



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



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

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Book Review/Commentary

Elizabeth's Glass

By Charles Boyle

When Elizabeth I was just 11 years old she made an English translation of Marguerite of Navarre's *Mirrors*, calling it *The Glass of a Sinful Soul*. The translation was first published in Germany as *A Godly Medytacyon of the Christen Sowle* in 1548, when she was just 14 years old. It was later reprinted in London in 1590, and the body of her translated text was also used in 1568-70 and again in 1582 by James Cancellor in his own edited editions of Navarre.

However, the 1590 London edition of Elizabeth's translation was the last for nearly 300 years, until it was reproduced in a rare 1897 edition by Percy W. Ames, and then remained unpublished and unstudied for nearly another century, until Marc Shell reproduced it in his 1993 book *Elizabeth's Glass*, a book that finally took a close, scholarly look at this work and what it may tell us about the young Elizabeth in the years before she became Queen Elizabeth.

In his Introduction to *Elizabeth's Glass*, Shell asks, "Why has this particular work, listed in the oldest bibliographies, been virtually ignored?"

"The answer to that question," he continues, "is finally inseparable from the real subjects of the 'Glass'—the queen, her family, and the nation."

Shell's comments in the concluding paragraphs of the Introduction lay out the case for how and why this remarkable work from a future English monarch has been ignored for so long:

What is most interesting about the "Glass" may go some way toward explaining its relative obscurity. Elizabeth's work expresses,

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Semiotics and the Shakespeare authorship debate:

The author—and his icon—do make a difference in understanding the works

By Dr. Merilee Karr

A year ago I spoke to a high school English class about the Shakespeare authorship question. The students offered the typical landscape of reactions: broad plains of skepticism, peaks of interest, valleys of apathy. The most challenging response came from a young man in the front row who listened intently and raised his hand: "Yes, but we have the plays. Don't we?"

Well, yes, we have the plays.

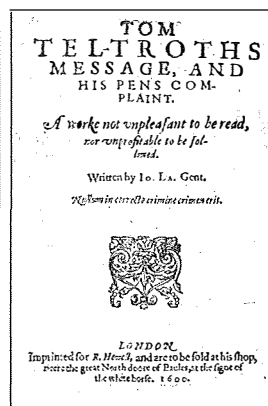
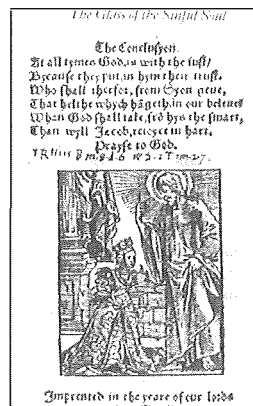
He went on, "So what difference does it make whether one man wrote them, or another? We still have the plays."

I gave him my usual answer, that since I started studying the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, now when I see and read the plays I get the jokes. He wasn't satisfied with my answer. Neither was I. And his question kept coming back to me: What difference does it make?

As I tried to answer his question for myself, I realized that it was asked, and must be answered, in the context of this particular moment in literary history. The academic and popular reactions to Oxfordian claims are not random. They emerge from current literary understanding.

Out of frustration with this student's nagging question, I began studying theories of knowledge, meaning and interpretation. Such dry study was just the thing for the wet North-

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Two very different books from the 16th century inform us about two quite disparate threads in the authorship story. In *Glass of the Sinful Soul* (left), England's future Virgin Queen meditates on her relationship with God and the Virgin Mary (book review, page 1), while in Tom Tel-Troth's *Message* (right) obscure poet John Lane lets us know that Elizabethans knew all about a "clown" taking credit for a great poet's work (Mark Anderson's column, page 20).

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Review of Journals

Shakespeare allusions and Oxford; wounded truth; Titian and *Venus and Adonis*; Hamlet and a “lost inheritance”

By Richard F. Whalen

Allusions to the 17th Earl of Oxford as the poet/dramatist Shakespeare in obscure verse stanzas and in a printer's colophon are explored in two articles of the October 2000 issue of the *De Vere Society Newsletter*, published in England.

John Rollett, following on work by Roger Parisious, suggests that the 1595 poem “Cephalus and Procris. Narcissus.” by Thomas Edwards contains stanzas that have puzzled scholars but must refer to Shakespeare as a disgraced nobleman whose badge was a star, namely the 17th Earl of Oxford. And Charles Bird discusses the “Wounded Truth” woodcut used by the printer Thomas Creede on the title pages of some of Shakespeare's plays possibly as a metaphor to connect Oxford to the title pages.

In other articles, Christopher Dams reports on the Q&A panel session of a De Vere Society meeting that addressed a dozen questions that might be asked by someone curious about the authorship controversy, Philip Johnson reviews the Stratfordian claims and the historical evidence for the Stratford man's education, while R.C.W. Malin compiles evidence for Oxford as a stage actor.

Finally, Eddi Jolly explores the Elizabethan context in which the question “Was ‘Shakespeare’ a pseudonym?” has to be answered by taking into account the era's background of nicknames, codes, ciphers, aliases, symbols, anonymity and misplaced attribution of authorship.

In the January 2001 issue of the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (a 48-page issue that editor Daphne Pearson says is their longest to date) a number of articles compete for the reader's interest, with topics ranging from Titian inspiring Oxford in Venice to Ben Jonson alluding to him in the First Folio, plus the Stratford man losing incontestably to him as Hamlet.

In the lead article, Noemi Magri, a researcher in Italy, argues that the main source for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* was a painting of the same name by Titian that was

in Venice when Oxford was there. Although Titian and his workshop produced more than 30 versions or copies of it, only five are considered “autograph” from his hand.

Of those five, which differ in details and backgrounds, the version that was in Venice contains all the details found in Shakespeare's narrative poem. Magri notes in particular Adonis's hat, which is not in the other versions of the painting but is mentioned by Shakespeare.

Citing evidence that the painting was in Titian's house in Venice in 1575-6, when Oxford was there, she suggests that since Titian welcomed foreign visitors and dignitaries, the Earl of Oxford probably met Titian and saw the painting at his house. The painting, which was never in England, is now at the National Gallery of Palazzo Barberini in Rome. Dr. Magri's article is now available on the Internet in the most recent issue (Summer/Fall 2000) of *The Ever Reader* (<http://www.everreader.com>).

John M. Rollett, an independent scholar in England, suggests that Ben Jonson alludes to Oxford in the opening and closing lines of his prefatory poem in the First Folio. The key idea for the first allusion is envy. Jonson opens with “To draw no envy (Shakespeare) on thy name.” Rollett notes that envy also figures in a poem by Ignoto, a poem that is generally seen as having influ-

enced Jonson's opening lines. Ignoto is thought to be one of Oxford's early pseudonyms, and his poem appeared in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

Spenser's well-known sonnet addressed to Oxford also refers to envy, and Rollett adds Gabriel Harvey's lines comparing Nash, Greene, Euphues and “Envie.” Interpreting the three allusions, he offers a paraphrase of Jonson's opening lines: “To avoid revealing you [Shakespeare] as the Earl of Oxford, author of a poem defending Spenser (at his request) from “envy,” and as a consequence labeled “Envie” by Gabriel Harvey in *Pierces Supererogation*, I shall avoid that topic and instead expand at length on your works and fame.”

With the help of Andy Hannas at Purdue University, Rollett determined that the Latin for envy (“*livor*”) also literally means blue, linking envy to Oxford's blue boar crest, and that Ovid's *Amores*, Book I, 15, which opens with an address to envy, includes the motto that Shakespeare put on *Venus and Adonis*, immediately mentioning envy again.

The allusion to Oxford in the closing lines of Jonson's poem addressing Shakespeare emerges in the words, “Shine forth thou Starre of poets;” Rollett notes that the star was exclusively the heraldic badge of the Oxford family over the centuries.

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Harvard scholar Stephen Greenblatt the real winner in a Shakespeare biography auction

Publisher's Weekly reported in January that a dozen publishers competed in an auction for the rights to publish Harvard Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt's planned Shakespeare biography. W.W. Norton won the rights, and *The Boston Globe* in January suggested they may have paid as much as \$1 million, most of which would wind up as an advance for Prof. Greenblatt.

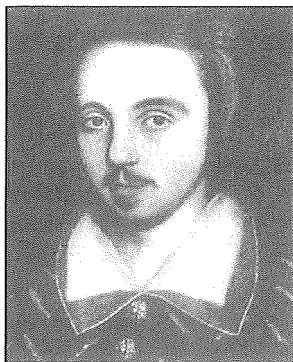
The projected book, entitled at the moment *Will in the World: How Shakespeare became Shakespeare*, is expected to be pub-

lished in 2003. A representative for Norton (also the publisher of Greenblatt's *Norton Shakespeare* edition of the plays) said that Greenblatt plans a book that “reconstructs the poet's life and personality from a close reading of his work.” The representative went on to say the biography will make Shakespeare “hugely accessible and unintimidating.”

One can only wonder what sort of book the professor will be writing with his close reading of the plays and poems. Will thereal Shakespeare please stand up?

The Bad Boy is Back

Amidst all the recent Oxfordian authorship news, The New York Times trumpets Marlowe



Christopher Marlowe

As the Oxfordian / Shakespeare authorship paradigm continues to shift, leave it to *The New York Times* to headline the wrong story. Or

maybe from their point of view it's the right story, a perfect combination of Elizabethan theatre, history and sexual politics, and even the possibility that Shakespeare was someone else—but minus the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Instead the man of the hour is Christopher Marlowe. *The Times* feature story on January 21, 2001 ("Bad Boy Stages a Comeback") reports that there is currently a major Marlowe revival underway, sparked apparently by the film *Shakespeare In Love* in 1999. *The Times* reports that there are two different theatrical biographies, and a number of theatre companies around the U.S. and England are mounting his plays.

On tap for 2001, the Target Margin Theater Company in New York will present a Marlowe marathon, while the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, England will present *Edward II*. Meanwhile, Joseph Papp's Public Theater recently premiered David Grimm's *Kit Marlowe*, a literary bio-drama. And there is a film in the works—titled *Marlowe*—that will "play with the idea that another writer or group of writers wrote [Shakespeare]"

It is this last bit that may be of most interest to Oxfordians, i.e. the authorship angle. However, the main thrust of the article is that Marlowe is suddenly being seen as one of the more interesting figures on the Elizabethan scene—a "sort of hose-wearing James Dean," one scholar says; "Marlowe was Joe Orton to Shakespeare's Alan Ayck," another is quoted as saying, after *Times* writer Celia Wren has first noted that Shakespeare's extra-theatrical activities seem to have tended toward invest-

ments and lawsuits,

This last observation is really the subtext of the whole article, and apparently, of the Marlowe revival. As several scholars note in the article, the Stratford Shakespeare is, well, pretty boring: "As more became known about Shakespeare," says University of Delaware Professor Lois Potter, "he became more and more like a successful businessman and less and less like a romantic writer." So, of course, enter Marlowe—"mutinous and doomed," "non-establishment," "a rebel character in the true sense of the word," etc., etc.

Now at this point readers of these pages may wonder, "Well, surely, in this sort of context, there must have been some mention of Oxford and Oxfordians, the 'other' authorship movement, the 'other' rebel?" Well, the answer to that question is, in a word: "No." Marlowe maybe revived, and along with him the image of a playwright as a rebel—with a "possible" Shakespeare authorship angle even being mentioned—and still *The Times*—in keeping with a long-standing pattern—can find no reason to mention the Oxfordian movement..

Which brings us back to *The Times'* Marlowe article and one final quote, this one from David Grimm (author of the Marlowe literary bio): "Where are the revolutionaries? Where are the heretics? Where are the sexual outlaws? Are there any taboos left to break, or is everything I'm O.K., You're O.K.? ... Here's a guy who's writing plays about how the world isn't enough for him ... he has that feeling of you can do anything and never have to face the consequences of your actions."

Now we are certainly not suggesting here that Marlowe and Oxford are two interchangeable characters, but if the subject is Elizabethan theatre and whether or not some Elizabethan play writing was bold, revolutionary—even dangerous—well, that concept is at the center of the Shakespeare authorship debate, and one can only wonder that *The Times* does not even mention it. And thereby hangs a tale ... or, perhaps we should say, thereby hangs a "fitting" tale. —W. Boyle

Authorship film projects underway in US, UK

At the winter 2001 meeting of the De Vere Society Michael Peer (the producer of last year's *The Shakespeare Conspiracy*, a documentary narrated by Sir Derek Jacobi outlining the Oxfordian case) announced that he is finishing the script of *Alias Shakespeare*—the title taken from Joseph Sobran's book—under the auspices of Kenneth Branagh's film company.

Peer outlined a bit of the plot and revealed an impressive cast list: Branagh as the Stratford man, Robert Carlyle as the 17th Earl, Jacobi as Lord Burghley, Helena Bonham Carter as Anne Cecil, Cate Blanchett reprising her role of Queen Elizabeth, Charles Dance as the 13th Earl of Oxford, and Patrick Stewart as the 16th Earl of Oxford, as well as a host of other venerable British and European actors. Peer said they are hoping for a release in 2004—coinciding with the 400th anniversary of de Vere's death and the proposed joint conference of the De Vere Society and Shakespeare Oxford Society.

This news comes on the heels of recently confirmed news out of Hollywood that film star Tom Hanks is also working on an authorship project. Recent contacts with Hanks' offices in Los Angeles confirmed that they are, in fact, working privately on developing an authorship script. The office would provide no further details beyond confirming that "something" is in the works.

And finally, yet another budding Hollywood-based project has been put together by Ron Destro (of Norwalk, Conn.), whose script is in the hands of a major director with whom he is acquainted; at least three major stars are also, at the moment, committed to it. Destro does not wish to name anyone at this point, but tells us he is confident that the film will be made in the next 1-2 years.

Destro has already had much success launching his Oxford Shakespeare theatre company in New York. It is now a 501(c)(3) organization that can accept donations.

Among the celebrities who have already publicly supported it are: Derek Jacobi, F. Murray Abraham, Michael York, Maggie Smith, Julie Harris, Judi Dench, Kenneth Branagh, Joseph Flinnes, Olivia de Havilland, Glenda Jackson, Eli Wallach and Edgar Lansbury.

25th Annual Conference to be held in Carmel, California

The Carmel Shakespeare Festival will host the 25th Annual Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, October 4th to 7th, 2001. Over 100 participants are expected, with a conference highlight sure to be the performances of three plays from the Festival's *Royal Blood* Project: *Edward III*, *Thomas of Woodstock*, and *Richard II*. The Festival was the site for the Society's 1994 18th Annual Conference, where its production of *Henry V* was the centerpiece of that year's festivities.

The Festival is managed by the Pacific Repertory Theatre, founded in 1984 in nearby Monterey by Oxfordian Stephen Moorer; it was under Moorer's leadership that the Pacific Rep then lead the movement in the 1990s to revitalize the Shakespeare Festival—which itself dates back to the 1940s—thus continuing a 90-year tradition of Shakespeare and the classics at Carmel's historic outdoor Forest Theatre. Now in its 19th year, Pacific Repertory Theatre is the only resident-professional theatre in Monterey County, employing a regular company of actors on an on-going basis. Pacific Rep operates on a 10-month season focusing on the great dramatists of the world stage—both contemporary and classical. The company is widely acknowledged for the quality and variety of its productions and, with the purchase and renovation of the Golden Bough Playhouse, the theatre has emerged as a major arts umbrella organization and cultural presenter within its geographic area.

The Festival each season presents professional guest artists, vivid historical costumes and dynamic production values. It is also notable for its open acknowledgement of the Shakespeare Authorship Question, and hyphenates the author's pseudonym in all its usage. Furthermore, the festival actively supports the candidacy of Edward de Vere as the primary author and general editor of the canon. Festival programs proudly share this viewpoint and often include substantial Oxfordian literature. The company tours to area high schools and is expanding its offerings to students in English, world

history, political science and the performing arts.

The main site for convention activities will be the Carmel Shakespeare Festival's home theatre—the Golden Bough Playhouse. The Golden Bough houses two distinct theatres—the 99-seat Circle Theatre (where *Edward III* will premiere) and the 300-



A production of Midsummer's Night Dream in Carmel.

seat Golden Bough Theatre (where *Thomas of Woodstock* will premiere). In addition, conference sites will include the historic Outdoor Forest Theatre—built in 1910 and the oldest amphitheatre on the West Coast. This famous theatre was started in 1910 by Herbert Heron, Mary Austin, Jack London and many others of the Carmel Bohemian movement. The first Shakespeare play per-

formed at the Forest Theater was *Twelfth Night*—in 1911—and Shakespeare plays have been performed there continuously ever since.

In 1993, the Rep's staff and board recognized the immense potential of purchasing Carmel's historic Golden Bough Cinema for the theatre's new home, and by 1994 they had concluded the first phase of its Save the Golden Bough campaign to spare the venerable structure from the wrecker's ball; with much community support the campaign was a success. The Golden Bough Playhouse, as it was re-christened, with its 300-seat Golden Bough Theatre and 99-seat Circle Theatre, is now a first-rate facility which is handicapped-accessible and even has headphones available for the hearing impaired in the main theatre. The larger theatre is suited to the great plays of the world stage, and the small theatre-in-the-round, the Circle Theatre, is a

unique space ideal for experimental and original works, small classics and the hottest issue-oriented contemporary theatre. The Playhouse is also a favorite venue of visiting groups for the performance of opera, music and dance. It was, in fact, as part of this campaign in 1994 that Moorer and the Pacific Rep hosted the Shakespeare Oxford Society's 18th Annual Conference.

The Pacific Rep's 2001 season features the newest artistic and literary successes, including the Central Coast premieres of *Art and Closer*, and the West Coast premiere of a new adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard*, starring renowned actress Olympia Dukakis. The season opened in February with the "Shakespeare" inspired classic musical *West Side Story* and this summer will see a reprise of *Peter Pan*.

In addition to the Rep's schedule, 2001 will be a special year as the Carmel Shakespeare Festival launches its own major "Shakespeare" event: *Royal Blood: The Rise and Fall of Kings*. This project will span four years and will encompass 10 history plays. The premiere year will feature the first three-play cycle, the American Professional Premiere of the newly attributed Shakespeare work, *Edward III*, in repertory with *Richard II* and its precursor, the any-

Call for Papers

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:

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mous *Thomas of Woodstock*. *Royal Blood* will continue the traditional history cycle, culminating with *Richard III* in the fall of 2004.

Two of the plays scheduled for this fall will provide Shakespeareans with a unique opportunity to experience works only recently being considered as Shakespeare's. In *Edward III*, Edward—the great-grandfather of Henry V—starts the 100-year war with France to expand and maintain English claims. Foreign campaigns, adulterous love affairs, military conquests, and a triumphant resurrection, combine in an exciting conclusion in this newly attributed work—a major addition to the Shakespearean canon.

Thomas of Woodstock is an anonymous play written in the 1590s just before Shakespeare wrote *Richard II*. It presents a graphic view of the period immediately before the beginning of Shakespeare's play; thus, in a sense, *Richard II* can be considered a sequel. A dynamic and entertaining drama married to a spine-tingling murder mystery, *Thomas of Woodstock* is at times outrageous comedy, factual history, and—without a doubt—Shakespearean poetry. In *Richard II*, the King's divine right to rule is pitted against the strength and power politics of Henry Bolingbroke in a winner-takes-all battle for England's throne. The rise of the House of Lancaster begins and with it...the War of the Roses.

For those who have never been there before, Carmel is centrally located on California's famous Highway 1, on the southern side of the Monterey Peninsula, only one hour south of San Jose and two hours south of San Francisco. The Monterey Peninsula is internationally famous for its scenic wonders. It is often called "the most beautiful place in the world." A drive down the Big Sur coast, a walk on the white sands of Carmel Bay, and some of the most beautiful ocean sunsets imaginable await visitors to this scenic paradise. Also nearby are Robert Lewis Stevenson's Tor Hours, the 17-mile drive through Pebble Beach and the state-of-the-art Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Additional information on the Conference will be mailed to Society members in late April, including advice on travel arrangements. The Monterey Airport is a short 10-minute taxi ride to downtown Carmel. The closest international airport is San Jose. Also, hourly air shuttles to Monterey are available from the San Francisco and Los Angeles airports.

President's Letter

I am pleased to report to you on the Society's continued progress in the past year and excellent prospects for this year.

The major news for 2000 is the success of our fundraising efforts. Last spring the Board of Trustees—building on plans originally adopted by the Board in 1996—established the Shakespeare Oxford Society Endowment Fund as a permanent endowment, with all income to be retained until the Fund reaches \$100,000. The \$5,000 seed money to begin the Endowment was awarded to us by the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation. Our long-range goal is to build this Endowment to a level of at least \$1 million in order to support a National Society Center consisting of Society offices and library, plus a lecture hall/theater supporting lecture programs as well as productions of Shakespeare plays.

To this end we launched in 2000 an Annual Giving Campaign for the Endowment Fund, with a goal of raising \$25,000 in the first year. I am happy to report to you that we reached that goal. We consider this achievement to be a significant step for the Society, and one which promises to give us financial stability in the years to come.

In January 2001 the Board set a goal of \$30,000 for the 2001 Annual Giving Campaign. We will again have matching grants to support the Campaign, with member donations matched dollar for dollar; we urge you to again consider gifts in support of the Endowment. We plan to publish the names of contributors in the near future. Anyone wishing to have his or her name not listed should contact Joe Peel at jcmmp@aol.com, or write to me at 2023 Abbey Lane, Memphis, 38134. I would like to publicly thank the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation for its grants for the Endowment and sponsorship of the Conference, and also Mr. James Hardigg for his generous donation in support of the library and our publications.

We are continuing to reform how our finances are handled, and to this end the Board has hired a professional accounting firm to review our books and financial reporting. As the Society continues its growth, it is of the utmost importance in assuring that the Society is run properly. Many of our current budgetary and financial duties are now being handled by Treasurer and Vice-President Joe Peel and Asst. Treasurer Richard Desper (of Ayer, MA). We have also benefitted from the excellent advisory support of our Financial Oversight Committee consisting of Peel, Grant Gifford, Esq.

and James Hardigg. We owe a great deal to these gentlemen for their many long hours devoted to these duties.

Our 24th Annual Conference in Stratford was a great success, and Conference Chair Sue Sybersma and Program Chair Dr. Jack Shuttleworth are to be commended for an excellent job in putting together a wonderful conference. The Stratford Conference was the first held outside the United States and was a very special and memorable event, with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival's production of *Hamlet* a memorable highlight for all of us.

And, of course, we are looking forward to an exciting conference in Carmel this October. This conference will be a special event since it will be our 25th Annual Conference. We welcome your suggestions and comments about the conference, so do not hesitate to pass along any of your thoughts and comments. Contact us at (781) 321-2391.

Another important activity is the development of local chapters. From April 26th to 29th the Chicago Oxford Society, which was initiated by William Farina and Marion Buckley in April 2000, will celebrate its first anniversary. Among their scheduled activities the COS will host the Society Trustees for their April Board meeting, as well as sponsor a book signing with Richard Whalen and other exciting events over four days.

About three weeks ago I had a very pleasant meeting with Dr. Warner Gundersheimer, who is the Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library. I thanked him for his and the Folger staff's very tolerant perspective towards the authorship issue in recent years. I pointed out that our commonalities, such as an interest in the works and research, should continue to foster that cordial attitude. We shared our fond memories of the late Charlton Ogburn, Jr. and he even suggested that someone should do a biography of him in light of all his literary work and brilliant career.

Finally, I want to thank again all who have expressed their kind sympathy to me after the loss of my dear wife and all of the help I've received from other board members during the long years while she was sick and I was having to spend much time taking care of her. I am most grateful. I firmly believe that this Board is as good as it gets and I am pleased to work with them. If any member has suggestions about the society's operations or plans do not hesitate to contact me at (781) 321-2391. —Aaron Tatum

Research Notes

A flood of Shakespeare biographies since the Ogburn and Honigmann works in 1984-1985

By Peter W. Dickson

There are almost 10,000 books in the Library of Congress dealing in whole or in part with Shakespeare as a topic but the numbers of serious scholarly biographies are not that numerous ... for the obvious reason given the paucity of records. As the late Professor Samuel Schoenbaum remarked in his revised edition of *Shakespeare's Lives* (1991), even in the 19th century, the idea of a biographical treatment with a continuous narrative constructed in "the modern spirit" was recognized as virtually futile by the greatest Shakespeare scholar of the Victorian era, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips. There were and are simply not enough records of the kind you need to illuminate what was in the head of the incumbent Bard because he left nothing but legal-notarial-commercial records and six crude signatures ... no manuscripts, personal correspondence, or letters of any kind. Not surprisingly, none of the great Shakespeare scholars between the 1890s and WWII—Lee, Stopes, Fripp, Chambers, and Hotson—ever attempted a biography in the narrative sense.

From the end of WWII to the mid-1980s—a period of almost 40 years—there were only 14 works that we would call genuinely biographical and serious enough in terms of analysis and research for other scholars to cite them in their own bibliographies. This brings us to the great historical watershed of 1984-1985 when there appeared Charlton Ogburn's Oxfordian work, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (Dodd & Mead) and Ernst Honigmann's *Shakespeare: the "lost years"* (University of Manchester) which opened up the long taboo issue of the Stratford man's possible secret Roman Catholicism.

Since that major watershed (which should also include Philip Edward's 1986 *Shakespeare: A Writer's Progress*) there have been 15 works, counting Edward's book. Jonathan Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1997) is a significant work, in part as a reaction to the Oxfordian theory, but it is not a Shakespeare biography. However, at the very end of the 1990s, two major new

biographies have appeared: Park Honan's *Shakespeare - A Life* (Oxford University Press), which is fairly orthodox in its interpretation, and Anthony Holden's *Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Genius* (Little Brown) which strongly advocates the Catholic-Lancashire connection first raised by Honigmann in 1985. At the present time, there is one other major book in the works, namely, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, to be written by Harvard Professor Stephen Greenblatt, the Guru of the New Historicist movement in literary criticism (see story, page 2). The book will appear sometime in 2003.

The pattern of evidence clearly points to a tremendous upsurge in biographical works after Oxford and Honigmann's books transformed the landscape. Without these two books, it seems doubtful that there would have been quite as many biographical works on the traditional Bard published over the past 15 years. It is reasonable to conclude that this high number reflects in part a desire to respond to Ogburn's revival of the Oxfordian theory, and in part the eagerness of a new generation of Shakespeare scholars (the New Historicists) to fill the vacuum of the Stratford story—with some of these new efforts following Honigmann into the closet to find more Catholic-flavor biographical data on the Stratford man. Once the taboo on this sensitive matter was broken, this situation evidently encouraged some scholars to believe that perhaps crypto-Catholicism might help explain the elusive personality in question and the disconcerting gaps and inconsistencies in the historical record concerning his life.

Among these 15 or 16 traditional biographies published since the mid-1980s, there is close to an even split over the question of whether the Stratford man was a secret Catholic. The split is most obvious when we compare the positions taken on this sensitive issue by the two most recent biographers: Park Honan and Anthony Holden. The former offers essentially the orthodox perspective on the Bard as a secular, non-sectarian person who studiously avoided

using his literary works to express his inner thoughts and feelings on extremely controversial religious or theological issues. Honan in his own quite valuable bibliographical essay on the biographical tradition at the end of his book criticizes Ian Wilson for pushing the evidence too hard to make the poet into a secret Catholic in his *Shakespeare The Evidence*, which appeared in the mid-1990s and which has been reissued by St. Martin's Press in paperback. In sharp contrast, Holden casts the young Bard in the mold of a secret Catholic who got his start as a tutor in the households of prominent aristocratic families (Houghton, Hesketh) in the Lancashire region. Holden's book is an obvious continuation of the path of research stimulated by Honigmann's landmark work in 1985. Ian Wilson is a bit more skeptical about the Lancashire connection but remains a strong advocate of the secret Catholic theory.

This schism over the religious orientation of the incumbent Bard—which will certainly grow among Stratfordian scholars—would have been inconceivable before Honigmann's work, given the Bard's status as a major cultural icon in a Protestant England and British Empire. So, given the new dynamics within the orthodox Shakespeare establishment resulting from the authorship dispute, their current dilemma is fairly clear: they are now caught in a bind between the Oxfordian challenge on one front and the growing faction within their own camp which wants to explore and advance this Catholic theory in some fashion or another.

It is interesting to note here that very few American scholars have ever tried to write a biographical work on the traditional Bard. Thus far, I have found none prior to WWII, though there may have been some. Since WWII the only Americans attempting a biographical treatment of the Stratford man are: Payne (1980) and Sams (1995). Russell Fraser did a two-volume biography in the late 1980s and early 1990s with Columbia University Press, but this University of Michigan Professor might be British-born and educated.

Schoenbaum's best-seller, *Shakespeare's Lives* (1970, 1991 revised edition), does not qualify as a genuine Shakespeare biography, and Gary Taylor has not produced a biography in the narrative sense. Both Schoenbaum and Taylor produced books that relate and analyze how other persons or epochs over time have perceived Shakespeare—whose mind, Taylor insisted in *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1989), would forever remain a “Black Hole” beyond human illumination. Here he echoes the sentiment of the great anti-Stratfordian Sir George Greenwood who called Shakespeare “the Great Unknown.”

However, even while not having written a “traditional” biography, it turns out that Taylor has himself been exploring the Catholic theory. He failed to mention this issue in his 1989 *Reinventing*, even though five years earlier in 1985—just before Honigmann's work appeared—he already had embarked on an exploration of the Catho-

lic theory as the key to the Bard's mind in an essay in the *Shakespeare Survey*, analyzing the Bard's treatment of the figure of Sir John Oldcastle. Taylor came totally out of the closet on the “Shakespeare as a secret Catholic” issue in 1994 in another essay in *The English Review*, while at that same moment Schoenbaum was trashing Ian Wilson's *Shakespeare The Evidence* (*Times Literary Supplement*, April 1994) for laying on the table substantial biographical evidence in favor of the secret Catholic theory.

In any event, it is so unusual for an American to attempt a biography of Shakespeare that the notion of an American Shakespeare biographer is close to being an oxymoron. The British have dominated—and no doubt will continue to dominate—this segment of the vast, global Shakespeare Industry. Nonetheless, we now await the next major treatment of the Stratford man, to be written by an American: Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World: How Shake-*

peare Became Shakespeare will be published in 2003. Greenblatt, who has been intrigued with this Catholic connection for several years, will—according to a W.W. Norton spokesperson—be premising his biography on a close reading of the plays and poems. It should be quite a sight to see how he will reconcile the literary works taken as a whole with the inherently contradictory views of the incumbent Bard as either a secret Catholic or as the more traditional Protestant icon in British history. Can a new Stratfordian Shakespeare possibly be both?

And, of course, coming out at about the same time as his book will be film treatments featuring Oxford as Shakespeare from Kenneth Branagh, Tom Hanks, and who knows who else. The battle over Shakespeare's identity, both physical and psychic, is just heating up, so stayed tuned.

Review of Journals (continued from page 2)

Eddi Jolly, lecturer at Barton-Peveril College in England, continues her work on *Hamlet* with a comprehensive survey of Stratfordian claims for sources, references and allusions linking their man to the play compared to Oxfordian claims that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is found everywhere in the play. She concludes: “It is difficult to find links, let alone documented ones, between Shakespeare of Stratford and the writing of *Hamlet*, but there are many between de Vere and *Hamlet*.”

In addition, she notes that Oxford's biography as reflected in the play has “marked resemblances” to what orthodox Stratfordian scholars have deduced from Shakespeare's works.

Finally, R.C.W. Malim puts Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* and Henry Chettle's *Kind-Harts Dreame* under the microscope once again and concludes that “shake-scene” in the obscure, convoluted and much-debated works was the 17th Earl of Oxford, whom he sees as “the leading actor in the late Elizabethan era.”

The Shakespeare Newsletter

Hamlet dominates the latest *Shakespeare Newsletter*, an issue that includes a long and most impressive article on a spe-

cific point of law that pervades the play and gives it new meaning. Not incidentally, it also implies an author (and an audience) extremely well versed in obscure aspects of the law of inheritance.

The article, which appears in the Fall 2000 issue of the Stratfordian quarterly from Iona College, is entitled “An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*: Lost Inheritance and Claudius's Marriage to Gertrude.” The author is J. Anthony Burton, a retired lawyer from Amherst, Mass.

Although scholars have long recognized that the gravedigger's scene was a parody of the legal reasoning in a 1564 inheritance lawsuit known as *Hales v. Pettit*, Burton says they have ignored the “consistent and coherent pattern of legal illusions to defeated expectations of inheritance, which applies to every major character,” *Hamlet*, of course, but even *Fortinbras*.

The key, he suggests, is the early description of Gertrude as a “jointress,” a term that appears nowhere else in Shakespeare (1.2.9). At issue “is the remarkable power vested in Gertrude as a widow, either to preserve or destroy her son's inheritance, or deliver it wholly into the hands of Claudius.” Burton shows how this point of law, “*Hamlet's predicament*,” pervades the play and partially explains his notorious indecision.

Toward the end of his article, Burton asks two questions: “But what made this 30-year-old law report important enough for anyone in his audience under the age of fifty to recognize and appreciate his parody? And how would Shakespeare know of it unless it were still being discussed?” His answer, which he does not elucidate, is that the court in *Hales v. Pettit* ruled that “in the case of simultaneous claims by the monarch and a subject, the monarch prevails.” Claudius wins and *Hamlet* loses because Gertrude held the right of jointress following *Hamlet senior's* death. Burton's article is the first of two parts, to be continued in the next issue.

The current issue also includes a review of John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius* (no mention of jointress), a critique of Kenneth Branagh's 2-hour version of his 4-hour *Hamlet* (he should have eliminated the flashcuts), a review of *Shakespeare on Screen: An International Filmography and Videography* (750 entries!), a review of Simon Russell Beale's portrayal of *Hamlet* (a family drama with *Hamlet* as a “nice guy”), a report of Shakespeare biographer Anthony Holden's talk at the Players in New York City (he defends Shakespeare as the author, no surprise; what else could he do?), and a visit to present-day Elsinore (unremarkable).

Semiotics (Continued from page one)

west winter. And now I have an answer for that young man. I know what difference it makes that one man rather than another wrote the plays. The answer I found surprises me.

Oxfordians are usually blind to such issues. We have stumbled onto the stage in Act Three of a play, and we have no idea why all these people are looking at us so strangely. Oxfordians need to know the critical landscape we have stumbled onto, because it is the layout of the battlefield.

But to appreciate where we are now in this authorship drama, we must first consider all that has come before—and there is a long history out there—as generations of scholars have analyzed the eternal triangle of author, text, and reader, running the gamut from the author-centered “intentionalist fallacy” theory to more recent theories such as the “New Criticism” and the “New Historicism.”

And, not surprisingly, different theories have invariably tended to center on one of the three elements of the triangle (author, text, reader) as being primary in how a work is read and understood (see the accompanying sidebar article on pages 8-9 for a more in depth look at this history of literary interpretation).

Semiotics

However, in the end I found that the most satisfying and useful answer to the “Why it matters” question is supplied by a fairly recent, new stream in critical theory that has been contributing new logical and analytical tools for the study of literature. This new stream is called Semiotics.

Semiotics’ roots extend back to the philosophers of classical antiquity, such as Plato and Aristotle, and through the great medieval thinkers William of Occam and St. Augustine; but it coalesced as a discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, and Charles Sanders Pierce (pronounced “purse”), the American mathematician. Of all the modern developments in critical theory, it is semiotics that is the most pertinent to authorship studies. Since authorship is an elaborate logic problem, the semiotic toolkit can be very useful.

Semiotics is the science of signs—that

(Continued on page 10)

A brief history of interpretation

The Author

The history of the interpretation of literature begins with the word of God. For more than a dozen centuries, the only literature that mattered was Scripture, and the only serious question was, “What does the Author mean by that?” Discovery of the divine intention was the only goal of textual interpretation. Words meant what the Author intended them to mean. Those who thought they knew what God intended enforced their interpretations with war, excommunication, torture and economic sanction (see Figure 1).

It is tempting to conclude that the reason no one believes this any more is that the people who believed it all killed each other off. But indeed, no one does believe it any more. The belief that the meaning of a work is determined by the author’s intention is now called the intentionalist fallacy. It is a fallacy because even if a

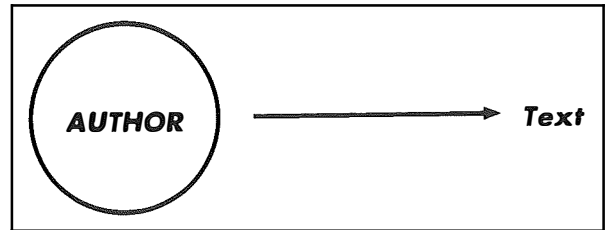


Figure 1

writer, or a writer’s psychoanalyst, could tell us what the writer meant, we should not be limited by the author’s conscious understanding of their work. Some very smart writers realize that an interpretation has more impact if we readers figure it out ourselves, so they wouldn’t tell us even if we asked. Besides, most authors nowadays can’t tell us what their work means—they’re dead.

We will see later that in the twentieth century the umbilical cord from the author to the text is cut, and the text must make its own way in the world with whatever gifts the author gave it.

The only people who still use the author’s intention as a guide to interpretation are in the field of law and literature, where the original intention of a legislative body when they drafted a law is still considered (by some) to be in effect throughout the life of that law, instrumented through the document. (This textual analysis of the law is the contribution of law and literature, a controversial new field of legal study whose mission is gracefully laid out in Richard Weisberg’s *Poethics*.)

Some years ago in Traffic Court, I discovered the hard way that the law admits to a text only the meaning that the author gave it. My defense that the signage at the most convoluted traffic circle in Portland was ambiguous, and that I obeyed what I interpreted the signs to mean, would not have saved me from the stake. Misinterpretation of the text is ignorance of the law, hence no excuse. Traffic Court uses the same theory of meaning as the Middle Ages, and for the same reason—because they can.

The author-centered, authoritarian model of textual interpretation slowly crumbled over the centuries with the Church that enforced it. It was not replaced for a long time, perhaps because it took the blood so long to dry.

By the Romantic and Victorian periods of the nineteenth century, the relationship between a text and its author was still privileged, but so metaphysical that it was useless to a reader attempting to understand a work. As the “Great Man theory” of literature, it justified an immense load of rambling, superficial criticism. On the other hand, it was no obstacle to a reader interpreting a work, as long as the reader understood that their own particular reading of an author’s intention was not to be imposed upon any other reader.

By this period, the once almighty Author was weakened beyond recognition, popularized but powerless. This redefinition set the stage for the mid-twentieth century ejection of the Author from the critical scene.

At the same time, in England literature was entrusted with a new purpose: filling the gap left by religion. Failing religious institutions could no longer enforce social cohesion. Class roles were transformed under pressure by the Industrial Revolution. Cottage industries powered and controlled by families gave way to factory work. The new industrial working class did not patiently accept the disempowerment expected of them by the new economy. Protest raised anxious memories of the bloody Revolution across the Channel. England seemed to be falling apart.

The solution, promoted especially by the poet and critic Matthew Arnold, was to offer the study of English literature to pacify the working class and re-unite English society, as religious institutions had once done. Literature was offered as a civilizing influence, to unite the classes in English identity and give the less fortunate classes a way to transcend, through poetry, their unfortunate circumstances—and Arnold and others were quite explicit that otherwise the working classes would take up arms and by opposing end them. English literature was first taught, not in the universities, but in the Mechanics Institutes and working men’s colleges. English literature was

the poor man's classical education. The expected social and political benefits of literature justified giving it a budget.

Literature during this time began to produce a lot of larger-than-life characters. The Three Musketeers, Sherlock Holmes and a whole host of others—the ancestors of our super-heroes—overcame superhuman obstacles with superhuman abilities. They proved Matthew Arnold right. People came home at the end of the day feeling smaller than life and overwhelmed by their obstacles. They felt comforted identifying with these larger than life characters who always won their battles.

This was also the period when Bardolatry was born. Scholars turned a handful of dry facts about the Stratford entrepreneur into the larger-than-life image of the native English literary genius who came from the working classes himself. England sold the new industrial working class a bill of goods to sweeten the Industrial Revolution—"Be our wage slaves and we'll make the national poet a working-class hero"—and their descendants, both biological and ideological, still buy it. The historical context also helps to explain why the adherents of the myth of Shakespeare are so resistant to rational, evidence-based analysis: like D'Artagnan and Sherlock Holmes, the Bard has superpowers.

The Text

In the twentieth century, the sentimentalized and moribund author was finally removed from the scene, and the text itself took center stage. Several converging forces gave it this honor.

The First World War had no winners. Everyone lost. The extent of the carnage, the disjuncting of the rules of war, the violation of old alliances and the rise of unsettled new powers made the survivors feel as if they had awakened from a nightmare to an endless night, sifting through the wreckage for new certainties to replace the old. A common reaction was to retreat into the past, or into perfect little invented worlds. Philosophy retreated into solipsism, such as Husserl's phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutics.

This flight from history into the study of things that were small, safe and/or imaginary occurred at a politically opportune time for the field of English literary studies. The study of English literature was breaking into English universities, and trying to explain why it should be taken seriously, when everyone knew that English literature was what you read on holiday, and that really serious people studied the classics. Under the leadership of F.R. Leavis, Q.D. Roth, and I.A. Richards, the Cambridge English department professionalized its discipline by featuring the close reading of texts. Focussing on the hard text on the page meant isolating it from its historical and social context, which belonged to other departments, anyway (see Figure 2).

This focus on the text as object was taken to its logical extreme by the American New Criticism between the wars. The New Critics, writers and academics such as T.S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks and Northrop Frye, adamantly divorced the text from author and reader. The author had no more to offer about the interpretation of a text than did any other reader. The individuality of reader experience of a text was merely variance from the correct answer. The text owned its own meaning, which could be found out by close reading. The New Critics rigorously analyzed poems as if they were engineering diagrams, balancing and integrating conflicting forces into a stable structure. The only texts that permitted this technique were short poems. Novels referred too much to that unsettling world outside the text. You couldn't isolate, for example, *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Little Women* from their

historical, political and social context and have anything left.

Despite these limitations, New Criticism has been around long enough to have settled into the popular culture of educated people, such as the high school student whose simple question "Why does the author matter?" set me on my journey to find an answer for both of us.

The Reader

The next development beyond the centrality of the text is still evolving in a fast-moving international dialogue. Reader reception theory, also called reader response theory, awards the reader the central place in literature. In 1968, Roland Barthes, the French semiotician, polished off the vestiges of authorial intention in his landmark essay, "The Death of the Author." Barthes concludes: "The unity of a text is not in its origin but in its destination. . . . The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (148).

In retrospect, it is surprising that it took this long to notice how hard the reader has to work to decode even a street sign, let alone a work of literature. And to notice how necessary is the work of the reader. (If a tree writes a book in the forest, is it literature?)

Reader reception theory empirically observes as the reader interprets a text, integrating information from inside and outside the text. Without the reader, the text is just ink on a page. Does the text have any meaning inherent in itself, or is meaning the gift of the reader? Is the work of the reader in enacting the text active or passive work? Reception theorists at one extreme, the deconstructionists, claim that a text has no inherent meaning, thus justifying any interpretation, no matter how idiosyncratic. If the director thinks *Macbeth* is about Freud, or Latin American dictators, then it is. One historian of critical theory has referred to deconstruction as "cerebral fibrillation" (Searle 870). Emphasizing the importance of the reader has setup a tug-of-war between the reader and the text, between the right of the reader to interpret a text any way they see fit, and the tendency of the inanimate text to direct its reader toward a range of correct, or at least not incorrect, interpretations. This tug-of-war is what the current international fuss is all about.

Reader response theory has sprouted a salad of overlapping approaches to literature from newly recognized reader viewpoints, all lucidly summarized by Tyson in her accessible *Critical Theory Today*. Feminist, African-American, postcolonial and queer criticism all provide insights for understanding literature from previously ignored points of view. Marxist criticism examines the point of view of the powerless by analyzing power relationships and class status in literature.

Another contemporary school of criticism, New Historicism, arose to restore social and historical context to the study of literature, in response to the perceived deficiencies of New Criticism (Cox and Reynolds 4-6; Tyson 288-292). New Historicism is particularly relevant to Shakespeare authorship studies, because the identification of the correct author restores the social and historical context of his work.

There is even a growing movement, sparked by the landmark essay "Against Theory" by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in 1982, to return to authorial intention as a basis for interpreting literature. A group of critics writing in response has been collected by Mitchell. A few agree with Knapp and Michaels, but several critics share the unintentionally ironic position that this would collapse the whole enterprise of literary criticism by eliminating the centrality of the critic.

—M. Karr

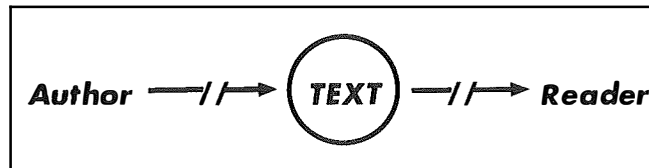


Figure 2

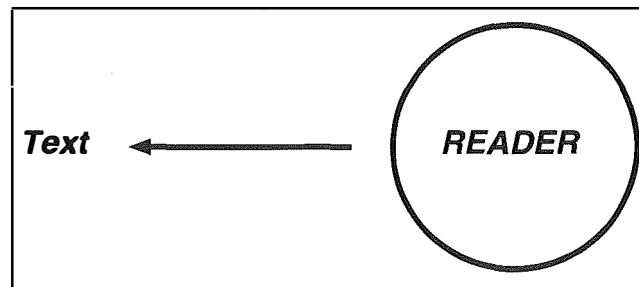


Figure 3

Semiotics (continued from page 8)

is, the science of communication in all its forms. Though it began in classical antiquity, it still requires an introduction for most educated people today. Seme is the Greek root meaning “sign”. Semiotics applies to a wide range of phenomena, from the communication between machines, or electrical engineering; to the interpretation of natural signs, such as weather, disease and the genome; to linguistics, non-verbal communication, anthropology, literature and advertising. Since the object of study is the sign itself, concepts from any of these fields may apply to the others.

The empirical approach of semiotics differs fundamentally from philosophy and the traditional study of literature. Philosophers and literary critics sit at their desks and declare what they think is true while semioticians, like other scientists, go out and observe, build models and test hypotheses. For example, Umberto Eco surveyed a class of students reading a short story to test his hypothesis about the structure of the plot (*Role of the Reader* 261-2).

The conflict over the Shakespeare authorship question is a natural experiment in semiotics, an opportunity to test hypotheses about the function of authorship in literature. Shakespeare authorship issues—all authorship issues—are addressed by semiotics. The tradition of literature and literary history has no intellectual framework for authorship research, which may be why Stratfordians become irritable when confronted with authorship questions. Oxfordians are all doing semiotics, so we should familiarize ourselves with a few rules and definitions.

To understand semiotics it is necessary to keep two things in mind: the definition of a sign, and a model of communication. There are several definitions of a sign, but the one given by Ferdinand de Saussure is the most compact. Saussure’s sign has two sides, like a coin or a story (see Figure 4).

The glue between signified and signifier may be natural, for signs such as pawprints in the snow or

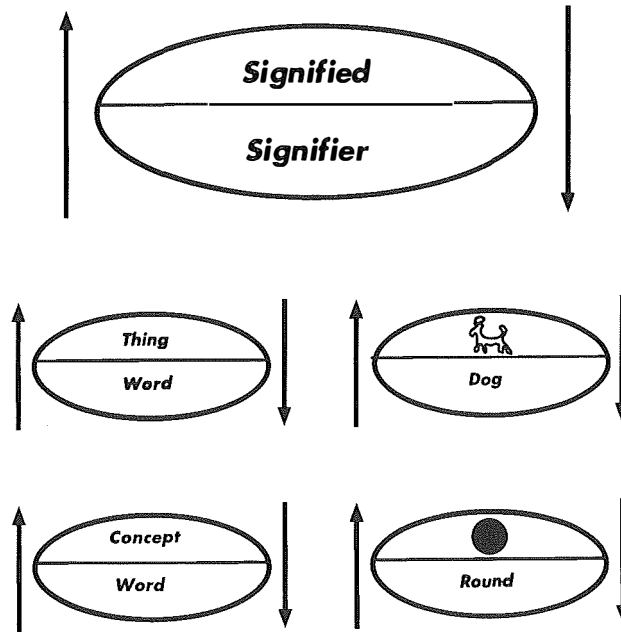


Figure 4. Ferdinand de Saussure’s definition of signs is the most compact. A thing has two signs—the thing signified and the signifier which represents it.

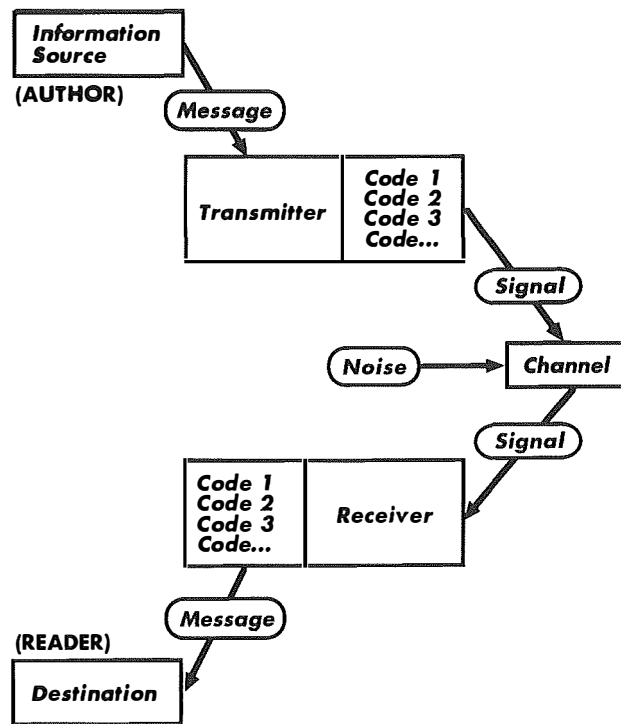


Figure 5. Shannon’s model is a universal paradigm of communication. All messages must be encoded into some form of language, sent to an audience, and decoded on the other end. Communication can fail at any step in the coding, sending, and decoding.

fevers; or conventional, for signs such as proper names and last year’s fashion. The ancients, especially the Stoics and Epicureans, were most interested in natural signs while conventional signs fascinate moderns. Perhaps this is because until modern times, most of what passed before the eyes was natural; now most of what passes before the eyes is advertising.

We also need a model of communication. A familiar cast of characters, the author, text and reader, reappears in a model published in 1949 by electrical engineer Claude Shannon, the founder of information theory (see Figure 5, *After Shannon and Weaver*, 1949).

The Information Source, or Author, creates a Message, or Text, and sends it to a Transmitter, which encodes the Message and transmits the encoded Signal over a Channel. Channels add Random Noise. The coded Signal arrives at the Receiver, which chooses among a number of possible Codes. The Receiver sends the correctly or incorrectly Decoded Message to the Destination, or Reader.

Umberto Eco

Equipped with a definition of the sign and a model of communication, we can now turn to literature. Our best guide for this project is Umberto Eco, who in his long and prolific career has pioneered the new trail of literary semiotics, integrating it with other schools of thought and with the classical and medieval heritage of sign theory. As the author of three novels, one of which, *The Name of the Rose*, was made into a movie, he has more experience than most critics with the performing side of the footlights. He writes insightfully and entertainingly about hearing readers and critics interpret his work, knowing that as the author he is not entitled to overrule readers in their interpretations (Postscript 1-12, 34, 47-53).

Eco’s life work deliberately places him between those who say there is no truth (the reader-centered

deconstructionists) and those who think they own the truth (the text-centered New Critics). There are obvious political analogies to those who think they own the truth and those who think there is no truth, not always neatly left and right. Most people, educated or not, stand in that middle space without thinking much about it. Eco attempts to map that middle space, to make that stance a definite choice, not just a failure to choose. Technically he is looking for a method of classifying some reader interpretations of a text as incorrect, without going so far as to limit the text to only certain pre-ordained correct interpretations.

Interpretation and Use

Eco distinguishes between criticism that uses a text and criticism that interprets a text (*The Limits of Interpretation*, chapter 3 "Intentio Lectoris" 57-62). Interpreting a text means taking information from inside and outside the text to decode the meaning of objects inside the text. Using a text means taking information from inside and outside the text to decode the meaning of objects outside the text.

Eco's example is Maria Bonaparte's critical work on three stories by Edgar Allan Poe, which interprets the text by comparing the stories and finding the same pattern of eternal love, death and grief between a man and a woman. She also uses the text when she infers aspects of Poe's private life—certainly outside the text—from the stories. Another way to use a text is for historical research on people or events referred to by the text.

Almost all Oxfordian research uses the text. The plays and sonnets are used to confirm the author's biography, his politics and religion, his relationships with other individuals and the biographies, politics, religion and relationships of other historical figures. Indeed, J. Thomas Looney could not have identified Edward de Vere without using the recurring themes in his writings. All of this work needs to be done, but it is the study of history, not literature.

When an Oxfordian watches *Hamlet* there is a shiver of doubled vision. We see Hamlet, and we see de Vere behind him, and Anne behind Ophelia, Burleigh behind Polonius and father behind father. Watching *Hamlet* is a deeper experience than it was before we knew about Oxford; but that is because we are following Oxford's story as well as Hamlet's, not because we are follow-

reflect an image of the author. The reader uses all the known works produced by an author to build up their own version of this icon. With the first work of a living author, the reader starts up a new icon. Each successive work by that author supplies the reader with more details, until by the end of that author's career the reader may feel they know them pretty well, though they only

know the icon they have made of the author. The reader also pastes onto the icon what they receive from the world outside the text, such as reviews, interviews, biographical facts and portraits (see Figure 6).

Building a fully fleshed-out icon is a fair amount of work, and no reader does it alone. Authorial icons are social conventions. The need for icons and their upkeep employs critics and talk show hosts. (We do this with actors, too, and directors; probably all auteurs are shadowed by their icons.)

We do not read *Rabbit, Run* or even *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike. We read *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike's icon, and that makes a difference—not all the difference, but a

difference. We do not watch a sheriff in a movie, we watch John Wayne's icon playing a sheriff, and all those other sheriffs that go into his icon add something to our interpretation of his performance. The icon tells us what to expect. When I.A. Richards detached poems from their authorial icons by giving them to his students without the names of their authors, the students' interpretations of these works varied widely from students who knew who wrote what (Eagleton, *Literary Theory* 15).

Once the reader has created an icon by reflection from the text, they use the icon to reflect back on and interpret the text. The reader uses the authorial icon as a guide to help interpret the text. Recalling Shannon's model of communication (Figure 5), the reader uses the authorial icon as a code book to

(Continued on page 12)

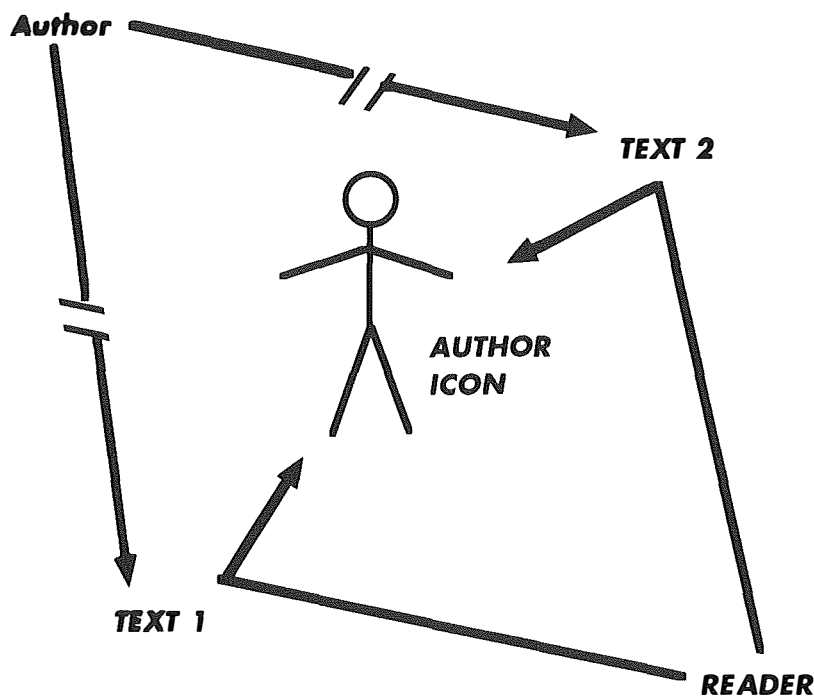


Figure 6. To understand the "author icon" based interpretative model, it must be realized that both author and reader interact with multiple texts over time (writing and reading), resulting in an icon of the author that could be developed no other way.

ing Hamlet's any better.

The only Oxfordian research I know of that interprets the text is a pair of articles on *Twelfth Night*: C. Richard Desper's 1995 article on allusions to Edmund Campion which changes the meaning of the Sir Topas scene from farcical to ghoulish; and Charles Boyle's essay on *The Ever Reader* web page on the relationship of Feste and Olivia.

Historical research into the world outside the text offers nothing to all those who merely love the great plays. It also leaves unanswered that high school student's question: "What difference does it make?"

Author Icons

The reason authorship makes a difference is that the reader creates an icon of the author, outside the text, by using the text to

Semiotics (continued from page 11)
decode the work.

Now the icon is not like the decoder rings found in cereal boxes when some of us were young. The authorial icon does not feed the reader a one-to-one correspondence between text and meaning. The icon is more like a Book of Possible Codes for the work, because every interesting work has many true and coherent meanings.

The icon also tells the reader what codes not to use. The reader expects that a book by Susan Sontag will not be a silly sexist fluff piece and that a Bruce Lee movie will not be deep. Readers enforce the correspondence between icon and text. Woe betide the hapless writer who departs from their usual genre to break new ground, because readers can't decode it. Readers become confused and even angry at such authorial misbehavior. Writers have a standard tactic, the pen name or heteronym, for evading the tyranny of the authorial icon. Carolyn Heilbrun, the scholar, writes murder mysteries as Amanda Cross. The Portuguese poet Pessoa had dozens of names under which he wrote different kinds of material. The names were all understood to be his pen names (Zenith, Introduction). Each name signalled his readers to plug in a different icon before interpreting the work.

Jorge Luis Borges played with replacing the authorship of various works in a short story, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," noting how doing so changed the interpretation of the works. One wonders if Borges knew about Shakespeare authorship. At the very end of the story, Borges suggests that reading the fifteenth-century devotional work "The Imitation of Christ" as if it were written by the nineteenth-century French novelist Louis Ferdinand Celine would be an "adventure." Thirty years later Umberto Eco took up this suggestion as an exercise. Using Augustine's concept of the coherence of the whole text, he found he could rule out Celine as the author because the authorial icon of Celine—that is, what we expect from a text written by Celine—matches the "Imitation" in only a few sentences (*The Limits of Interpretation*, chapter 3 "Intentio Lectoris" 59-60).

Notice that I am not sitting at my desk pronouncing that readers should or must use authorial icons. I sometimes wish they wouldn't. I have empirically observed that they do. Here are two examples:

Listen to Susan Sontag, in the Sunday

Oregonian, complaining about a review of her new novel: "People see it's by me and they think it must be a novel of ideas" (Heltzel, F1).

Here is Umberto Eco, making a fine point in the history of Egyptology: "... fifteenth century readers saw it as coming from a different author. The text had not changed, but the voice supposed to utter it was endowed with a different charisma. This changed the way in which the text was

*"We know what it
means for a play to
be by Shakespeare.*

*We don't know what
it means for a
play to be by
Edward de Vere."*

received and the way in which it was consequently interpreted" ("From Marco Polo" 60).

Author icons and "Shakespeare"

The authorial icon of the Stratford Shakespeare is an elaborate structure, despite the lack of a writerly biography. An author's biography, of course, can be a major source of icon material. The biography of Edward de Vere has promising writerly lines: conflicted love life, impoverishment, disempowerment, involvement with language and literature; but so far his authorial icon is little more than a crude armature with a few scraps of clay on it. An icon tells us what it means for a text to emanate from a certain author. We know what it means for a play to be by Shakespeare. We don't know what it means for a play to be by Edward de Vere. Oxfordians are creating a new icon.

There is an existing icon of Edward de Vere, created by Stratfordians down through the centuries. It begins with the tennis court quarrel with Sir Philip Sidney and goes downhill from there. The entry in Boyce's *Dictionary of Shakespeare* says "Oxford was renowned as a violent and irresponsible nobleman. . . . He may have killed a servant when

he was seventeen . . . and his brawling was notorious (Boyce 479). The closeted A. L. Rowse said that Edward de Vere was "a roaring homo . . . almost frightful lightweight. . . . He never wrote a single play" (PBS Frontline's *The Shakespeare Mystery*). Even if these descriptions were accurate, the Stratfordian claim that a life of violence, substance abuse and/or sexual ambiguity disqualifies a person from artistic greatness would astonish and amuse scholars of Lord Byron, Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, Jean Genet, Oscar Wilde or a host of other great writers and artists. Artistic talent complicates lives.

Smearing the reputation, the icon, of Edward de Vere is a rear guard strategy. And it's a pretty good strategy. Ezra Pound's work was removed from curricula when he came out in support of the Nazis. (He is being put on a few reading lists again, by junior professors who find his wartime offenses abstract, because they were not even born when he committed them.) The Directors Guild of America recently removed the name of D. W. Griffith from their annual award, because, although he was a founder of their field, his original films were brutally racist and led to lynchings and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.

Oxfordian research focuses on finding the "smoking gun" that will convince the world that Oxford was Shakespeare. But by the time it is found, it may not matter—who would want to read the work of such a disgusting person? There is nothing new in society selecting what it wants to read based on the origins of its author. It used to be that women and minority writers couldn't get read. Now racists and Nazi sympathizers can't get read.

Stratfordians have been salting de Vere's reputation for a long time. No doubt this is poetic justice for what de Vere did to *Richard III*.

Open Works and Closed Works

So we have two authorial icons to choose from. Does it matter which one comes out on top?

To finally face the question of what difference it makes if we trade the old Shakespeare for a new one, we need to look at Eco's distinction between an open work and a closed work. (This is one of his major contributions, made in *The Role of the Reader* and *The Open Work*.)

A closed work predetermines its readers' interpretations. It does this by limiting the reader's choice of code to the same code used to encode the message. Traffic signs are the obvious example. Textbooks and cookbooks are also closed works. They only make sense decoded one way.

Another way that some closed works, such as romance novels and thrillers, predetermine their readers' interpretation is to make choices for the reader at turning points in the story. The reader does not have to work as hard. Plot and character are all as definite as rocks in works like this. Nothing is left ambiguous. There are certain lazy pleasures in a closed work, being pulled along a predetermined path, using familiar codes, seeing familiar types and feeling familiar emotions. There is a large market for closed works, probably many times larger than the market for open works.

The open work leaves a lot more up to the reader. The reader has to decide what code or codes to use, by asking: What kind of a story is this? More than one code will work simultaneously, but not all codes. Ambiguity is decodability by multiple codes. The reader of an open work can produce more than one possible coherent message, and an infinite number of incoherent ones. An open work can even refer to its own coding process and question its own code, or, in a metasemiotic twist, force a reader to create new codes.

The reader has to work a lot harder to interpret an open work, but they arrive at the finish line, panting, with a pearl of great price. The reader owns their interpretation. No two readers will come through an open work by exactly the same route. This level of involvement in a work of literature can change a reader's life.

The works of Shakespeare are among the most open works ever written. Much of their richness for performance and reading is due to this openness. The common wisdom about Shakespeare's audience is that the plays are designed to be understood and enjoyed—that is, decoded—by everyone in Elizabethan society from groundlings to lords, who all have different codebooks. Actors do their best work when they discover a character for themselves, which they must do in an open work. Every generation so far finds its own particularly resonant interpretation of the great plays.

How do author icons affect open and closed works differently? Closed works don't

require much of an icon, little more than "This is the kind of book this author usually writes, you're safe buying it." We don't know, or need to know, much about Erle Stanley Gardner, Jacqueline Susann or Ian Fleming. Plenty of interviews with popular authors are published, but these are publicity, not inquiry.

Author icons for open works are a different story. The goal of a writer with an open work on the typewriter is to drive the reader

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a little bit crazy. James Joyce said he spent his whole life writing his work, his readers could bloody well spend their whole lives reading it. So readers will go to some length to learn more about authors of open works, hoping to find interpretive clues. We know a lot, and we want to know more, about John Updike, Lillian Hellman, Tom Stoppard, and Lorraine Hansberry. I have actually read a long, serious article about John Updike's psoriasis and how it affects his work. And, of course, we want to know as much as we can about William Shakespeare.

Putting it all together

Now, finally, we can tie the threads of our inquiry together. What is the impact of an author icon on an open work? What is the impact of the author icon of William Shakespeare on the interpretation of the Shakespeare plays?

The Shakespeare icon has been a wonderful experiment in the null icon. Since the life of William Shakespeare has almost nothing in common with the plays, the icon does not restrict the reader (or actor or director) from interpreting the text itself. The hungry reader who turns to the biography to help interpret the text finds nothing and is thrown

back on the text and their own resources. The effect of the null icon has been to make the plays super-open works. This is a good thing.

One director here in Portland who takes the authorship controversy seriously is concerned that if research confirms a real author, the centrality of the texts will be lost, and Shakespeare play production will degenerate into a guessing game of Elizabethan Who's Who. This is a responsible concern that the plays will become closed works.

In two respects the Stratfordian icon has closed the works deleting certain codes from the Book of Possible Codes. The icon, socially and geographically located far from the centers of power, is cheerfully apolitical. This has hidden the themes of politics and power that pervade the plays, especially the comedies.

This icon is also an upbeat icon. The Shakespeare biography is a triumphal story of unmitigated success and happy middle-class retirement. This closes off to directors the darker aspects of some of the plays, in favor of shallow sitcom-like presentations.

Will Edward de Vere's authorial icon be better for the plays and their readers than William's? We will all find out. The Oxfordians are winning. It may take 10 years or 10 generations, but it is inevitable. Will an icon formed from de Vere's life offer us any new codes, any new approaches to interpretation, that the Stratford icon did not?

In many ways it will. One example will have to suffice. Lawyers have long recognized the professional precision of Shakespeare's legal terminology. There is a large body of literature on the law in Shakespeare that only lawyers read, because they use a different authorial icon. Only lawyers can decode the legal language in the plays, and they naturally apply it to their icon of the author. To laypersons who do not possess the codes, legal language is undecodeable. The standard Shakespeare icon has nothing to do with the practice of law, so critics and directors do not even look for legal interpretations of the texts.

Recently legal scholars have argued that many of the plays were actively written to influence the outcome of contemporary legal controversies, almost as if they were *amicus curiae* briefs in the form of plays. This sets a powerful example of an activist writer and lawyer in his society. Oxford's

(Continued on page 14)

Semiotics (continued from page 13)

legal stands as expressed in the plays are strikingly democratic for someone labelled an aristocrat. In *The Merchant of Venice* he advocates the supremacy of equity law over common law, that is, the rights of individuals over property rights (Andrews xii, 77). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale* he argues for the rights of women in slander cases (Kornstein chapters 10-11). But Shakespeare's legal activism is missing from the Book of Possible Codes. The popular Shakespeare icon is not set in a society that wants or needs to change.

The Stratfordian icon has closed off interpretation of the legal meaning of the plays. An Oxfordian icon could open up a whole new field of law and literature, with Oxford as an activist lawyer-writer. As a physician writer, I do science in my plays. I am fascinated to find Shakespeare doing law in his.

Oxford had an interesting life, to say the least. He was not just an aristocrat. He had power, he lost it; he had money, and lost it. He was a sort of socioeconomic Tiresias. He had love, threw it away, got it back, lost it again, etc. He threw himself into war, music, science, sports, politics and a couple of religions, all reflected in the plays. It is hard to think of anything in his time that he didn't do. That breadth of experience provides an almost inexhaustible Book of Possible Codes. These new ways to understand his works have not occurred to readers and actors lacking the stimulus of the actual author's biography.

On the other hand, what codes will the Oxford author icon close off? The only way to find out is to perform the experiment. My director friend is probably correct that Shakespeare study will go through a phase of icon-building, focussing overmuch on the historical personalities and scandals used in the plays. But known autobiographical content has hardly limited treatments of, for example, Eugene O'Neill.

The answer

Now we can answer that high school student who sent us on this inquiry. It is not the new author himself who makes a difference, but how we readers, actors and directors use the image of whomever we think wrote a work to help us interpret it. Maybe we would understand all literature better if,

as Borges suggests, we shuffled the authors around every 400 years or so.

The association of William Shakespeare with Edward de Vere's plays has blocked our interpretation of them in some ways. But most often it has challenged us to turn back to the texts themselves, to search out what their author buried there. This absent authorship is part of what has made them magical, and it is a great lesson in the relationship of authors to their works. But as William Shakespeare rides off into the setting sun, the true author promises to open new horizons in the landscape of the plays.

This is a brave new world. Let's go see what wonders are in't.

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Elizabeth's Glass (continued from page one)

as we shall see, an ideology both important and discomfiting in its personal and historical aspects. Its treatment of bastardy and incest, for example, has potentially disconcerting ramifications for ideas of liberty and politics generally and illuminates the historical rise of the English nation and biographical role of Elizabeth herself. For the most profound themes of "Glass" involve the reworking and expansion in nationalist and secular terms of such medieval theological notions concerning kinship as universal siblinghood, whereby all men and women are equally akin, and dormition, wherein the Virgin Mary plays at once the role of mother and daughter as well as wife ... It thus reflects the beginnings of a new ideal and real political organization, which, partly out of Elizabeth's own concerns with incest and bastardy, and partly out of political exigencies of the time, England's great monarch introduced as a kind of "national siblinghood" to which she was simultaneously the mother and wife.

The "Glass" is a reflection of Elizabeth herself ... [contextualized in] terms both of individual psychology and of national politics—not only [about] how a preadolescent young woman of 1544 formed her spirit, but also how that spirit informed the political identity of the English nation... (Shell, p. 6-7)

Marguerite of Navarre

To appreciate more completely how Elizabeth came to preside over this national siblinghood, we need to understand the author whose book she chose to translate at the tender age of 11.

Marguerite of Navarre was the sister of Francis the First of France. The humanist and libertine Queen was also herself a published author whose works had influence on other women in her time. Susan James comments (in "Kateryn Parr, The Making of a Queen," part of the series *Women and Gender in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*) on Katherine Parr's fascination with Navarre, saying that Parr was attracted, for example, to such concepts as...

the sinful soul awakening to its wretchedness as a miserable sinner through the grace of God, ... [a realization] which alone had the strength to break the chains from which no mortal man could deliver her. The similarity of language used in these self-abasing proclamations underscores a psychological equivalence, particular to women, between religious masochism and female submission.

On the title page of the 1533 edition of Navarre's *Mirror* the main theme is stated as

the place of God as spouse: "the soul recognizes her faults and sins, as well as the graces and benefits made to her by Jesus Christ her spouse." In her *Prayers and Meditations*, Katherine Parr utilizes this same image of Jesus as a "most loving spouse." Thus Navarre's ordinary physical incest is replaced by the extraordinary incest which informs the holy family. The *Mirror* is about "the discord being in human kind by the contrariness or spirit and flesh and its peace through spiritual life."

Shell writes (31) that the protagonist in *Mirror* is a woman who compares herself to the Virgin Mary—"the mother and sister of God the Son, and the daughter and spouse of God the Father."

In another work by Navarre—*Heptameron*—this "spiritual" incest takes a far more real turn. In this work a young man unknowingly has sexual intercourse with his mother (who does know and initiates it) and then marries the offspring of this union—his sister, daughter, and spouse. These two never learned of their kinship and the tale then ends happily: "...and they [the son and daughter] loved each other so much that never were there husband and wife more loving..."

Thus, in *Mirror* the sin of earthly incest can become the blessing of heavenly incest. As Shell carefully points out, *Heptameron* and *Mirror* are polar opposites, containing thematic (spiritual verse physical incest) and verbal ("mother, sister, daughter, and wife") parallels.

And Shell also notes the important distinction—or should we say linkage?—that Navarre herself makes about all this. As she writes in *Heptameron*:

She [the mother] must have been some self-sufficient fool, who, in her friarlike dreaming, deemed herself so saintly as to be incapable of sin, just as many of the Friars would have us believe that we can become, merely by our own efforts, which is an exceedingly great error. [Thus] Without God, fleshly desire will turn to naughty action. (31)

But of course, with God, that same desire is "not naughty." Shell also notes how Marguerite of Navarre is something like Shakespeare's Navarre in *Loves Labors Lost*, where the "little academe" cannot live a life of celibacy because "every man with his affects is born, / not by might master'd, but by special grace."

Marguerite's work did not sit well with either the Catholic or the Protestant movements. Her biblical studies were condemned

by the censors at the Sorbonne, and her books were to be burned. The King of France, her beloved brother, saved them from this fate. It's said that her best poetry was written for her brother. Navarre biographer George Saintsbury says, "it has been asserted that improper relations existed between the brother and the sister," though historical evidence is lacking. In the 1897 edition of *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* editor Percy Ames says "Elizabeth's life was a continuation and fulfillment of the promise of Marguerite's."

Marguerite Porete

Marguerite Porete is another important French female writer/philosopher, upon whose work Marguerite de Navarre drew for her own work (using Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*). During the 14th century Porete was one of the most interesting writers in a movement called the Brethren of the Free Spirit, a lay order which numbered hundreds of thousands of adherents in Europe, especially France. For the Brethren a key doctrine was that the spiritually incestuous relations between the Virgin Mary and God could be reproduced in a paradisiacal state of grace.

Their motto, writes Shell, was the Pauline rule *Ubi Spiritus, ibi libertas*: when the spirit of the Lord is in one, then the law is erased, and one is raised above the law (46).

In Rome, not surprisingly, this doctrine was condemned. For Catholics the religious celibate seeks liberty from physical desire. The libertine, on the other hand, seeks liberty from rules that restrict physical desire, even desires of an incestuous nature.

Though Porete was burned at the stake by the official church, her thoughts lived on. The Free Spirit movement had a direct effect on the doctrines of the Elizabethan "family of love" and its communal sexual practices. The English Anabaptists thus tried to erase and rise above the old distinctions between good and evil, even chastity and incest, and in the spirit of the free spirit many asserted publicly that "when the spirit of the Lord is in one, one can do no sin."

Or, as Marguerite Porete said in her *Mirror of Simple Souls*: "friends, love and do what you want."

Elizabeth's Glass

What else, then, is Elizabeth's *Glass of the Sinful Soul* except a kinship riddle? Elizabeth herself teases out the matter thus:

(Continued on page 16)

Elizabeth's Glass (continued from page 15)

I am sister onto thee, but so naughty a sister that better it is for me to hide such a name.

Certainly Elizabeth had incest in mind when she wrote these words. Her father, Henry VIII, had committed—by his own declaration—adultery and incest with his first wife, Catherine. Anne Boleyn had been accused of being sexually “handled” by her brother Lord Rochford (George Boleyn). Elizabeth’s uncle-father—as Shell describes him—Thomas Seymour (brother of her Protector Edward Seymour) was soon to be accused of “handling” Elizabeth herself. “Handle” in Elizabethan terms meant “fondle.”

Elizabeth’s narrator calls out in “Glass” to father or Father, to brother or Brother, to son or Son:

O my father, what paternity, O my brother, what fraternity, O my child, what selection; O my husband, what conjunction! Father full of humility, Brother having taken our similitude, Son engendered through faith and charity, husband loving in all extremity.

Lest we miss the extraordinary quality of the poet’s love, the speaker asks of her unnamed fourfold kin, “Is there any love that may be compared unto this, but it both some evil condition?”

For it is ultimately Father, and not father, who handles the young girl. And so, to Jesus she cries out:

Thou dost handle my soul (if so I durst say) as a mother, daughter, sister, and wife.... Alas, yea, for Thou hast broken the kindred of my old father, calling me daughter of adoption.

Note how in this quote Jesus is summoned to “handle” the soul.

In the end the narrator comes to recognize that, on one’s own, one can do nothing to overcome the sinful desire for physical incest. Only through the grace of God can profane incest be converted to sacred.

Elizabeth

As we know, Elizabeth’s young life was immersed in issues of incest, and in particular the politics of incest, and the legal and political consequences of charges of incest. Anne Boleyn had become Queen thanks to Henry’s memorable charge that he and his sister-in-law Catherine (widow of his brother Arthur) were living in adultery and incest

and the marriage should be declared null. This charge, which recalls the complexities of the relationship between King Claudius and his sister-in-law Gertrude in *Hamlet*, is momentous in the English Reformation. Ironically Henry, in making these charges of incestuous behavior, set in motion a series of later charges of incest within the royal family.

As Shell enumerates for us in *Glass* (p. 9), Henry’s political use of incest charges had a lasting effect. To paraphrase Shell, in

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the years following his charge of incest against Catherine it was the young Elizabeth who had to face the consequences. She was declared a bastard in several ways.

—First, Henry claimed publicly that Anne had committed incest with her brother Lord Rochford.

—Second, Thomas More argued that Henry and his first wife had never been divorced. Therefore his marriage to Anne was null.

—Third, it was claimed that Henry and Anne had been married less than nine months before Elizabeth was born.

—It was also claimed that Elizabeth’s aunt, Mary Boleyn, had been her father’s mistress before he had turned his attention to Anne. Since, according to the 1536 Act of Parliament it had been nominated adultery to sleep with the sister of one’s mistress, it could be seen that the marriage between Henry and Anne was thus tainted and that Elizabeth was a bastard.

—But the most interesting charge of them all was that Elizabeth’s mother was also her sister, i.e. that Anne Boleyn was

not only Henry’s wife but also his daughter. These charges are extant in the historical records of the times, and many of Henry’s biographers have reported them, though they don’t then know what to do with them. This ambiguous kinship is possibly being suggested in the couplet that Anne inscribed on an illumination in the Annunciation in the Book of Hours that she gave to Henry: “Be daly prove you shalle me fynde/ to be to you bothe lovyng and kynde.” The Annunciation is the intimation of the Virgin Mary—who is not just the wife of God but also his sister and daughter—of the divine incarnation in her womb.

Anne Boleyn

Anne Boleyn is, of course, a key figure in this story. We have seen that to a great extent, rumors and charges of incest surrounded the childhood of Elizabeth. The first wife of Henry VIII, Catherine, was dumped because of incest, with Henry himself charging that this marriage to his own sister-in-law was in fact incest, but only after Catherine produced a daughter and no sons.

When his second marriage to Anne Boleyn produced—again—a daughter and no sons, he decided to end that marriage too, and he again used the charge of incest, saying that Anne had committed incest with both her brother and one of her uncles. Whether these charges were true or not we cannot know. The bringing of such charges for a second time against one of his wives clearly shows what was on Henry’s mind.

Most historians of the period report that the young Henry was sexually active, and in all likelihood had relations with a wife of one of his most loyal companions, Thomas Boleyn, a man who would give his master anything. Boleyn’s wife, Elizabeth Howard, was a mystery; she was little older than the future king and was known to be very kindly towards him when he was Prince of Wales.

As Francis Hackett said of her in *Henry the Eighth*, “It is not impossible that as a young matron she appealed to Henry at seventeen. Thomas Boleyn, at any rate, was one of Henry’s first appointees. He was a squire of the body from the beginning.”

In the first 10 years of the 16th century Elizabeth Howard was pregnant 10 times. Only three children survived: Mary, possibly born in 1503, George, possibly born in 1505, and Anne, possibly born in 1507. None of their birthdays are clear.

The two daughters, when they were around the ages of 16 and 12, went to the

French Court in Paris with their father. The light-hearted Mary was soon not a virgin. She'd left for home with the English contingent from the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520. She then married William Carey and began an affair with Henry that lasted until 1526. Her father, Thomas Boleyn, profited handsomely during these years.

In 1522 Anne returned to England. She soon was brokenhearted by a lover who had to marry another girl. She then spent most of her time at Hever in Kent. It was in 1526 that Henry saw her in a different light. He loved her. Not only would he give up her sister for her, he would find a way out of his marriage to Catherine, anything to be with her. And once she agreed, the die was cast.

It wasn't until 1533 that Catherine was divorced from Henry under English law, on the charge of incest. And by then, of course, England was no longer tied to Rome. But, Henry wanted Anne. They had a secret ceremony, and Elizabeth was born five months later.

It was in 1534-1535, during her brief two and a half year marriage to Henry, that Anne and Marguerite had a well documented correspondence. According to Marc Shell, when the 11-year old Elizabeth translated Navarre's *Mirror*, she used a copy of the book that had been her mother's—possibly sent to her by Navarre herself.

Finally, in 1536 Anne was beheaded, charged with adultery and incest. Whether Anne was actually Henry's daughter is something that we can never know for sure. But it is important to remember that this rumor of the father-daughter relationship was extant in the 1530s. It has been cited over and over in nearly all biographies of Henry right through the 20th century.

Conclusion

If *The Glass of the Sinful Soul* was just one anomaly in an otherwise uneventful life for Elizabeth, it might not matter that much. But this young Elizabeth grew up to become Queen Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, monarch of England and Head of the Church of England. And this same Elizabeth had some sort of relationship with the true Shakespeare—Edward de Vere. Therefore, I believe, *Glass* may be an important clue in understanding the larger problem—the problem of Shakespeare's true identity, and—beyond that—the problem of just how and why the Shakespeare authorship mystery came about 400 years ago, and has endured so strongly since then.

For once Shakespeare is seen as Edward

de Vere, the historical problems and unanswered questions simply multiply. Let's consider some of these questions within the new context provided by *The Glass of the Sinful Soul*:

—The 16th Earl of Oxford hastily married Marjorie Golding in the summer of 1548 under duress. Why?

—Elizabeth had some sort of relationship with Thomas Seymour in 1548. She even wrote to the Parliament that year to

**“... young Elizabeth grew
up to become Queen
Elizabeth, the Virgin
Queen ... Head of the
Church of England ...
[and with] some sort of
relationship with
the true Shakespeare.”**

claim that she was *not pregnant* by the Lord Admiral [i.e. Seymour]. Shades, perhaps, of more recent political declarations, such as “I am not a crook,” or “I did not have sex with that woman.” What was really going on in 1548?

—Elizabeth and Burghley knew each other by 1547, and began their historic life-long alliance. Burghley may well have played the leading role in helping Elizabeth through the 1548 crisis about her relationship with Seymour and the rumors about her being pregnant by him (rumors documented for us by her letter to Parliament). What role did Burghley really play in 1548? Does the strength of his alliance with Elizabeth date from this year?

—For the Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, there are no contemporaneous records of his birth. Over 20 years later (in April 1576) Burghley recorded in his diary his birthday was April 12th, 1550; this was done while he was in the middle of a fight with Oxford over the paternity of Oxford's first daughter, Elizabeth Vere. Of all the years and months that Burghley might have thought to have recorded

Oxford's birth date, is it significant that he wound up doing it in April 1576, in the midst of the well-documented, historic battle over whether Elizabeth Vere was, in fact, Oxford's own child?

—Oxford used a form of signature that seemed to say that he was both the 17th Earl of Oxford and Edward the 7th of England. The last time he used it was in a letter to Robert Cecil (Burghley's son) on the eve of Elizabeth's funeral in April 1603. Why did he use this signature throughout his entire adult life, and why did he abruptly stop using it shortly after Elizabeth's death?

—The Third Earl of Southampton, not yet 20, seems to have been regarded as a future king in poetry dedicated to him in the early 1590s. He was also the recipient of dedications in the first two poems published by Shakespeare, and *Shakespeare's Sonnets*—many scholars have supposed—was also dedicated to him. On what basis could Southampton be considered royal? What is the true relationship between Shakespeare and Southampton?

—The Earls of Southampton and Essex led the 1601 Essex Rebellion. Essex was executed, Southampton was spared. Do we really know the whole story behind this famous, remarkable event in English history? And why was Southampton spared while Essex was executed?

—On the day Oxford died (June 24th, 1604) Southampton and several of his followers were put in the Tower overnight and then released. No record of this incident occurs in English sources; we know of it only from ambassadors' letters written back to their home governments. Why this remarkable coincidence? And why is there no mention of it in the official British archives?

What all this means, I believe, is that there is a very good reason why the true identity of Shakespeare has never been acknowledged, that reason being that the true story behind the Shakespeare mystery may involve *both* incest and the English Crown—and not just spiritual incest, but perhaps real, physical incest.

The political consequences of publicly acknowledging such a connection, with the Virgin Mary/Virgin Elizabeth icon at its center, would have been then—and perhaps still is now—too much for a government, a society and a culture to bear.

Oxfordian News

Authorship play in California; an April Oxfordian Weekend scheduled in Chicago; Michigan Oxfordians spread the word; DVS meeting in London

California

The South Coast Repertory company, based in **Costa Mesa**, will be producing an original play this coming June that takes on the Shakespeare authorship question.

The *Bard of Avon* is a new play by award-winning playwright Amy Freed, and will be on stage at the SCR from May 25th to July 1st. The SCR press release says, "Freed explores the debate over Shakespeare's authorship with a period comedy set in Shakespeare's day that reveals much about the nature of art and genius and how Shakespeare became Shakespeare as it introduces us to many of the Bard of Avon's contemporaries [and] asks whether Will Shaksper... could have written the greatest works in the English language... or might a more logical choice be the erudite Earl of Oxford? Or Sir Francis Bacon? or Queen Elizabeth."

For further information, contact Cristofer Gross, Director of Public Relations, at (714) 708-5561, or Madeline Porter at (714) 708-5562.

Illinois

The **Chicago Oxford Society** will celebrate its first anniversary in April with a festive four days of Oxfordian events, including lectures by several prominent Oxfordians and the involvement of local Shakespeareans in performances and poetry readings.

The scheduled events for the four day period from April 26th to 29th are:

April 26th - 6:30 pm: Richard Whalen lecture and book signing for "*Shakespeare: Who Was He?*" at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater at Navy Pier (800 E. Grand). The Event is sponsored by the Theater and Barbara's Bookstore. Admission free.

April 27th - 6:30 pm. A birthday party—wine and cheese reception—for the Chicago Oxford Society, the Earl of Oxford, and William of Stratford. The event will be held at the Feltre School (22 West Erie). Special guests include Richard Whalen, along with members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society Board of Trustees, in town for their annual Spring meeting.

April 28th - 9:00 am: Shakespeare Ox-

ford Society Board meeting will be held at 53 W. Jackson, Suite 340. 1:00 pm: Dramatic adaptation and reading of *The Rape of Lucrece* by The Shakespeare Project of Chicago at the Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Center. 3:00 pm: Slide show and panel discussion "*Lucrece, Shakespeare, and Oxford*" with Richard Whalen and Peter Garino, director of *Lucrece*, moderated by Chicago Oxford Society co-founder Bill Farina, in the Chicago Author's Room of the library. 4:00 pm: "On Looking Into Chapman's Oxford: Notes for A Personality Profile," by Richard Whalen. Same location. Admission to all library events free.

April 29th - 1:30 pm: Dr. Merilee Karr will conclude the weekend's events with a lecture on "The Shakespeare Authorship Issue: What Difference Does It Make Who Wrote the Plays?" at the Oak Park Public Library Veteran's Memorial Room, 834 Lake Street, Oak Park. Admission free.

COS co-founders and event organizers are Bill Farina and Marion Buckley. For further information about the COS and its events in the Chicago area, send email to: oxfordchicago@juno.com, or call (312) 786-0158 or fax (312) 922-5534.

Michigan

Society members in Michigan have recently formed the **Oberon Chapter** of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, and have already had much success in publicizing the authorship issue in the local media and attracting new members to monthly chapter meetings.

Among those actively involved in the chapter are Barbara Burris (who helped found it last year), Janet Trimbath, Tom Townsend, Richard Joyrich, Matt Wyneken, Rey Perez, Ron Halstead and Tom Hunter. The Chapter holds monthly meetings in the **Baldwin Public Library (Birmingham)**, with as many as 30 attending some meetings.

Last October Derran Charlton (a De Vere Society member from Yorkshire, England) spoke at the Baldwin library for one of the chapter meetings. Derran was in the U.S. for the Society's conference in nearby Stratford, Ontario. There has also been some excellent media coverage of the chapter

events and the authorship issue, featuring Burris as the spokesperson; such coverage is, of course, the best way to reach out to the public and attract new members.

Another project that has helped spread the word about Oxford has been a bookmark featuring the Droeshut on one side (with the face blanked out) and doubts about Stratford, and an Oxford portrait on the other side and the highlights of the case for him.

Burris reports to us that the bookmarks are quite popular, and are an excellent way to publicize Oxford and any local organization promoting him.

For further information about the Oberon Chapter and upcoming local events, call Barbara Burris at (248) 548-4931.

Washington, DC

Oxfordians in the Washington/Virginia area continue to meet regularly (usually at the home of Peter Dickson) to discuss the authorship issue and recent books and events. One of their winter meetings was devoted to a discussion of Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*. Usually included in the group Joe Sobran and Ron Hess, along with Baconian Vincent Mooney.

Earlier in the winter (January 24th) Sobran drew more than 100 attendees to his lecture at the St. James Church in Falls Church, Virginia. Sobran spoke on *Hamlet* and the *Sonnets*, his favorite topic for making the case for Oxford as Shakespeare. Peter Dickson reports that the Catholic issue, his favorite topic in the authorship arena, was touched upon briefly by Sobran and again in the Q&A followup.

England

At **Castle Hedingham** this April 15th and 16th a special historical re-enactment group ("Bills and Bows") will present a light-hearted drama on the grounds of Hedingham about the links between Shakespeare and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. The event, which will highlight the opening of the Castle for the 2001 tourist season, includes "dastardly plots being uncovered, sword fights and dancing." The press release invites all to puzzle over whether Ed-

ward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, may have been the true Shakespeare, but kept his name hidden because of the unsuitability of having nobility write for the theatre; the release also invites one and all to puzzle over why women are dressed as men and men are dressed as women—in short, something for everyone.

Other events on the Castle grounds will include falconry and archery.

The **De Vere Society** held its annual winter meeting at the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Bankside, London, on January 27th, 2001.

The meeting commenced with David Roper giving a fascinating presentation on the effigy believed to be of William Shakespeare in Stratford's Trinity Church. He presented a very clear case on why the monument was very likely completely replaced in 1748.

The next speaker was Richard Malim, presenting his paper on the "Actor and Pseudonym," which addressed the oft-positing view that the writer of the 30-odd plays and poems had to have been an actor. Malim cited Professor Jonathan Bate's recent writing to that effect, and went on to discuss why, in fact, Edward de Vere fills this bill—pun intended—far better than the man from Stratford.

After a lovely lunch in the Globe cafe, Brian Hicks took the podium to offer a challenge to Oxfordians. His talk, "Myths, Facts, and Probabilities," called for Oxfordians to scrupulously examine our own case for flaws, weaknesses, or untruths, which in this respect puts us a cut above Stratfordians. Such a project serves as a preemptive strike against our critics, and also underscores our commitment to the truth; a propensity to reassess the validity of our facts can only strengthen our case.

To this end, Mr. Hicks and the De Vere Society are forming a research committee, much like their Dating Project, and any interested party is invited to participate in finding definitive proof for the "Oxmyth" list that has been compiled.

The final presentation of the day was the major news about Michael Peer's authorship film script, to be produced by Kenneth Branagh's film company (see page 3 for more details about this project).

For more information on the Winter Meeting, the research committee, or other DVS events, please contact Hon. Secretary Christopher Dams at Chdams@lineone.net.
—Gerit Quealy

Research Notes

Stone Coffin Underneath

By Paul Hemenway Altrocchi

"Truth hath a quiet breast."

King Richard II

It was suggested in 1975 that Edward de Vere might lie buried under the mysterious inscription "STONE COFFIN UNDERNEATH" in Westminster Abbey's Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, adjacent to the tomb of his favorite cousins, Francis and Horace Vere (Miller, Vol. 2).

A number of Oxfordians have wondered whether the play manuscripts might lie there also (Sears). The manuscripts clearly rank number one on anyone's "Smoking Gun List" because they would almost certainly stimulate a prompt de Verean paradigm shift.

We know that Edward de Vere was first buried in St. Augustine Church, Hackney in 1604 and was still there when his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham died in December, 1612. Her will states, "I joyfully commit my body to be buried in the Church of Hackney as near unto the body of my said late dear and noble lord and husband as may be." (Miller, Vol. 2)

In 1943 Percy Allen discovered an undated document in the Herald's College by Percival Golding, thought to have been written by 1625 (reported in both Ward and Carrington). Percival was the youngest son of Arthur Golding whose half-sister, Margery Golding, was Edward de Vere's mother. In this unpublished history of the Vere family, Percival wrote:

Edward de Vere, only sonne of John, borne ye twelveth day of April, 1550 died at his house at Hackney in the month of June Anno 1604 and lieth buried at Westminster

We know that Susan de Vere, her husband Philip Herbert, First Earl of Montgomery, and his brother William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, the Grand Possessors, had the "true original" play manuscripts when they published the First Folio in 1623. The manuscripts have never been seen again.

Westminster Abbey was completed by Edward the Confessor in 1065. Meticulous record-keeping did not begin until 1607. Before that time there were many anonymous burials, but not afterwards (Trowles,

letter). Re-burials often did not get recorded when they were transferred to the Abbey, since a Parish Register had already documented the death (Trowles, letter). A name-plate or chiseled name, however, should be present.

Internal coherence of the "Stone Coffin Underneath Theory"

The theory that Edward de Vere's bones and manuscripts were buried adjacent to Francis de Vere's ornate tomb in the Abbey's Chapel of St. John the Evangelist springs from the presence of the enigmatic "Stone Coffin Underneath" inscription near the de Vere tombs. Certain questions can be asked and answered based on this inscription:

—When was the inscription made? Simultaneous with the burial of Edward's son Henry on July 25th, 1625. Henry is recorded as having been buried in Francis Vere's vault but his name is chiseled on the floor of the Cecil area in the Abbey's Chapel of St. John the Baptist (Miller, Vol. 2). His wife of one year was Diane Cecil, granddaughter of Thomas Cecil, the son of William Cecil and Mary Cheke.

—Why were the manuscripts buried? Even though Edward de Vere's two main adversaries had died—William Cecil in 1598 and Robert Cecil in 1612—manuscript-burial would prevent their destruction by the many Cecil descendants who were imbued from childhood that the anti-Cecil allusions in the plays were scurrilously untrue.

—Why a stone coffin? To help preserve the manuscripts.

—Why the chiseled tombstone, "Stone Coffin Underneath"? The Abbey is the pantheon for England's greatest and most famous citizens, not nameless ones. The puzzling anonymity of this tombstone would lead to investigation and recovery of the missing manuscripts.

But what are the facts? The official 1997 *Westminster Abbey Guide* states:

Beneath the floor north of the Vere tomb
(Continued on page 27)

Column
The Paradigm Shift
Mark K. Anderson

The Upstart Crow's Other Plumage

Classical allusions may indicate that Stratman was, indeed, a frontman

In Diana Price's excellent new book *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, a subject is broached that many Shakespeare aficionados—be they orthodox or otherwise—won't touch.

"This book raises questions about Shakespeare's biography," she writes. "It delves into the historical documents and restores some of the vital evidence that most biographers omit. The fuller reading of contemporary references will reveal, not a writer, but a sharp businessman who would certainly have been willing to turn a profit by brokering plays or taking credit for their authorship." (xv)

The walls, in short, come tumbling down. The ahistorical but necessary (for Stratfordians, at least) division between "documentary" evidence and "non-documentary" or "literary" evidence has been breached.

Price balances the negative testimony left by the Stratford player's documentary trail—his will, his lawsuits, etc.—with a sheaf of Elizabethan literary texts that converge on the conclusion that contemporaries recognized Shakspeare as a shrewd dealer and an impostor. Not, as she notes, a writer.

One curious line of enquiry she opens comes in her chapter on Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*. Handily exposing the pamphlet for the "anti-Stratfordian" evidence that it is, she begins examining other Elizabethan allusions for the figure Greene made famous, that of the "upstart crow."

For starters, she quotes a passage from Henry Crosse's 1603 book *Vertues Common-wealth*:

He that can but bombast out a blank verse and make both the ends jump together in a rhyme is forthwith a poet laureate, challenging the garland of bays and in one slaving discourse or other hang out the badge of his folly. Oh how weak and shallow much of their poetry is. ... [O]ftentimes they stick so fast in mud, they lose their wits ere they can get out, either like Chirillus, writing verse not worth the reading, or Battillus, arrogating to themselves the well deserving

labors of other ingenious spirits. (109)

Greene's *Groatsworth* refers to Shakspeare of Stratford as one who "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best [playwrights]."

"Three additional literary references to Batillus seal the case that his name was a literary device that allowed writers to speak about Elizabethan literary front-men without explicitly naming them."

Crosse speaks of similar purveyors of bombast. But then, unlike *Groatsworth*, Crosse continues with two obscure classical-sounding names. One is a bad poet, he says, and the other a byline-thief. However casually these names are dropped, the careful reader should take heed.

The latter of these two monikers, I contend, emerges as an important reference point for contemporary allusions to Shakspeare. In his *Mirror of Modesty* (1584), Greene himself compares the image *Groatsworth* uses to refer to Shakspeare ("Aesop's crow") with "the proud poet Batillus, which subscribed his name to Virgil's verses." The two figures are, in Greene's estimation, cut from the same cloth. (Of course, given the timing, Greene's 1584 reference can almost certainly not have been to the Stratford player, who at that point was still spending his "lost years" in the

Stratford-on-Avon Public Library memorizing law dictionaries, Italian cultural guidebooks and back issues of "Falconry Today.")

So, then, who is this Batillus guy?

That question is best answered by Aelius Donatus (fl. 350 A.D.), who wrote an early biography of Virgil.

According to Donatus, the celebrated poet had written some unattributed verses that pleased Caesar Augustus. So Augustus tried to find out who had written the text he so admired. According to Donatus' *Life of Virgil*,

For a long time, Augustus sought to find who it could be that had written these verses, but could not discover their author. A mediocre poet by the name of Batillus actually ascribed them to himself, and no one said a word. In consequence, he received honor and gifts from Caesar.

Although Virgil eventually re-established his authorship of the disputed verses, this is not the element of the story that Elizabethan authors cite. Instead, the part of the Batillus tale that inspires comment amongst Shakspeare's contemporaries is the anecdote quoted above.

In 1591, for instance, Greene returns to the figure of Batillus (also cited by Price) in his book *Farewell to Folly*. He speaks of poets who "for their calling and gravity, being loath to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other Batillus to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery." (9:232-33)

These three Batillus allusions are indeed suggestive. But I would like to add three additional literary references to Batillus that, I contend, seal the case that his name was a literary device that allowed writers to speak about Elizabethan literary front-men without explicitly naming names. While the first two allusions I've located may hint at the role of Shakspeare as the age's leading Batillus, the third is a direct reference to the

Stratford man as an impostor, standing in for some other unspecified writer.

First, Robert Greene again alludes to the Roman pretender in 1589. In Greene's preface to the novel *Menaphon*, the author twice mentions Batillus, showcasing yet again his interest in this classical figure—and, I suspect, lending credence to those who argue that in his 1580s and early '90s heyday, Greene may himself have served as a Batillus for various court poets such as de Vere, Mary Sidney, etc.

It fareth with me, Gentlemen, as with Batillus the over-bold poet of Rome," Greene writes in his introduction to the Gentlemen Readers, "That every wink of Caesar would deliver up an hundred verses, though never a one plausible thinking the Emperor's smile a privilege for his ignorance. So I, having your favor in letting pass my pamphlets, fear not to trouble your patience with many works—and such as if Batillus had lived, he might well have subscribed his name to. (3)

On the other hand, where Greene speaks of Batillus with a knowing wink and a nudge, Thomas Lodge uses the figure of Batillus in a more apprehensive tone.

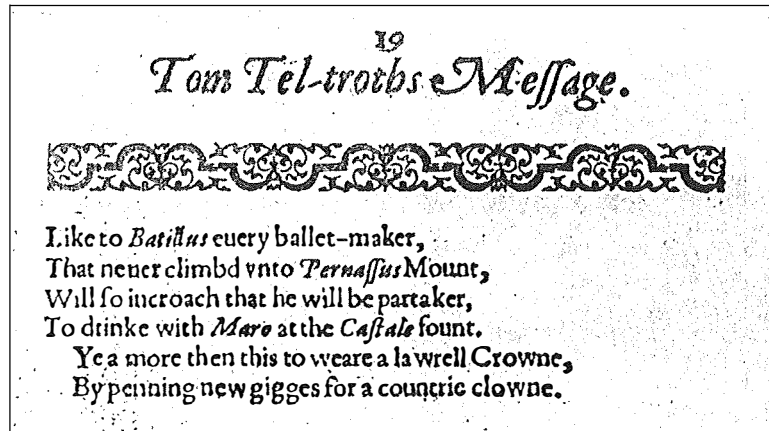
Amongst the appended material to Lodge's 1589 epic *Scillaes Metamorphosis* is an 82-line poem titled "Beauty's Lullaby" which he prefaces with the following note:

Gentlemen, I had thought to have suppressed this lullaby in silence, amongst my other papers that lie buried in oblivion. But the impudent arrogancy of some more than insolent poets have altered my purpose in that respect and made me set my name to my own work, lest some other vain glorious Batillus should prejudice my pains by subscribing his name to that which is none of his own. (39)

As can be seen in the poem itself the verse is a love lyric of a familiar Elizabethan form, with the metronomic musical quality and emergent rhetorical sophistication that one associates with de Vere's early work. It anatomizes the beloved, associating her with dozens of deities and legends from the

Greek and Roman pantheon. The author's language suggests the Queen herself—her

they somehow avoid talking about William Shakspeare.



The stanza containing the line "penning new gigges for a countrie clowne" begins with a reference to a "Batillus."

eyes, for instance, are "twinkling stems of state" while the word "Elizium" is also tossed out with a wink. However, its at points extreme familiarity with the subject would seem to preclude Lodge as the author.

Perhaps Lodge really hit his stride on this poem and his intent was purely innocent, but at the very least, the poem's preface seems to protest a bit too much. Enough so that "Beauty's Lullaby" could at least be categorized as a suspicious text. I offer no proof of authorship—whether for Lodge, de Vere or someone else—and make no claim of attribution but rather leave it an open question for readers to consider.

Finally, Batillus the poet-thief makes one more appearance in Elizabethan literature that I've been able to trace. In 1600, a verse writer named John Lane published a poem of 120 six-line stanzas titled *Tom Tell-Troths Message*. The Message rails at Catholicism and all "this popish ribble-rabble route," it takes a swipe at the "Seven Liberal Sciences" and Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and it launches into an extended diatribe about the seven deadly sins.

In the midst of his attacks on the Liberal Sciences, Lane brings up the subject of this column. But his allusion to Batillus specifically castigates an unnamed superlative poet who "pen[s] new gigs for a country clowne."

The stanza in which the allusion appears is sufficiently malleable that one can already imagine the myopic defenders of the Stratford orthodoxy contorting the logic and grammar of the two sentences so that

Like to *Batillus*, every ballet-maker,
That neuer climbd vnto *Pernassus* Mount,
Will so inroach, that he will be partaker
To drinke with *Maro* at the *Castale*
fount.
Yea, more then this, to weare a lawrell
Crowne,
By penning new gigges for a countrie
clowne. (118)

[Original spelling, italicization and punctuation retained]

Two notes are in order before discussing the import of this stanza. First, the OED's definition number one for "encroach" is "to seize, acquire wrongfully (property or privilege)." Although Lane does not specify what is being encroached, the natural conclusion, given the allusion to Batillus, is that an author's identity is being stolen.

Second, a logical ambiguity in this stanza unfortunately muddies the waters a little: The first four lines talk about a Batillus whose theft is so extreme as to allow him to share a chalice of the Muses' nectar with Virgil himself. Obviously a major pilfering. The concluding two lines talk of a leading poet of the age (one qualified to "wear a laurel crown") who pens material for a "country clowne." (The OED cites this verse as an example of its third definition of "gig," viz. "A fancy, joke, whim.")

The problem lies in reading these lines out of context. Since the couplet's antecedent is unclear, one could conceivably argue that it's the Batillus-like phony ballad-maker

(Continued on page 28)

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

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From the Editor:

The ABCs of the authorship debate

As more and more people become aware of the authorship debate, certain fault lines lurking just beneath the surface bring on tremors that sometime surprise or even shock newcomers, but are really just part of the territory for those who have been around for a while.

We thought it might be appropriate at this point in time—especially with the arrival of Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*—to try to explain how at least some of us see the whole authorship landscape. To this end, we believe that the entire debate can be best understood by focussing on three levels within the debate that make up the whole—in other words, the ABCs of the debate.

First, of course, is the matter of the Stratford man and the Stratford story; anyone who is going to entertain the notion of an alternative Shakespeare must first be disabused of Stratford. This is where Price and her book come in, for she has done a first-rate job of focussing on just the problems with Stratford, without advocating any particular alternative Shakespeares. Congratulations, Diana, on a job well done.

Second, we come to the equally important matter of settling on who Shakespeare really was, if he was not the Stratford man. This also is fairly straight forward. There are a limited number of possibilities to choose from, and for readers of this newsletter, the matter is really pretty much settled: Oxford's the one. There is still much research to be done to support that conclusion, but most Society members readily accept the overwhelming circumstantial case in support of Oxford.

That brings us, then, to the third level of this debate—the “C” of ABC. What really did happen 400 years ago, and why did it happen? This is where the debate can often get acrimonious, every bit as acrimonious as battles with Stratfordians.

Within the Oxfordian movement it has often been argued that until the battle is won—i.e. until both A and B have been accomplished—there should be minimal public debate on the “what” and “why,” and virtually no visibility for some of the more radical speculative theories that some have about the “what” and “why.”

When Charlton Ogburn chose to es-

chew certain theories in his 1984 *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, it was over precisely this concern with the partial liabilities of such speculative theories (e.g. Southampton's parentage), and how they could distract attention from the critical task of establishing Oxford's identity as Shakespeare. He knew first hand from his parents' bitter experience with *This Star of England* that the Southampton theory had become a straw man which opponents attacked with derisive malignancy. In 1995 a similar decision was made about what sort of material would be on the Society's Home Page on the Internet vs. what would be published in the newsletter. Again, the same concern prevailed about the tactics of the debate.

However, the tide of battle is now turning. Awareness of the issue is spreading, and with a book such as Price's exposing the hollowness within the traditional story we can expect that more and more people everywhere will engage the authorship issue and begin for themselves the exciting, rewarding process of doing their own research and thinking. Which means, of course, they will quickly find themselves pondering that same question: “What really happened, and why did it happen?”

Therefore, we believe that the most important change that could now occur within the Oxfordian movement is simply the acknowledgment that this search for motive *exists*—that it *must* exist. Inevitably anyone who engages the authorship issue will arrive at questions about why the cover-up has lasted for 400 years, and should feel free to pursue an answer. The irony for us is that each success in reaching new people about the authorship question then brings in more people who will ask these questions about motive and want some answers. And all the existing answers have one thing in common: they're speculative theories.

So rather than battle the rightness, the wrongness or the craziness of any one theory, let's remember that hashing out the issue of motive is every bit as important as disposing of Stratford and settling on Oxford. Various theories about motive are necessary and inevitable, and there cannot be pre-selection by anyone of which theories are comfortable or acceptable vs. those that may seem extreme, or even downright upsetting.

Letters:

To the Editor:

Perusing "New Light on the Dark Lady of the Sonnets" (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 200), Stephanie Hughes has embraced A.L. Rowse in all his Rowsean literalness. Stratfordians might be forgiven for seeking a woman who literally has dark hair, dark eyes and a dark complexion; but Oxfordians have no such need to spin fictions out of metaphors, because that is exactly what the "darkness" of the so-called "Dark Lady" is—a metaphor—referring not to her physical characteristics but to her point of view or attitude as well as to her deeds.

In Sonnet 127, in the first eight lines, the author sets up this metaphor before declaring: "Therefore my Mistress' eyes are Raven black, Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem." The operative word is "therefore"; the blackness of her eyes is not literal. The woman is "Slandering Creation with a false esteem" (with a negative, false viewpoint) and so, metaphorically, she attends the funeral of Creation: "Yet so they mourn," he says of her eyes, "becoming of their woe."

It's a metaphor.

In 130 the author writes: "If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head." Here "if" is the operative word. Her hairs are not literally black wires, but "if" they were wires, then they'd be black wires.

It's a metaphor.

"In nothing art thou black," he tells her in Sonnet 131, "save in thy deeds." It couldn't be much clearer: she's black only in

terms of how she sees and what she does.

It's a metaphor.

In 132 her eyes "have put on black and loving mourners be." Eyes cannot "put on" black if they're already black.

It's a metaphor.

In 137 she has "eyes of falsehood." In 144 she is "a woman colored ill" because of her "foul pride," not because of the literal color of her skin. Nearing the height of his rage at her in 147, the author is "frantic mad with ever-more unrest" and the metaphor gains full power: "For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright, Who art black as hell, as dark as night."

It's still a metaphor.

Hank Whittemore
Upper Nyack, New York
10 March 2001

To the Editor:

Chuck Berney suggests in his article (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Fall 2000) that Sir Walter Scott might have been a "paleo-Oxfordian" along with Herman Melville and that "there may be more of them." And indeed there are.

I wrote about this topic (i.e. that Oxford may have been known as the true Shakespeare before Looney) in the *Shakespeare Oxford Society - Newsletter*, autumn 1995. Three pieces of evidence I wrote about then also suggest pointers to the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare, long before J. Thomas Looney identified him as such in 1920:

—In 1769, Charles Dibdin, composer

and lyricist for David Garrick at his Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-on-Avon, wrote a song addressing "Sweet Willy O." with a period after "O" 10 times (suggesting Oxford the poet) and using "ever" (E. Ver?) five times in the song's 20 short lines. That's 25 times more often than in the rest of his voluminous lyrics. The ballad, entitled "Sweet Willy O.", was on display at the Folger Shakespeare Library in 1995 when I was there.

—In 1782, an inventory of portraits mentioned in a will dated 1696 omitted a portrait of Oxford that had been named in the will and listed instead one of "Shakespeare" of the same dimensions. The will had not mentioned a portrait of Shakespeare nor has any been identified. And the later inventory listing of a Shakespeare portrait was among those of portraits of Oxford's relatives. Derran Charlton made the discovery.

—In 1827, Robert Plumer Ward published *De Vere, or the Man of Independence*, a contemporary novel of political intrigue whose hero is a descendant of the 17th earl of Oxford. The hero sounds a lot like Oxford, cites verse warning of an "upstart," and anonymously writes masques alluding to the "queen of the household." Shakespeare is quoted throughout the novel, and Shakespeare quotations lead off 88 of the 93 chapters. Sam Cherubim and Roger Stritmatter brought this novel to light.

Besides the growing weight of evidence, what's important here is that the evidence has been brought forward by half a dozen Oxfordians working in England, Washington DC, and Massachusetts. (Stritmatter of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Elliott Stone of Boston are working on Melville's "Starry Vere" in *Billy Budd*.)

Most Oxfordians read widely and are in a position to spot other early allusions to Oxford as the author, analyze them and report them in the newsletter, as did Chuck Berney. With luck and careful, alert reading, Oxfordians may be able to build a persuasive case that in the centuries after his death Oxford was known to have been the author of Shakespeare's works. The cumulative evidence would be powerful support for the Oxfordian view.

Richard F. Whalen
Truro, Massachusetts
24 February 2001

(Continued on page 24)

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Letters (continued from page 23)

To the Editor:

In the Fall 2000 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Robert Grumman (a “devout Stratfordian”) wrote [regarding my article in the Spring 2000 newsletter]: “While I don’t go along with Dixon in believing Green 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.”

I would like to express sincere admiration for Mr. Grumman’s integrity. I wish more Stratfordians would be as willing to retreat to a position of less certainty when faced with the ambiguity inherent in so much Stratfordian evidence.

Mr. Grumman has helped me pinpoint something I had only a vague sense of when I wrote the essay on “supposes.” I felt there was something in this new reading of Greene’s *Groatsworth* that was much more destructive to orthodoxy than might be apparent on the surface, but I was unable to define exactly what. Now I know:

This single most powerful piece of contemporary evidence in the Stratfordian arsenal—the one piece that proved “beyond reasonable doubt” that the actor Shakspeare was also a writer—has now been reduced to that flimsiest of types of evidence; i.e. evidence whose power rests entirely on the belief system and personal preference of the person interpreting it. The whole issue has shrunk down to a pathetic stalemate—“Well, I think he meant he *was* a writer,” versus, “Well, I think he meant he *wasn’t* a writer.” (“Was!” “Wasn’t!” “Was!” “Wasn’t!”) And this takes us to the next major implication: that the validity of either interpretation of Greene’s passage now rests entirely on external, secondary sources of evidence. Does other evidence support “was” or “wasn’t”?

To put it another way, this passage, which was once one of the mightiest columns, if not *the* mightiest column, supporting the entire Stratfordian temple, has now been revealed to be a mere hanging wall with

little structural strength or integrity of its own, entirely dependent on the surrounding architecture to support it. (And as Diana Price has most recently demonstrated in *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*, that surrounding architecture is pretty unstable itself.) For Stratfordians to acknowledge this, as Mr. Grumman has done, is to risk the first step on a slippery slope toward total condemnation.

Jonathan Dixon
Sante Fe, New Mexico
20 February 2001

To the Editor:

Jonathan Dixon’s suggestion (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2000) that the word ‘supposes’ in Greene’s *Groatsworth* is to be understood in the archaic sense as ‘feigns’ or ‘pretends’ has elicited a favorable response both from Oxfordian Roger Stritmatter and Stratfordian Robert Grumman.

In further support of Dixon’s interpretation, I would like to cite a passage from *Taming of the Shrew*. To gain the father’s consent to his suit for Bianca, Lucentio has disguised his servant and an older man as himself and his own father, Vincentio. While Baptista is occupied with the imposters, Lucentio secretly marries Bianca, then returns for the unmasking.

Baptista: ...Where is Lucentio?

Lucentio: Here’s Lucentio,
Right son to the right Vincentio,
That have by marriage made thy daughter
mine,
While counterfeit supposes blear’d thine
eyne.

Here ‘supposes’ is a plural noun rather than a singular verb, but clearly, ‘feigning,’ or intentional deception is implied.

Chuck Berney
Watertown, Massachusetts
20 February 2001

To the Editor:

In his discovery and analysis of Edmund Bolton’s biography of Nero (*Shakespeare*

Oxford Newsletter, Spring 2000), Mark Anderson has made an extremely important contribution to our understanding of the political environment in which the First Folio project unfolded in the early 1620s. Historians have always struggled with the difficult question concerning what to make of the many-sided, mercurial personality of King James who was famous for being described as the “Wisest Fool in Christendom”: at times a generous, tolerant ruler who abhorred violence and at other times, a mean-spirited and self-centered autocrat. Here with the King’s personal authorization of the Nero biography dedicated to Buckingham, his corrupt royal favorite and lover, we see King James at his worst at a crucial moment in his struggle against the Patriot Coalition opposed to his plan to marry Prince Charles to the King of Spain’s sister.

It is quite revealing to observe that on April 18, 1623, only three days before the registration of Bolton’s work for publication, King James had decided to keep the leader of this coalition, the Earl of Oxford, Henry Vere, in the Tower where he had been exactly a year. The Lord Treasurer, Middlesex warned the King that if he released Oxford before Prince Charles returned to Britain safely with his Spanish bride, that Oxford would become “the ringleader of the mutineers (Akrigg, *Letters of King James VI and I*, Letter 201, pages 409-410). There is no doubt whatsoever that royal approval of the Nero biography immediately after the decision to continue the incarceration of Oxford underscores the profound nature of the political conflict known as the Spanish Marriage crisis.

And from this perspective, we see once again the motives and sense of urgency behind those who decided suddenly to assemble and publish Shakespeare’s dramatic works in the First Folio shortly after the original round of arrests of Oxford and Southampton in the Spring of 1621. This crisis over the Stuart regime’s effort to achieve a dynastic bond with Spain, the Anti-Christ to most Anglicans and Puritans, supplied the motivation to preserve the literary crow jewels of the Elizabethan era.

Peter W. Dickson
Arlington, Virginia
October 10, 2000

To the Editor:

I would take up a cithern and launch into a paeant to Roger Stritmatter's brilliant explanation and justification of the lower case letter-i in MENTE.VIDEBOR<i> ("The not-too-hidden key to *Minerva Britanna*, " *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Summer 2000), but for a winding queue of early-arrived paeantists absently tightening gut and plunking chords. In which case I shall have to content myself with substitution of the noxious and alienating task of sharpening up four Latin-to-English translations that appear in the article.

1) The Latin phrase, "Undique fraxineam dum dextra viriliter hastam / Torquet et incerto circum aera verberat ictu (page 9, top of col. 3)" is translated as, "She spins (Torquet) everywhere her ashen spear in her virile right hand, and all around the air reverberates with mis-aimed blow(s)." After a cursory inspection I concluded that a thought-completing third line (within which we might expect to find the main verb) was missing, meanwhile translating what we do have as follows: "[... I while on all sides [your] right hand manfully twists the ashen spear, and roundabout beats the air with unpredictable stroke (incerto ... ictu)." (subsequently I repaired to the Boston College library and the *Minerva Britanna* in its stacks to determine the actual position of the main verb, which proved, in fact, to be in advance by a couple of lines—hence my use of the ellipsis within the brackets above).

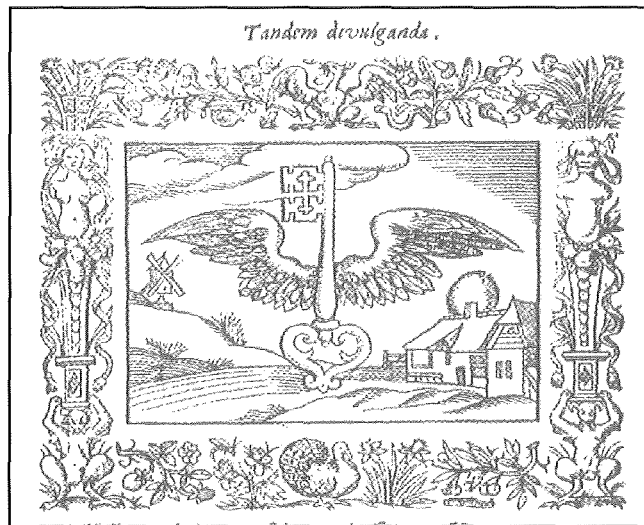
Even less than the goddess-like back-flipping Xena, would a divine Minerva be subject to "mis-aiming" a blow. "Incerto" is misleading. Although modifying "blow" or "stroke," it seems to better describe the mental state of the beholder or adversary, who is worried and uncertain—"incertus"—where Minerva may strike next. In rhetoric, this is an instance of transferred epithet.

2) The Latin phrase, "Hei mihi quod vidi," translated as, "O woe is me because I see" (p. 11, bottom of col. 3). "Vidi" means "I saw" or "I have seen." "Videre," meaning "to see," customarily takes a direct object (a famous exception is Caesar's "veni, vidi, vici": "I came, I saw, I conquered.").

Doubtless Roger's "I see" is sheer inad-

vertence. "Quod" can give Latinists fits, with its primary and confusable meanings of (the conjunction) "because" and (the relative pronoun) "what." In this context I read it as the latter. This interpretation has historical and psychological merit. Peacham published *Minerva* after Oxford's death. The motto may express his dismay at the suppression of Oxford's connection to the works of Shakespeare.

3) I also take a little issue with the translation of VIVITUR IN GENIO: "BY (OUR)



Emblem #38: More than a key?

WITHELIVES" (p 15, top of col. 1). First, as a neutral observation, "vivitur" is passive, "he is lived," not active. This usage of the passive voice in Latin was a conscious literary imitation of the Greek "middle voice," favored by the poets, Ovid notably, and indicated—if I may oversimplify—the subject doing something for himself.

As you can see from above, we are generally compelled to translate it in the active, as Roger has done here. "Ingeni[um]" doesn't really mean "wit," but rather, primarily, "innate or natural quality" (Traupman). Obviously "genius" readily flows as a secondary meaning. Because of the middle-voice construction, "ingenium" cannot belong to us readers of the motto. If the motto refers to Oxford, we might prefer to say: "he lives—or he is sustained—by his own genius." "All else shall perish" (*Caetera mortis erunt*).

4) "Satis laboris, nunc est ludendum," (p. 13, bottom of col 3, onto p. 14). Here begins Roger's inspired insight into emblem #180 (figure 9), the depiction of a cipher

wheel. Tipped off by the cipher wheel, Roger finds, in the verses beneath, the word "VIVERE" (the Latin translation of "to live") in the phrase "all doe seeke, TOLIVE." And behold "VERE" within that word! Suppose in the smithy sense that VE is a double strike. What we really have, then—in strikes on the metal—is VIVEVERE, or, the French VIVEVERE, which requires no discussion beyond its Plausibility Index rating.

Finally, then, let me turn from Latin to share a thought about one of *Minerva's* images. In his introductory poem to *Minerva* (reproduced on page 11 in the newsletter article), William Segar assures the reader that, for all its complexities, every jot and tittle of *Minerva* is in order. If you should presume to find an error, the error is in your presumption. On page 14 we come upon that chimera of the winged key (emblem #38, figure 10). Either Segar was too optimistic in the perfection of *Minerva*, or Peacham may have deliberately snapped a twig on the trail.

The cutout in the bit of the key looks much like a cross. Of this "cross," the vertical arm is complete, the horizontal arm is not. The right horizontal arm cannot be completed because of the truncating presence of the post (shaft) of the key. The tip of the left horizontal arm cannot be finished because it coincides with a proper notch in the bit. However, the upper tip of the "crosslet" immediately to its right has been left unfinished. If we make that completion and conceptually close as well the notch, we produce a cross of heraldry, the "cross crosslet," defined as "a plain cross crossed at the end of each arm."

If we conceive of the bit cut-out as a cross, it becomes easy to go a step further and look upon the bit entire as a banner. Because of its upright position, the post of the key is duly morphed into the staff upon which the banner is borne.

Ali, Peacham!

James Fitzgerald
Clinton, Massachusetts
27 December 2000

Roger Stritmatter expressed his gratitude for Mr. Fitzgerald's thoughtful letter and will respond in a future newsletter. —Ed.

Changes in addresses, phone numbers

Alert readers of recent newsletter issues may have already noticed several changes in phone numbers and addresses for several of our offices and contacts. We wish to alert everyone now that the transition is complete.

Beginning last year a number of activities were transferred to Asst. Treasurer Richard Desper (of Ayer, MA). These include membership renewals and all Blue Boar orders. This new mailing address is: PO Box 504, Ayer, MA, 01432. The fax number in Ayer is (978)772-2820.

For regular phone messages about either membership or Blue Boar orders, Society members should now start using the phone number in the Malden (MA) library: (781)321-2391. There is voice mail on this number, and individual mailboxes for membership, Blue Boar, and general Society business. As noted in Aaron Tatum's President's Letter, this is the number members should now call to leave messages for the President, ask about the Conference, etc.

The newsletter office will remain in Somerville, MA, and the same phone number—(617)628-3411—that has been in place since 1996 will continue for newsletter business, and will now also be the fax number. The newsletter mailing address remains: PO Box 263, Somerville, MA (for letters to the editor, new submissions, etc.).

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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 *TMWS* in 1984. Item SP 27. \$35.00

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Stone coffin (continued from page 19)

is a medieval stone coffin containing a chalice and paten of pewter. The coffin lid with a floriated cross now stands upright (nearby).

In 1913, while working on the floor of the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist, a stone coffin was accidentally found (Westlake). The lid with a cross suggested that the bones were those of an abbot of the Abbey, since monks were buried outside (Trowles, letter).

The bones were not disturbed but the chalice and shallow pewter plate, the paten, were carefully scrutinized and photographed (Westlake). The chalice was identified as being made between 1200 and 1250. Both items were replaced with the bones.

The stone floor itself became the new "lid" of the coffin. A warning was given to future Abbey workers by chiseling "STONE COFFIN UNDERNEATH" on the new stone covering.

Conclusions

1. The mysterious stone coffin which has so fascinated Oxfordians for a quarter of a century contains the bones of an unknown religious person who died in the 13th century, probably an abbot of Westminster Abbey.

2. The inscription "STONE COFFIN UNDERNEATH" was engraved in 1913, seven years before Thomas Looney re-introduced Edward de Vere to the Shakespearean world, and has no missing-manuscript implication.

3. No deception or Stratford-on-Avon skullduggery is afoot. The article by Rev. Westlake in *The Antiquaries Journal* (January 1921) is a valid, scholarly archaeological analysis of the stone coffin and its contents.

4. The pleasingly-coherent and titillating theory that Edward de Vere's bones and manuscripts lie in the "STONE COFFIN UNDERNEATH" must be cast into the trashbins of history.

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Anderson (continued from page 21)

(i.e. Shakspeare, in the present interpretation) who's "penning new gigs for a country clown." And that in turn could be seen, albeit in a rather obtuse way, as fobbing off Lane's allusion on some other, yet-undiscovered Elizabethan Batillus who fit these new, distorted criteria.

A simpler reading, though, would be that the first four lines and the final couplet are two distinct but connected examples of those ways in which "Ladie Poetrie / Doe suffer vnder seru'd iniurie."

My translation, then, would run as follows: Those Batillus-like ballad-makers who have never even been to the home of the Muses will pilfer a poet's identity such that they'd find themselves imbibing the waters of Mount Parnassus with Virgil himself. Even worse ("Yea, more than this") is a laureate poet who yet is stuck writing behind the mask of a country clown.

Professional Stratfordians will, no doubt, dispute this interpretation, perhaps with the bait-and-switch I outlined above, perhaps by trying to claim the "countrie clowne" is not the same individual as the Batillus poseur-poet. It'll be fun, in any case, to see what contortions those Houdinis devise to

get out of this box of chains.

However, for the rest of us, what remains but to recognize the "country clown" for who he was? Namely, an undoubtedly clever and shrewd man, yes. But when it came to writing, he was only a Batillus to the age's singular Virgil.

"Thus having blazed false poets in their hue," Lane writes, "Dear poetry, though loath, I bid adieu."

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Subjects for further research: *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* has an entry for a "Bathyllus" who was a Roman freedman actor and pantomimist from the first century B.C. As the two names are very close—I'm told by a linguist well versed in the history of Latin that "til" and "thyl" in this context could readily have been seen as interchangeable to a medieval or Renaissance classicist—one is tempted to claim "Batillus" as an actor as well as phony poet. But the attribution remains uncertain.

To complicate matters, there also appears to have been a Bathyllus who was a subject of the poetry (e.g. Ode XXIX) of the Greek lyricist Anacreon, who lived some 500 years before the time of Virgil and his Batillus.

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