in the years *after* 1604 Shakespeare was apparently unavailable for revisions to his texts.

It is in a close study of these five instances of "author-edited" quartos that I have found interesting patterns of printers and publishers who are often interconnected with each other, and clearly *all* connected in some manner with previous publishing ventures involving Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Some of these publishing ventures go back nearly two decades.

In Part II (to be published in the Fall 1999 Newsletter) each of the five author-edited "Shakespeare" quartos published from 1598 to 1604—and the small network of printers and publishers involved in producing them—will be examined in detail.

Robert Brazil will be presenting his research findings at the Annual Conference in Newton, Mass., in November.

Book Reviews:

The Late Mr. Shakespeare: A Novel. By Robert Nye. (New York : Arcade Publishing, 1999).

By Richard F. Whalen

Unless Robert Nye is being immensely coy, he has brazenly lifted the concept for this pseudo-biography from another writer, and then betrayed some anxiety over whether his subject, the Stratford man, really was the great poet/dramatist.

Nye calls it a novel, but it's really a fictionalized biographical memoir by one Pickleherring, a former actor who sets out in old age to write about his friend from Stratford. The garrulous and unreliable Pickleherring promises to tell us (in almost 400 pages) all that's fit to know about Shakespeare "and all that's not fit, too, for that matter." No prude, Pickleherring is a closet cross-dresser and admirer of the male member.

Pickleherring spins bawdy tales and speculations about his friend only to deny them two chapters later. Mischievously he blurs and obscures the line between fact and fiction, but he displays an accurate and complete knowledge of the few known facts, the hoary legends and biographical problems. Nye has done his homework.

His fantasy memoir is written in an intimate, joking, conversational style that seems to be a desperate attempt to inflate the dull facts of the life of Will Shakspeare into something colorful and believable. Six years ago Nye did the same for Anne Hathaway Shakspeare in *Mrs. Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Professor Marjorie Garber of Harvard called it "a queer narrative of female eroticism." Someday these imagined lives will be judged for what they are—pathetic attempts to make sense out of the mundane inconsequence of the life of the Stratford man.

In Pickleherring, however, Nye has succeeded in creating a magnificently outrageous rogue who is worth a novel all by himself. He completely overshadows Nye's Shakspeare of Stratford, as is usually the case in biographies. The Stratford man exists only as an indistinct, lifeless foil to

Pickleherring, the real hero of Nye's book.

Nye begins by promising to tell all about Shakespeare: "Who he was and why. Where he was and when. What he was and wherefore. And then, besides, to answer several difficult questions that might be bothering you. Such as, who was the Dark Lady of the sonnets? Such as, why did he leave his wife only his second-best bed? Such as, is it true he died a Papist, and lived a sodomite? Such as, how come he placed that curse on his own grave?"

All this, and more, you will find answered here, or not find answered here, for Pickleherring seems most anxious about what really happened. How, for example, was Shakespeare begot? Maybe conception was inspired by Edward de Vere, the young Earl of Oxford, who sought shelter one dark and stormy night with John Shakespeare, who became furiously jealous then forgiving of his wife, who gave birth nine months later to baby William.

Or maybe his mother was Juliet, the miller's daughter, or maybe his father was the vicar of Trinity church whose successor later composed a Latin poem to the vicar with "Mary Arden" encrypted in it.

Or maybe his mother was Queen Elizabeth, who met big John Shakespeare near Stratford and coupled with him in a warm spring, a coupling described in priapic and lubricious detail. Since the queen knew a "bastard prince might bring civil war," the baby was left in Stratford with his father. (So Nye even knows about the Prince Tudor theory.)

Pickleherring says John Shakespeare's story about the queen will be believed only by snobs, like the people who believe Bacon or Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare. "Because those lads were nobles, don't you know, while our hero was only a clod."

As Pickleherring Nye strains to link the Stratford man to Shakespeare's works. A rural town scene in *Coriolanus* is "pure Stratford." In *Cymbeline* Posthumus sails from Milford Haven instead of Bristol or Plymouth because it's the closest port to Stratford. Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet* reflects Katherine Hamlett's drowning and

the inquest in Stratford into whether it was suicide. Juliet feared being buried alive just as a plague victim was too hurriedly buried alive in Stratford. Juliet's nurse counted the years after an earthquake "that killed a mouse and rattled some dove-cotes in *Stratford*" (emphasis in the original).

Nye worries the author-identity question. He has Pickleherring asking why it is so difficult to grasp the poet/dramatist in his friend from Stratford. In fact, says Pickleherring, his friend once told him that "sometimes he felt as if his works had been written by someone else of the same name."

Pickleherring asks: "How can we tell the man from the work, and both from the stories about him? Why did the sly fellow leave so little information about himself.... why did he cover his tracks so cleverly?" After much musing he concludes that his story of William Shakespeare "is a pack of lies, and my heart's blood." Later he confesses that "there is little to know, but there is much to tell." And "the closer I get to Shakespeare [he means the Stratford man], the more I recoil from him."

Curiously, Nye features two quotations often cited by Oxfordians. For his book's epigraph he uses Spenser's line, "Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late." Some Oxfordians see the line as referring to Oxford's withdrawing from public life as a playwright.

Before his first chapter Nye uses the provocative quote from the advertisement for *Troilus and Cressida*: "A never writer, to an ever reader. News." Then at the end of the book he modifies it to read; "An ever writer to a never reader. Farewell." Oxfordians read the original line as wordplay: "From an E. Vere writerto a[n] E. Vere reader."

Nye ends his fantasy with a funeral in Stratford and Pickleherring's retreat to the widow's bedroom to dress himself in her finery, kiss his image in her mirror and plunge his face into her silken undergarments. Caught in the act, Pickleherring has no regrets for "the expense of spirit in a waste of shame." Nor in the end does his creator seem to regret being caught in the act of laboring under an author identity crisis.

Although Pickleherring is a genuine creation, Robert Nye's book is not an original.

Among the more notable fictionalized biographies is Anthony Burgess's *Nothing Like the Sun*, which is acknowledged only on the book's jacket. Indeed no other author, only Shakespeare, has stimulated so many fantasy biographies. The reason, of course, is that there is nothing literary and almost nothing of the stage in the lifetime records of the man from Stratford.

Moreover, the concept and language of Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare: A Novel* is perilously parallel to a pseudobiography published two decades ago by John Mortimer, the renowned novelist and playwright. His fictional narrator in *Will Shakespeare: The Untold Story* was John Rice, "snotnose, bare arse, runabout Rice," an actor friend of Will Shakespeare the supposed dramatist.

Mortimer also depicted Rice as an eccentric, garrulous, aging actor, near death, who promised to tell all. "So I will set it all down before I am dead and you, Will, are quite forgotten." Like Pickleherring, Rice indulged in bawdy tales and admitted that much of it was fiction. "And some, perforce, I must invent." Like Pickleherring he addressed the Reader in an intimate conversation. "Now, my reader, if times should change..." And John Rice also told more about himself the narrator than he did about Shakespeare.

Nye's opening paragraphs are remarkably similar to Mortimer's. Mortimer ended his first paragraph: "So let us begin again." Nye ends his first paragraph: "But better begin at the beginning, while we can." Mortimer began his narrator's memoir with a self-description: "I, John Rice..." So does Nye: "Who am I? Reader, I will tell you suddenly."

Robert Nye never mentions John Mortimer. In a "postscript" he says his book "contains quotations from (and variations on) the lives and works of..." and then he names sixty-six writers. They include himself, William Shakespeare and Warren Hope of Rosemont College, author of *The Shakespeare Controversy*, but no acknowledgement of Nye's famous fellow-novelist John Mortimer.

No doubt Nye would retort, "If Shakespeare can steal plot ideas, so can I."

Shakespeare: A Life. By Park Honan (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998)

By Joseph Sobran

Park Honan's literary biography of the reputed playwright William Shakespeare of Stratford is not so much the latest as the first. Literary biography studies the way a writer's life and personality discernibly shape and inspire his work, as new biographies of Coleridge, Byron, and Hemingway attest. In the case of William of Stratford, this has proved impossible, so his biographers have settled for bare chronology, festooned with speculation. They rarely attempt to make real connections between the dull documented facts of his life and the great plays and poems he is believed to have written.

The inability of the scholars to connect William's life with his imputed works is the source of the anti-Stratfordian revolt, which is now by and large settling into agreement that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, was the real author. For Oxford's life bristles with the sort of large and small links to the Shakespeare work that William's life should, but doesn't, yield. A literary biography of Oxford on the premise that he was "Shakespeare" is easy to imagine.

I once posed the following question to a young Stratfordian debater: "Suppose Oxford had been identified as the author in 1623 and that his authorship had been uncontested for these four centuries. What do you find in those works that would have led you to conclude that Oxford didn't write them, and that William did?" This usually brash and voluble lad could only reply: "What a curious question!"

But that is the question. Is the evidence for William's authorship purely extra-literary testimony? Or is there something in the works themselves that shows the unmistakable stamp of his personality as revealed in his documented life?

In *Shakespeare: A Life*, Park Honan really wants to answer these questions. He is scornful of "nutty books" arguing against William, but he wants to lay their qualms to rest by showing an organic relation between William's known life and his ascribed writings. "Nothing that is 'new' in the present book," he writes, "is more central than the complex evolution in Shakespeare's mind and being that it tries to show."

After ten years of thorough research about William and his forebears, Honan assures us that he has found the vital connections: "Fresh details about his youth show that he did not leave home unprepared for his career. Evidence of his mother's quick intelligence and familiarity with a quill pen, new light on his father's managerial work and troubles and on schooling at the time, neglected evidence about the social revolution of the 1570s, and fresh details about the Hathaways of Shottery all give us a fuller picture." Moreover: "The inner theatre of his development is a deep, wonderful story, of which his colleagues, his rivals, his company, his Ovidian poems, his plays, and even Stratford grain-speculators give us varying glimpses."

Unfortunately, Honan never delivers on that "inner theatre." His "fuller picture" does add new items, most of which fall into two categories: the trivial and the laughably trivial. For instance, the only evidence of William's mother's "quick intelligence and familiarity with a quill pen" is the apparent fact that she once signed her initials with a quill pen. (Surely a town that boasted a woman of such accomplishment can never again be dismissed as a cultural backwater!) Yet this staggering discovery goes only a short way toward proving that her son could write *Hamlet*.

Honan cites many interesting details, but he fails to show what influence they had on William. Many of his attempts to do so dissolve into garrulous digression, with no discernible relevance to William's putative "complex evolution" or "inner theatre"; the connections he purports to see are merely his own arbitrary mental associations. Like his predecessors, Honan is forced to fill in gaps with surmise; at critical points, forgetting his claim to have found new sources of illumination, he falls back on the standard fixtures of the William myth—Greene's *Groatsworth*, the "ur-*Hamlet*," the Gunpowder Plot, the 1609 Bermuda shipwreck. His own very haphazard methods merely take Stratfordian guesswork to a more rarefied level.

Honan makes two passing references to Oxford. First he notes that the young Earl of Southampton was ordered by Lord Burghley to marry Oxford's daughter Lady Elizabeth Vere; then, a few pages later, we learn

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Sobran (Continued from page 21)

of the "coincidence" that William Herbert, future Earl of Pembroke, was urged to marry "another child of the Earl of Oxford and granddaughter of Lord Burghley—Bridget Vere." Honan overlooks another "coincidence": that William Herbert's younger brother Philip, future Earl of Montgomery, would later marry yet another daughter of Oxford, Susan Vere. So all three of the dedicatees of the Shakespeare works were candidates for the hands of Oxford's daughters. A less sober biographer than Honan might wonder if there were some connection between Shakespeare and Oxford.

But no, Honan has his story and he's sticking to it. He's rather foggy about just what *The Sonnets* tell us of William's "complex evolution," but he's sure they have little to do with his personal life: "The myth that Shakespeare's nameless Young Man and Dark Lady had exact counterparts in his life only began in the late eighteenth century." Odd, this, since Honan has already acknowledged, in effect, that Southampton seems to match the Young Man of the seventeen "procreation" sonnets. Another "coincidence," perhaps?

Again like most contemporary Stratfordians, Honan shies away from what *The Sonnets* actually disclose about their author, even as he tries to quarry information out of far less interesting materials. *The Sonnets*, of course, tell us nothing about William; nothing links them to William, except possibly the words "my name is Will"—which are offset by the poet's references to his "age," "high birth," "poverty," "lame-ness," and "disgrace," not to mention his legal vocabulary, all of which are far more

plausible as links to Oxford.

William's biographers never explain why he'd have given so many of *The Sonnets* to keening about his "disgrace," "shame," "bewailed guilt," "blots," being "despised" and "vile esteemed," his "name receiv[ing] a brand," and so forth. After all, William was never a public figure, let alone a notorious one, and it wasn't an Elizabethan convention for sonneteers to pose as targets of "vulgar scandal." It's a very odd theme to keep popping into a set of love poems. But it might apply (by coincidence, no doubt) to the scandal-ridden father of Elizabeth and Susan Vere.

While straining to find topical references in *Hamlet*, Honan fails to note the striking (coincidental?) resemblances between Polonius and his children and Burghley and his children; Hamlet's prospective wife and in-laws have a lot in common with the family Oxford married into. The crude Amleth story that is the play's source has no such characters. Surely Ophelia's death was inspired by Anne Cecil's early death in 1588, which explains why Oxford's friend Thomas Nashe made the first known mention of the play as early as 1589.

The Stratfordian view, accepted by Honan, is that Nashe was referring to the supposed "ur-*Hamlet*." No trace of such a play has ever been found; its very existence is an inference from the standard dating of the plays, which in turn is inferred from the dogma of William's authorship. All the positive evidence indicates that there was only one *Hamlet*, and that it was familiar long before 1600 (the date traditionally assigned by Stratfordian scholars). The play's references to boy actors, assumed by Honan

and other Stratfordians to allude to a boys' troupe of around 1600, may as easily suggest Oxford's own company of the 1580s, recorded as "the Children of the Earl of Oxford." The preparations for naval war described in the play's first scene obviously suggest 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada.

Only one passage in the Shakespeare works says plainly that drama may have topical content. This is Hamlet's warning to Polonius that the players are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live." Interesting that these words are addressed by an Oxford-like prince to a Burghley-like courtier.

Honan wants, and tries hard, to show that William's life and the Shakespeare works are of a piece. But he winds up resorting to banal generalizations that have no specific connection to William: "his receptivity and extraordinary insight gave him a unique understanding of human experience, so that all of his works transcend their time. His dramas are inexhaustibly fertile in stimulating new ideas and interpretations. . . . His curiosity about human nature was in a sense remorseless, but it never outran his sympathy for the human predicament." As Samuel Johnson said of a certain poet: "A man might write such stuff forever, if he would abandon his mind to it."

In the end Honan gives us only that familiar figure, the featurelessly "universal" Shakespeare of Stratford, whose transcendent genius envelops all of human nature without possessing a distinctive personality of his own.

Whittemore (Continued from page 14)

mentators to Southampton's release in 1603), Sonnet 73 (a funereal companion to 1601's *Phoenix and The Turtle*), and Sonnets 27 and 127 (similar in their images of darkness and despair ...but, what had happened?). From this eventually came the insight that the heart of the sonnet collection (27-125, and 127-152) was anchored in this narrow time period (1601-1603), and involved just the poet and the two most important people in his life during the crisis of their lives.

So while *The Sonnets* are on one level about love, they are just as importantly also about the real-life events underlying the failure of that love, and the betrayal of that

love. They are indeed as much letters and diary entries as they are the magnificent poetry we all know. They are "the abstract and brief chronicles" of those desperate days, deliberately and calculatingly operating on multiple levels to serve the poet's purpose.

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Remarks on Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* as Applicable to the Authorship Question

by Richard Desper

Baldessare Castiglione was a courtier in the first half of the 16th century in the court of the Duke of Urbino, in Italy. A high officer in the service of his Duke, Castiglione served on occasion as his master's ambassador to the court of King Henry VIII. He is best known to history, however, as the author of *Il Cortegiano*, or *The Courtier*, a book in which he set forth the principles for correct behavior of his class of courtiers in Italy and throughout Europe. In this role he set forth noble principles and offered an alternative to those principles espoused by the earlier author Niccolò Machiavelli in his book *Il Principe* or *The Prince*. One of his principle admirers was one who lived in the second half of the 16th century, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

History reveals that *Il Cortegiano* was translated into Latin by Bartholomew Clerke, and published in 1572, under the sponsorship of "Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, Viscount Bulbeck and Baron Scales and Badlesmere," as he styled himself in the preface.¹ *Il Cortegiano* provides a great deal of insight into the norms of etiquette of the day. For instance:

M. Federico Fregoso proceeded to point out that some exercises, like dancing, should be done in private, or only amongst your equals, unless the gentleman wears a mask, which gives a certain liberty.²

Such "liberty" occurs, for instance, in *Much Ado About Nothing* (II,i,87ff) where the revelers, including the nobles Don Pedro, Count Claudio, and Lord Benedick, enter to be entertained in the home of Leonato. Now Leonato and his brother Antonio are not noble, but are "gentlemen," for which we have the word of Don Pedro in Act V (i,102). For this reason, the revelers in the first scene of Act II enter masked, meeting the requirements of etiquette as set forth by Castiglione. A further convention of etiquette in such a situation is that the participants pretend not to recognize each other; the mask requires the convention of anonymity even when

that anonymity is not achieved in actuality. Beatrice, for instance, uses this to comic effect in her dialogue with Benedick (II,ii 130-160). Knowing full well she is addressing Benedick, Beatrice uses the opportunity to mock Benedick to his face (or at least to his mask) under the guise of speaking to a third party.

Beat. Nor will you not tell me who you are?

Bene. Not now.

Beat. That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the "Hundred Merry Tales": - well, this was Signior Benedick that said so.

Bene. What's he?

Beat. I am sure you know him well enough.

Bene. Not I, Believe me.

Beat. Did he never make you laugh?

Bene. I pray you, what is he?

Beat. Why, he is the Prince's jester, a very dull fool; only his gift is in devising impossibilities. None but libertines delight in him, and the commendation is not in his wit but in his villainy; for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet; I would he had boarded me.

Bene. When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

Beat. Do, do: he'll but break a comparison or two on me; which, peradventure not mark'd or not laugh'd at, strikes him into melancholy; and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night.

In terms of the authorship question, Castiglione's rule of etiquette, as outlined above, has relevance. The Earl of Oxford may entertain others of his own class, as poet, playwright, or even performer, with no loss of face; and entertaining his Sovereign would always amount to gaining of face. In the presence of Queen Elizabeth, the Earl could present a play of his own, even perform in it, and the Sovereign would be properly considered the audience of one. Whoever she might also allow to be present would be of no concern to the Earl, for he is presenting or performing for his Sovereign.

However, producing his plays before the public is a different matter: it would be a breach of noble etiquette, unless the convention of the "mask" were invoked. Early on, this "mask" was the mask of anonymity; later, the "mask" of a pseudonym, the purported author "William Shakespeare," was used.

Proceeding further into Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, the author speaks of humor:

Then follow some jests which would lose their point if translated, as they depend upon the different meaning of the same word in Italian or in Latin. Somewhat of this kind was one told about Proto da Lucca, who asked the Pope to give him the Bishopric of Calio. The Pope answered: 'Know you not that Calio in Spanish means "I hold my peace?" and this would be untrue each time the Bishop named his title...'³

Note that this jest appears specifically in *Twelfth Night* (II,iv,71-74):

Sir Andrew: ...Begin, fool. It begins, "Hold thy peace."

Clown: I shall never begin if I hold my peace.

On a more subtle level, the above situation applies to the relationship between Queen Elizabeth and her talented playwright and author, the Earl of Oxford. If the Queen were to publicly confer upon the Earl recognition for his talent as poet and playwright, she would violate the noble conventions of etiquette. Thus she could not honor the Earl as Poet Laureate, since such public recognition would redound not to his honor, but to his dishonor. At best, she could confer on him an honor akin to "Bishop of Calio," who, as in the jest, could never respond to his own title or voice it himself.

The above considerations may well be the basis for Queen Elizabeth's Privy Seal Warrant⁴ of June 26, 1586, to "deliver and pay ... unto Our right trusty and well beloved Cousin the Earl of Oxford ... the sum of One Thousand Pounds ... to be yearly delivered and paid unto Our said Cousin." The War-

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Editor: William Boyle
Editorial Board:
Mark Anderson, Charles Boyle,
Stephanie Hughes, Elisabeth Sears

Phone: (617) 628-3411
Phone/Fax: (617) 628-4258
email: everreader@aol.com

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From the Editor:

Shakespeare, Southampton and *The Sonnets*

Readers of this issue of the newsletter may have a variety of reactions to our decision to make Hank Whittemore's new thesis on *The Sonnets* the lead story. As Stephanie Hughes's letter (opposite, page 25) makes clear, Whittemore's thesis raises, in one fell swoop, all the foremost issues of contention within the Oxfordian movement today: evidence vs. interpretation, literary vs. non-literary documents as evidence, conspiracy vs. coincidence, and last but not least—the 3rd Earl of Southampton as the son of the Virgin Queen and Oxford/Shakespeare vs., well, apparently, anything else in all the world except that.

When Whittemore, a long-time supporter of the Southampton theory, first began last spring sharing his insights on *The Sonnets* with other Oxfordians, the reaction among many of us—though certainly not all—was extremely enthusiastic. This reaction was confirmed when Whittemore presented his work at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable last June to mostly rave reviews.

Even so, the crucial difference in our deciding whether to simply report on Whittemore's work (as we did in the last issue) versus whether to give it the prominent place we do in this issue was based not on a burning desire to promote this controversial theory, but rather on what we believe is the breakthrough insight Whittemore has made about the entire sonnet sequence itself.

This insight—that the bulk of these sonnets are tied to the time period of the Essex Rebellion, and are about the Poet's anguished reaction to the Fair Youth's plight—is itself worthy of broad dissemination to our readers—and to all readers

and lovers of *The Sonnets*.

Hence our decision to provide a major forum in this issue for Whittemore to explain his thesis in more detail, Southampton, royal heir and all. And hence the decision of one editorial board member—Stephanie Hughes—to respond in this same issue to the broader issues involved—of evidence and interpretation, of the plausibility of the Southampton theory itself, and of Whittemore's theory of the author's "dual purpose"—his "invention"—in crafting each and every sonnet.

In one of the other go-arounds on this issue earlier this decade, Charlton Ogburn, Jr. probably best summed up the sonnet dilemma when he wrote: "We are left with a compelling question raised by *The Sonnets* ... that is inescapable and one that traditional scholarship is resolved upon escaping at all costs. How is it that the poet of *The Sonnets* can—as he unmistakably does—address the fair youth as an adoring and deeply concerned father would address his son and as a subject would his liege-lord? (*The Man Who Was Shakespeare* (1995), p. 75)"

Of course, some would say, the short answer to that question is that the poet is *not* a father, and the subject *not* a liege-lord. Nonetheless, the observation about "inescapable questions" and the sonnets is a good one. It's been that way for a few centuries now.

So Whittemore, Hughes—and several other presenters—will take on the sonnets, Southampton, and controversy at the November conference. And we will report on it all in our next newsletter, and—undoubtedly—in the years to come.

Inescapable questions are, after all, inescapable.

The 1999 *Oxfordian* goes to press

The second edition of *The Oxfordian*, the annual journal of articles by Oxfordian scholars, will be out in October. Those who see *The Oxfordian* as a means to increase their knowledge of the background to the Shakespeare authorship question should enjoy this edition, which focuses on the issues involved with achieving a more solid dating rationale for the plays.

Articles by Jack Shuttleworth, Eddi Jolly, Ron Hess, and Robert Brazil shed new light on the challenges facing those who seek solid answers to placing the works in

time, while John Rollett, Jim Fitzgerald and Andrew Werth address other, equally fascinating issues.

All members of the Society received an introductory copy of the first edition last fall. The renewal notices sent out during 1999 informed members that subscriptions to *The Oxfordian* would be handled separately from the regular membership dues (i.e. members who wish to receive the 1999 issue paid \$45 this year rather than \$35).

Back issues of the first edition are still available for \$20 plus shipping.

Letters:

To the Editor:

The Prince Tudor advocates [those Oxfordians who support the theory that the 3rd Earl of Southampton was the son of Oxford and Elizabeth—Ed.] have long looked to *The Sonnets* as proof of their claims. In a recent paper [circulated privately to members of the internet Phaeton discussion group, and now summarized in the page one article in this issue—Ed.] promoted in an editorial advertisement on page two of the Spring 1999 newsletter, Hank Whittemore has labored to fulfill these claims with a mountain of verbiage, but unfortunately, all that actually appears is the same old mouse.

Despite his claims (“the solution offered here will survive the most rigorous scrutiny”) Whittemore offers nothing more solid than what could easily be expressed in a single paragraph. Just as a house without a foundation is nothing more than a pile of lumber, a thesis without a solid foundation of cited fact and general plausibility is nothing more than a pile of words—the more words, the bigger the pile.

Whittemore seems to feel that tying the sonnets to the period from 1601 to 1604 will somehow prove that the Earl of Southampton was Oxford’s illegitimate son by Queen Elizabeth. That Oxford, as Southampton’s father, would expend his glorious creative energies writing one hundred and twenty-six sonnets to his son on a topic that could easily and far more appropriately be covered by a conversation or two over dinner, and further, that he would mask his true purpose by

pretending to be writing passionate love poems, not only passes the bounds of normal human psychology, it also requires us to see these poems, not, as generations of apparently ignorant fools have perceived them, as the culmination of centuries of development of the sonnet cycle as the classic form for expressing romantic love, but as something altogether new and strange in the realms of English literature. Uncaring, or unaware, Whittemore wastes no words on the problem this will cause for educated readers. In fact, eager to get on with his “interpretation,” he wastes few words, or thought, on the immense background of literary, historical and psychological proof required to support a version of history that requires that almost every standard accepted by critics and historians be revised. This is a tall order, and Whittemore basically ignores it.

Early on he lists three things that tie the sonnets to Oxford (as opposed to the Stratford resident): the poet seems to have been about forty at the outset, Sonnet 109 seems to refer to a water bearer, and Sonnet 125 refers to his bearing the canopy. No disagreement here, yet from these he leaps to extrapolate: “Reading the sonnets with [Oxford] in mind, it became easier to realize that the verses referred exclusively to figures in the highest circles of royalty. . . .”

Exclusively? One wonders what it is about these three tidbits he has offered, or the likelihood that the author was a great nobleman, that makes it a sure thing that all the persons referred to in the sonnets were “figures in the highest circles of royalty.” (What is a “circle of royalty” anyway?)

Then, without pausing for breath, he offers the following: “The author was concerned about the Queen’s two favorite lords, Essex and Southampton; he [Oxford] wrote about the death of Elizabeth (the mortal Moone); and he expressed profound relief (my love looks fresh) over Southampton’s release from prison.”

Whittemore doesn’t bother with even a passing attempt to prove these suppositions, which he states flatly as though they were accepted fact. Mentioning a possibility is a long way from using it as a fact on which to base an elaborate thesis. Yet, as here, over and over Whittemore offers first a couple of accepted facts, then a supposition built on those facts, then, taking off from the supposition, a long flight of fancy, which we, without benefit of the wings of faith that, lacking all solid support, must be what sustains him, can only watch from below with amazement. Worse, once he gets rolling he doesn’t even bother to line up some accepted substantiation, but just goes right ahead with the suppositions stated as fact.

There are SOME facts, though nothing new. Luckily we know from previous study that Oxford did urge action upon the Earl of Lincoln in an attempt (though not, as Whittemore suggests, one that seems to have been particularly strong or sustained, as it appears to have consisted of this single conversation) to prevent the accension of James I to the throne; and it well may be, as the advocates of Southampton as illegitimate prince maintain, that Oxford’s own candidate for the throne was Southampton.

But even if that were proven, would it offer a shred of evidence that Southampton was Oxford’s son by the Queen? Whittemore claims James put Oxford on his Privy Council; without a citation this piece of information is worth precisely nothing; but, even were it rock solid, would it offer a shred of evidence that Southampton was Oxford’s son by the Queen? Does the matter of Southampton’s arrest on the day of Oxford’s death offer a shred of evidence that it was due to his being the Queen’s illegitimate son, or even if somehow that could be ascertained, that Oxford was his father? Do these morsels of uncited information tie together in any way? And even if it can be shown that they do, we’re still a long way

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from any proof that the sonnets were written from Oxford the father to Southampton the son. These bits of fact [neither] connect with [one] another to build a case, nor offer anything solid in the way of proof.

Whittemore has an even tougher row to hoe with his attempt to persuade us that all but the first seventeen sonnets were written in the early 1600s. That the weight of two hundred years of scholarship is against it, as are dozens of topical references that have been painstakingly tracked by the many scholars of sterling repute that have preceded Whittemore on this well-worn path, not one of whom he bothers to name, offers no deterrent to his claims. That he is satisfied with two or three isolated references that "might" tie them to the 1600s cannot possibly satisfy a reader who is honestly seeking the truth.

To one who loves poetry, who reveres the sonnets of Shakespeare as among the greatest love poems ever written, it is almost insulting to suggest that this monarch of language would stoop to using this classic verse form, traditional for poems of love, for anything but what he openly declares, over and over, right from the beginning, is his sole purpose, to relieve his heart of its burden of love and to give his beloved immortality through his verse. (Whittemore calls this view of *The Sonnets*, "harmless poetry.")

To suggest that this prince of poets would stoop to using these 154 love poems as a cover for sniping at the Queen and mourning the fact that one of his sons wasn't getting his just dynastic deserts, cheapens their source to the level of soap opera. To suggest that a father would write lines of such intensely passionate desire to his own son asks us to accept that the author chose an unpleasantly peculiar way to demonstrate his paternal devotion, and finally, beyond what seems to be a sorry disdain for scholarship, it demonstrates a very dull ear for poetry and a sad ignorance of its true purpose and values.

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes
Editor of *The Oxfordian*
25 August 1999

Editor's note: Stephanie will attempt to show how the Oxfordian thesis actually solves the four hundred-year-old "sonnet problem" at the Conference in November.

To the Editor:

I wonder if anyone else has noticed that, wittingly or not, Harold Bloom, author of *Shakespeare, The Invention of the Human*, seems to have revealed another clue to the Oxfordian provenance of the Shakespeare canon. In his exegesis of the play *Julius Caesar*, Bloom expresses great bewilderment over Shakespeare's apparent unwillingness to take dramatic advantage of an

historical speculation that was common currency among educated playgoers in his day: that Brutus was Caesar's son. Certainly, Oxford would have been reluctant to abandon such a powerfully dramatic plot device unless he felt constrained by the resonance of some discomfiting analogue in his own world.

While my own scholarship is not up to the task of disentangling the possible hidden relationships in the Elizabethan court I

The Blue Boar

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recall that some Oxfordians have conjectured a more intimate connection between Oxford and Elizabeth than has been allowed by conventional historians. One might wonder if Shakespeare's sensitivity arose from the possibility of an awkward, or even dangerous, conflation of regicide with parricide.

Paul N. Nash
Oakton, Virginia
24 August 1999

To the Editor:

In reference to the article "Henry Peacham on Oxford and Shakespeare" by Peter W. Dickson (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Vol. 34: no. 3), I suggest that the referenced Peacham illustrated manuscript page, c. 1595, of *Titus Andronicus* (H. M. Comm., Longleat Papers, ii. 43, calendared by Mrs. S. C. Lomas in 1907) ought to have long been of particular interest to Oxfordians as: "... most of the Elizabethan papers in the composite volume were brought from *Welbeck* (emphasis added) to Longleat by Lady Elizabeth Bentinck in 1759, and derive ultimately from the study of Sir Michael Hicks, a secretary to the first Lord Burghley.

This may be one of them, although Mrs.

Lomas does not identify the hand of the endorsement, which is not that of either Burghley or Hicks, and a pencilled reference in the margin to the second Sir John Thynne (1560-1623) may suggest that it had been preserved since the sixteenth century at Longleat itself. No doubt Peacham, born at North Mimms, is more likely *a priori* to have been in touch with Theobalds than with Longleat." (p. 57, *Shakespeare Gleanings* by E. K. Chambers, O.U.P., 1943)

I would add that the magnificent Welbeck portrait of Edward de Vere (itself a copy of the original now "lost") most probably arrived at Welbeck, home of Countess Elizabeth Holles (nee Lady Elizabeth Vere, eldest daughter of Lord Horace Vere of Tilbury, Suffolk) c. 1623, following her marriage to John Holles, 2nd Earl of Clare, of Welbeck.

I suggest that Henry Peacham's illustrated manuscript page of *Titus Andronicus* could have arrived at Welbeck, via Countess Elizabeth, circa that date.

Derran Charlton
Dodworth, England
28 May 1999

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(Desper, Continued from page 23)

rant further stipulates that "neither the said Earl nor his assigns ... shall by way of account ... whatsoever be charged towards Us ... these Our letters ... shall be sufficient warrant and discharge."

Thus the Earl has an office for the Queen with no explicit name and no explicit duties, at least not enumerated for the public record. I submit that the Earl of Oxford was, in effect, Lord Master of Keep Thy Peace, i.e. given an office which could not be named, by either the appointor or appointee, by the very nature of the office and its incumbent. Were the office to be explicitly given a title, it might well be Lord High Poet, Playwright, and Promoter of English Patriotism. But such a title was not possible, considering the conventions of courtly etiquette.

Notes:

1. Ogburn, Charlton. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare - the Myth and the Reality*. (McLean, VA: EPM, 1984) p. 498.
2. Castiglione, Baldessare. *Il Cortegiano*. (in *Courts and Camps of the Italian Renaissance*, by Christopher Hare (New York: Scribner's, 1908) p. 228.
3. Ibid., p. 240.
4. Ogburn, op. Cit., p. 688.

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Bacon clearly wrote the two letters out of great desperation. He was in dire financial straits after his own release from the Tower in May 1621 and the payment of a heavy fine of 40,000 pounds. Also, he had failed in several efforts to persuade King James and his notorious homosexual lover, the Duke of Buckingham, to permit him to resume his seat in the House of Lords and to confirm his estate for his heirs.

In his prior letters to Buckingham, Bacon grovels in a most ignominious fashion before the widely detested royal favorite who had been working hard to facilitate the controversial Spanish marriage. The idea of a dynastic union with Spain—which traumatized Anglicans and Puritans alike—apparently meant nothing to Bacon compared to his own financial problems.

From this perspective, Bacon's sudden willingness—after the crisis was over—to beg favors from the two earls who had led the fight against the Spanish Marriage at great personal cost is perhaps unequalled in terms of sheer gall or hutzpah. Furthermore, Bacon, who had once been the Earl of Essex's most famous protegee, had a personal blood feud with Southampton going all the way back to the Essex trial (1601) in which Bacon had served as the Crown's chief prosecutor.

Southampton narrowly escaped with his life back then, but he must have borne a deep grudge, which would explain his zeal in leading the impeachment against Bacon exactly two decades later (1621).

So, why did Bacon write these letters in the face of such prior bad blood? He wrote them because all London knew that Buckingham (who tried to defend Bacon during the impeachment proceedings) had barely salvaged his own career after the Spanish marriage negotiations had collapsed in late 1623. To save himself, the Duke made a dramatic *volte face* and reconciled with the Patriot Coalition, the virulently anti-Spanish faction calling for war with Spain under the leadership of Henry de Vere and Southampton.

Bacon knew that without their support he would never return to the House of Lords. The earls had forced Buckingham, who in turn had forced the King, to call a new parliament to declare war. At that moment they were at the zenith of their popularity in parliament and among the English people, who were greatly relieved when the Spanish marriage negotiations collapsed.

Not surprisingly, the two earls ignored Bacon, who eventually died in May 1626 without ever having been readmitted to the House of Lords. It is also ironic they both

were to die before him—Southampton in November 1624 and Oxford in June 1625.

Implications

These two letters would seem to destroy totally the Baconian theory of the Shakespeare authorship. If he really had been the author of the 36 plays in the *First Folio*, would he not have underscored that point in letters to Southampton, the dedicatee of the Bard's two epic poems from the 1590s (*V&A*, *Lucrece*), and to Oxford, a brother-in-law to the Earl of Montgomery, one of the "the Incomparable Paire" to whom the *First Folio* was dedicated?

Furthermore, Bacon's plea to these two specific earls fits the contemporaneous public perception of their great power as a "twin-like" political pair, depicted—for example—in Thomas Jenner's dramatic engraving of the two earls on horseback (circa 1625, reproduced on page 8 of the Spring 1999 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*).

Thus, our further research into the historical context of the *First Folio* project during the Spanish Marriage crisis continues to bolster the Oxfordian theory in conjunction with the dramatic events of the early 1620s—in addition to eradicating the old Baconian theory.

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