



# The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



Vol.36: no.3

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

Fall 2000

## New Light on the Dark Lady

By Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

For anyone who cares about authors, for whom it is almost as important to know *how* great works of art come to be written as it is to know the works themselves, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are tremendously important, for they are the only piece of his writing that we can be sure speaks to us directly from the heart of the author about his own life.

Unfortunately, although they tell us a great deal about his feelings, they don't tell us much of anything else. No one is identified, not even the poet himself. We're given very little background detail and what he does give is for the most part far too general to assign a specific time or place with any certainty or to connect with any known event.

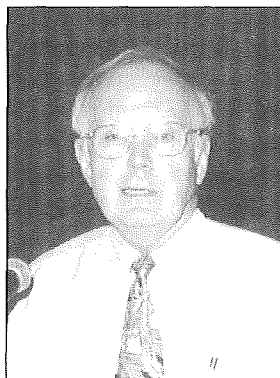
In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, literally thousands of books have been written about the sonnets, and although many commentators stay away from any attempt to identify the personalities portrayed in them, or even when they were written, because, as one put it, it is "a bog more easily got into than gotten out of," many *have* nonetheless addressed this "biographical problem," and in the process came up with a dizzying array of candidates and scenarios.

Yet, despite the questions that still remain, most scholars willing to address the issue have agreed on a scenario based on some very meticulous and convincing studies made in the first half of the twentieth century, which hold that all but a few of the sonnets were written over a period of five or six years, possibly beginning as

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## Stratford (Ont.) hosts 24th Annual Conference

*First gathering outside the US celebrates  
another exciting year in the authorship debate*



Conference Program Chair Dr. Jack Shuttleworth (left) welcomed one and all to the Society's 24th Annual Conference. Among the speakers was Eddi Jolly of Southampton, England, who presented her research on Lord Burghley's personal library, a rich resource of books and manuscripts that was clearly available to a young Shakespeare—if that young Shakespeare was Burghley's ward and eventual son-in-law, Edward de Vere.

The Society's 24th Annual Conference was held outside the United States for the first time ever, with Society members and other Oxfordians descending on Stratford (Ontario) during the last weekend in October to celebrate Edward de Vere after another impressive year of progress on all fronts in the authorship debate.

Among some of the notable events during the past year were yet another cover story (*U.S. News and World Report*) in a major media magazine touching on the Shakespeare mystery and authorship—with the story giving a clearly positive emphasis on the Oxfordian position—and, of course, the landmark event of Oxfordian Roger Stritmatter successfully defending his authorship-based Ph.D. thesis at UMass-Amherst.

Conference attendees and their families were able to enjoy not only the scheduled conference events, but also the daily theatre fare in the world famous home of the Shakespeare Festival, which included a production of *Hamlet* featuring Canada's premier Shakespearean actor Paul Gross. Tickets to *Hamlet* were part of the conference package, and gave everyone something special to talk about, especially

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### Media Notes

## Shakespeare, authorship and the Earl featured on Fox TV's *Malcolm in the Middle*; Oliver Stone on history and conspiracy

Shakespeare and the authorship question made a guest appearance last December 10th on Fox-TV's quirky U.S. sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle* (in which the title character is an adolescent genius making his way in a world he doesn't understand, or that doesn't understand him, or both).

The storyline has Malcolm playing Puck in *Midsummers' Night Dream* at his high school. Most of the story builds on requisite jokes about fairies, high-school boy-girl struggles, and the show's ongoing gags about genius Malcolm out of step with everyone. In fact, one of the show's endearing qualities is how genius Malcolm is continually portrayed as the observer/commentator on all that goes on around him, sometimes speaking directly to the camera, which might remind us of someone. But that's another story.

Anyway, amidst all the Shakespeare in this episode there was an exchange on the "Who was Shakespeare anyway?" question. The show opens with a classroom scene in which one student refers to Will Shakespeare as a "writer from way back in olden times," to which another student fires back, "He was a drunken hack who was just fronting for the 14th [sic] Earl of Oxford."

Another student then joins in with, "So he didn't have the benefit of higher education! How many Ph.D.s have written *King Lear*?" After a few more exchanges, the teacher finally says, "Now, class, didn't we all agree to save these discussions for our Friday forums?"

The episode drew some notice on the public Internet bulletin board humanities.lit.authors.shakespeare (hlas), and also on the private discussion groups SHAKSPER (for Stratfordians) and Phaeton (for Oxfordians).

One poster on hlas also reported that the authorship question popped up in a December episode of *Bette* (another prime-time sitcom, starring Bette Midler). That sighting says the episode opened with two characters arguing over whether Marlowe was Shakespeare.

Leaving aside getting the Earl wrong on *Malcolm* (17th, not 14th), or getting the leading challenger wrong on *Bette* (Oxford, not Marlowe), it can be said with some

certainty that the more such authorship mentions go on, the better. In the end just spreading awareness of the issue is more than half the battle.

### **Oliver Stone on conspiracy**

Last July 14th, 2000 *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured an article by Oliver Stone ("In Filming History: Question, Disbelieve, Defy") that drew heavily via excerpts from his recent book *Oliver Stone's USA: Film, History, and Controversy*.

Stone is, of course, well-known for his fictionalized history, such as *JFK* and *Nixon*, which attempts to get at underlying truths through story-telling that combines facts and conjecture, presenting them in what is openly acknowledged (by Stone himself) as "alternative history," a possible antidote to "official" histories that become public staples.

While most of Stone's writing is concerned with the 20th century and how the works he is known for deal with history, some of his comments are worth repeating for those of us involved in the Shakespeare mystery, which is a dual story about what happened back then to launch such a story as the Stratford man, and just as importantly, what is now happening in our own time as assorted experts and powers-that-be tirelessly defend the status quo in the face of overwhelming circumstantial evidence that something's amiss—if not outright rotten.

Stone writes:

Let's face it — any historian knows that jealousy plays a huge factor in human affairs ... I think many historians, whether they know it or not, are equally subject to this jealousy, and, thinking that history is their territory only, they come at filmmakers with an attitude of hostility. To them we pervert the paradigm with emotion, sentimentality, and so on. But historians exhibit much pomposity when they think that they alone are in custody of the 'facts,' and they take it upon themselves to guard 'the truth' as zealously as the chief priests of ancient Egypt...

It seems that the only people left who take chances are dramatists and a few progressive historians who are willing to undertake a deconstruction of history and question given realities.

As far as facts go, I used them as best I

could, but the truth is, you can't use them all. You are forced to omit some. And any honest historian will tell you that he does that, too.

We are all victims of counterfeit history. In my lifetime I have learned this lesson by head and heart ... Never underestimate the power of corruption to rewrite history ... In our country, if we search, we find that a coup d'état planned against President Roosevelt in 1933-1934 has amazingly disappeared from the history books. You don't have to wonder why when you understand the power of the conspirators ... or the incredible ability of the media, which were then as now basically controlled by the establishment of this country, to vaporize the incident into the black hole of ridicule ... The awkwardness of conspiracy theories still prevails in American politics...

Ultimately, all this has more to do with the fear of change than anything. I truly believe that the thing that terrifies men in society the most is change. Often it is just Roosevelt's "fear of fear," but it becomes far more subversive and dangerous when that fear crystallizes into hatred and terror and destroys other people's lives in the name of an ideology of stasis, of conservatism, of seeking refuge in the past for fear of an unknown future.

Yet the lessons of history repeatedly point out the virtue of independent thinking—the need to Question, Disbelieve, Defy. Allow then, in our million-dollar-a-minute TV culture, a little space and time for the contrarian in you, and allow that paranoia in moderation, like red wine, is healthy precisely because conspiracy does not sleep.

Finally, Stone concludes with a familiar quote that dates back to Elizabethan times,

"Treason doth never prosper," an English poet once wrote. "What's the reason? For [sic] if it prosper, none dare call it treason."

While this may sound like Shakespeare, it actually comes from Sir John Harrington. But in the matter of the Shakespeare authorship debate, while the problem at hand is not treason, the truth contained in Harrington's words are still quite appropriate.

For whether the authorship problem turns out to be intertwined with real-world politics (as some think) or is simply about the more mundane academic politics, the message is the same: it is difficult—if not dangerous—to question established truths.

*Conference (Continued from page 1)*

during the panel on *Hamlet* on Saturday morning (see page 5 for a separate discussion of *Hamlet* and the panel).

### Author's Night

The conference began Thursday evening with readings from two recently published young adult novels that feature the authorship question and Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare (both of these books are reviewed on page 19 of this issue).

Lynne Kositsky's *A Question of Will* takes a young protagonist back in time—to the Elizabethan era, to be exact—where she encounters and interacts with all the key players in our story, and comes away knowing who Shakespeare really was. And in a *Back to the Future* twist to the story, our heroine's trip back in time manages to change history, and she returns to a world in which Shakespeare plays are "by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford."

In Norma Howe's *Blue Avenger Cracks the Code* the protagonist is a high school junior, and he travels not back in time, but to Venice—in search of proof that Edward de Vere is Shakespeare. In his case, he doesn't find the proof, but the authorship case is advanced by his searches, for both himself and *Blue Avenger's* readers.

The evening concluded with a first-rate two-person musical show ("Shakespeare on Broadway"), performed by the Phantom Romance of Toronto, featuring Rebecca Poff and David Rogers. The show, arranged by Conference Chairperson Sue Sybersma, was a delightful cabaret-style selection of Broadway show classics from over the years,



*McCoy Baugham spoke at the Saturday luncheon. Baugham once acted in a 1971 off-Broadway production about the authorship issue (Gertrude C. Ford's play, Masquerade, which was based on her Shakespeare and Elizabeth Unmasked).*

with the lyrics and connecting vignettes cleverly tailored to the Shakespeare authorship debate and the Oxfordian audience. The duo received a long, well-deserved ovation at evening's end.

### The Papers

Among the topics covered by this year's papers were important new information on Shakespeare/Oxford's access to books and libraries (Eddi Jolly on "Lord Burghley's Library"), new analysis of some familiar topics (Richard Whalen on "Leonard Diggs"), plus a half dozen or so papers ranging far and wide on various areas of history and related commentary, stretching back into the decades before the reign of Elizabeth and her Shakespeare, and reaching all the way up to the 19th century with a look at the possible authorship implications of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Billy's captain, Edward "Starry" Vere.

Roger Stritmatter's paper on *Budd* was probably the most intriguing of the weekend, since it dwelt not on research into the Elizabethan era or Shakespeare, but looked instead at another important phenomena surrounding the authorship debate—the issue of who were those over the centuries who questioned the Stratford story in any way, and/or who may have known/suspected that Edward de Vere was the man behind the Shakespeare pseudonym. The research into *Billy Budd* and its putative Shakespeare/Oxford connection was origi-

nally started by former Society trustee Elliott Stone, and the paper Stritmatter presented is a collaboration among himself, Stone, and newsletter columnist Mark Anderson.

There is no space in this brief conference report to do justice to this concept that Melville was writing an allegory on Shakespeare when he wrote *Budd* (which was unfinished at the end of his life). The paper is being considered by several major media magazines, and we hope later this year to explore this idea in more depth.

Another paper that took on issues not usually seen within the confines of the authorship debate came from Ron Hess. This paper was anchored in the Elizabethan era, focusing on the earlier years of Oxford's life and the theory that the young Oxford may have been spying during his European/Italian travels in 1575-76. Hess provided much context for this theory with his overview of the political scene in Europe in the 1570s, including the well-known Don John of Austria. As with the *Billy Budd* paper, there is too much here to cover in the conference report. Hess is selling his completed research as a book (*The Dark Side of Shakespeare*), and we plan to give fuller coverage to this thesis in the near future.

Several representatives of the English De Vere Society were on hand to report on their work. Derran Charlton gave an update on the DVS' ongoing Dating Project, which will result in a best case list of when the Shakespeare plays were actually written. Christopher Dams had reported on the project last year in Boston. Charlton reported that the project is proceeding well, and that a complete list of the plays including annotations as to how the final dates were established is not far off.

Eddi Jolly, a lecturer in English at Barton Peveril College in Southampton, England, reported on her research into Lord Burghley's library; the library was sold, more or less intact, at auction in the late 17th century, so there is a complete list of its contents. It should come as no surprise that many books dear to Shakespeare's heart (as per mainstream scholarship) were in Shakespeare/Oxford's father-in-law's library (her paper was published in the July 2000 *De Vere Society Newsletter*).

Among other papers, Richard Whalen and Dr. Frank Davis both re-examined some familiar ground in their papers. Richard Whalen argued that Leonard Digges, who

*(Continued on page 4)*

### **The 2001 Shakespeare-Oxford Calendar**

*A limited number of calendars are still available. If you would like to order one, please contact Gerit Quealy at 212-678-0006, or by email at: MissGQ@aol.com*

*The price is \$20 per calendar, plus \$3.50 P&H*

*Correction: The text that appears under April 24th belongs under April 23rd. We deeply regret the misprint.*

*Conference (Continued from page 3)*

wrote a prefatory poem for the First Folio, makes a much better witness for Oxford as the author of the First Folio than for the man from Stratford. Contrary to the Stratfordian view that Digges was a "friend and neighbor of the much-older Stratford man," Whalen showed that the evidence for that purported relationship has been grossly exaggerated, and that Digges was closer to Oxford's relatives through family and court relationships, including his dedication of a book in 1622 to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery of the First Folio.

Davis' "Shakespeare's Medical Learning" made an excellent case for the author's intimate, detailed knowledge of the latest in 16th century medical advancements (such as *aspiamater*, the inner lining of the covering of the brain and spinal cord), yet another indication that the true Shakespeare was someone with both a keen interest in and access to such knowledge. Davis' paper appears in the 2000 *Oxfordian*.

And finally, two other papers took on ciphers and codes (Robert Prechter), and the sexual and religious practices and mores of the times (Charles Boyle).

Prechter's paper took as its starting point John Rollett's discoveries about the famous dedication to *Shakespeare's Son-*

*nets* (in which "Ever" may be seen as referring to a person, and the name "Henry Wriosthesley" can be found in rectangular arrays of the 144-word dedication). Prechter, through a carefully thought-out approach, had extracted several other names possibly embedded in the 144-word dedication, some being familiar names such as "Elisabeth," but also several other more obscure names, such as "Emilia Bassana."

This latter discovery was quite remarkable, since *Oxfordian* editor Stephanie Hughes had been working for some time on a paper about the possibility that Emilia Lanier Bassano, a member of a family of court musicians, was in fact the Dark Lady of the *Sonnets* (see page one of this issue for Hughes paper on this subject).

Finally, Charles Boyle spoke on a book he had only learned of recently, but which offers some significant information for anyone studying the Elizabethan era, and in particular, Elizabeth herself.

*Elizabeth's Glass*, by Marc Shell, is about a translation the 11-year-old Elizabeth made from French of Marguerite de Navarre's book *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*. *Glass* includes a complete photocopy facsimile of Elizabeth's original manuscript. Navarre's book expresses a philosophy which in turn is based upon a significant 16th-century

religious movement in Europe—The Brethren of the Free Spirit—that was libertine in nature, and very much the polar opposite of the Catholic Church's celibate practices and teachings.

That the young Elizabeth was so interested in this, and shared it with others in the 1540s, such as her father's last wife, Catherine Parr, and the theologian John Bale, is notable, Boyle said, and can perhaps lead us to a fuller understanding of her later life, which in the view of some was a perpetual contradiction of a "not" Virgin Queen living a libertine existence behind a facade, an existence that may have included her having had unacknowledged children.

### AGM/Board Elections

The Annual General Meeting of Members was held Saturday afternoon. Our next newsletter will include a full report on all Society business matters, including fundraising for the year.

This year's Board of Trustees elections provided a bit of drama, and—unbeknownst at the time—a bit of a preview of the national US elections following just a week later. For the first time in memory, the election ended in a tie between two nominees for Board seats: Roger Stritmatter (Northampton, MA) and Michael Pisapia (New York, NY). When this was announced at the Saturday Banquet a lively debate ensued as to how to resolve the dilemma; the By-laws offered no remedy, and a second vote could not be held since some people had already left or were about to leave Stratford. And, yes, the ballots had been recounted, several times.

It was finally suggested that a coin be tossed, with the winner immediately taking a seat and the loser then slated to take the next available Board seat. The compromise was, in effect, that both would eventually be seated. Michael Pisapia won the coin toss and was immediately seated.

Shortly after the conference Board member Robert Barrett (Bremerton, WA) resigned his seat for health reasons, and so Stritmatter joined the Board in late November. Also re-elected this year were Katherine Chiljan (San Francisco, CA) and Sue Sybersma (Sebringville, Canada), while Dr. Charles Berney (Watertown, MA) and Dr. Merilee Karr (Portland, OR) were elected to their first terms on the Board. —W.Boyle

## 25th Annual Conference scheduled for Carmel, California, October 4th to 7th, 2001

To celebrate its 25th Annual Conference, the Society will be returning to sunny beautiful Carmel, California, home of the Carmel Shakespeare Festival (managed by Society member Stephen Moorer) to hold its annual conference during the first weekend in October, 2001. The Society's 19th Annual Conference was held there in 1994.

There are three plays scheduled over the four-day period, all touching on the Shakespeare story. In addition to *Richard II*, the Festival will also present *Edward III* (now accepted by many Shakespeare scholars as Shakespeare's), and *Thomas of Woodstock*, a play that is gaining increasing attention as potentially Shakespearean (and sometimes called *Richard II*, Part I).

A special publicity campaign will couple the Festival's production of these history plays and the Society's conference.

### Call for Papers 25th Annual Conference

*For the 25th annual meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Society members are especially invited to submit papers (about 25 minutes in length) for presentation in Carmel. Of particular interest are such topics as new findings about Oxford, his possible relationship to the plays Edward the Third and Thomas of Woodstock, his relationship to other writers and dramatists of the period, and evidence for dating of the plays. We welcome scholars from other fields and disciplines who can provide context or questions for the study of Oxford's role in Elizabethan society.*

Send papers to:

Jack Shuttleworth  
7770 Delmonico Drive  
Colorado Springs CO 80919  
email: DeVereinCO@aol.com

## Panel discussion on *Hamlet*

With the conference being held in the home of the world famous Shakespeare Festival, part of the conference program naturally included tickets to one of the Shakespeare plays on tap, and by a special providence the 2000 Stratford Festival schedule gave Oxfordian attendees the opportunity to visit with—perhaps?—the author himself in *Hamlet*. And this particular *Hamlet*, performed by Canadian actor Paul Gross under the direction of Joseph Ziegler, gave everyone much to think about, and then debate in the following day's panel discussion of the play.

Granted, debating *Hamlet* is a universal preoccupation for all Shakespeareans. Oxfordians, however, know that they are at least one up on the rest of the world by having some of the play's mysteries seen in light of having the play correctly placed in time, and place, and authorship. But then one encounters a production such as this, and the range of reaction runs from "the best *Hamlet* I've ever seen to the worst *Hamlet* I've ever seen."

There were two clear aspects to this production that brought out these varied reactions. First, Paul Gross played Hamlet as almost manic-depressive, with a wide range of emotion that ran the gamut from rolling on the floor whining to strutting about as the quintessential wisacre that most playgoers know. One Oxfordian was heard to mutter during intermission, "What is this, *Hamlet* on drugs?"

The second significant production decision that drew attention was that many scenes were played for comic effect, with some scenes that no one may have ever seen before as funny (the Hamlet-Gertrude bedroom scene) drawing unexpected laughter. The combination of these two production decisions resulted in much comment before, during, and after the panel.

On the first point (Gross's portrayal of Hamlet), Ron Destro, who manages a theatre company in New York, said that he had actually walked out during Act I, commenting later that "this was the worst thing to happen on stage since Cher won an Oscar."

He added that it was Gross's shaking, whimpering and crying that drove him out, since there was no Prince of Denmark in this production, only the Wimp of Wittenberg, and thus, no downfall of any consequence.



*Stephen Moorer (left) moderated the Saturday morning panel discussion on Hamlet, with (from left) Eddi Jolly, Gerit Quealy and Ted Story also participating.*

And indeed, even those who otherwise enjoyed this production took issue with the "on the verge of a nervous breakdown" take on our hero.

However, *Oxfordian* editor Stephanie Hughes thought this was, overall, one of the best *Hamlets* she had ever seen. "Hamlet's performance caused me to think about what kind of performance Shakespeare would have wanted to see," she said. "This Hamlet shook, wept, fell on his knees, leaped about in a manic frenzy, while at other times seeming almost nonchalant. This kind of erratic over-the-top behavior seems quite appropriate for a man on the verge of madness. It also gives impetus to the King's decision to get rid of him."

The production's comedy drew the same range of opinion, with about half of the conference attendees much put off by it, while others thought it was there in the play as well as in the author's worldview and artistic intent. Charles Boyle said that in this production we were perhaps brought closer to glimpsing the true author's self-portrait rather than the one we are all so used to in the more traditional "dressed in black, melancholy, tragical-genre" portrayals.

Picking up on that point, someone else in the audience remarked that if this Hamlet was anything like the real author, little wonder his enemies erased him from history.

Chuck Berney remarked that seeing the Act I encounter with the ghost staged with almost slapstick abandon each time the trio hears the ghost seemed to him to be a

concept drawn straight from the text as written, and, he said, it may just be that he had now, for the first time, seen this scene played the way it was meant to be played.

Others, such as panelist Eddi Jolly, were just as firm in stating that the comedy present in this production diminished the tragedy and the tragic hero; she saw the comedy as, in effect, interfering with the play and its genuine tragedy. This sentiment echoed what Ron Destro had to say, along with a number of others in the audience.

Richard Whalen said that he admired the production for detecting the playwright's innate sense of humor—black humor—but thought that the comic bits had misfired. "Instead of biting wit," he said, "the actors delivered broad buffoonery as if mocking the modern stage convention of a gloom and doom *Hamlet*. Instead of Shakespeare/Oxford jesting bitterly and wisecracking in the midst of tragedy, we got actors acting foolish for audience guffaws. The intent was admirable, the execution flawed" (see *From the Editor* for some further thoughts on "*Hamlet*, the Comedy," p. 20).

Panel moderator Stephen Moorer (who came down on the side of this being a weak *Hamlet* production) commented later that, "I thought the panel was a fabulous idea, and I was honored to take part. It was quite an experience to hear such differing opinions. The whole exercise pointed to the inescapable conclusion that Shakespeare in performance is quite often just as controversial as the entire authorship issue."

*Film Review*Taymor's *Titus* illuminates a troublesome play

By Joseph Eldredge

For the purposes of this review there must first be two assumptions: first that the reader has a pretty good idea of who wrote the underlying play (herein called *Andronicus*) for the film (*Titus*). And second, that since the play has been around since perhaps 1576, it is fair game to reveal the plot.

Unlike *Shakespeare in Love*, *Titus* does not play footy-footy with the authorship issue. While *Titus*' makers may well know that *Andronicus* is an early play written by Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, it is evident only in the skill with which they have treated his work. The producers of *Shakespeare in Love* wallowed in a rather banal (although often very funny) banter, revealing that they really do know *Romeo and Juliet* was not written by an illiterate android from Stratford-on-Avon. And that at least some of their advisors had been hitting on them to be brave enough to admit it. In the case of Tom Stoppard, who confessed to Charlie Rose on Rose's TV talk show that he did not take much stock in current scholarship, he's either as stupid as he is talented—or he's a closet Oxfordian planning to write a blockbuster exposé.

*Andronicus* has split scholars over the ages: there are those who believe it was written by Shakespeare; and those who do not. In many cases Marlowe (misplaced in Stratfordian timing) erroneously gets the credit or blame. The play's classical origins have been sifted with archaeological skill. Its direct references to Terence and Ovid (Philomel's sad scam of hands and tongues) are self-explanatory. Though often corrupted by Stratfordian bias, scholars have still found Seneca as the primary source for this brand of tragedy, and such notable thinkers as T. S. Eliot have held that Seneca would have chosen Shakespeare over other Elizabethan authors for his understanding of ancient works wired with exquisitely non-gratuitous cruelty.

There is also no shortage of other possible historical reference points offered by

Oxfordians over the years. Nina Green, writing on the Internet discussion group Phaeton, reminds us that Eva Turner Clark tried to connect the play to a performance of *Titus and Gisippus* noted in the Revels accounts of 1576-7. For Hank Whittemore—also writing on Phaeton—"the 'Spanish Fury,' a

own evil is much more like the Shakespearean character." But, like all Stratfordians, his dating of the play—leaning on Marlowe and Kyd—places it at least ten years beyond the time when the above source events in Oxford's life (i.e. 1570s) took place.

In any event, this plot must have been a

ball for a young noble playwright steeped in Greek and Roman classics that he had undoubtedly read in the original. A conquering general returns to Rome to bury his sons, sacrifice one prisoner in the funeral rites, deliver his other prisoners, and retire. He refuses the offer of the job of Emperor, fobbing it off on the eldest son of the former ruler. A bad guy, the new emperor demands Titus' lovely daughter as his queen. His younger brother, a good guy to whom she is betrothed, promptly absconds with her. The new emperor takes the sexy (and now liberated) Queen of



Anthony Hopkins as Titus Andronicus.

terrible massacre by Catholic fanatics in Antwerp on Nov. 4, 1576" may be a more immediate source for so violent a play.

But Green, noting that Oxford had just returned from the Continent, also sees the possibility that the play involves "a real political cover story for the horrors of the real rape of a real woman" (e.g. Anne Cecil), and considers also that the punishment awarded John Stubbs in 1579 for his tract against the French marriage could have been on the author's mind. She feels that Oxford would have reacted strongly to the removal of Stubbs' hand both in principal, and because he "was the husband of Oxford's first cousin, Anne Vere."

Other historical parallels that have been considered include Charles Boyce in *Shakespeare A-Z* "allowing" that his version of the Bard (i.e. Stratford) might have known that the 12th-century Byzantine Emperor Andronicus Comnenus, famous for his cruelty, was killed by a mob after having his hand cut off. Boyce also mentions a story by the 16th-century Italian author Matteo Bandello, which gives us a Moor "whose crimes are similar and whose delight in his

the Goths instead, installing her troupe of two remaining sons and an interesting Moor (Aaron) in his court. It doesn't take long for the Queen and her sons to avenge their son/brother's death by murdering the emperor's younger brother and ravishing his new bride. They silence her by chopping off her hands and cutting out her tongue.

Guided by Aaron the Moor in all this, they contrive to blame it all on Titus' sons, who lose their heads. Their father also loses a hand, offered as security for a fair trial for his sons. Lavinia, the daughter, uses a copy of Ovid to compare her plight with that of Ovid's Philomel and manages to write her assailants' names in the sand. Titus' remaining son, banished, runs to get help from their former enemies, the Goths.

A telling sub-plot has Aaron, who has been the Queen's lover all along, receive his/her newborn son (sufficiently pigmented to require a deft substitution) and to bargain for its life by agreeing to reveal the details of the above shenanigans. He will then spend the rest of his time on earth buried in it up to his neck.

Titus, not unaffected by all of this, feigns



madness to position himself for appropriate revenge. The Queen's sons are dispatched into a meat pie served to their mother and the emperor at a parley with son Lucius and the Goths. There, nearly everyone is killed off except this last son, who gets to be emperor.

This then is Shakespeare's blood-bath of a play. However, the present task of saying something useful about *Titus* has been lightened by the film itself, as Taymor's production has, for this writer, opened up a difficult play for the first time. It does this in two ways: "infrastructure" and language.

The infrastructure is set up right from the film's beginning. *Titus* opens on a child at dinner, presumably in his nursery, playing with his toy soldiers. A mix of sturdy Roman figures with modern engines of war are anointed with cat-sup and tossed about in frantic battle until the scene is enveloped in a windy blast. The child is rescued from this explosion and carried triumphantly into a great square, to the cheering of an unseen crowd.

Still unsure of what Julie Taymor has in store for us we watch the square fill up with orchestrated military might: tramping warriors, chariots, and then, motorcycles and tanks. From this seething panoply Titus and his sons emerge, helmeted and covered with dust. OK, we get it, the film wants us to recognize that war has no special place in time, and our link into this timelessness is to be this "modern" kid and his imagination: we are to see things through his eyes from now on. But who is he? It turns out that he is Titus' grandson, and may well some day follow his father as emperor. I suspect, however, that the film wants us to know something more important about the play.

While Shakespeare's text does not verbally establish the abstract concept of military might, some appropriate stomping and

clanking about the Elizabethan stage probably would have stirred an audience closer in time to this ancient technology. Today's audiences, spoiled by Hiroshima and *Star Wars*, can appreciate Taymor's understanding that for its author this film's timeless,

tions of ancient heroes and battles, or as the tournament champion on tour, immersing himself in the entrails of Rome? You bet! This, then, is both the physical and psychological infrastructure of the film.

The chaotic political parade that follows

later continues the discordant theme, done in modern limousines with loudspeakers spewing the rivalry between royal sons Saturnius and Bassianus. Thus we are asked (this time by Julie Taymor, not Shakespeare) to enjoy a special historic sandwich. *Andronicus*, written under a painfully absolute hereditary monarchy, is suspended between the electoral promise of late Rome and that of our own time. In this way Taymor captures for us today the same "broader" scope that a Shakespeare play would have had back then—even this play—with its commentaries transcending its own time. And in 1585 such work was heady stuff, more suitable for the block than the stage. Only later generations—such as our own Founding Fathers—might have learned from Shakespeare's special brand of behaviorism, and modeled their new democracy on what they had learned; our constitution and laws are laced with his wisdom.

Turning now to the play itself, this film's most welcome feature is, in fact, the deft preservation of Shakespeare's

language. Taymor's rendition here of text and characters is one of powerful restraint. In all but one or two instances key speeches are framed in close-ups supported by the facial energies of a well-chosen cast, and after seeing *Titus* it is difficult to imagine an equal impact from these same words cast adrift on any staging of the play. We would, of course, expect Anthony Hopkins to be able to get his lines across in a hurricane, but the film's "talking-head" format allows us to share in the more intimate feelings of a

(Continued on page 15)

## Excerpts from Julie Taymor's press release comments on *Titus*

*"In adapting Titus to a screenplay the challenge was to maintain the contrasts and scope in Shakespeare's vision: his story and language is at once poetic and very direct. It shifts between graphic, base emotions and ephemeral, mythic revelations. Though I was committed to creating a film whose world would be grounded in a sense of possibility and reality, I was also committed to the ideas I had formulated in the theater that juxtaposed stylized and naturalistic imagery."*

*"My cue came from Shakespeare himself. The genius of his drama is that he juxtaposes very direct, simple and visceral actions with immense poetic verbal imagery, allowing neither direction to over-indulge in either gratuitous action or sentimental poeticizing. —Throughout the film there is a tension between the real and the surreal, the poetic and the graphic, thus hopefully allowing the adrenaline to rush while the heart and mind is challenged."*

*"Within this very gritty drama there is a constant referencing to Latin and Greek mythology as well as to animal and nature's symbolism. We see the teeth of cruelty and then hear that, 'Rome is but a wilderness of tigers—' Lavinia, Titus' daughter, is often referred to as a doe, and the rape and mutilation which overcame her are direct parallels to the story of Philomel in Ovid's Metamorphosis."*

*"As counterpoint to Shakespeare's dark tale of vengeance is the journey of the young boy from childhood innocence to passive witness and finally to knowledge, wisdom, compassion, and choice. As the drama comes to its end young Lucius, the boy, takes Aaron's baby in his arms. Holding his 'enemy,' the young Lucius begins to move toward the exit arch of the Coliseum—toward the promise of daylight as if redemption were a possibility."*

cacophonous setting would have been absolutely necessary. Our equivalent might have been Great Eisenhower, atop a tank returning up Broadway as Liberator to become President.

So, try to imagine *Andronicus* having been written (in 1585) by a young country bumpkin for whom there is no record of his ever having been subjected to unnecessary schooling, owned a book, gone to war, or learned a classic language. But would Oxford have seen himself as that impressionable boy dreaming through his own transla-

*Dark Lady (Continued from page 1)*

early as 1589 or '90 and ending in 1595 or '96 (Akrigg 201 fn 2, 203 fn).

### Identifying the cast of characters

Chiefly because these dates have been more or less firmly determined, most scholars writing today identify *The Fair Youth* as Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who turned seventeen in 1590. This identification works even better for Oxfordians than orthodox scholars, since Southampton was being urged by his family and friends at that time to marry Oxford's daughter, an historical fact that fits much better with the marriage theme of the first seventeen sonnets than anything the Stratfordians can suggest. Also, with Wriothesley as *The Fair Youth*, *The Rival Poet* can be identified as his beloved friend and mentor, the Earl of Essex. For Oxfordians, the identity of the melancholy poet himself certainly works better for Oxford, turning forty and up to his ears in money problems and loss of reputation, than it does for William of Stratford, just turned thirty and, as orthodoxy has it, just embarked on an exciting and successful career.

Which resolves the identity of all of the major characters of the sonnets but one.

### Who was the *Dark Lady*?

Scholars gave her the name because the poet made such a point of her dark complexion and dark mournful eyes. Rather unkindly he suggested that most did not consider her beautiful. "In the old age," he wrote, "black was not counted fair, or if it were, it bore not beauty's name," though he assures her always that he thinks her "the fairest and most precious jewel." In calling her "black," we mustn't be confused into thinking that, as with our concept of Othello, she was of African descent, for "black" was the common term then for a brunette. (Today we still speak of the "black Irish.") Based on Shakespeare's repeated description, most scholars conclude that she was of Mediterranean descent with the dark curly hair, olive skin and dark eyes of Spain, Italy, Southern France and Greece. Actresses like Sophia Loren and Anna Magnani, divas like Maria Callas, easily suggest the sexual appeal of such a woman and the temperament that

often goes along with it.

What else do we know or can we guess about her from the poems? She was an expert keyboard player (Sonnet 128); had to have been to have impressed Shakespeare, the most musical of writers. She was committed in some way to another man (Sonnet 152); in his pique over the fact that he was not the only man in her life he came close to calling her a whore (Sonnet 137). She was high-strung and demanding, "tyrannous" he called her (Sonnet 131). And she was considerably younger than he (Sonnet 138).

His sexual attraction to her was so intense that he felt it as a sort of bondage that he was simply too weak to break, though he knew he should (Sonnets 134, 139, 141, 144, and 147, among others). He felt so guilty about the relationship that we might guess that the man she belonged to was a friend of his; that in loving her he was hurting others who had more of a claim on her and probably also on him (Sonnets 142, 152). Yet, despite the pain she caused him, there can be no doubt her loved her, not just with the sexual passion expressed in Sonnet 147 (above, right), but also with tenderness, as is expressed in all but a few of his sonnets.

### Rowse uncovers her identity

In 1973, the historian A.L. Rowse published his claim to have discovered the identity of the *Dark Lady*. Opinionated and egotistical, Rowse was a thorn in the flesh of traditional Shakespeareans. And as a fierce defender of the Stratford myth, he has been a problematic figure for Oxfordians as well. But we think he got this one right, and we are grateful.

At some earlier point in time, Rowse had discovered that the diaries of Simon Forman, lodged in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, were a goldmine of information about the Elizabethans. Forman was an astrologer and self-qualified physician to a variety of Londoners, including many in the aristocracy and wealthy merchant class, one who relied more on his charisma than his integrity for his success.

One day, while examining Forman's notes, Rowse came across something that aroused his interest. One "Emilia Lanier" had visited Forman in May and June of 1597. According to Forman's notes, in her youth, Emilia had been the mistress of Lord

### Sonnet 147

*My love is as a fever, longing still  
For that which longer nurseth the disease;  
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,  
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
And frantic mad with evermore unrest;  
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,  
At random from the truth vainly express'd;  
For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,  
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.*

Hunsdon, the Queen's Lord Chamberlain. Since Rowse had already spent a great deal of time and energy on efforts to resolve the identity of the *Fair Youth*, he was well aware of the qualities necessarily possessed by the *Dark Lady*. Emilia Lanier appeared to have several of those qualities. Although married at the time she visited Forman, she would certainly have been seen as a courtesan during the years when she was Hunsdon's mistress. It was also clear that she was immensely attractive to men, for Forman, who documented his active sex life in his diaries, became somewhat obsessed by her, an obsession that lasted at least three years and that was not deterred by her obvious refusal to fulfill his desires.

Further research revealed that she was a member of the Bassano family, which made it very likely that she was a musician, for the Bassanos were the most numerous and important of the families that provided the music that entertained the Courts of Elizabeth and James. And because they were Italians, brought originally from Venice to the Court of Henry VIII during his courtship of Anne Boleyn, it seemed more than likely that she would have Mediterranean coloring and the "tyrannous" temperament that often goes with it. As the Queen's Lord



Chamberlain of the Household, it was Hunsden's duty to oversee entertainment for the Court, which meant, naturally, that he had a great deal of contact with the Court musicians.

Since Henry Carey, Baron Hunsden, was forty-five years older than Emilia, their relationship was not one of sexual passion, certainly not on her part and possibly not on his as well. The youngest of Hunsdon's ten grown children was nine years older than Emilia. So, although Shakespeare may scorn the Dark Lady for breaking what he terms her "bed vow," we can surely understand why a young woman in her early twenties might seek emotional satisfaction outside a relationship that was not a marriage and, as it turned out, assured her little in the way of future security.

With her youth and her looks, Emilia would surely have been on the lookout for a relationship that would. During this period she had been, as she told Forman, "favored much of her Majesty and of many noblemen and hath had great gifts and been made much of" (Rowse 11).

According to Emilia, Hunsden kept her in style and when she became pregnant in 1592, he arranged a marriage for her with a member of the second most important family of Court musicians, Alphonse Lanier. Her son was born early in 1593. Hunsdon continued to support her, and then, for four years until his death in 1596. It was the year following his death that she visited Forman to see if astrology might reveal whether her husband, then with the Earl of Essex on his Cadiz campaign, would be knighted and herself made a Lady.

### The Bassanos

At first Rowse was unaware that there was already a considerable body of information available on Emilia's family, the Bassanos, who have been studied in some depth by historians of early music since the late nineteenth century. In their 1995 book on the Bassanos, music historians Roger Lasocki and David Prior claim that the family had an enormous influence on the development of music in England in the sixteenth century. Considered foremost in their fields in Venice, both as players and, what was equally important at the time, skilled instrument-makers, Lasocki and Prior hold that,

despite the fact that they left no compositions clearly labelled as their own, they brought with them to England new ideas in musical composition, ideas in vogue in Italy at the time, ideas that would soon lead the way to England's finest musical hour. They kept in touch with Italy and Italian ideas by travelling back to Italy from time to time where some of them still owned property in the town of Bassano, a village about forty miles northwest of Venice.

## SALVE DEVS REX IVDÆORVM.

### Containing.

- 1 The Passion of Christ.
- 2 Eues Apologie in defence of Women.
- 3 The Teares of the Daughters of Ierusalem.
- 4 The Salutation and Sorrow of the Virgine Marie.

With diuers other things not vnfit to be read.

Written by Mistris Emilia Lanier, Wife to Captaine  
Alfonso Lanier, Seruant to the  
Kings Majestie.



AT LONDON

Printed by Valentine Simmes for Richard Benian, and are  
to be sold at his Shop in Pauls Churchyard, at the  
Signe of the Fleure de Lure and  
Crown. 1611.

Title page of Emilia Bassano Lanier's 1611 book of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*.

Even more interesting, perhaps, is the fact, uncovered by Lasocki and Prior, that the Bassanos were not Italians, but Sephardic Jews. They had been residents of Venice for only a brief forty years or so before first coming to England, having left Spain during the diaspora created by the edict of Ferdinand and Isabella that banished the Jews from Spain in 1492.

Recent research sheds light on this community of Jews who had lived and prospered in the Languedoc region of southern France and northern Spain for centuries, even as far back as the time of Christ. It was from this area that the culture of chivalry and courtly love was spread by troubadours throughout Europe, a culture steeped in knowledge of ancient languages, in science and cosmology, in poetry, music and the use of stringed instruments, whose origins were the near East, originally centered on the

great city of Alexandria in Egypt. Dinner table conversation at the Bassanos would have been interesting, to say the least.

### Emilia the feminist

But there is yet another and perhaps even more interesting frame of reference for our nominee, for as "Emilia Lanier" she has been energetically promoted by feminist literary historians over the past two decades as the first woman in English history to publish a full book of poetry under her own name. This little book, *Salve Deus Rex Judeorum*, was registered with the Stationers in October 1610, and printed by Valentine Simms in 1611. Although, like *The Sonnets*, it barely survived into the present age (there are but nine copies known to exist), King James's son, Prince Henry, had a beautifully bound copy in his library. This would suggest that Emilia's book was known and read by the community for whom it was intended, the Court community that, despite her low rank, was hers since childhood.

Emilia's long poem is an account of Christ during his final days, his beauty described as a woman would have seen him. As Rowse grudgingly admits, she has an exceptional ear and a strong sense of meter and rhythm and, much like early Shakespeare, she seems to write rapidly and easily, as though thinking out loud in verse, and to express her personal feelings freely and confidently with no awkwardness or self-consciousness, an astonishing performance by any poet then, much less a woman. The other long poem, a description of the estate of Cookham, where she lived for a time with the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter, Ann Clifford, is another first for Emilia, for it is known as the first country house poem in the English language, a genre soon to be popularized by Ben Jonson.

Nor is this the end of her firsts, for what is perhaps of more importance to feminists even than the quality of her poetry is the fact that the preface to her poem is the first genuine feminist tract ever published in the English language. It would be the only one for almost two hundred years, until Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1792. Emilia dedicated her book to a dozen patrons, all of them women, another first, while her Preface

(Continued on page 10)

*Dark Lady (Continued from page 9)*

made it clear that it was an audience of women that she was addressing.

Speaking forcefully and directly in the only prose in the book, she urges women to see themselves, not as weak, sinful, inconstant creatures, as men so often were wont to portray them, but as important, as worthy and as virtuous as any man. Most of all, she demanded that women stop their cruel judgments of each other, and that "they would refer such points of folly to be practised by evil-disposed men, who forgetting they were born of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world" (Rowse 77).

She states her case in language so strong that four centuries later it antagonized A. L. Rowse. In a time when women dared not publish anything but the most cautious translations of works of piety, to speak as Emilia does, boldly and in the first person, and then to publish it under her own name, was an act of extreme bravado. How can we doubt that this is the woman that captured the heart of Shakespeare, a writer who in every one of his stage heroines showed that wit, daring and intelligence were the prime qualities he treasured in a woman? He loved music, she came from a family of musicians; he loved Italy, her family came from Italy. Forman's obsession shows that she had intense powers of attraction for men. And, as the mistress of the patron of the Lord Chamberlain's men, raised in the family that provided the Court with their musical entertainment, she could hardly be closer to Shakespeare's world.

#### But what about Oxford?

Oxford as Shakespeare actually makes the case for Emilia as the Dark Lady more solid. In the sonnets to and about the Dark Lady, Shakespeare refers several times to their age difference, as in Sonnet 138 (above).

In 1590, when Emilia was nineteen, William of Stratford was twenty-five; in 1596, the probable end of the period of sonnet composition, Emilia was twenty-five while William of Stratford was thirty. Even today when we are more concerned about such things, an age difference of five years hardly qualifies as an "age gap" and to claim it does makes nonsense of the poems. Between

#### Sonnet 138

*When my love swears that she is made of truth,  
I do believe her, though I know she lies;  
That she might think me some untutor'd youth,  
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young  
Although she knows my days are past the best,  
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;  
On both sides thus is simple truth suppress.  
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
And age in love loves not to have years told:  
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.*

Oxford and Emilia, on the other hand, there was a genuine age gap of almost twenty years.

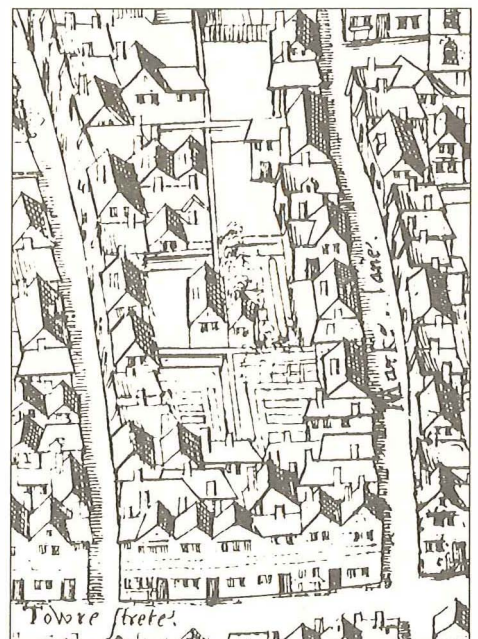
Among the dedicatory poems in the front of her book is one in which Emilia declares her gratitude to Susan Bertie, Countess of Kent, whom she addresses as "the Mistress of my youth, the noble guide of my ungoverned days." Forman quoted her as stating that "she was brought up on the banks of Kent," which suggests that she spent a number of years in her childhood or early teen years in this noble and childless household. As Rowse notes, it is likely that it was while she lived with the Countess that she received the impressive education that she demonstrates in her writing. As for Susan's own education, as the daughter of Catherine Bertie, the Dowager Countess of Suffolk, her education could hardly have been neglected. The Dowager was one of the leading members of the community of protestant expatriates who fled England during the reign of Mary Tudor, one that later provided the reformed Church with its most important officials and that also provided the English literati with several women renowned for their extensive educations, among them Francis Bacon's mother and

her sister, Oxford's mother-in-law. Susan Bertie was also the sister of Sir Peregrine Bertie, the husband of Mary Vere, Oxford's sister.

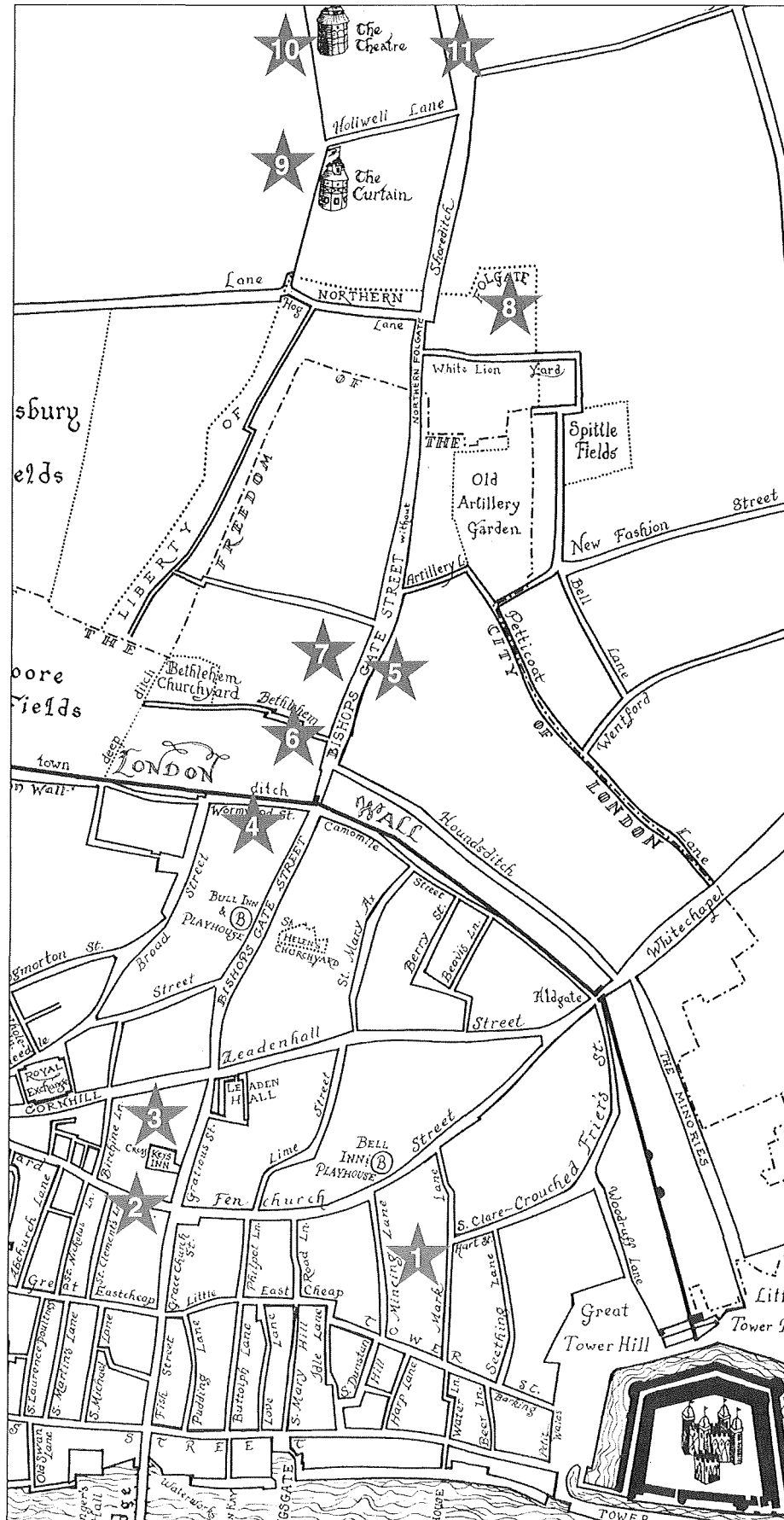
#### The first theater district

In 1552, Antonio Bassano and his brothers purchased property in the parish of All Hallows Barking, a neighborhood frequented by foreigners, actors and musicians (Lasocki 25). Several purchased property on Mark Lane, including Emilia's uncle, Antonio Bassano, where he and his wife Elina raised their large family (See Figure 1 and Figure 2, #1). Five of their six sons became Court musicians, and two of the four daughters married Court musicians. Five of Antonio and Elina's children were within four years of Oxford in age, all five of them Court musicians or married to Court musicians. There can be no doubt that as soon as he began frequenting Court holiday events, probably at the age of twelve when he came to live in London at Cecil House, Oxford would have the opportunity to get to know the professional musicians that made up the consorts that entertained the Court on a daily basis, including, of course, the Bassano family and their most prominent member, Antonio.

Figure 1. The residence of Antonio Bassano on Mark Lane, near the corner of Tower Street; probably the group of buildings at the center of this map section.







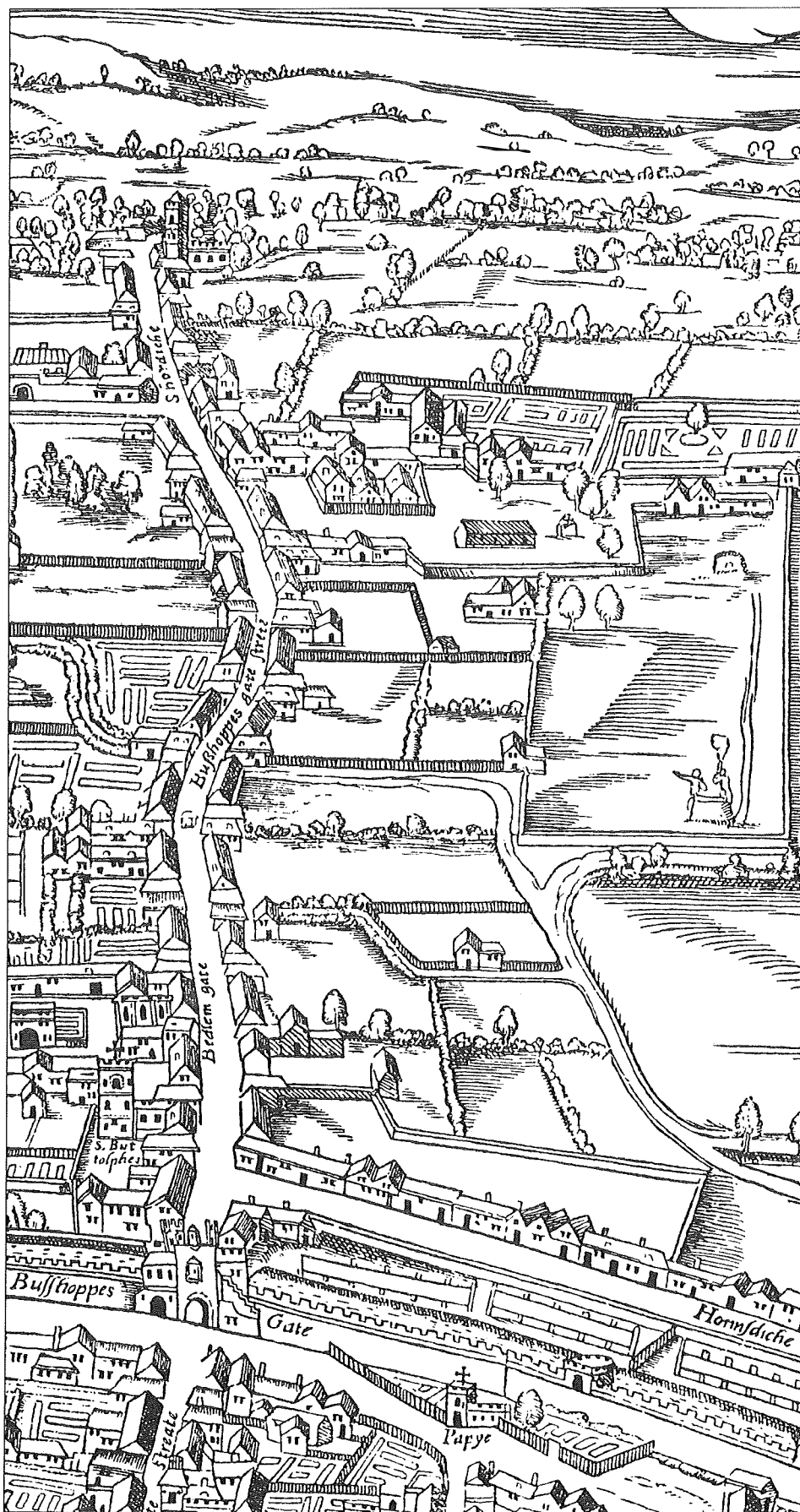
Baptista Bassano, Emilia's father, was Antonio's youngest brother. Baptista moved to Norton Folgate, in Shoreditch (Figure 2, #8), in the early 1560s, and over time, purchased several buildings and parcels of land in this area, so that it is fair to conjecture that it was somewhere in this neighborhood that Emilia was born. She was one of four children, though the two boys died in early childhood, leaving just herself and her sister. She was baptized in the parish church, St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, January 27, 1569. That her brothers died makes it even more likely that her father taught his trade to his daughters. She could also have received instruction from her uncles, Edward (Eduardo) and Andrew (Andrea) Bassano, both of whom bought property in Norton Folgate in the 1570s. It is also possible that her mother, Margaret Johnson, was a member of a family of musicians as several Johnsons appear in lists of Court musicians.

Emilia's marriage to Alphonse Lanier in 1592 took place in the neighboring parish at St. Botolph's, Aldgate; but by 1597, when she visited Simon Forman, she and her husband were living in Longditch, an upscale neighborhood in Westminster near Cannon Row where many members of the nobility and Court community had London residences, among them Oxford's daughter Elizabeth and her husband, the Earl of Derby. A

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Figure 2. The original theater district along Bishopsgate Street in London: #1 the Bassano residence on Mark Lane; #2 The Bull Inn (theater); #3 The Cross Keyes Inn (theater); #4 Broad Street, Oxford's location in the late 70s; #5 Fisher's Folly, Oxford's residence in the 80s; #6 St. Botolph's, Emilia and her daughter's births registered here; #7 Bedlam, the hospital for the insane; #8 neighborhood of Norton Folgate, probable location of Emilia's childhood home; #9 The Curtain theater; #10 The Theater; #11 the road to Hackney, Oxford's primary residence from the mid-90s to the end of his life.

This map gives a sense of how close these places were to each other, and their relation to the Thames River. Bishopsgate Street was part of the ancient road leading into London from Canterbury to the South, and out of London, towards Norwich to the North, the road to Oxford's ancestral domain in NE Essex. This road crosses the river at London Bridge, the only bridge over the Thames in Oxford's time.



### *Dark Lady (Continued from page 11)*

daughter born to Emilia in December 1598 was baptized in the local Westminster church, St. Margaret's, and then, sadly, buried nine months later back in Emilia's old neighborhood at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate. Whatever her living situation in Longditch, it was clearly not of a stable or permanent nature. Rowse conjectures that she returned with her children to her old neighborhood, perhaps to live with relatives, while her husband was in Ireland with Essex.

At some point between 1598 and 1609, she and Alphonse moved to the village of Hackney, a short ride further north from Norton Folgate along that same road (Figure 2, #11). After her husband's death in 1613, Emilia rented an old farmhouse in St. Giles in the Fields, another area where there were a number of noble residents. Here she did her best to support herself and her son by operating a small school for "children of divers persons of worth and understanding," though this venture ended in grief after only two years. Court records over the years show several lawsuits she instigated over the years in attempts to secure a living for herself, her son and her grandchildren. She outlived her son, and just about everyone else in this story, dying at the ripe old age of seventy-four.

### **Oxford's neighborhood**

London wasn't very big during this period. It isn't necessary to place Emilia and Oxford in the same neighborhood to argue that they had a relationship; they could have been lovers whether they lived near each other or not. Nevertheless, it is interesting that when Oxford lived in the mansion known as Fisher's Folly he was living in the same neighborhood in which Emilia was

*Figure 3. Oxford's chief residence during the 1580s, Fisher's Folly, is the group of buildings just above Bedlam gate on the right, with a tree. Keep in mind that these early maps are rarely exact, so we have no way of knowing whether this reflects the property as it was. The map dates from the 1570s. Across from Fisher's Folly was the old priory of Bethlem, by then a hospital for the incurably insane. Below is St. Botolph's, the parish church for Bishopsgate parish, where Emilia was christened in 1569, and where her daughter was buried in 1598.*

born and raised, and a short walk from Mark Lane, where the Bassanos had their family home. Two more of Emilia's uncles also had property in Hoxton, which was just north of Shoreditch and south of Hackney, where both Emilia and Oxford lived later.

It was in this same neighborhood of Norton Fulgate that James Burbage built his Theater in 1576 and where *The Curtain Theater* was built not long after. Here also the Burbage family lived and raised their sons, one of whom, Richard, grew to become the leading actor in the Lord Chamberlain's men in the 90s. It was in this same neighborhood that the playwright Christopher Marlowe was living in 1589 while rooming with the poet Thomas Watson. In the early 1590s Watson was tutoring the children of William Cornwallis, to whom Oxford sold Fisher's Folly in 1589.

There is evidence that for some time before Oxford bought and renovated Fisher's Folly in 1580, he was living somewhere on Broad Street (Figure 2, #4) (Nelson), one street over from Bishopsgate Street. It is not surprising that so many actors and musicians lived in this neighborhood, since at one end of Bishopsgate street, not far from Mark Lane, were two of the inns where plays were still performed during the winter season as they had been before the public theaters were built: *The Bull* (Figure 2, #4) and *The Cross Keyes* (Figure 2, #5), while at the other end of Bishopsgate Street, outside the city walls, in the suburb of Shoreditch, were located the first "public" theaters: *The Theater* and *The Curtain* (Figure 2, #s 9 and 10).

Both Oxford and Emilia Bassano married in 1592 (though not to each other) and both had sons the following year. Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, was an heiress whom he probably married to repair his ruined estate. At some point in the mid-90s, Oxford and his new wife and son moved to Brooke House in the Village of Hackney, a few miles further north along the same road that led from Bishopsgate through Norton Folgate.

So far as we know, this was Oxford's residence until his death in 1604. We also know that Emilia and her husband and son also lived in Hackney for some period between 1599 and 1609, though since we have only the single date, 1609, she may not have moved there until after Oxford's death.

None of this proves, of course, that Oxford and Emilia had an intimate relationship. It does, however, make it extremely unlikely that, given the small size of both communities to which they belonged, that of the theater and of the Court, they managed to avoid meeting and knowing each other, and knowing this, and knowing both their natures as evidenced by their writings and their reputations, we are free to guess the rest.

If Emilia Lanier was Shakespeare's Dark Lady, we should find evidence of her, and perhaps her family as well, in the plays. Many interesting connections do exist, but there are two Shakespeare plays in particular that seem to speak to their relationship.

### *The Merchant of Venice*

The first thing that strikes us is that the youthful protagonist who falls in love with Portia is named *Bassanio*. Names in Shakespeare can often be traced to an original story in French or Italian, but this one is original with Shakespeare. Although *Bassanio* is not exactly the same as *Bassano*, it is a fact that, in the records of the time, *Bassano* was spelled *Bassani*, almost as often as it was spelled with an "o." As an Italian name, derived from a location, the family themselves may well have called themselves the *Bassani*, the plural of *Bassano*.

The Merchant of Venice himself, the older man that loves Bassanio with the same dedication as the poet of the *Sonnets* loved the Fair Youth, is named *Antonio*. As we have already noted, Antonio Bassano was the patriarch of the Bassano family, the father of five Court musicians and two Court musician's wives, all Oxford's contemporaries in age and steeped in the culture of Italy, the culture he badgered the Queen and his guardian to be allowed to experience and which he was forced to leave after less than a year, long before he was ready to return to England.

In fact, several of the *Bassani* could be regarded as real "merchants of Venice," for they had business dealings that took them back to Venice from time to time. As with Antonio in the play, their success in these dealings depended upon the health and welfare of ships. But most members of the Bassano family were primarily professional musicians. More than most of Shakespeare's

plays, *The Merchant of Venice* is filled with descriptions of the beauty, effects and, above all, the importance of music.

But if the Bassanos were Jews, what about Shylock, Shakespeare's anti-semitic caricature? Wouldn't they have taken Shylock as an insult?

Perhaps they would have known, as would all of Oxford's personal audience, that he was creating a paradox, for if the Christian Antonio was based in part on a Jew, the antisemitic caricature, Shylock, was based on a Christian, one who dealt in money, land and favors like any Jew on the Rialto; one who in Oxford's angry opinion, at least, prized his ducats over his daughter and, while spouting Christian doctrine at every turn, openly advocated usury. (Read 274)

We suggest, of course, that in the early 90s version of *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock was based on Lord Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law, who was at that time foreclosing on Oxford's supposed "debt" to the Crown. This and other debts were forcing him to sell the last of his properties, including his home in Bishopsgate.

Whatever the exigencies of Burghley's office that may have forced him to foreclose on his son-in-law, beneath their uneasy detente lay an opposition of values that ties of marriage and progeny could never reconcile. Just as Shylock hated Antonio for Antonio's ill-concealed disdain of Shylock's religion and his trade of money-lending, Burghley resented Oxford for virtually identical reasons. They were separated by both culture and nature by an unbreachable gulf, Oxford loathing Burghley's hypocrisy, his equivocation, his lust for money and power, and Burghley hating not understanding everything Oxford stood for: the feudal doctrine of noble largesse along with the artist's duty to teach and cleanse society. As Jacques says in *As You Like It*, Oxford demanded, "as large a charter as the wind, to blow on whom I please, for so fools have, and they that are most galled with my folly, they most must laugh."

Burghley, bitter over his daughter's death, was in no mood to laugh off Oxford's peccadilloes. Like Shylock, he used legal measures to take the pound of flesh nearest his son-in-law's heart, his theater and pub-

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*Dark Lady (Continued from page 13)*

lishing enterprise, by forcing him to turn his attention to sheer financial survival.

### *Antony and Cleopatra*

Numerous scholars (among them the mystery writer, Agatha Christie) have commented on the similarities between Shakespeare's Cleopatra and his Dark Lady (Rowse 29), and between their lovers, the Roman general Mark Antony and the poet of *The Sonnets*. It is interesting that they can see the parallels even without knowing anything about Oxford and the kind of trouble his relationship with Emilia got him into with the Court community and with his in-laws. Or the trouble it must have caused her, by preventing her from forming a relationship with a man who could either marry her and give her respectability or, if not marry, then at least keep in style, neither of which Oxford was in any position to offer.

When Emilia wrote of Cleopatra's great beauty as her downfall (above, right), was she apologizing to her community for the mess she and Oxford had made of their relationship and the pain they had caused his legal wife; perhaps both his wives?

Since *The Sonnets* was published in 1609 and Emilia's book was registered the following year (ent. SR October 2 1610. xxv), Rowse thinks it likely that she published as a means of defending herself against Shakespeare's harsh portrayal of her.

The general reader would probably have had no clue as to the identity of the woman described in *The Sonnets*, but it wouldn't have been the general reader Emilia would have cared about. Those she cared about would have known immediately, or if not, they would have been quickly informed by someone who did.

If *Shakespeare's Sonnets* was suppressed, as it seems that it was, certainly the most likely agent of its suppression was the Earl of Southampton; Emilia alone would not have had the necessary clout. Freed from the Tower by James, and returned to his rank and possessions, Southampton, by then in his mid-thirties, was determined to shake off the reputation of a rebel and traitor that had kept him imprisoned in the Tower for two years. At this stage of his life he would hardly have been pleased to have his youthful involvements with Shakespeare and

Emilia Bassano broadcast for anyone to read who could afford to buy them. I think we can be sure he would have used every means at his disposal, which by then were considerable, to recall *Shakespeare's Sonnets* and prevent its further publication.

Humiliated by the public appearance of these intimate poems, Rowse thinks Emilia fought back with the only weapon she had, her talent. She would replace Shakespeare's version of her with something that would command respect. She would let them know who she really was.

### **The evidence of the names**

When we exclude the generic names Shakespeare took from classical literature, history or the Bible, pun-names like "Doll Tear-sheet," or, like "Constable Dull," names given comic characters as a sort of cartoon sketch of their natures, we are left with a handful of names of great interest to the question of who wrote the plays.

For his protagonists, Shakespeare used certain names a number of times and never used others. Of the names pertinent to our story, we note that he never used either Edward (Oxford's name) or Henry (Southampton's) for any non-historical character, though he did use William, always for nonentities, and John (Oxford's father's name), always for servants or rascals.

Male names used by Shakespeare more than four times each are Claudio and Sebastian; five times each, Angelo and Francis; and seven times each, Luciano or Lucianus. If we include Francisco as a variation of Francis, it, too, increases to seven. But Francis, Francisco, Lucius and Luciano are, in all but one or two cases, minor characters. Antonio, used by Shakespeare seven times, is, in every case, a major or important supporting role. If we include the name Antony, it adds up to a grand total of ten, making Antonio or Antony his favorite male name. We also note that all but one of these Antonios are good characters with noble hearts, and that most are older men, mentors and benefactors to the younger protagonists. Antonio Bassano, the patriarch of the Bassano family, was about the same age as Oxford's father, while of his five sons, four were within a year or two of Oxford's own age.

Only two female names are used more

*Tw'as Beautie bred in Troy the ten years strife,  
And carried Helen from her lawful Lord;  
Tw'as Beautie made chaste Lucrece lose her life,  
For which proud Tarquin's face was so abhorr'd:  
Beautie the cause Antonius wrong'd his wife,  
Which could not be decided but by sword:  
Great Cleopatra's Beauties and defects  
Did work Octavia's wrongs, and his neglects.*

*Emilia Lanier (Rowse 85)*

than three times. Catherine, a favorite for queens, is used four times; Catherine's of stature were many in Shakespeare's time. But Emilias were not, and yet we find the name Emilia tied for first place for frequent use of female names. Shakespeare used it three times as a female name and once as a male name, Aemilius. If we include the play *Two Noble Kinsmen* as Shakespeare's, the name Emilia, at five uses, moves ahead of all other female names, with only Antonio, Francis, and Luciano ahead in number of uses of names of both sexes.

### **Two more plays**

Another early play shows an interesting connection with the Bassanos through their names. On some rather weak evidence, the pre-Shakespearean play *The Spanish Tragedy* was attributed, long after its composition, to Thomas Kyd. Apart from the fact that it was tremendously popular, *The Spanish Tragedy* is intriguing because of the many similarities between its plot and themes and those of *Hamlet*. We can't help but find it of interest that the only three noble-hearted characters in the play: the protagonist, *Jeronimo*, his murdered son, *Andrea*, and the heroine, *Isabella*, have the same names as three of Antonio Bassano's children, all three Court musicians or the wife of one, all three Emilia's cousins, and all three within a year or two of being the same age as the Earl of Oxford.

It is also worth mentioning that the name of Antonio's other daughter is the Italian version of another of Shakespeare's female protagonists, *Lucretia*. Emilia's father's name, *Baptista*, has also been given to two



characters in the plays. Thus we see that Shakespeare (plus Kyd, if you trust the orthodox view) gave many characters the names of several members of the Bassano family, names not typical to the English of that time. This, plus the fact that they are to be found in works that many scholars agree were written or revised at the same time (late 80s to early 90s) seems well beyond the range of mere coincidence.

But there is still one more early play that offers clues to a relationship between Oxford and Emilia Lanier. The title page of *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*, published in 1600, states "As it hath been sundry times played by the right honorable Earl of Oxenford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, his servants." As its form and style

follows that of several of the Queen's Men's plays, it was probably written for that company originally in the 1580s. It is a rather silly romance typical of the pre-Shakespearean period, featuring a noble hero in disguise, a clown spouting what is meant to be a Dutch accent, and a semi-historical French venue of no great validity.

The interesting name here is that of the female lead, a most unusual name, unique so far as we know, *Odillia*. Or rather, we should say perhaps, almost unique, for the name Emilia gave her baby girl two years before the play was published, the one who died in 1598, was *Odillia*.

*This article was first presented as a lecture at the Newberry Library in Chicago, sponsored by the Chicago Oxford Society, July 20, 2000.*

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*Titus (Continued from page 7)*

complicated man. Likewise the electric energies of Jessica Lang as Tamora—propped up by a costume that would make Madonna jealous—do justice to her less-than-charitable nature.

Granting Rome's larger than life setting—a bloody jungle equipped with real tigers, plus clinical special effects that are suitably uncomfortable—we are not asked to abide with clever puppets. Instead, the amputations, penetrations, and throat slittings are so real that they become abstract and almost subsidiary to the intensity of the unretouched lines that accompany them.

Finally, then, we come to Shakespeare's trademark soliloquies, which in this play (interestingly) fall to Aaron the Moor, played skillfully by Harry Lennix, whose ritually scarred face and fine-tuned acting keep us in touch with the play's original author. Elizabethan scholarship seems to spread the provenance of stage Moors rather thinly, from light-skinned North Africans to Spaniards, and even—for those who have come to hate him—to the Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's Number One Guy. But Ms. Taymor, an acknowledged champion of African culture, pulls no punches. *Andronicus'* script says "black," and Aaron's best lines are those that do not question his, and his tiny son's natural (racial) superiority.

At least seventy percent of the Canon is about cause-and-effect and responsibility, and here, in this ancient behavioral sink,

Shakespeare has chosen to compare levels of integrity. We have Titus, whose principles extend to adherence to routine—though for us brutal—sacrificial rites, a sense of duty that requires him to kill one of his few remaining sons, and to an unquestioning love for his mutilated daughter. His brother, Marcus the Tribune, maintains a principled and even keel throughout. Tamora, whose only identification with ethical procedure is to term the ritual sacrifice of her oldest son as "irreligious," otherwise makes the bloody wars of the Romans pale before her private peace. Saturninus, played here as a caricature of the standard neurotic Roman emperor (with a touch of 16th-century monarchical psychosis), is Evil incarnate. Minor characters such as Titus' and Tamora's sons act in resonance with the morals of their parents, laced with appropriate heroics or cowardice.

But in Aaron, the film has preserved for us a 400-year-old hologram of integrity. The Moor, admittedly more intelligent than the rest of the cast, understands his own creative iniquity. In contrast to the unstructured behavior of other cast principals, he alone is true to both sides of his nature. His defense of his helpless son raises haunting questions about the play's author.

We know that Oxford lost one son in childbirth (1583), had another out of wedlock, and a third by his last marriage. And then there is the question of his own birth, with some Oxfordians now wondering whether he was really the son of a Queen. He certainly knew the rumors of at least one royal son (by Leicester) living safely in

Spain. While Oxfordian scholars are deeply split on this and other possibilities, one thing is certain: *Andronicus* was not written in a social vacuum.

It would have been easy for Shakespeare to make Aaron a total scoundrel; certainly easier than it would have been for a modern film maker. What I wouldn't give to share a cup of coffee with Julie Taymor to find out what attracted her to this play, and to see in it this potential. Hollywood has its precedents for the noble savage from nearly every culture. But this crisp presentation of a man whose last "confession" was limited to remorse for any kind deed he may have done was done as much in honor of the Bard as it was for any political correctness.

*Titus* ends with the boy Lucius carrying the Moor's cuddly infant off into the sunrise. This scene is not in the original play. Was this the infant Oxford being brought forth from Roman times to the sixteenth century to put things to right; or was Oxford's brainchild being passed on to us?

With her perceptive treatment of one of the Canon's more troublesome plays Julie Taymor has won the right to bring her own loving agenda to bear. The film opened to some acclaim, but then faded from sight. My prediction is that, aided by the inevitable capitulation of the Stratfordian Heresy, we have a cult film on our hands. In its respect for the ideas and purposes of the original play, *Titus* is, in my opinion, the best Shakespeare film to date. It certainly belongs in every college film archive for direct use in course work.

## Oxfordian News

### Oxford Symposium held in Massachusetts; authorship debate held in Washington, DC; Oxford Day Banquet scheduled for April 27th

#### California

The Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable was treated to a double presentation on December 2nd, with both Dr. Daniel Wright and Andrew Werth presenting papers (at the public library in **Beverly Hills**) which had first been presented at the Edward de Vere Studies Conference last spring (and later published in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000).

The Roundtable's schedule for 2001 continues with talks by Richard Roe on January 27th, Jean Seehof on March 24th, and Stephanie Hughes on June 9th

Contact either Alisa Beaton at (310)452-7264 or Carole Sue Lipman at (541)488-2475 for further information.

#### Massachusetts

On Saturday, November 18th, 40 attendees turned out for The First Annual Oxford Symposium, an event organized by Society member Paul Streitz of Darien, Connecticut. The Symposium was held in the Cronkite Center on the campus of Harvard University in **Cambridge**.

Streitz presented an overview of the authorship debate, and then turned the floor over to the four scheduled speakers for the day, one of whom—Mark Alexander—had come in all the way from California for the occasion. Alexander, who manages a popular Internet site on the authorship (*The Shakespeare Authorship SOURCEBOOK*, [http://home.earthlink.net/~mark\\_alex/](http://home.earthlink.net/~mark_alex/)) gave an entertaining and informative presentation on how one aspect of the authorship debate ("Shakespeare and the Law") has been more distorted than debated over the years, with the better arguments for Shakespeare's in-depth legal knowledge often suppressed.



*At the Oxford Symposium on November 18th (held in the Cronkite Center on the campus of Harvard University) three of the speakers (from left, Hank Whittemore, Mark Alexander and Roger Stritmatter) answered questions at the end of the day.*

Hank Whittemore and Roger Stritmatter gave presentations updating their work on, respectively, the *Sonnets* and Oxford's 1570 Geneva Bible; much of their work has also been recently published in the newsletter, and Stritmatter's dissertation will be available in 2001, while Whittemore expects to publish his book on *The Sonnets* in the near future.

The day was rounded out by Ron Destro's presentation on how knowing who Shakespeare was can reveal much about certain scenes in the Shakespeare plays and therefore inform an actor's reading of the scenes. Destro was assisted by several actors from his NY company.

On October 23rd Dr. Charles Berney gave a talk on "Hamlet, Who Was He?" at the **Watertown Public Library**.

Berney, elected to the Society Board of Trustees last October, reports that the turnout was excellent, as were the questions after his talk. He says that using the approach of inter-linking Hamlet, Shakespeare and Oxford clearly works in gaining the public's attention about the authorship debate and at the same time informing them about "why it matters."

The 14th Annual Oxford Day Banquet is scheduled for Friday, April 27th at the **Harvard Faculty Club in Cambridge**. The featured speaker will be Roger Stritmatter,

presenting, "Tales from Academe," the story of his 10-year journey to earning a Ph.D. based on accepting Edward de Vere as Shakespeare (newsletter story, Spring 2000).

Others expected to be on hand and speak briefly about their books in progress on the authorship issue are Peter W. Dickson and Hank Whittemore. Call William Boyle at (617)628-3411 for further information.

#### Tennessee

On November 2nd Maria Tatum, wife of Society President Aaron Tatum of **Memphis**, died after a long illness. In the weeks following Tatum received much support from his Oxfordian and Society friends, whom he wishes to thank through the newsletter.

Aaron writes,

I want to thank profusely all the kind words, thoughts and prayers expressed to me in the past weeks since my wife died. I am most grateful to each of you who sent cards or made phone calls and regret that I couldn't reach everyone to relate the news. She was infinitely supportive of me and especially in understanding my commitments to the Society, which was second to her attention. I am humbled by everyone's support and understanding.

#### Washington, DC

Researcher and author Peter Dickson was one of nearly 100 who attended an authorship debate held at the venerable **Metropolitan Club in Washington** on November 3rd. The event was organized with assistance from local Oxfordian Win James, Dickson and others, and drew some well-known Washington names, such as journalist Marvin Kalb.

The two debaters were also well-known among Washington's political establishment: John Fisher, whose political roots go back to the Eisenhower days, and Kenneth Adleman, a professor at Georgetown University (who teaches Shakespeare) and who was an advisor to former President Ronald Reagan and an associate of Jean Kirkpatrick, former UN ambassador.

Fisher argued against the Stratford man, while Prof. Adleman supported the mainstream status quo. Dickson reports that Fisher was quite effective in deconstructing the Stratford story, and in his opinion—based on questions during the event and informal talks afterwards—Fisher was much more effective in questioning Stratford than Adleman was in defending it, and Dickson said, “pretty much won over the audience.”

The debate did not venture into active promotion of Oxford as Shakespeare, but stuck mainly to the “questioning-Stratford before-promoting-an-alternative” mode (a decision similar to Diana Price's new book on the authorship, reviewed by Richard Whalen on page 18).

## England

Meanwhile, back in Stratford-on-Avon, we have recently learned that things are often not what they seem to be. The room where William of Stratford was born is not necessarily the room where he was born. He may have gone to school at the school where he was supposed to have gone to school. The monument in Trinity Church may well not be the one erected for him in the early 1600s. And now his mother's traditional birthplace is not where his mother was born.

*The New York Times* reported in December that research has shown that the timbered farmhouse in Wilmcote, three miles from Stratford, long thought to have been the birthplace of Mary Arden, was the wrong house. As a result, the designation “Mary Arden's House” has been transferred to another, rather decrepit structure 30 yards down the road.

Roger Pringle, director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, admitted that the discovery came as something of a shock, especially for the guides. That shock, however, will pale to insignificance once they understand that William Shakespeare, the great poet-dramatist, was born and raised, not in Stratford, but at Hedingham Castle, Essex.

## Commentary

# Sir Walter Scott as Paleo-Oxfordian

*Some thoughts on the proposition that leading lights of the 19th century may have understood who Shakespeare was*

By Chuck Berney

Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth* (published in 1821) concerns the efforts of the arrogant and ambitious Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, to ingratiate himself with Queen Elizabeth while keeping secret his earlier marriage to Amy Robsart. Scott plays fast and loose with the historical chronology: the action supposedly takes place in the summer of 1575, while the historical Amy Robsart died in 1560.

I was reading the novel to get Scott's take on Leicester when I came across a startling passage. Leicester is bustling through the court, greeting followers and exuding bonhomie, when he spots a familiar face:

Ha! Will Shakespeare—wild Will!—thou hast given my nephew, Philip Sidney, love-powder—he cannot sleep without thy Venus and Adonis under his pillow! We will have thee hanged for the veriest wizard in Europe. Hark thee, mad wag, I have not forgotten thy matter of the patent, and of the bears.

“*The veriest wizard in Europe.*” As an Oxfordian, I could scarcely miss the name-clue *veriest*, referring to Edward de Vere. Coincidence? Perhaps. But how about *wizard*? Could it refer to Henry Howard's accusation that de Vere was a sorcerer and the owner of a book of prophecies? And why *Europe*? Surely Leicester would have said “the veriest wizard in England,” unless Scott was trying to point to someone who was known as “the Italianate Englishman,” who had traveled extensively in France, Germany, Italy and Sicily, and who spoke colloquial French and Italian.

There are other clues. Philip Sidney was indeed Leicester's nephew, but his name is associated with de Vere's because of the tennis quarrel. And Leicester calls Shakespeare a “mad wag,” which, like “madcap” is used in the plays to designate characters (Philip the Bastard, Feste, Prince Hal) identified with Oxford. And 128 pages later, Oxford himself puts in a cameo appearance. The Queen has been told that Amy is the wife of Varney, Leicester's henchman, and

has commanded her to appear at court. Varney appears with certificates testifying that Amy is too sick to travel. Elizabeth asks if the certificates can be authenticated and Varney replies “So please your Majesty, my young Lord of Oxford, who is here in your presence knows Master Anthony Forster's hand and his character.” The novel goes on to describe Oxford as “a young unthrift whom Forster had more than once accommodated with loans at usurious interest,” and reports that he “verified the certificate.”

What did Scott know and how did he know it? Scott was writing 100 years before the publication of Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*; was there a confidential tradition of Shakespearean identity that reached from the 17th century to the 19th? We know there is such a tradition somewhere in the bowels of the British government—the bust in the Stratford chapel was altered to look more authorial around 1749, and more recently someone has quietly been persuading historians to eliminate references to Henry Wriothesley and Henry de Vere.

Roger Stritmatter has developed evidence that Herman Melville's last work, *Billy Budd*, is his homage to Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works. Did Melville tap into a confidential tradition, or did he anticipate Looney by researching 16th century poets, casting his conclusion in the form of a *roman à clef* rather than a literary detective story? Melville's grandfather claimed that the family was descended from titled Scottish nobility. The ambassador to the Elizabethan court when Mary Stuart reigned in Scotland was Sir James Melville.

Further research is necessary to verify the details, but I believe that both Scott and Melville were paleo-Oxfordians; that is, those who knew the truth about Shakespearean authorship before Looney published *Shakespeare Identified*. There may be more of them.

I no longer fear that the Paradigm Shift will leave us with nothing to do. The fun is just beginning.

## Book Reviews:

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

By Richard F. Whalen

In a single volume of 300 pages, Diana Price, an independent scholar, pulls together and expands upon all the major arguments against Will Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon as the author of Shakespeare works. Her book, a stinging rebuttal to the orthodox biographies of the Stratford man, undercuts them by analyzing the few facts about him and especially what is missing from his life. Readers of any orthodox biography should find *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* a provocative and persuasive companion volume. The contrasts are striking.

Price's main conclusion is that biographies of the Stratford man cannot cite "one personal literary record to prove that he wrote for a living" much less was capable of writing the works of Shakespeare. That is unique, she says, in the literary biography of the time; and to prove it she offers a chart of two dozen contemporaries showing their personal, literary paper trail in 10 categories, such as correspondence, manuscripts, books and notice at death as a writer. Will Shakspeare, the reputed author, is the only one to be blank in all 10 categories.

Although orthodox biographies rely heavily on references and allusions to Shakespeare by his contemporaries, Price points out that "all the literary allusions with some hint of personal information are ambiguous or cryptic." This, she says, is also "highly unusual, if not unique."

The subtitle of Price's book, her first, promises "new evidence" against the Stratford man as the author. Oxfordians, however, will find no smoking guns, no major discoveries, no startling revelations. Price's strength is in her comprehensive review of the evidence. Demonstrating wide and careful reading, she contrasts the barren record for the Stratford man with the relatively rich literary records for his writing contemporaries.

She adds to traditional anti-Stratfordian arguments in several areas, including *Greene's Groatworth of Witte* and the Parnassus plays, by interpreting the entire documents, putting key passages in full context, and even suggesting linkages between the two.

Price also sees a linkage between a passage in the preface to First Folio about Shakespeare rarely putting "a blot on his papers" and Ben Jonson's commonplace book *Timber* wherein he says Shakespeare "never blotted out a line." She goes on to argue that where the First Folio says Shakespeare "uttered with that easiness," the word "utter" can mean "empty-headed fast talk," and Jonson often used it in that sense.

To build a character profile of the Stratford man, Price draws on historical documents and satirical allusions for a 12-page "conjectural narrative," which, she says, is better supported by the evidence. She sees an Elizabethan busker of natural wit who recites extempore in the village square, produces puppet shows, loans money, plays bit parts on stage, gets away with ad-libbing lines, accumulates a theatrical wardrobe for an acting company, scavenges old plays, finances theater companies, and "brazenly accepts the compliments" when people confuse him with the published author of the works of Shakespeare. In the end, he is "a braggart with social pretensions, and a money-lender, but not a writer."

Some Oxfordians may take issue with several of Price's positions. In her view, Will Shakspeare probably attended the Stratford grammar school, although his education there was incomplete. There is, however, not enough evidence for "probably," although it is possible, since there was a school in Stratford. She accepts all six signatures as by the Stratford man, despite the doubts of Jane Cox, custodian of the will at the Public Record Office in England, who notes that it was not unusual for a clerk to write the name of the person making his will.

She devotes a chapter to the Stratford monument, rejecting the Dugdale sketch and Hollar engraving of it in the 1600s as

true effigies and calling them mistaken. To most viewers, the Dugdale/Hollar image looks like a man with a drooping moustache grasping a bag of corn or wool to his groin. It is very different from the effigy of a writer seen today in the Stratford church. (See "A Monumental Problem" in the Fall 1997/Winter 1998 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*.)

Despite Price's rejection of the Dugdale's eyewitness sketch as mistaken, her publisher features it prominently on the book jacket next to the words, "New Evidence of an Authorship Problem." Thus, the cover seems to say the Dugdale sketch is the new evidence. And, indeed, only a few years ago a photograph of it was produced for the first time. Paradoxically, Price maintains that it is not valid evidence. Fortunately, her readers have only to compare the Dugdale/Hollar images with today's monument (all three are among the book's 31 illustrations) to see the disparity that she tries to explain away in her text with conjectures about what Dugdale might have missed. The Dugdale sketch on the cover is, indeed, the "new evidence" of the title.

Price declines to discuss who might be the true author of Shakespeare's works, although she suggests he must have been an aristocrat who traveled in Italy. Her position may disappoint and frustrate readers: If Will Shakspeare was not the author, then who was this aristocrat she keeps mentioning? Price explains her agnostic position by saying the book is "concerned with those who would never look at any candidate as long as their confidence in the official biography of William Shakspeare remains unshaken. And it intends to shake that confidence."

Still, the average reader might have appreciated a few paragraphs on the most popular candidates over the years. Price notes that the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford is the front-runner but without even a summary of his qualifications. So it is perhaps not surprising that the text makes no mention at all of Charlton Ogburn, the champion of Oxford as the author and a forceful anti-Stratfordian. Cited only once are two other Oxfordian writers who were, of course, also knowledgeable

(Continued on page 23)



# Young Adult Novels Pitch Oxford as Shakespeare

By Richard F. Whalen

Oxfordians have long known that high school students, especially those in advanced placement classes, are greatly intrigued by the proposition that Shakespeare's works were written by Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford—if and when the proposition is raised in class.

The students quickly grasp the arguments. The iconoclastic aspects of the controversy appeal to them. They are open to new and daring ideas. A teacher who wants to challenge them to engage in critical thinking enjoys a gratifying response. Oxfordians who have been guest speakers in high school English classes can sense the students' enthusiasm; they ask good questions.

But even high school teachers who know about the authorship controversy seldom have the time or inclination to bring it up in their classes. The school system defines the curriculum, and teachers of Shakespeare are usually supposed to cover several plays in a crowded schedule. They have little time for an authorship "elective," unless they are willing to offer an after-hours class.

Now come two young adult novels, both published this year, that can—along with a third from 1993—introduce Oxford as the true author and do so in adventure stories that appeal to teenagers. They might even read them on their own time. Norma Howe's *Blue Avenger Cracks the Code* is the second in her Blue Avenger series from Henry Holt and Company. Lynne Kositsky's *A Question of Will* (Montreal: Roussan) is the third young persons novel by the award-winning Canadian author. Both authors attended the Shakespeare Oxford Society conference in Stratford, Ontario, in October for readings from their novels.

Curiously, both authors comment in "afterwards" to their books on their encounters with the Oxfordian proposition. In her "Author's Final Note," Howe pays tribute to the late Charlton Ogburn and his book, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* but took a cautiously agnostic position: "I don't know who really wrote the plays and poems attributed to

William Shakespeare." She awaited "some definitive proof." Nevertheless, the hero of her book and his English teacher are firm for Oxford, and after her book went to press she said that while writing it she had been almost convinced that Oxford was the author. The de Vere Studies Conference last April helped her make up her mind, and now she says she is "firmly in the Oxfordian camp."

In her *Afterward*, Kositsky says the message of her novel is "deadly serious," and she is convinced that Oxford was the author: "In fact, I am 99.9 percent sure he was. Why only 99.9 percent? Because I am never 100 percent sure of anything."

Both mention the Shakespeare Oxford Society. Both cite Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare*. Both feature lap dogs in their plot lines. And both urge further reading about the controversy. After noting Ogburn's fervent wish that Oxford receive the recognition he deserves, Howe ends her book by enjoining her readers: "You may be the one to make it happen," just as her hero almost does make it happen.

Kositsky urges her readers to try "to figure out for yourself the answer to one of the most perplexing riddles of all time." High school English teachers might make good use of both books as introductions to a critical-thinking segment on the authorship controversy.

## *Blue Avenger*

Norma Howe's book is her sixth young adult novel, and she does a masterful job of interweaving plot lines and maintaining suspense to the end. Her hero is not the macho man of revenge and violence that the title would suggest. He is David Schumacher, a high school junior who changes his name to Blue Avenger in his role as puzzle-solver, code-breaker and righter of wrongs. His English teacher, who wants to see "fairness and justice prevail," raises the authorship question in class. Blue (ex-David) is almost immediately persuaded and starts a notebook. A trip to Venice throws him into contact with a shadowy character who seems to have an old manuscript that might iden-

tify Oxford as the author. In the end, Blue feels that someone is going to solve the mystery, and he resolves to "spread the word until the day the truth is finally uncovered."

Along the way, Howe finds opportunities for vignettes about Giordano Bruno, Fermat's last theorem, the Venice Ghetto, email, Bacon's biliteral cipher and the problems of copyrighting computer games—plus Blue's romance with Omaha Nebraska (that's her name), whose absent father is a Bruno fan.

*U.S. News & World Report* carried a brief item on her book, calling it "an absorbing Oxfordian primer." *Publisher's Weekly*, a must-read for booksellers, praised it as "eccentric and intellectually engaging...a comic novel unafraid to challenge its audience." In November, she discussed her book at the national convention of the National Council of Teachers of English in Milwaukee.

## *A Question of Will*

Lynne Kositsky, a Canadian who grew up in England, hurls her heroine back in time to Shakespeare's day. The narrator, a high school girl and also a Canadian, is studying in London. Her class makes a field trip to the Globe and on the way she loses the way and suddenly finds herself in Shakespeare's London. In her 20<sup>th</sup> century pants and shirt, she is taken for a boy. She hooks up with an acting company, moves in with Will Shakspeare, and is enlisted to carry mysterious packages from the Earl of Oxford to Shakspeare. The packages turn out to be plays for the stage, and Willow, as the narrator is called, advances to leading roles for the acting company. As in the film *Shakespeare in Love*, she is at one point a girl playing a boy playing a girl playing a boy.

Kositsky's Edward de Vere limps, dresses in black, has eyes like burning coals, and is "dark, stooped and inscrutable." Willow is sure that he, not the dolt Shakspeare, is the author of the plays, which everyone seems to know but does not talk about. It's an open secret. De Vere finally explains to Willow

(Continued on page 24)

## Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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The newsletter welcomes articles, essays, commentary,  
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should be reasonably concise and, when appropriate,  
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## From the Editor:

### *Hamlet*, the comedy

When plans were being made for the 24th Annual Conference in Stratford last year, the prospect of seeing *Hamlet* as part of the festivities didn't seem particularly important. In fact, it seemed pretty old hat, and one might even have wondered if a less-often performed play might not provide more interest.

As it turns out, that was not the case, and the particular *Hamlet* that was seen in Stratford during the conference actually wound up providing some insights into the whole matter of Shakespeare and the authorship debate itself.

As discussed briefly in our report on the conference (page 5), there were several points of contention about this *Hamlet*, but one of the most notable was the extent to which this Stratford production emphasized comedy. Now there has always been some universally acknowledged comedy in the play—Hamlet's byplay word games with Polonius and with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to mind.

But in Stratford seeing the encounter with the ghost draw laughs, or having the production's overall sub-text lead up to a bedroom scene in which a burst of laughter results as Hamlet, lugging out the guts, cheerily calls out, "Good night, mother"—these laughs are a whole different matter.

For those of us for whom this comedy presented no real problem this calls to mind several mentions of the names Oxford,

Shakespeare and comedy, and we wonder out loud whether an overall part of the Shakespeare mystery is our under-appreciating the extent to which the author and his contemporaries may have seen much of his writing as comedy—even in the midst of tragedy.

Recall that in Meres' *Palladis Tamia* in 1598 the mention of Oxford's name is as "the best for comedy." In 1609, in the famous epistle to the *Troilus and Cressida* quarto ("A Never Writer to an Ever Reader"), this play is referred to as "passing full of the palme comically," and throughout the rest of the epistle plays by this author are continually called "Comedies," plays that demonstrate the author's wit, and his ability—through his wit—to frame play-texts "to the life" so that they "serve as common commentaries of all the actions of our lives," and that those who see these plays leave "better wittied than when they came."

Now these two examples are, assuredly, a thin reed upon which to claim that all Shakespeare is comedy, and should be played as comedy. The first-person anguish in many of the sonnets can easily belie that claim.

Nonetheless, we should perhaps consider that part of the paradigm shift that we all are seeking—a shift that involves informing the Shakespeare works with truly knowing how and why they were created—may also involve some rethinking about how the author may have seen himself and his work, i.e. Shakespeare the comedian.

## Newsletter schedule, policies for 2001/2002

The Board of Trustees has asked that we remind all our readers about our commitment to publish material from as wide a range of sources as possible. All our readers are encouraged to contribute news items and calendar listings throughout the year—based on the publication schedule below—as well as longer articles, essays and research papers.

Such longer material, can, of course, be submitted at any time during year, and may then appear in a subsequent newsletter issue based upon review by the Editorial Board and available space.

For the coming year, the newsletter will

be published on the following schedule (dates are approximate mailing dates; it takes 2-3 weeks for third-class mail to be delivered):

Spring 2001 - May 15th  
Deadline for news/calendar - April 15th

Summer 2001 - August 15th  
Deadline for news/calendar - July 15th

Fall 2001 - November 15th  
Deadline for news/calendar - October 15th

Winter 2002 - February 15th  
Deadline for news/calendar - January 15th



## Letters:

To the Editor:

As a footnote to Dan Wright's revealing article on Oxford's favorite treatment of his ancestors in the history plays ("Vere-y Interesting," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000) allow me to add further examples from what was perhaps his earliest play—*The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*.

In 1928 B.M. Ward demonstrated Oxford's authorship of this rudimentary 20-scene history play that spans the same two decades as *Henry IV* (Parts I and II), and *Henry V*. Since then, several Stratfordian scholars have tied it so strongly to these three plays as to make it certain that it was Oxford's first version of what later became the Shakespearean trilogy. Given its likely date of 1574, it was also one of the earliest English history plays, and perhaps the first of Oxford's many landmark contributions to Elizabethan drama.

In Oxford's first history play one would expect his favored treatment of his ancestors to be even more pronounced than in the later plays, and one would be correct. As both B.M. Ward and Seymour Pitcher (*The Case for Shakespeare's Authorship of The Famous Victories*, 1961), pointed out, Oxford/Shakespeare took substantial liberties with the historical record, and elevated the obscure Richard de Vere, Eleventh Earl of Oxford, to the place of Henry IV's principal counselor, and made him one of the main

characters in the play. In this he disregarded his main source, the English chronicler Edward Hall, who had, in 1550, accurately recorded the King's counselors as the Earls of Exeter and Westmoreland, and the Duke of York.

In *The Famous Victories* the Eleventh Earl of Oxford speaks 18 times in seven scenes, more than any other historical character except the Lord Chief Justice and the two Henrys, and he is the first historical character to speak, except for Prince Hal. Needless to say, his actions are generous, wise, informative, and brave. Early in the play he acts as a conciliatory messenger between Prince Hal and King Henry; in the ninth scene he urges that King Henry seek to conquer France and not waste time in Scotland; on the evening before the battle of Agincourt he asks the King for command of the vanguard, but it has been promised to the Duke of York.

On the morning of the battle he brings information to the King about the number of French facing him, and a few moments later volunteers to take charge of the archers whom the King has ordered to plant sharpened stakes in the ground to break the French cavalry charge. To this last request, King Henry V replies, "With all my heart, my good Lord of Oxford. And go and provide quickly." For none of this is there any support in the historical record, except for Hall's mention of the Earl of Oxford's presence in the middle rank with the King at Agincourt.

Who can doubt that it was the young Oxford, perhaps anxious to regain Elizabeth's

favor after his impetuous dash to the Continent in the summer of 1574, who whipped up a clever and patriotic entertainment for her about a young Prince who misbehaved, repented, and later led his country's army to a famous victory? The play was perhaps presented in the same year at Court during the Christmas season.

We may infer, as did B.M. Ward, that the payment for Oxford's debut in the theater was the long-desired permission to travel abroad. Within weeks he was off on a 16-month tour of France and Italy, a trip with momentous consequences for the future of English drama.

Ramon Jimenez  
Berkeley, California  
15 October 2000

To the Editor:

The news of Oxford's letter to King James was most interesting and demonstrates how records can be found by pure chance (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000). In case others wish to see the letter, the reference is Essex Office Record (E.R.O.), D/DMh C1.

The other records that Susan Campbell refers to are not letters in the modern sense of correspondence. They are Letters Patent, issued by Oxford as the person of authority in this instance, proclaiming Lewyn, Tiffin and Harlackenden as his instruments to improve the income of the Grammar School at Earls Colne (founded by Christopher Swallow, household chaplain to the fourteenth earl).

Because this involved raising rents, these men needed written authority to show interested parties and to prove that they held the earl's commission. The text is formulaic and formalized and the phrases such as "null and void" are part of the formulae, much as "to have and to hold" and "give, grant and demise" are in land transactions. Oxford is unlikely to have had much input, beyond providing the bare facts. The writing would have been done by a legal clerk.

These records are known, certainly to historians. They were used and published in part, in Merston, A. V., *Earls Colne Grammar School, A History*, Colchester, 1975. The

(Continued on page 22)

Subscriptions to the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* are included in membership dues in the Shakespeare Oxford Society, which are \$35 a year, or \$50 a year for a sustaining membership. Dues are \$15 a year for students and teachers. Dues and requests for membership should be sent to:

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

The Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and was chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state as a non-profit, educational organization.

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

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Letters (Continued from page 21)

references are: E.R.O., D/Q6/1/1, March, 1592 and E.R.O., D/Q6/1/2, December, 1593. A further record in the series, E.R.O., D/Q6/1/3, copy of an inquisition held 1 and 2 May, 1595 at Chelmsford, refers to an enquiry undertaken into the affair.

The interest to Oxfordians is the light that the records (together with some others also relating to the Grammar School) throw on the deteriorating relationship between Oxford and Roger Harlackenden, one of the results of the De Vere/Harlackenden lawsuit, and the ensuing power struggle in Earls Colne.

Daphne Pearson  
Redbrook, Nr. Monmouth  
United Kingdom  
24 December 2000

To the Editor:

Far be it from me, a devout Stratfordian, to criticize the Oxfordianism of Dr. Roger Stritmatter, but I must say that I found it strange, to say the least, that he believes Jonathan Dixon's theory be to that the upstart crow of Greene's *Groatsworth* "only 'supposes' he is able to bombast out blank verse" (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000).

This is actually the standard *Stratfordian* theory (mine, for instance): the idea is the crow believes—or supposes—he can write plays as well as Marlowe, Peele and Nashe but, in Greene's view, is sadly deluded, for he has little talent as a playwright. Dixon's point is that "to suppose" could have meant "to feign or pretend." While I don't go along with Dixon in believing Greene used "supposes" to mean "pretends," I can't be positive he did not.

It is for that reason alone that I have retreated from my belief that it is certain beyond reasonable doubt that Greene was referring to Shakespeare as an actor/playwright to a position that this was substantially more likely so than anything else, but *not* certain beyond reasonable doubt.

Robert Grumman  
Port Charlotte, Florida  
12 December 2000

## The Blue Boar

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*Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time.* By Joseph Sobran. Item SP17. \$25.00

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*The De Veres of Castle Hedingham.* By Verily Anderson. Item 122. \$35.00

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

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*Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford.* Edited by Katherine Chiljan. A new edition that brings together the poems and the letters with updated notes about original sources, provenance, etc. Item SP22. \$22.00

*The Man Who Was Shakespeare.* By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (94-pp summary of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*) Item SP5. \$6.95

*The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality.* Revised 2nd Edition. By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. Item 121. \$40.00 (damaged, \$20.00)

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

*The Oxfordian: Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.* Back issues from 1998 and 1999 available, \$20.00 each. Item SP30.

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

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

*Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletters.* (1965-1995). 2 Volumes, 1270 pages, soft-cover, plastic spiral binding. Photocopy edition of the first thirty years of the Society's newsletters. Item SP 23. \$105.00 (Price includes P&H).

*Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon.* By Richard Whalen. Item 123. \$19.95

*Shakespeare's Law.* By Mark Alexander. Item SP31. \$10.00

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

### Video

*Firing Line interview with Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (12/11/84).* William F. Buckley, host; Prof. Maurice Charney (Rutgers) represents the Stratfordian side. 1 hour, VHS. Rarely seen interview with Ogburn upon publication of *TWHS* in 1984. Item SP 27. \$35.00

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*Whalen (Continued from page 18)*

anti-Stratfordians, namely, J. Thomas Looney, who is quoted on Ben Jonson, and Ruth Loyd Miller, cited in a footnote on Spenser's use of "moniment." Even Sir George Greenwood, like Price in her book an agnostic anti-Stratfordian whom she mentions twice for his solid research, is quoted only once, regarding a Parnassus play. Greenwood and Looney are acknowledged, along with Alden Brooks, for their groundbreaking research.

Nevertheless, the book's intense and exclusive focus on the documented life of the man from Stratford in all its inadequacy presents a formidable challenge to orthodox scholarship. The world has never seen two more divergent views of a literary personage: Was he an uneducated commoner and theater hanger-on? Or was he a well-traveled aristocratic courtier? Although declining to make the case for an aristocrat, Price makes clear throughout her book that Will Shakspeare of Stratford "is the only alleged writer of any consequence from the period who left no personal contemporaneous records revealing that he wrote for a living." Oxfordians can certainly agree with that.

## ***The 5th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference Concordia University***

*Robert Detobel, Editor of the Neues Shake-speare Journal, headlines a list of over 20 scholars, including Dr. Peter Usher, Dr. Steven Steffens, Dr. Daniel Wright, Dr. Frank Davis, Dr. Charles Berney, Dr. Paul Altrocchi, Roger Parisious, Andrew Werth, Stephanie Hughes, Roger Stritmatter and many others.*

*The Concordia University Theatre Department will also present the premiere of the Tim Hill play, The Bubble Reputation —a play about the William Henry Ireland forgeries— on the opening night of the conference.*

*The conference will convene from April 5-8 2001 on the campus of Concordia University in Portland, Oregon.*

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

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(For students: School \_\_\_\_\_)

*Young adult novels* (Continued from page 19) that Will Shakspeare "started to pinch the plaudits meant for me, and I was delighted, borrowed him for a front man in fact, paid him handsomely to quiet the Queen's ire." Willow is outraged and tells him, "You'll be stunningly sorry after your dead."

Drawing on her 20<sup>th</sup> century experience, Willow introduces French fries and other snacks to the audience to make some money and inspires the audience to join in her salsa dancing. When the acting company performs in court, she creates and emcees an Elizabethan version of the Academy Awards, with Queen Elizabeth choosing the winners and presenting the awards.

In a double-twist ending, Willow wakes up by the Thames surrounded by her 20<sup>th</sup> century classmates, and when they all return to class she is surprised to find that they are reading *Macbeth* "by Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford." Back in Elizabethan England, she had asked her boyfriend, who shared her adventures, to promise he would set the record straight. Returned to the present, she realizes that her trip back in time had led her boyfriend to change the course of history by telling the world that Oxford was the author, not Shakspeare.

### *Keeping Christina*

Sue Ellen Bridgers' young adult novel, *Keeping Christina*, has been used in high school classes since its publication in 1993 by Harper Collins. Called "an unsettling morality tale" by one reviewer, the novel takes up issues of loyalty and friendship when a newcomer joins a group of teenage friends. A major plot line is the organization of a high school debate on the authorship question and whether the administration will let it go forward. Bridgers, who has published a dozen books, is an accomplished author, and her treatment of the authorship question and how it might be raised in high school is well-informed.

Raising the authorship issue is challenging not only for the students but also for the teachers. One of the most outspoken teachers is Robert Barrett of Central Kitsap junior high in Silverdale, Washington (see the Winter 1999 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* for a story about Barrett's encounters with his local school board and fellow teachers over teaching the authorship question).

Barrett teaches an after-school course on the authorship that draws a full class. Although Oxfordian, he strives to present

both sides to stimulate critical thinking. He has a web site for his students at <http://www.hurricane.net/~rbarrett.html>. Plans are underway for a page for high school teachers at the society's web site.

Other teachers who have used the Shakespeare authorship controversy to stimulate critical thinking include Patricia Creighton of Uxbridge (Mass.) High School, Starr Whitney of Haverford (Penn.) High School, Mary Ann Rygiel of Auburn (Alabama) High School, Peggy Fleming of Churchville/Chili (NY) Central School, Andrew Werth of Park Rose High School in Portland (Oregon), and Dom Saliani of Sir Winston Churchill High School (Calgary, Alberta).

Werth is a recent graduate of Concordia University and has delivered papers at the Edward de Vere Studies Conference there. Saliani, a former society trustee, is editor of the *Global Shakespeare Series*, editions of six plays in a format designed for high school students. His introduction to the series raises the authorship question but concedes nothing to the Stratford man.

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*Titus - film review: pages 6-7,15*

*Oxfordian News: pages 16-17*

*Book Reviews: pages 18-19*

