



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



Vol.37.no.1

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

Spring 2001

Cross-examining Leonard Digges on his Stratford Connections

By Richard F. Whalen

Leading Stratfordians have often called Leonard Digges to the witness stand to testify for the Stratford man as the author of Shakespeare's works. They present Digges as a friend and neighbor of the Stratford man. They say Digges knew him as the poet/dramatist, and that's why Digges was picked to write a prefatory poem for the First Folio, wherein he mentioned "thy Stratford monument."

Under-cross examination, however, Leonard Digges's connection to the Stratford man turns out to be slight to insignificant. And in the end, Digges actually makes a better witness for the 17th earl of Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare.

Leonard Digges was one of the poets who contributed verses to the preface of the First Folio in tribute to William Shakespeare. His poem said in part "...when that stone is rent and time dissolves thy Stratford monument, here we alive shall view thee still." Stratfordians have taken that reference to

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Inside:

Was Prince Hamlet the
"Spear-Shaker" of Elsinore?

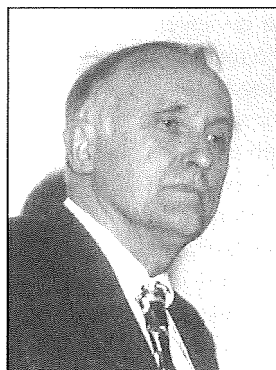
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"Ingenuity for imposition"

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Oxford as Shakespeare celebrated coast to coast

5th Annual De Vere
Studies Conference
convenes in Portland



Among the presenters at Portland this year were Ramon Jimenez (top) and Dr. Peter Usher (bottom).

inquisitive fictional bookshop owner named "Verrey" to dramatic life. Playwright Tim Hill contextualized the staged reading of his play with a pre-performance lecture on "The Cultural Hunger: Notes on the Times of Samuel and William Henry Ireland."

The conference began in earnest early Friday morning in Luther Hall, with Conference Director Dr.

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By Nathan Baca

A highly entertaining performance—and world premiere—of *The Bubble Reputation*, a play focusing on the circumstances behind the infamous William Henry Ireland Shakespeare forgeries, kicked off events for the 5th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference in the Fine Arts Center at Concordia University (Portland, Oregon) on Thursday, April 5. Some of Portland's finest professional actors, supplemented by members of the Concordia University Student Players, brought the characters of William Henry Ireland, his father, Samuel Ireland, and such figures as Edmund Malone and an

Birthday bashes
in Boston
and Chicago

Oxfordians in Boston and Chicago celebrated Shakespeare in the month of his birth by honoring Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, born April 12, 1550.

Events in two of America's major cities provided a benchmark of the existing and continuing growth in interest in the authorship debate. The 14th Annual Oxford Day Banquet in Boston featured a talk by Dr. Roger Stritmatter (who was formally awarded his Ph.D. on May 26th by UMass-Amherst), while in Chicago the first anniversary of a new organization—the Chicago Oxford Society—included four days of special events featuring Board members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society to celebrate its first year on Oxford's 451st birthday.

With the ever-growing Edward de Vere Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon also taking place each spring, Oxfordians are now staking out their claim on both Shakespeare and the fortuitous circumstance that the true Shakespeare's birthday is in April.

Chicago Oxford Society

The Chicago Oxford Society (COS) celebrated its first year,

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A new Shakespeare portrait?



Canadian press

Toronto's *Globe and Mail* took the Shakespeare world by surprise in May 2001 when they published a front page story on a possible new portrait of Shake-

speare—the Stratford Shakespeare, that is—supposedly painted from life in 1603 by one John Sanders, supposedly connected with the Globe Theatre as a scene painter.

While the authenticity of the painting has been tested in a number of ways, and has

so far passed (meaning the paint, wood, etc. are all about 400 years old), the key question of whether it is actually Shakespeare is still a huge unknown. The Shakespeare identification comes from a faded linen label on the back of the painting, a circumstance that is anomalous for the period (there is no name, coat of arms, etc. on the painting itself).

The real news so far is the incredible play this story has already gotten in the press, with front page stories and editorials in papers including *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Sunday London Times*, and undoubtedly innumerable others (see From the Editor on page 20).

Shakespeare experts are withholding judgment so far, but clearly there are those who would love for this to be a Shakespeare portrait that could replace the Stratford bust and the First Folio Droeshout.

Arthur Golding's *Metamorphoses*

New edition now available, and one reviewer considers the de Vere/Shakespeare connection

Newsletter readers and Oxfordians everywhere should be alerted to the availability of an old and valuable text that has just now returned to print after an absence of 40 years: Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* was the first translation of this Latin classic into English, and apart from the Geneva Bible, it was Shakespeare's most important literary resource in composing his plays and poems. Golding, of course, was Edward de Vere's uncle and was resident at Cecil House where Edward de Vere received much of the education that would enable him to become the Shakespeare poet-playwright, and it was Arthur Golding who, you may recall, so highly praised the learning of his young nephew in dedicating his history of Pompey to Edward de Vere.

Oxfordians have long noted that, especially while at Cecil House, Arthur Golding likely played a substantial role in young Oxford's education, and Oxfordians also have noted that Golding's seasoned and bawdy translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* stands in sharp contrast to the relatively

tepid work that he otherwise wrote—inducing many of us to conclude it likely that this translation was less uncle Arthur's work than his nephew Edward's.

Now comes a reviewer, Thomas Paul Kalb, writing for a major publication, who agrees. In the Spring 2001 issue of *Rain Taxi* (a celebrated reviews journal published in Minneapolis) Kalb writes in his review of this new edition of Golding's translation that "[s]ome scholars point out the anomalous nature of the *Metamorphoses* in the Golding canon—anomalous both in terms of its vulgar subject matter and excellent quality—and conclude that it is explicable only if the work were a collaboration between Golding and his brilliant young student [Edward de Vere]. Thus [if Golding's nephew were Shakespeare], this translation could well be Shakespeare's first published work."

The book, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Arthur Golding—the first edition of Golding's translation of Ovid to be published since 1961—is published by Paul Dry Books; recommended sale price is \$22.95. Orders for the book may be placed through the Concordia University Bookstore.

Bard barred as "too boring"

The Guardian in Johannesburg (South Africa) reported last April 18th on a Shakespeare story that—unfortunately—has parallels in other school systems around the world, making "official" (as the article's author Chris McGreal put it) what school children have been saying for years: Shakespeare is boring, unlikely and ridiculous.

Or at least that is the view of a committee of teachers appointed by the education department of South Africa's most important province, Gauteng, which wants to ban some of the Bard's works from state school reading lists because they have unhappy endings, lack cultural diversity and fail to promote the South African constitution's rejection of racism and sexism. Among the committee's findings were that: *Julius Caesar* "elevates men" (thus failing on sexism grounds), while *Antony and Cleopatra* and the *Taming of the Shrew* are both undemocratic and racist, and *Othello* is "racist and sexist."

Hamlet was declared *persona non grata* on the grounds that the play is "not optimistic or uplifting," plus the unfortunate fact that it does not appeal to students because "royalty is no longer fashionable."

But it was the "too despairing" *King Lear* that fared the worst under the committee's scrutiny: "The play lacks the power to excite readers and is full of violence and despair ... The plot is rather unlikely and ridiculous."

Plays that slipped through the censor's net included *Romeo and Juliet* (its ending notwithstanding), *The Merchant of Venice* (meaning anti-semitism is not being considered racism?), and *Macbeth*.

Shakespeare was not alone in failing to pass muster. *Gulliver's Travels* is also to be pulled because its humor is deemed foreign to South Africans. Even the country's Nobel laureate and Booker prize winner, Nadine Gordimer, is to be removed from school libraries as her writing is allegedly "deeply racist," even though three of her books were also banned by the previous apartheid regime.

Some of South Africa's most prominent writers and artists plan to send a letter of protest to the ruling African National Congress, accusing it of "political correctness gone mad."

The Hamlet formerly known as Prince

Royal National production leaves out the politics and the stakes

By Beverly Creasey

The much ballyhooed Royal National Theatre production of *Hamlet* arrived in Boston this spring, with Simon Russell Beale playing the famous tragical-historical hero, billed as “a *Hamlet* for our time.”

Director John Caird envisions *Hamlet* as everyman, just an ordinary guy, a bit uncomfortable in his own skin, embarrassed at his station in life. Beale has the face of a cherub and the body language of a mouse. He tries to connect with this mother (and with Ophelia), but he reaches his arms out only to draw them back as if he lacks the confidence to follow through and touch anyone. Even with his father’s ghost, he reaches, then hesitates, then reaches and hesitates again.

Hamlet connects with one person only, his best friend Horatio, who—in Caird’s kinder, gentler production—opens and closes the play in a piercing shard of light. On the other hand Caird has eliminated Fortinbras altogether, and along with him

the whole political sub-text of the play.

Beale’s abashed, self-conscious Hamlet probably would have endured the over-hasty marriage of his mother and his uncle, were it not for that ghost. He has to honor his father’s memory because Shakespeare calls it his “father’s commandment” giving it the weight of heaven. Caird sees religious overtones in every scene, introducing a giant cross to hang overhead or going to blackout via a cross of light where the set separates crucially.

In fact, the most gripping scene in the play is Claudius in the chapel confessing his sins and vowing to advance his plans despite the risk of hell. Peter McNery’s Claudius is the one performance which creates real sparks. Caird even suggests martyrdom when Claudius thrusts his chest forward, his arms outstretched like Christ on the cross, daring Hamlet to dispatch him.

Peter Blythe’s Polonius is a lightweight throughout the play. Even though he ver-

bally abuses his daughter and plots against his own son, Caird makes Claudius’ co-conspirator a buffoon instead of a henchman; once you’ve seen Richard Briar’s evil Polonius (in both Branagh’s stage and film versions of the play), it’s difficult to settle for Polonius the comedian.

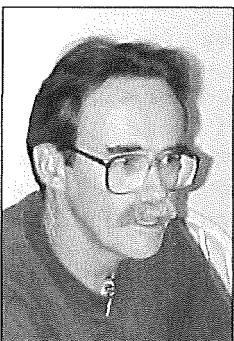
Most *Hamlets* are compelling, either in their suicidal self-centeredness or their magic Princeliness. The Royal National, on the other hand, gives us a charming, affable sad sack who seems to run out of steam at play’s end. A *Hamlet* for our time? Perhaps, then, these are not heroic times.

If Shakespeare is Hamlet—and of course he is—then the Royal National Production has placed the Stratford man centerstage. This Hamlet could *never* have become king. He’s embarrassed, uncomfortable and not Princely in the least.

What is missing from this British production? The stakes are missing. The nobility is missing. Oxford is missing.

Obituary

James Edmund Fitzgerald, 1943-2001



Jim Fitzgerald

James Edmund Fitzgerald, a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society since the 1960s and a regular contributor to its publications, died at the age of 58 on April 27th, after a long bout with cancer.

Fitzgerald was born on December 8th, 1943 in Natick, Mass., and attended Natick public schools, graduating in 1961.

Shortly after graduation he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and for 4 years served as a communications specialist in Morocco and London, England, making many friends in the London fine arts community.

After his military service, Fitzgerald returned to school, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Boston State College in 1972 and a Master of Arts in Latin Litera-

ture from Boston College in 1975.

For the rest of his life Jim divided his work life into stints of manual labor and Latin instruction. He taught Latin at both the high school and college level, working at Waltham High, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin High School, Northeastern University and Boston College. His lifelong love of classical literature and the Latin language were exceptional. He had expert knowledge of the writings of Virgil and once wrote a totally original analysis of *The Aeneid*, proposing that Virgil had intended it to be a satirical work.

Typical of the variety of organizations to which he belonged were: The Classical Association of New England, The Shakespeare Oxford Society, and The Laborer’s International Union of North America.

For over half his life Fitzgerald was a prominent member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, having read Charlton Ogburn, Jr.’s 1962 *Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Mask* shortly after it came out. Over the years Fitzgerald wrote for the Society’s

newsletter and journal, and served on *The Oxfordian* Editorial Board. Among his more recent work was research on the relationship between Oxford and the French poet Du Bartas. Several articles were published in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (1997 and 1998) and *The Oxfordian* about this work.

Du Bartas, in his time, was held in great esteem as a writer throughout Europe, though soon after his death he fell into obscurity. Fitzgerald, in his researches, had uncovered evidence that suggested he might be able to track down a body of undiscovered correspondence between Oxford and Du Bartas, and that correspondence might reveal Oxford as the real Shakespeare. He combed through what evidence he could find in the Boston area, and was in touch with the French consul asking for assistance. A research trip to France was contemplated.

However, the plans could never be finalized, and Jim never made the trip. While this dream was never realized, research into a possible Oxford/Du Bartas connection remains an idea for other scholars to pursue.

De Vere Studies (continued from page 1)

Daniel Wright delivering an old-fashioned stemwinder that greeted the conference's early risers with an Oxfordian call to arms: "Call[ing] these foul offenders to their answers': Repudiating the Stratford Fiction to Academicians."

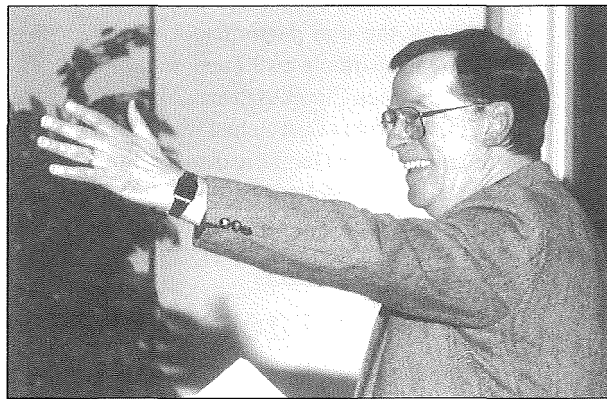
Professor Wright's blistering assault on the Stratfordian Establishment in academia was followed by another, delivered by one of Concordia's Oxfordian English majors, Nathan Baca. These two talks were then followed by a rebroadcast of the authorship debate between the late Charlton Ogburn, Jr. and Professor Maurice Charney of Rutgers University, a broadcast that originally aired on William F. Buckley's *Firing Line* in 1984, the year Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* was first published.

The conference was formally opened later Friday morning as Professor Charles Kunert, Dean of Concordia University's College of Arts and Sciences, welcomed its 153 assembled registrants to Concordia and its feast of over 20 papers and presentations during the four-day event. To rousing applause, he reiterated the university's strong support for the Conference and reaffirmed the university's desire, by its creation of a Conference Endowment Fund in 1999, to establish Concordia as a permanent academic home for Oxfordian Studies and establish the yet-embryonic Institute for Oxfordian Studies on the Concordia University campus.

Bearing out the dean's conviction that the classroom is one of the most promising arenas for the authorship battle to be waged and won, Jason Moore, a Concordia University graduate and Oxfordian high school English teacher in Vancouver, Washington, then reported on his success at being able to recruit interested students at his high school into a class which would be reconsidering the authorship of the works of Shakespeare. He stunned the conference audience—and the administration at his high school—with the revelation that 172 students have *already signed up* for his course this forthcoming year—and he expects that 100 or more may follow.

In the last of the Friday morning presentations, Toronto author Lynne Kositsky delighted the conference with her spirited anecdotes and contagious high humor in

her presentation, "A Sea of Troubles: The Risks Attendant in Challenging Shakespeare Orthodoxy." Kositsky, who has published a children's book that addresses the authorship (*A Question of Will*) has had more than her share of authorship encounters in getting published.



Among this year's conference presenters were The Oxfordian editor Stephanie Hughes (top) and Concordia Prof. Steven Steffens.

Genius and education

Following lunch another member of the Concordia community, Dr. Steve Steffens, addressed the attendees. Dr. Steffens, Professor of Education and Psychology at Concordia University, spoke on a key topic in the debate, i.e. whether genius alone (without education) can prepare anyone for a lifetime of great achievement. Dr. Steffens' work—which he distributed in printed form to attendees—presented research conclusively demonstrating that William of Stratford could not be the man Tradition has acclaimed him, as he did not have the requisite education, nor was he shaped by the kinds of persons and experiences that educational psychologists know to be essential for the formation of writers such as the one

who eventually came to call himself "Shakespeare."

The next two speakers provided the perfect point-counterpoint to Steffens' presentation. As if in response to Professor Steffens' collation of research that demonstrates, according to the canons of science,

that the Stratford man cannot creditably be advanced as a serious candidate for the authorship of the Shakespeare canon, Stratfordian Professor Jack Cooper of Portland State University repeated some of the many traditional propositions for crediting the works of Shakespeare to William of Stratford that conventionally are made by partisans of the Stratford man. Professor Cooper emphasized, especially, that posthumous declarations asserting Stratford Will to be the playwright Shakespeare have to be taken as creditable evidence of the Stratford man's authorship by reasonable people.

But as for the Stratford man having had the requisite education that Shakespeare must have had, Prof. Cooper was, of course, silent. Typical of his responses to many questions posed by the audience, Cooper was unable to explain how a man like Will Shakspeare of Stratford came to the great learning he needed to become Shakespeare, nor could he explain why this prodigy from Warwickshire was not attested to as a poet, dramatist or writer of any kind by anyone, anywhere, until long after his death. Prof. Cooper also could not explain how the Stratford man

could sit down in middle-age and begin penning, without any precedent experience in writing at all, the most erudite poems and plays ever written—dense in their reliance on and allusions to hundreds of classical figures and works—but he emphasized that it is irrational, given the authority of Tradition, to believe he did not.

The next speaker then made a presentation that substantially supported Prof. Steffens' spotlight on the foundations needed for the intellectual preparation of the writer who called himself Shakespeare. *Oxfordian* Editor Stephanie Hughes spoke on the subject of her massive Concordia University thesis, "Shakespeare's Education: The Tutors of Edward de Vere." Ms. Hughes focused especially on the critical and often undervalued role in Oxford's education that

was played by Sir Thomas Smith, Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge University. Hughes was followed by conference regular Richard Whalen who, in another of his ever-revealing studies of Shakespeare's contemporaries, invited listeners to an expanded understanding of Edward de Vere based on the evidence of Elizabethan poet and playwright, George Chapman.

The conference adjourned on Friday evening for attendees to enjoy themselves in the city of Portland at dinner, the opera, the ballet, the theatre and other sites of evening entertainment.

Saturday papers

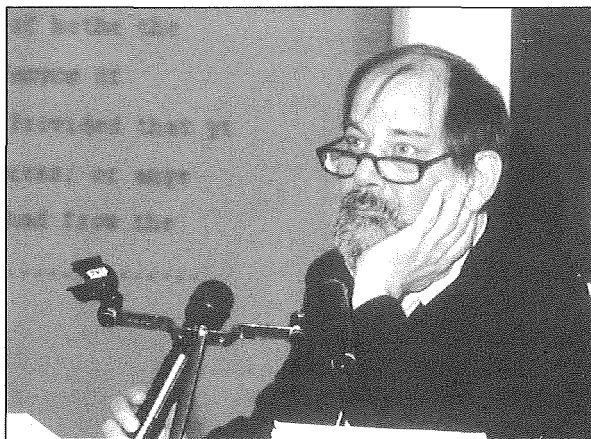
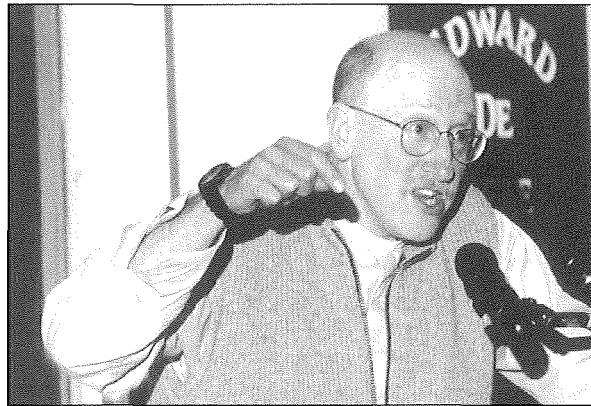
Saturday's session opened with Dr. Frank Davis, of Savannah, Georgia, presenting a compelling refutation of Professor Alan Nelson's thesis that Oxford had contracted syphilis from a prostitute and that Oxford's contraction of this sexually transmitted disease was announced to the world by the poet Nathaniel Baxter in one of his poems of 1606. The swiftness of Dr. Davis's dispatch of Professor Nelson's untenable claims was matched by his persuasive interpretation of the poem's far-more-likely meaning.

Berkeley author Ramon Jimenez, who followed Dr. Davis, built a most impressive argument for the Shakespearean authorship of the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. With deft and masterful scholarship, Mr. Jimenez laid out a brilliant case for the attribution of this play to the hand of Oxford/Shakespeare. His presentation won one of the heartiest rounds of applause by the conference during the whole weekend.

Two research scientists, Dr. Eric Altschuler of the University of California at San Diego and Dr. Peter Usher of Penn State University, wound up the Saturday morning program with insightful and revealing multimedia presentations. Dr. Altschuler recapitulated some of his groundbreaking work on Shakespeare's astronomical knowledge and advanced stunning new research that suggests Shakespeare was not only an incomparable poet and playwright but also a pseudonymous composer of madrigals. Dr. Usher focused on Shakespeare's knowledge of the universe in "Advances in the Hamlet Cosmic Allegory" in a presentation

that was broadly acclaimed by conference-goers for its excellent arguments, evidence and lucid illustration.

Saturday's afternoon session was led off by German scholar and editor, Robert Detobel, who presented a paper on "Inaccurate Assumptions Regarding the Author's



Typical of the conference's wide range of participants were Marlovian John Baker (top) and Neues Shakespeare Journal editor Robert Detobel.

Rights in Early Modern Times: What Do These Tell Us about the Provenance of the Shakespeare Texts?" Oxfordians in America and the United Kingdom know of Mr. Detobel due to his work in presenting Oxfordianism to German-speaking Europeans through the *Neues Shakespeare Journal* that he edits with Dr. Uwe Laugewitz.

Concordia University graduate Andrew Werth, in typical style, opened new scholarly floodgates to swamp the barren Stratfordian plain with his paper, "Shakespeare's Odyssey: A Journey into the Shakespeare Playwright's Use of Untranslated Homeric Sources," a breakthrough study that establishes Shakespeare's reliance on and familiarity with untranslated Greek material in the composition on his plays. Andrew's study of

Othello as a damning indictment of the traditional theory of authorship was reinforced by the contributions of the Rev. John Baker, a Marlovian who declared, to appreciative laughter and applause, that he was so impressed by the quality and character of the scholarship of the Oxfordians at the conference that he was thinking of perhaps becoming one himself!

Dr. Charles Berney concluded the day's business with an animated report on the curiosity of what seems to be insider knowledge of Edward de Vere's real status as Shakespeare that appeared in thinly-veiled allusions within several works of literature by British and American authors (Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*, Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, et al) prior to John Thomas Looney's identification of de Vere in his 1920 "*Shakespeare Identified*."

The conference recessed to the Kennedy School Lodge near the university for the evening's annual Awards Banquet. This year's accolades were bestowed on two outstanding recipients of the conference's Scholarship Award, Robert Detobel and Dr. Roger Stritmatter; notable among the accomplishments being recognized was Robert Detobel's unique and influential publication of Oxfordian research in his German-language quarterly, the *Neues Shakespeare Journal*, and Dr. Stritmatter's achievement of the first Ph.D. to be awarded to anyone, anywhere, for writing a doctoral dissertation defending the authorship of the Shakespeare canon by Edward de Vere. Dr. Stritmatter's dissertation, "The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence," was unanimously approved by his doctoral committee in 2000, and he will be formally bestowed with the degree itself at the May 2001 graduation ceremonies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Others recognized during the evening for achievements in the Oxfordian movement included Elisabeth Sears, who was awarded the Conference's Vero Nihil Verius Award for outstanding contributions to the establishment of Oxfordian libraries in the USA; and Bill Boyle, for the excellence of his efforts in enabling Oxfordian communications via such projects as the *Shakespeare*

(Continued on page 6)

De Vere Studies (continued from page 5)
Oxford Newsletter and the Shakespeare
Oxford Society website.

Sunday papers

Sunday morning's presentations commenced, once again, with Dr. Frank Davis, who offered new and compelling evidence to enlist the poem, "Grief of Minde" into the Oxfordian canon. Dr. Ren Draya, Professor of English at Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois, then addressed the deeply embedded and pervasive problems of identity in *Hamlet* in her presentation, "'Who's There?' Questions and Answers—The Theme of Identity in *Hamlet*."

In a fascinating presentation in which he produced dozens of interesting (and sometimes curiously altered) portraits from the Elizabethan/Jacobean eras, Dr. Paul Altrocchi, former Clinical Professor of Neurology at Stanford, engaged the conference's attention with his revelation of the systematic makeover of portraits that has been undertaken by authorities to conceal a severe congenital deformity in Lord Burghley—a cleft lip. He also skillfully pointed out all of the abnormalities in the infamous Droeshout portrait in the First Folio, which, in their nature and sum, speak to the high likelihood of deliberate malformation of the playwright's alleged image by the Droeshout engraver.

After a pleasant Sunday brunch, Joshua Mitchell, a Concordia University English major and web designer for the university, introduced conference participants to the university's creation of a new on-line forum for announcements, the posting of papers, and discussion of the Oxfordian authorship thesis by participants in and registrants of the Edward de Vere Studies Conference. The site, accessible by invitation to Conference registrants, was demonstrated to the whole assembly by a live connection to the Internet that was broadcast to the conference on the auditorium theatre's projection screen. To request access to the site, interested Oxfordians who were not at this year's EDV Studies Conference should e-mail Dr. Wright and "cc" the site manager, Joshua Mitchell. Dr. Wright can be reached at: dwright@cu-portland.edu; Joshua Mitchell can be reached at: jmitchell@cu-portland.edu

Sunday afternoon continued with an intriguing presentation by Dr. Richard Desper that strikingly refuted the tired old

Stratfordian claim that allusions to equivocation in some of the plays of Shakespeare—most notably *Macbeth*—demonstrate that some of the Shakespeare plays had to have been written after Oxford's death. Dr. Desper's paper, "'We Must Speak by the Card, or Equivocation Will Undo Us': Equivocation and the Oxford-Howard Controversy, 1580-81," will appear in the next issue of *The Oxfordian* (Fall 2001).



Teacher (and Concordia alum) Jason Moore (top) and Dr. Ren Draya (bottom).

Dr. Wright and Dr. Stritmatter closed out the presentations of this year's conference. Professor Wright's rousing address went far to crush recent, feeble attempts by some Stratfordians to establish Shakespeare as a Catholic writer who supposedly emigrated from Warwickshire to Lancashire under the name of William Shakeshafte. Dr. Wright's paper, "Shakespeare the Propagandist: Deciphering Protestant Rhetoric and Iconography in *Henry VIII*" will also appear in the Fall 2001 issue of *The Oxfordian*.

Dr. Stritmatter, in his closing address to the conference, invited the audience to consider the possibility, based on a consideration of events in 1574, combined with a speculative reading of the Shakespeare texts, that a possible reason for the sustained loss

to history of Shakespeare's true identity may be rooted in issues surrounding the possible secret birth of an unacknowledged claimant to the throne who, according to some, was raised, unacknowledged by his parents, as Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. Stritmatter presented a chronology of the Queen's progresses in summer 1574 that could have allowed for her being out of the public eye for many weeks.

In addition to papers, plays and banquets, there was also a weekend-long booksale available to attendees. Rare and out-of-print books on the Authorship Question and other Shakespearean and Elizabethan issues by writers such as Charlotte Stopes, Sir E.K. Chambers, Alden Brooks, Geoffrey Bullough, Eva Turner Clark, Sir George Greenwood and many others were made available for sale during the conference breaks; sales continued on Sunday afternoon and were conducted by members of Sigma Tau Delta, the university's English honor society. Proceeds from the sales were contributed to the Edward de Vere Studies Conference Endowment Fund (similar offerings to the public will be available at next year's conference, as well).

The next De Vere Studies Conference

Next year's conference will convene from April 11th to 14th. Honorees at next year's conference will include Dr. Daphne Pearson, graduate of the University of Sheffield, England, and author of the doctoral dissertation, "Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604: An Evaluation of the Financial Problems and the Changing Political Role of an Elizabethan Aristocrat," as well as Sir Derek Jacobi.

Another special event next year will be a series of papers on *Hamlet*, especially those with an Oxfordian perspective. Contact Dr. Ren Draya at: 14098 Winding Lane, Medora, IL 63062 for further information

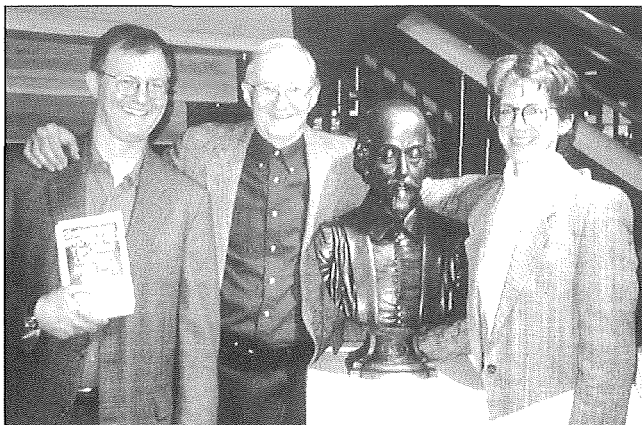
The Awards Banquet will be celebrated at the luxurious Edgewater Country Club, near Concordia University's campus, on the Columbia River, one of the annual LPGA golf tournament's sites. Registration for the conference and banquet closes with receipt of the first 180 paid registrations. Registration for the four-day conference is \$95; banquet registration is \$50. Registration forms can be downloaded from the Edward de Vere Studies Conference website at:

<http://www.deverestudies.org>

Birthdays (continued from page 1) along with the birthdays of Edward de Vere (April 12th) and the traditional Shakespeare (April 23rd), over the weekend of April 26th-29th with a four-day series of events, attracting nearly 130 total participants. On April 26th, Richard Whalen, author of *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon*, gave a lecture and booksigning at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier, an event co-sponsored by the Theater and Barbara's Bookstore. Whalen proceeded to give a one-hour introductory lecture on the authorship question, followed by a reception during which he signed books and cheerfully answered questions from a long line of curious attendees.

On April 27th Whalen was taped in a radio interview for National Public Radio's popular "848" program, which was then broadcast on May 7th. During a rapid fire 20-minute segment, Whalen more than held his own as he debated Professor David Bevington of the University of Chicago on the authorship question. At one point, after Professor Bevington recited the usual list of Oxford's shortcomings as a human being, Whalen retorted by quoting Chief Justice Steven's famous remark "Sounds like a writer to me." The "848" radio interview can be heard on-line by visiting the WBEZ website, www.wbez.org, and going to the archives section.

That evening, the COS held a reception at the Feltre School, named after the great Renaissance humanist educator from Mantua. In addition to COS members, the event was attended by several students and teachers from the school, as well as several visiting members of the SOS Board. The featured speaker was Dr. Jack Shuttleworth, whose slide show ("Why This Is An Arrant Counterfeit Rascal: Perpetuating Myth with Shakespeare's Portraits") humorously debunked, one by one, the various bogus portraits of the Stratford man. Bill Farina also thanked Shakespeare Oxford Society President Aaron Tatum for his encouragement during the formation of COS, and presented him, as a token of gratitude, with a reproduction 1959 Chicago White Sox



(Top photo) Chicago Oxford Society co-founders Bill Farina (l) and Marion Buckley pose with Richard Whalen, while in Boston (bottom photo) Hank Whittemore (l) shares some stories with Isabel Holden and Jim Hardigg.

baseball cap.

On Saturday there was a dramatic adaptation and reading of *The Rape of Lucrece* performed by The Shakespeare Project of Chicago and held at the Chicago Public Library Harold Washington Center; the event included a preview lecture by Bill Farina connecting Shakespeare's *Lucrece* with paintings by Giulio Romano in Mantua (paintings that were probably seen by Oxford in Italy), and was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Farina, with Richard Whalen and Peter Garino, director and adaptor of *Lucrece*. After a short break, Whalen concluded the afternoon with his paper entitled "On Looking into Chapman's Oxford: Notes for A Personality Profile," which explored Oxford's melancholic character as seen through the eyes of his contemporaries.

The weekend concluded on Sunday with Dr. Merilee Karr presenting her paper "The Shakespeare Authorship Issue: What Difference Does It Make Who Wrote the Plays?" (published in the Winter 2001 *Shakespeare*

Oxford Newsletter) which analyzed the authorship question using the science of semiotics. A lively Q&A session followed, and afterwards one local high school teacher (from Chicago's prestigious Latin School), acknowledging the strength of the case for Oxford, joined the COS.

Boston

Meanwhile, in Boston, New England Oxfordians enjoyed themselves at the 14th Annual Oxford Day Banquet, now one of the oldest Oxfordian gatherings in the country. This year the featured speaker was Dr. Roger Stritmatter, celebrating the achievement of his dissertation on Edward de Vere by recounting some of his experiences as an Oxfordian at UMass-Amherst over the past 10 years, and also presenting his views on the larger meaning of the authorship debate as he has lived it and learned from it over these years.

Typical of Stritmatter's deep interests and research skills was the "party favor" that guests found at each place setting for the Banquet: a reproduction of the title page of the 1589 *Menaphon* (by Robert Greene, with a title page reference to "Euphues, in his melancholic cell"), and the re-

production of a hand-written poem entitled "Edward de Vere, our Shakespeare" which he found in 1990 in a book (Alden Brooks' *Will Shakspeare and the Dyer's Hand*) formerly owned by the recently deceased (late 1980s) Antonia Alfredo Giarraputo, a distinguished Harvard faculty member, and founder of the Dante Society in Boston.

Stritmatter had no knowledge of this poem—dated November 21, 1985—until after he had purchased the book. The date indicates that Prof. Giarraputo may have been reading Ogburn's 1984 *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* at this time, and—like so many others—undergoing a sea change in his thinking about Shakespeare.

In any event, Stritmatter himself was in his first year of studying the authorship issue, and so this find was most fitting, in fact almost a harbinger for the young man who 10 years later would earn his own place in history with the first Oxfordian Ph.D.

Space limitations in this issue preclude any further details on Giarraputo and his poem, but we will have more in a future issue.

Prince Hamlet, the “Spear-Shaker” of Elsinore

A consideration of just how often the madcap Prince wielded words in the cut-throat world of the court

By Hank Whittemore

For several months in 2000 there was a discussion on the Internet forum Phaeton over the pseudonym “William Shakespeare,” with the point in contention being whether Oxford simply adopted the Stratford man’s name more or less directly, or whether the name was actually his own device, loaded with special meaning, and its nearly identical similarity to the Stratford man’s name (Shaksper) was pure chance. Many readers may be more familiar with this debate in terms of whether Pallas Athena was herself a “spear-shaker,” and therefore whether Oxford was identifying with her in using the name “William Shakespeare.”

While I do not propose here to reproduce that debate, the discussion did prompt me to consider what the name “Shakespeare” might have meant to Oxford, which in turn led me to some new insights about that most autobiographical of Shakespeare plays, *Hamlet*. And here I found myself encountering what seemed to me to be an extraordinary personal theme that Oxford had in mind when writing it—a theme that I had never really considered before, or even read that much about in all the reams of criticism produced over the centuries on this play.

To summarize, first it can be demonstrated throughout *Hamlet* that this is a play about the power of speech, about the use of words as weapons or, shall we say, as daggers or spears. Whether this “total view” of the play has been expressed somewhere before I don’t know, but, in any case, I think you’ll find the following evidence to be remarkable—especially if this is Oxford’s ultimate portrait of himself as William Shakespeare.

This total view evolved out of discussions of the “spear-shaking” image that the Shakespeare name evokes, and the more closely I looked at the play, the more this view of Oxford/Shakespeare as a self-described “Spear-shaker” fit right in with the use of word and “words-as-daggers” imagery in *Hamlet*, which can be summarized initially with these examples:

Act 2, Sc 2: “What do you read, my lord?” Polonius asks, and Hamlet replies,

“Words, words, words.”

Act 3, Sc 3: “I will speak daggers to her,” Hamlet says, “but use none.”

Act 3, Sc 4: “O, speak to me no more!” Gertrude tells him. “These words like daggers enter in mine ears.”

From this obvious starting point, Oxford creates his self-portrait as a prince who loves words and uses them like daggers. These images can in turn be found in some of the well-known contemporaneous commentary about Oxford:

Gabriel Harvey on Oxford: “No words but valorous. Not the like discourser for Tongue, and head to be found out.” (Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, p. 630-31) Interestingly enough Ogburn writes: “And it was to serve Leicester, Nashe indicates, that Harvey undertook to ‘hew and slash’ Oxford ‘with his hexameters’ and had ‘bladed’ him with his ‘pen’ - knifed him.”

Nashe: “I and one of my fellows, Will. Monox (Hast thou ever heard of him and his great dagger?).” (Ogburn, p. 725; Ogburn also notes that Oxford calls himself “Will” in the Sonnets.)

Nashe: “Shall I presume to dilate of the gravity of your round cap and your dudgeon dagger?” (Ogburn, p. 725: “Here we have the dagger again, identifying ‘Apis Lapis’ with ‘Will. Monox.’”) And Nashe also says, “Thou art a good fellow, I know, and hadst rather spend jests than money.” (Jests being made of words.)

With these examples in mind, I decided to look through *Hamlet* again, and what I found, to my surprise, is that the entire play can be viewed through this lens.

Act One

Scene 1: Marcellus hopes Horatio will see the ghost “and speak to it.” “Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.” “It would be spoke to,” Bernardo says. “Stay!” Horatio calls out. “Speak, speak! I charge thee speak!” “Who is’t that can inform me?” Marcellus asks. Horatio to ghost: “If thou hast any sound, or use of voice, speak to me..speak to me. O, speak!. Speak of it! Stay, and speak!”

And he says of Hamlet, “For, upon my life, this spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.”

Right from the top, then, the entire play is framed by the subject matter of speech. In this case, the ghost may speak to Hamlet and tell him the truth.

Scene 2: Claudius: “What says Polonius?” (Indeed, what is this man’s use of speech going to be?) When Hamlet speaks, Claudius says, “Why, ’tis a loving and fair reply. But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell.” And Hamlet tells himself, “But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!” Enter the three friends, with Hamlet telling Horatio, “I would not hear your enemy say so, nor shall you do my ear that violence to make it truster of your own report against yourself.” Horatio: “Season your admiration for a while with an attent ear, till I may deliver.” Hamlet: “For God’s love, let me hear!” Horatio recounts their experience with the ghost, how the others stood “dumb” and “[spoke] not to him. This to me in dreadful secrecy impart they did.” “Did you speak to it?” Hamlet asks. “My lord, I did,” Horatio says. And finally Hamlet: “I’ll speak to it, though hell itself should gape and bid me hold my peace.” He tells them to keep “silence” and “give it an understanding but no tongue.”

Again we are entirely in the realm of who speaks what.

Scene 3: Laertes tells Ophelia to beware of Hamlet’s speech. If he “says” he loves you, believe it only so far as “he in his particular act and place may give his saying deed, which is no further than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.” Polonius advises Laertes to “give thy thoughts no tongue. Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice.” And he wants to know from Ophelia what Hamlet “hath said to you?” He demands of her, “Give me up the truth.” And she talks about his “many tenders of his affection to me.” “Pooh! You speak like a green girl.” But, she says, Hamlet “hath given countenance to his speech ... with almost all holy vows.” And Polonius barks that it’s nonsense and “do not believe his vows, for they are brokers. I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth have you so slander any

moment leisure as to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet."

Polonius knows the danger or power of Hamlet's speech.

Scene 4: Hamlet confronts the ghost and says "I will speak to thee. O answer me! It will not speak. Then I'll follow it."

Scene 5: Hamlet to ghost: "Speak, I'll go no further." Ghost: "Lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold." Hamlet: "Speak, I am bound to hear." Ghost: "Now, Hamlet, hear." The ghost tells how the poison was poured "in the porches of my ears"—a fitting place, within the context of speaking and hearing. And later, alone, Hamlet screams about Claudius as a villain, which immediately prompts him to want his writing tablets so he can use words: "My tables, my tables! Meet it is I set it down that one may smile, and smile, and be a villain."

So we have Oxford portraying himself as writer. Using words on paper.

When the others return, Horatio says, "Good my lord, tell it," and Hamlet says, "But you'll be secret?" And Hamlet has them swear upon his sword. Horatio asks him to propose the oath, which is: "Never to speak of this that you have seen. Swear by my sword." The ghost backs him up: "Swear."

Perhaps it's too much to suggest that "words" = "sword" but, in fact, this is the launching pad for Hamlet's decision to put on an antic disposition. The truth has been revealed; the hearers of the truth are sworn to secrecy by an oath upon the sword; and now Hamlet, or Oxford, is ready to fool the world "by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase, or such ambiguous giving out."

His use of speech will be at once both his weapon and his disguise. It seems fair to say that Hamlet/Oxford is defined in terms of his ability to speak and write; his need for secrecy and wordplay; and that all other characters, so far, are defined in terms of their ability to speak and hear the truth. The contest of truth versus falsity is portrayed within that context, in great variety according to the characters; and the power of words to effect change is thoroughly established in Act One, from which Hamlet will emerge as the spear-shaker of words.

Act Two

Scene 1: Polonius to Reynaldo: "Marry, well said, very well said." And now he instructs him in how he should speak to Hamlet, so as to elicit information. "You may

say" such and such to him. "Your party in converse, him you would sound."—using certain phrases to catch him. Then Polonius gets lost in his own speech: "What was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something! Where did I leave?" Very funny, viewed within this context; it seems that Polonius' speech is totally separate from substance. "Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth," he says—that is, go in disguise, falsely, and spy on him for information.

*"Hamlet is a play
about the power
of speech, about the
use of words as
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shall we say, as
daggers or spears."*

When Ophelia enters with the tale of Hamlet's crazy behavior, by now we know what Polonius will ask: "What said he?" It's the words that need to be examined. "He raised a sigh so piteous and profound," she says, and Polonius mistakes it for love. Ophelia had repelled his letters as he'd asked, but now her father says, "I am sorry that with better judgement I had not quoted him" to the king.

Scene 2: Rosencrantz & Guildenstern with Claudius and Gertrude. "Good gentlemen," she says, "he (Hamlet) hath much talked of you." Polonius enters and announces he knows the cause of Hamlet's lunacy. Claudius: "O, speak of that! That do I long to hear." But Voltmand enters with news to report. (More words, more information, more delivery by report of some kind.) Here's where Polonius declares that "brevity is the soul of wit," so he'll be brief—obviously it doesn't matter one way or another—and Gertrude, shrewdly enough, tells him, "More matter, with less art." Polonius reads Hamlet's writings and comments on the phraseology—"that's an ill phrase, a vile phrase"—but continues, with Hamlet's poem—Hamlet the Poet—and this, Polonius says, was "all given to mine ear."

Polonius talks about his "precepts" that he gave his daughter (more words) and how she should "admit no messengers"—and

it's he who says, "I will find where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed within the center."

Hamlet enters reading a book. He plays with words, confusing Polonius. And finally tells him he's reading "Words, words, words."

Polonius: "Though this be madness, there's method in't."

All really a description of Oxford the spear-shaker with words, in utter contrast to Burghley and even Anne Cecil.

"How pregnant sometimes his replies are," Polonius says. As his plays are pregnant? (He also might be playing on Anne's pregnancy, but that's another story.)

We then come to Hamlet's scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, driving them nuts with his wordplay, but finally getting down to it: "Come, deal justly with me. Come, come! Nay, speak." He's asking them for what, in this play, is essential—direct, truthful speech.

"What should we say, my lord?"

"Why, anything, but to the purpose."

There is a "kind of confession" in their looks. As to the reason they were sent for, Hamlet says, "That you must teach me."—with, of course, words.

And now they reveal that the Players are on the way—one might say that the truth-tellers are about to arrive. And they are agents of Hamlet's truth-telling, reflecting Oxford's playwriting and play producing.

Hamlet greets the players, as Polonius belatedly reports: "My lord, I have news to tell you ... The actors are come hither." "Buzz, buzz!" Hamlet says—which is what he thinks of Polonius' words.

Of course, it's the actors he loves, and: "We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech." "What speech, my lord?" "I heard thee speak me a speech once," etc.

And Hamlet himself delivers the speech. He himself is a stage player.

Polonius, of all people, comments, "Fore God, my lord, well-spoken, with good accent and good discretion." The first player gives a speech and Polonius says, "This is too long."

Hamlet dismisses him and tells the player to keep going. And finally tells Polonius that the actors (and their lines) are the "abstract and brief chronicles of the time"—i.e. the real history (a history which Oxfordians, of course, believe that Polonius/Burghley edits and covers up). So here we might see a direct statement by Oxford that he's using words, through actors in plays, to tell the

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Whittemore (continued from page 9)

truth about his times, and he's declaring this to Polonius/Burghley, who controls and distorts that history.

Hamlet will insert his own "speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down and insert in't." He will be the producer and the dramatist and the truth-teller with words.

And finally, alone, in his monologue, he says that if the player had "the motive and the cue for passion that I have" he would "cleave the general ear with horrid speech," etc., "and amaze indeed the very faculties of eyes and ears." But I, unpregnant of my cause, "...can say nothing." (Emphasis: he can "say" nothing.) And instead all he does is, like a whore, "unpack my heart with words." (He is aware that he's mis-using his greatest gift.)

So now he conceives the idea of putting on a play. "For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ." Even murder will speak. And the play's the thing.

That covers the basics of Act Two in these terms. So far the entire play is about the use of words; and, seen in this context, what a powerful allegory of Oxford's role as the poet who shakes the spear that consists of his words—with everyone around him using words to express either more, or less, of the truth. And the entire play revolves around the various ways in which speech can be used in one way or another.

But by the end of Act Two, Hamlet has chosen his weapon, his foil—the play! The play for which he will contribute lines of words. The play that will catch the conscience of the king and move things off center. The play—words spoken on stage—will leave a record of the truth.

Act Three

Scene 1: We are now half-way through the play, and there continues to be more accumulating images of words spoken and read, with the emphasis on revealing and learning, culminating, of course, in the famous "To be or not to be.":

Rosencrantz: "He does confess he sees himself distracted, but from what cause he will by no means speak." "Niggard of question, but of our demands most free in his reply."

Polonius: "And he beseeched me to entreat your Majesties to hear and see the matter."

Claudius: "It doth much content me to hear him so inclined."

Polonius (to Ophelia): "Read on this

book." Claudius speaks of his own "most painted word."

Hamlet: "To be or not to be, that is the question."

Here then is the central question for Oxford in his own life. To what extent can he tell the truth and be himself—whatever that is—as opposed to obliterating himself and his identity. Most of us assume the authorship/identity issue, i.e., to be known as the author or not; while some of us wonder if he refers to other realities of his identity—to be king or not to be king? Whatever the case, all others in this play are attempting, accord-

***"To what extent
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and his identity?"***

ing to ability or motive, to discern the meaning of his words.

Ophelia speaks of his letters and poems to her, "and with them words of so sweet breath composed as made the things more rich." (words; composed)

Hamlet: "That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty." (Note, "discourse.")

Ophelia speaks of Hamlet's "eye, tongue, sword" (in that order).

Claudius: "Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little, was not like madness."

Polonius: "How now, Ophelia? You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said, we heard it all ... And [to Claudius] I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear of all their conference."

Scene 2: We now come to the famous scene between Hamlet and the players, and, of course, more discourse on words, words, words.

Hamlet to the Players: "Speak the speech, I pray you." "I had as life the town crier had spoke my lines." "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action." (In a real sense, the underlying current of words, speech, questions, answers, hearing, reading, composing, discoursing, the tongue—all this culminates in Hamlet's relationship to the play and the players, who embody the perfect use of words to tell the truth.)

Hamlet: "And let your clowns speak no

more than is set down for them."

Hamlet: "Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt do not itself unkennel in one speech, it is a damned ghost that we have seen."

Polonius himself was "accounted a good actor," which Hamlet mocks with a play on words about it being "a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there." He dismisses the old man's claim as actor and immediately says, "Be the players ready?"

Hamlet: "The players cannot keep counsel; they'll tell all."

Ophelia: "Will he tell us what this show meant?"

Hamlet: "He'll not sham to tell you what it means."

Gertrude: "The lady doth protest to much, methinks."

Hamlet: "O, but she'll keep her word."

Claudius: Have you heard the argument? Is there no offense in't?"

Hamlet: "No, no! They do but jest, poison in jest; no offense in the world."

Ophelia: "You are as good as a chorus, my lord."

Hamlet: "I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying."

Hamlet does become the chorus and the interpreter, making sure that the king and queen will get the meaning of the play. And when it works, he himself delivers a poem to his friend. Horatio: "You might have rhymed." Hamlet: "O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds!"

An interesting aside here is that this particular line about "a thousand pounds" is from the Q2/Folio versions of the play; the 1603 Q1 (obviously a much earlier version of the play) does not have it, suggesting perhaps that Q1 was a version pre-dating the 1586 grant to Oxford. In any event, the line would tend to link the grant to Oxford's play producing and the value of words. One word of truth is worth a thousand pounds. The actors have told this truth on stage.

Guildestern: "Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you."

Hamlet: "Sir, a whole history."

Guildestern: "Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair."

Hamlet: "I am tame, sir; pronounce."

Hamlet: "Make you a wholesome answer." (Hamlet again plays with words to confuse R&G.)

Rosencrantz: "She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed." (It's speech that Gertrude desires.)

Hamlet's metaphor of the recorder or

pipe is about speech, truth, falsity -

Guildestern: "I know no touch of it, my lord."

Hamlet: "It is as easy as lying."

Hamlet: "And there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'S blood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?"

Polonius: "My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently."

Hamlet: "I will speak daggers to her, but use none. My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites—how in my words some ever she be shent, to give them seals never, my soul, consent."

This is the end of the scene. The words are now daggers. In this way, the action of the play has escalated - Hamlet the spear-shaker using words as weapons.

Scene 3: The prelude to the famous closet scene (Scene four) emphasizes Claudius' relationship to words, a relationship which in the end is summed up by Claudius' observation that "words without thoughts never to heaven go." This stands as a counterpoint to all the uses to which Hamlet has been putting words, which can be summed up as either speaking truthfully or, if putting on his antic disposition (i.e. false words), it is only as a means to get at the truth.

Claudius: "Never alone did the king sigh, but with a general groan." (Such is the power of royal speech, utterance, even sigh.)

Polonius: "And as you said, and wisely said."

Claudius: "But, O, what form of prayer can serve my turn?" (His use of words is now prayer to god. Hamlet can't kill him while he's possibly confessing or telling the truth.)

Claudius: "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Scene 4: The closet scene, with Hamlet speaking daggers to Gertrude, and then literally using a dagger on Polonius.

Polonius: "I'll silence me even here." [as he hides behind the arras] ...

Queen: "Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue."

Hamlet: "Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue."

Queen: "Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak."

Hamlet: "Come, come, and sit you down, you shall not budge! You go not till I set you

up a glass where you may see the inmost part of you."

Queen: "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt murder me? Help, help, ho!"

Now we're at the essence: Oxford using words to reflect the Queen's own soul, and, since the words are daggers, she assumes he's going to "murder" her! Is this the power of the spear-shaker? Is she the ultimate audience for his words as swords? It leads immediately to the real killing of Polonius, followed by Hamlet's most vicious use of words to his queen, who entreats him, "O, Hamlet, speak no more!" "O, speak to me no

*"...Oxford using words to
reflect the Queen's
own soul ...*

*[so] she assumes
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more!" she repeats. "These words like daggers enter in mine ears. No more, sweet Hamlet!" And again, "No more!"

Just as the poison went into King's ear, now the words go into her ears, like daggers. The Ghost enters and Hamlet begs: "O, say!"

The Queen thinks he is holding "discourse" with the air.

Hamlet: "That not your trespass but my madness speaks." "Confess yourself to heaven."

Queen: "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain."

His words have pierced her heart, broken it in two.

Hamlet: "One more word, good lady."

Queen: "Be assured, if words be made of breath, and breath of life, I have no life to breathe what thou hast said to me."

Perhaps we can see this as Oxford's ultimate fantasy, that he could reach Elizabeth's heart with his words, break her heart, convince her of the truth, and get her to make a confidential pact with him. Polonius/Burghley is now out of the way; is this necessary for such a fantasy to come about? Is it all about who gets the Queen's ear? The act is over with "Exeunt (Hamlet lugging out Polonius)."

The theme, it seems, is now well devel-

oped: Hamlet, when viewed as Oxford's self-portrait, becomes Oxford expressing his role as the spear-shaker using words; and that all others in his world are basically defined in terms of how they themselves speak and listen and receive his words.

Act Four

Scene 1: The very opening lines, spoken by Claudius, serve here to illustrate: "There's matter in these sighs. These profound heaves you must translate. 'Tis fit we understand them."

Indeed that's the central necessity; understanding Hamlet's words becomes a critical urgency. Claudius commands Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find Polonius: "Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body into the chapel." Why speak fair? Claudius tells Gertrude that they must "call up our wisest friends and let them know" what they're going to do. The line is muddled because of a printing omission, but Claudius speaks of "whose whisper o'er the world's diameter as level as the cannon to his blank, transports his poisoned shot"—etc.—in effect, Claudius is talking about the value of public relations, of putting a spin on things, and says that if they put out their version of the truth, then the gossip "may miss our name and hit the woundless air."

It's enough to remind one of a Nixon or a Clinton trying to spin the facts and escape the censure of the populace for misdeeds.

Scene 2: Here we see the other side of speech, i.e. listening and comprehension:

Rosencrantz: "I understand you not, my lord."

Hamlet to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear."

Well, that's the point.

Scene 3: This scene is filled with Hamlet's wordplay, followed by the king's decision to order Hamlet's death "by letters congruing to that effect, the present death of Hamlet."

He himself will attempt to murder Hamlet with words.

Scene 4: Captain: "Truly to speak, and with no addition, we go to gain a little patch of ground that hath no profit but the name." (Now, there's a guy who puts no spin on things!)

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Hamlet now issues his credo. What is a man? Well, a man is a creature to whom God has given the power to think and speak. "Sure he that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after, gave us not that capability and godlike reason to fust in us unused."

To think and speak. Here indeed is the whole world of Hamlet/Oxford/Shakespeare in a nutshell. *To think and speak*, and perchance, with a little luck, to find and embrace the truth.

Hamlet: "O, from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

Now the words/daggers must become action—something Oxford himself may have fantasized.

Scene 5: Here the opening line is the Queen about Ophelia: "I will not speak with her." (No, speech and conversation is what's dangerous.)

Gentleman says of Ophelia: "Her speech is nothing." The hearers of her speech "botch the words up to fit to their own thoughts."

Ophelia enters and delivers a song. Her words are veering toward truth: "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be."

Claudius turns his thoughts to Laertes, who "wants not buzzer to infect his ear with pestilent speeches of his father's death."

Queen: "Alack, what noise is this?" Now it's just the slightest sound that triggers alarm.

People are chanting for Laertes to be king. "Tongues applaud" this idea "to the clouds."

Queen: "How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!"

Claudius to Laertes: "Speak, man."

And when Laertes speaks of revenge, Claudius tells him, "Why, now you speak like a good child and a true gentleman."

Claudius here tells the truth—that he did not kill Polonius—a diversionary tactic well known to our modern spin doctors.

Laertes: "How now? What noise is that?" (terrorized by the slightest sound.)

Scene 6: Horatio: "What are they that would speak with me?"

Servant: "Sailors, sir. They say they have letters for you."

Hamlet in his letter says: "I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb."

Scene 7: Here we have Claudius saying to Laertes: "Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear, that he which hath your noble

father slain pursued my life," and then:

Claudius: "How now? What news?"

Mess. "Letters, my lord, from Hamlet."

Claudius: "What should this mean?"

Laertes: "Know you the hand?"

Claudius: "'Tis Hamlet's character." (His handwriting ... and more words)

The queen then reports Ophelia's drowning.

Act Five

Scene 1: Gravediggers (clowns) and their wordplay, with songs.

Hamlet: "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once." The owner might have been a politician or a courtier—someone who used words hypocritically and falsely. Or a lawyer. "I will speak to this fellow (to the gravedigger)."

Hamlet: "We must speak by the card (to the point, as by a compass), or equivocation will undo us." (So says the truth-teller, who mourns the loss of Yorick, the fellow of infinite jest.)

Hamlet questions Laertes' expressions of grief over Ophelia. "Whose phrase of sorrow conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand like wonder-wounded heavens? This is I, Hamlet the Dane."

This statement has been likened to the biblical "I am that I am" that both Shakespeare and Oxford are known to have written. It's a core statement of identity, and in the play, as shown above, it's linked to the honesty of his speech. Although, I must say, Hamlet's sincerity about how grieved he is over Ophelia has been questioned. Probably, though, it's an honest statement by Oxford of his genuine grief over Anne Cecil's death, despite or because of the possibility that he himself triggered her suicide.

Scene 2: Hamlet: "I once did hold it, as our statists do, a baseness to write fair, and labored much how to forget that learning; but, sir, now it did me a yeoman's service. Wilt thou know the effect of what I wrote?" (Seems a plain, bold statement by Oxford of the value of his writing to him.)

Horatio, in an aside to Hamlet, wonders if he can understand Osric. "Is't not possible to understand in another tongue?" And adds of Osric: "His purse is empty already; all's golden words are spent."

The duel. Real swords. Real poison.

Hamlet: "You that look pale and tremble at this chance, That are but mutes or audi-

ence to this act, Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, Death, is strict in his arrest)—O, I could tell you—but let it be. Horatio, I am dead; thou liv'st. Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied."

The action required is to speak, to make a report, to "tell my story."

Fortinbras has "my dying voice."

"The rest is silence."

The end of Hamlet the man is the end of speech and truth (unless Horatio carries it forth with his own speech and truth). With his passing there are no more words, only silence.

Horatio: "And let me speak to the yet unknowing world how these things came about."

Fortinbras: "Let us haste to hear it."

Horatio: "Of that I shall have also cause to speak, and from his mouth whose voice will draw on more."

Fortinbras: "He was likely, had he been put on, to have proved most royally; and for his passage the soldiers' music and their rites of war speak loudly for him." So the soldiers shoot. The end is the sound of ordnance shooting. Hamlet in the end is a soldier, a warrior, who died for the truth.

Conclusion

This, then, is at least one way to view the entire play—a play on words, if you will, from beginning to end. I leave it to others to decide for themselves if this perspective on *Hamlet* (and on Oxford/Hamlet as "Shakespeare") has been enlightening. I do believe that this essay demonstrates that the entire play has been constructed according to what Oxford saw as his central role: the "spear-shaking" teller of truth in a world of hypocrisy and falsehood.

Finally, we might recall Spenser's lament of 1590 that Willie was "dead of late"—and remember that, just a few years later—in 1593—the William Shakespeare name first emerged in print. This may perhaps be seen one day as the "resurrection" of that same Willie, in the guise of a bold warrior, the spear-shaker in the world of the court.

The play, then, seen in this light, is a portrait of Oxford/Shakespeare/Hamlet as the spear-shaking master of words that were his weapons, daggers, spears, swords. At the end he is concerned not with his life *per se* but with his "wounded name"—a name that had to die in order for the Shakespeare name to rise in its place.

"I, once gone, to all the world, must die," Oxford wrote in the *Sonnets*—and that too is Hamlet.

Digges (continued from page 1)

"Stratford monument" and put it together with Ben Jonson's earlier mention of "Sweet Swan of Avon" in the First Folio to claim that the playwright Shakespeare was from Stratford-on-Avon. Oxfordians, of course, know that these literary allusions are ambiguous and could point just as well to real estate of the 17th earl of Oxford.

Stratfordians support their claim for Will Shakspeare as the author by postulating a friendship between him and Leonard Digges of the First Folio. The catalyst for this purported friendship is Thomas Russell, one of two overseers named by Shakspeare in his will. Overseers supervised the executors of a will.

Russell's identity was long a mystery; there were no Thomas Russells in Stratford. Then Sidney Lee suggested that Russell was "in all probability" a London metallurgist who seemed to know Francis Bacon and the Warwickshire poet Michael Drayton (*Life*, 490). Lee's surmise prevailed unchallenged into the 1920s when E.K. Chambers suggested that Russell would more likely be a member of the Russell family of Strensham in Worcestershire (*WS*, 2:178). Strensham was downriver on the Avon and about 20 miles from Stratford.

Leslie Hotson and Digges

Chambers's suggestion inspired Leslie Hotson, the dogged researcher who for years scoured the civic and church records of London and Stratford for his books. A Harvard graduate, Hotson was a professor at Yale, New York University and Haverford College. He wrote half a dozen books on Shakespeare but is probably best known for finding the coroner's inquest in the death of Christopher Marlowe. His archival research is most impressive, but he couldn't resist spinning fanciful tales around his discoveries—tales that would support his conviction that the Stratford man wrote the works of Shakespeare.

In 1938, he published his findings in *I, William Shakespeare Do Appoint Thomas Russell, Esquire* (though this title sounds like a line from the Stratford man's will, it is not). In the book, Hotson reported two powerful discoveries. He found a Thomas Russell, who was born in Strensham, just as Chambers had suggested; and he found

that Russell's stepson was none other than the Leonard Digges who contributed the poem to the First Folio.

Truly persistent, Hotson found other connections: Russell had once sued a butcher in Stratford. His second wife, the widow Digges, Leonard's mother, lived in the same London parish as the actors John Heminges and Henry Condell. As it happens, William of Stratford lodged for a time in 1604 with the Mountjoy family in the same

***"Stratfordians support
their claim for
Will Shakspeare
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by postulating a
friendship between
him and Leonard
Digges of the
First Folio."***

part of town, although they were not neighbors, as Hotson would have it. (Hotson is sensationally ingenious in lining up "Friends of Will.")

Hotson's principal contribution, however, was that Leonard Digges, a stepson of Russell, lived at Alderminster near Stratford as Will Shakspeare's "neighbor and friend" (Hotson, 244). As might be expected, many Stratfordian biographers picked up on Hotson's story. They included Peter Levi, Ivor Brown, A.L. Rowse, E.A.J. Honigmann, and the well-respected Mark Eccles. Levi called Digges "a young friend and fan" of the Stratford man and suggested that Digges wrote the inscription on the Stratford monument, and if so, his step-father Thomas Russell paid for it (*Life and Times*, 94, 186, 320). The reference book *Shakespeare A to Z* says that "Digges knew Shakespeare through his stepfather, Thomas Russell."

The biographer Samuel Schoenbaum, ever cautious, thought Hotson too often

exaggerated (he was right), and suggested that Digges "probably" came to know the Stratford man through his stepfather (*Lives*, 544). A not unreasonable suggestion, but still conjectural. And the issue is whether the evidence supports that conjecture.

Most outspoken most recently, however, is Jonathan Bate of Liverpool University, the author of *The Genius of Shakespeare*, published in 1998. He devoted a quarter of his book to a critique of the case for Oxford—and made dozens of factual errors in trying to do so (see my book review in the Fall 1998 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*). Regarding Digges, he asserted that Digges was "brought up by his stepfather" (that's wrong) in Alderminster on the "outskirts" of Stratford (wrong again) in the 1590s (wrong again) and that a book inscription by Digges mentioning "our Will Shakspeare" established a "firm link" between Digges and Stratford (wrong yet again).

Problems with the Digges / Russell connection

Actually, this allegedly firm link between the Stratford man and Digges dissolves upon closer examination of Hotson's contentions and Bate's elaborations.

There are three problems:

First, Hotson has no evidence that the widow Digges, her new, common-law husband Thomas Russell and her son Leonard moved from her residence in London to Alderminster, or that they spent much time there. As Hotson would have it, Alderminster "was in time to become Russell's residence and the place where Shakespeare was with him most frequently." There's no evidence, however, that Shakspeare was ever there. To put the Russell/Digges ménage in residence at Alderminster, Hotson relied on a single legal document, a complaint by a guest at Alderminster around 1600 that Russell was a double-dealing horse trader (203-7). That's evidence for one short period of time, perhaps a few days, but no evidence that Leonard Digges was there, too, or that Shakspeare was there at all, much less "most frequently." The couple also had much grander country manor at Rushock where, in fact, they were officially married three years later. Legal records of the time describe Russell as "of Rushock," not of

(Continued on page 14)

Digges (continued from page 13)
Aldermminster.

Second, Hotson's claim that a Russell/Digges manor at Aldermminster made them neighbors of Will Shakspeare falls short when it is realized that Aldermminster was four miles from Stratford, with two villages in between, as shown on Hotson's own map—hardly the same neighborhood.

Third, and most significantly, if Leonard Digges spent any time at Aldermminster, he was too young to have been a friend of the Stratford man. Contrary to Bate, Digges was born and brought up by his parents in London. He was 12 years old in 1600 when the manor near Stratford came into his family with the common-law marriage of his mother to Thomas Russell. And he went off to Oxford when he was 15 (*DNB*). Thus, if Leonard was ever at Aldermminster, he was there on visits, perhaps on longer stays, from age 12 or 13 to 15—about three years. During those years, Will Shakspeare of Stratford was in his late thirties. Friendship between the two, while certainly possible, would have been most unlikely. Of course, there is no record or indication that they ever met. Finally, Russell's lease of Aldermminster ended in 1611-12, when Leonard was in his early twenties, so he had no proximity to Stratford as an adult. Conveniently for his "Friends of Will" story line, Hotson never compares the ages of the young teenager and much older Stratford man.

Both in his book and in *Harper's Magazine* (April 1999, 62), Bate tried to argue that a "memorandum to himself" by Digges on the fly-leaf of a book establishes a "firm link" between Digges and the Stratford man (72). Digges's note (not a memo to himself) is an inscription addressed to one Will Baker. It's on the fly-leaf of a 1613 book of Lope de Vega's poetry that was discovered by Paul Morgan (*Shakespeare Survey*, 1963). See the complete text in the box on this page.

On the fly-leaf, Digges wrote that Lope de Vega was esteemed by the Spaniards "as in England we should of our Will Shakespeare." Bate would have "our Will Shakespeare" refer to our Shakespeare of Stratford since he was arguing that Digges was brought up on the outskirts of Stratford. In the inscription, however, "our" simply

means Shakespeare of England, not the Shakespeare of "we English from Stratford." Besides, neither Digges, who wrote the note, nor Will Baker, to whom it was addressed, was from Stratford.

As Morgan points out, Digges's inscription on the book of Lope de Vega poems also links two poets who eulogized

dence is quite suggestive for his association with friends and relatives of the 17th Earl of Oxford—through his writings, through his father Thomas and through his brother Dudley. There is, of course, no indication that Leonard and Oxford ever met; Leonard was 16 and at university when Oxford died. The associations would be with Oxford's survivors and friends, who put together the First Folio.

Leonard Digges came from an illustrious family. Both his father and his grandfather were distinguished mathematicians. His grandfather was considered the best architect of his day and was said to have anticipated the invention of the telescope. He was also a weather forecaster, basing his forecasts on astrology.

Leonard's father wrote several important works on mathematics. He was a member of Parliament, superintendent of harbor and fortification repairs at Dover and a close friend of John Dee, the itinerant scholar/astrologer and adviser to Queen Elizabeth. In 1586, he was, through the influence of the Earl of Leicester, made muster-master-general of the English forces in the Netherlands. Moreover, one of his mathematics books was requested by and dedicated to William Cecil Lord Burghley. Leonard's father was very well connected, not just with the Court but also with Oxford's guardian and father-in-law.

Leonard's elder brother, Sir Dudley Digges, was a member of Parliament and a diplomat. He rated almost two pages in the *Dictionary of National Biography* versus a quarter-page for Leonard. Sir Dudley, knighted at 24, was a prominent figure in the court of King James, which included Oxford's daughters and sons-in-law. He was a special emissary of King James to Russia and to the Netherlands. He was a shareholder in the East India Company. He launched Parliament's impeachment case against the Duke of Buckingham, King James's favorite, with an eloquent speech, and for it he was imprisoned briefly. And his copies of letters between Queen Elizabeth, the Earl of Leicester, Lord Burghley and Walsingham were published after his death as *The Compleat Ambassador*. Like his father, Leonard's brother was also very well connected with Court

The fly-leaf inscription

The inscription linking the names Shakespeare and Leonard Digges, found on the fly-leaf of a copy of *Rimas* (1613) by Lope de Vega, found in the library of Balliol College by Paul Morgan and transcribed by him in *Shakespeare Survey* 16 (1963):

Will Baker: Knowinge
that Mr Mab: was to
sende you this Booke
of sonets, wch with Spaniards
here is accounted of their
lope de Vega as in Englande
wee sholde of or: Will
Shakespeare. I colde not
but insert thus much to
you, that if you like
him not, you muste neuer
neuer read Spanishe Poet
Leo: Digges

Shakespeare in the First Folio. The book was to be sent to Baker by "Master Mab." James Mabbe was also a Spanish scholar, a friend of Digges and was no doubt in Spain when Digges was there. And James Mabbe is generally accepted as the author of the poem in the First Folio signed "I.M." So Digges and Mabbe, traveling companions in Spain around 1613, were both recruited later to write poems for the First Folio.

Digges family connections with Oxford

Whereas the evidence for Leonard Digges as friend and neighbor of Will Shakspeare is slight to insignificant, the evi-

circles that included Oxford's sons, daughters and sons-in-law.

Digges may or may not have spent much time at a Russell/Digges country manor in his early teens, but at age 15 he went to the university at Oxford for three years. He got his B.A. at age 18, returned to London, and then probably traveled in France and Spain to study in universities for the next decade. He may have returned to England during that time (1606-1613), but if so there's no record of it. Hotson says he returned to England the year after Will Shakspeare's death in 1616. No records suggest any specific occasion for Leonard Digges to have met Will Shakspeare of Stratford, much less become a friend. It is all conjecture based on the supposed and now doubtful connection through Thomas Russell and the fact that both men were sometimes in London.

The most significant link between Digges and Oxford's friends and relatives came the year before the First Folio was published. In that year, 1622, was published a translation by Digges of a Spanish novel. The printer was Edward Blount, one of the two printers whose names appear on the title page of the First Folio. Digges dedicated his translation to the same two brothers to whom the First Folio was dedicated, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, one of them the son-in-law of the Earl of Oxford. Given his brother Dudley's involvement in the Court of King James, Leonard must have known the two Herbert brothers. (Ruth Loyd Miller and Charlton Ogburn both mention the dedication by Digges to the two earls, but very briefly.) Moreover, Digges must have known the identity of the author of Shakespeare's works, and he was in a position to know that the First Folio would obscure the identity of the author.

Conclusion

In sum, no one offers evidence that Leonard Digges ever met William Shakespeare. He was not brought up by his stepfather at Alderminster in the 1590s. Alderminster being four miles and three

towns from Stratford; no one there was a neighbor of anyone in Stratford. Nor is it likely that young Leonard, barely into his teens, became a friend of the Stratford resident 24 years his senior, as Hotson asserts. No records suggest any occasion or milieu for the two to have met when Digges was a teenager or young adult, much less that they

including patrons like the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, the two Incomparable Brothers of the First Folio. Leonard Digges makes a much better witness for Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare than for the Stratford man.

This article is adapted from a paper delivered at the 24th Annual Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in Stratford, Ontario, Oct. 2000.

"Mad Relations"

Despite his exaggeration and flaws of interpretation, Leslie Hotson was a dogged researcher; and during his research on Leonard Digges, he unearthed a letter from Digges that should fascinate Oxfordians. Digges wrote it in 1632, three years before he died, to his long-time friend and roommate at Oxford, "Chamber-fellow mine." Digges never married and he and his companion died within 24 hours of each other. In this long letter, which puzzled Hotson, he writes about tall tales that he heard on one evening at a friend's house near Stratford (Hotson, 251-7).

Then Digges continues: "I could write you mad relations of the town of Stratford [that is crazy stories], where I was last week, but they are too tedious."

Hotson has no explanation for the tantalizing idea that crazy stories could be told about Stratford in 1632 just two years before William Dugdale sketched the monument in Trinity Church, showing a man clutching a sack—no paper, pen or writing surface—and noted nevertheless that this was a monument "to our late famous poet Will Shakespeare." The hullabaloo in Stratford may have been about the notion that their long-dead grain dealer was supposed to have been a famous poet. Leonard Digges (and anyone else who cared about it) knew who Shakespeare was and would have called such reports about the grain dealer as author "mad relations." ("Relation" was a common Elizabethan term for a narrative account or a story.)

As Hotson wrote: "What a pity that Digges didn't take the time to include his mad relations of the town of Stratford."

became friends. Based on historical evidence uncovered so far, the chances that Leonard Digges enjoyed a friendship with William Shakespeare of Stratford through his stepfather, Thomas Russell, must be considered slight to insignificant.

Much more persuasive is the evidence that Leonard Digges was close to the friends and relatives of the 17th Earl of Oxford—

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Oxfordian News

De Vere Society in England sets July 2004 for anniversary conference; authorship play debuts in Tennessee; Renaissance Festival in Vermont

Massachusetts

For those New England Oxfordians who didn't go to Portland, Oregon, in April, there were several local authorship events in **Cambridge**. The month began with the Oxford St. Players (managed by Lesley University English Professor and Society member Dr. Anne Pluto) presenting *The Tempest*, and concluded with the Oxford Day Banquet on April 27th. Society member Joe Eldredge (photo, topright) spoke on both occasions.

Eldredge also gives authorship talks on Martha's Vineyard where he lives, the most recent being on April 29th at the library in **West Tisbury**.

Tennessee

A new authorship play made its debut in **Nashville** this past April, promoting the theory that Edward de Vere was the true Shakespeare.

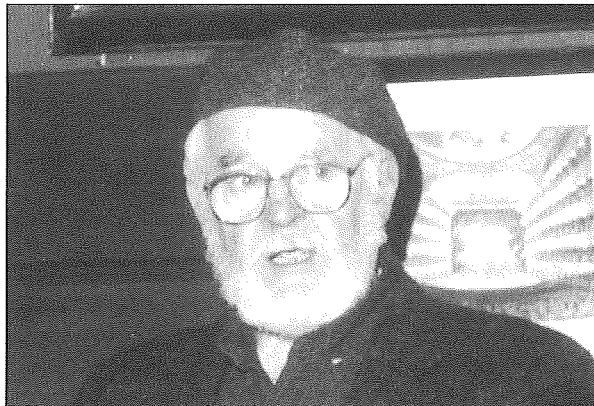
A Rose by Any Other Name was written by William Dorian, artistic director of Nashville's AthensSouth Theatre. In a review of the play in the May 3rd *Tennessean* Dorian is described as "firmly in the Oxford camp." He became interested in the issue during his graduate years at Tulane University.

Rose is described as a comic dramatization of the authorship, with the Stratford man traveling to London in 1585 and being recruited by de Vere to claim authorship of the plays.

Most of the May 3rd article is given over to Leah Marcus, Prof. of English at Vanderbilt, to debunk Dorian and all Oxfordian claims. She uses all the standard arguments, including: the post-1604 plays exclude Oxford, the Stratford grammar school was just fine for Latin and Greek, Shaksper read all about Italy, and he got all his court information from his patrons Southampton and Pembroke. Right.

Vermont

The 3rd Annual Renaissance Festival will be held in **Killington** from August 17th to August 19th this summer.



Among the participants at Oxfordian events in Boston and Chicago on April 27th were: (top) Joe Eldredge, speaking at the Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge, and (bottom) Fred Haas, Dr. Ren Draya and Shelly Haas enjoying themselves at the Chicago Oxford Society reception.

This festival, originally co-organized by Society member Betty Sears of Killington, continues to grow in popularity each year, providing a pleasant "Shakespeare" summer weekend in Vermont.

This year's play is *Comedy of Errors*, and authorship-related talks will feature Roger Stritmatter, Hank Whittemore, Pidge Sexton and Lynne Kositsky. Call 802-773-4181, or visit www.killingtonchamber.com for further information.

Australia

Recent news from down under is that Australian Oxfordians will soon be premiering a new authorship play in **Sydney**.

The Kinetic Energy Theatre Company's co-directors Jepke Goudsmit and Graham Jones recently emailed us with some details

about their upcoming production, *Shakespeare*, which will premiere at The Edge in Sydney in October 2001.

The play (which will be in two parts) looks at how Shakespeare's plays and poetic work reflect the life of Edward de Vere in stunning detail, therefore suggesting the Earl to have been the true author. The script features all the key historical figures in the author's life. Email the company at: kineticenergy@iprimus.com.au for further information.

England

The **De Vere Society** announced in its latest (April/May 2001) newsletter that a conference date and venue has been selected for the 400th anniversary of Edward de Vere's death in 2004.

The conference will be held from July 7th to 10th, 2004, at St. John's College in Cambridge, just outside London. The Shakespeare Oxford Society is continuing in its negotiations with the DVS to make this a joint conference of the two Societies and bring as many SOS members over to England in summer 2004 as possible, thus increasing the overall impact of this special event.

Many more details will be announced in the coming months and years, such as the hotel venue, the exact schedule, and special VIP speakers. Meanwhile, the DVS does advise that prospective participants can begin thinking ahead to 2004 so that their journey leaves ample time to visit the many historic sites associated with Shakespeare, Elizabethan era studies, and the Earl of Oxford. To name just a few such sites, for example:

Castle Hedingham
Earls Colne
Bures (for Oxford monuments)
Essex Record Office
Chelmsford
British Library
Public Record Office
Hackney
Otley Hall
The Globe Theatre.

Confidential Video Bard

By Chuck Berney

*Midsummer Night's Dream on film:
From Hollywood extravaganza to British opera*

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the British Broadcasting Corporation produced a series of videos comprising the complete set of plays commonly attributed to Shakespeare. These productions featured strong professional casts from the top and middle ranks of the British theatre, and experienced directors. The complete series is usually available at the larger suburban libraries. I have found that watching these videos is an excellent way of studying the Shakespearean canon, particularly for less frequently performed plays such as *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*.

For the most popular plays, videos of commercial productions are frequently available. This makes it possible to compare several versions, which is even more instructive. One thing it shows you is that Shakespeare's plays are so subtle and all-encompassing that no single production can be definitive—there are always other interpretations that work just as well. Directors are paid to make choices, but every choice made precludes other, equally valid possibilities. Another lesson is that directors can make mistakes, choices that vitiate the potential of the text. And actors too can be creators, sustaining a powerful character throughout a long play, or infusing a cameo role with such insight that it shines like a jewel.

This essay (hopefully the first of a series) will explore and compare five video versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I will start by stating my biases: (1) Given the budgets and special effects available to film-makers I don't think there's any reason we can't expect a realistic ass's head for Bottom; for me, this is essential for getting the scenes with Titania to work. (2) The enchantments should take place at night. This should seem obvious from the title of the play, but some film-makers choose to ignore it.

The first version we will consider is the 1935 black-and-white version directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle. Reinhardt was an Austrian who gained a huge reputation in Europe in the early 1900s largely on the basis of spectacular productions of *Dream*. The movie is based on his

staging in Los Angeles in 1934. Dieterle was a German who had come to Hollywood in 1930 and directed many films there, including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (with Charles Laughton) and *Portrait of Jennie*. He was largely responsible for the actual filming of *Dream*. Warner Brothers, delighted to be involved in such a high-prestige project, showered stars upon the director: Mickey Rooney (Puck), Olivia de Havilland (Hermia), Dick Powell (Lysander), etc. James Cagney was the reigning star of the studio and was given his choice of roles. After studying the script he chose Bottom. He chose wisely.

Having done so many productions of *Dream*, Reinhardt understood how it worked, and that understanding shows in the film. The events in the Enchanted Forest are preceded and followed by fairy ballets that provide clarifying transitions. The fairies' closeness to Nature is emphasized by the wildlife wandering through the forest—deer, elk, even a bear (although Helena's line "I am as ugly as a bear," is cut). The director of photography has taken care that events in the forest seem to take place at night, though we can see the action clearly. Mendelssohn's music is used effectively throughout, sometimes apparently played by an on-screen gnome band. Oberon's abduction of the changeling is explicitly shown—again, a clarifying touch.

The casting works. Cagney conveys Bottom's exuberance, Joe E. Brown is hilarious as Flute, and the Athenian couples play broadly enough to justify their rhymed couplets. Rooney's Puck is made up as a child satyr, with stubby horns protruding from a mop of hair. He was 11 years old when the film was made, and had enough charm to make his overacting palatable, except for his annoying laughter. In fact annoying laughter is the chief flaw in this version of *Dream*. Hugh Herbert's Snout giggles constantly, and Bottom laughs overlong when he awakes from his "dream," as do the Athenian couples.

The BBC version was produced in 1981 by Jonathan Miller and directed by Elijah Moshinsky. It opens promisingly with Nigel Davenport projecting rock-solid authority as Theseus. Helen Mirren is lovely as Tita-

nia, but we run into trouble with the male fairies. Peter McEnery's Oberon is given stringy shoulder-length hair. Every time he leans over Titania to administer a potion, greasy strands of hair sweep across her face, and I shudder. Puck (Phil Daniels) is bare from the waist up, but wears lace cuffs and a dingy ruff. He has been outfitted with enhanced canines, so he looks like Adam Sandler playing Dracula. All his lines are given with a lower-class British accent. I cringed every time he came on screen.

If Oberon has too much hair, Bottom has too little—they shaved Brian Glover's head, so he looks like Kojak Lite. This is presumably to increase the contrast when he is transformed, allowing them to save the expense of building an ass's head. What they give him is two fuzzy ears and some buck teeth—the effect is more Easter Bunny than Donkey. With this handicap the seduction scene with Titania falls flat, although I did chuckle when he is scratched to climax by Cobweb and Mustardseed.

One strong point of this production is that it *looked* good. The action in the woods clearly takes place at night. The dialog is largely uncut (in the Reinhardt version, about half of it is missing). As with the other BBC productions, if you want to see what Shakespeare wrote, this is a good place to go. But for the same reason, parts of it drag—the camera wants to go places, but the people are standing around talking. Take the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' at the end: I have seen stage productions of *Dream* where people were helpless with laughter at the slapstick mishaps of the Mechanicals, but in this version they simply give an inept performance of a foolish play.

A commercial version of *Dreams* was released to theatres in 1999; it was given short shrift by critics and didn't do much business. It must have been a labor of love for Michael Hoffman, who adapted the screenplay, co-produced and directed it. Hoffman, apparently inspired by the successes of Zeffirelli (*Romeo and Juliet*) and Branagh (*Much Ado About Nothing*), has transposed the action from Athens/England to sunny Italy. For me, that's part of the

(Continued on page 23)

Book Review

Most Greatly Lived: A Biographical Novel of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Whose Pen Name Was William Shakespeare. By Paul Hemenway Altrocchi. (Xlibris, 2000).

By Richard F. Whalen

Historical novels have long been accepted as a legitimate literary genre, from Sir Walter Scott to Patrick O'Brien. All readers understand the conventions of historical novels. Fictionalized biography is another matter. There are those who deplore the mixing of fact and fiction in the life of an historically significant person and the potential for misleading the reader about what was true and what was not. Myths drive out reality; George Washington confessed to chopping down a cherry tree.

On the other hand, there are those who appreciate a writer who can take the bare biographical facts and bring a long-dead person vividly to life with imaginative embellishments that do not violate history. Marguerite Yourcenar's *Hadrian's Memoirs* comes to mind.

Paul Altrocchi's *Most Greatly Lived* will appeal to those in the second category, those who want a lively narrative about their hero as seen by an author well-versed in the biographical facts. His narrative is straightforward, recounting Oxford's life decade by decade, from youth to death. Oxfordians will recognize the main events of his life.

Fictionalized, for example, are two love affairs with exceptionally sensual women. An affair of initially thwarted passion is with Mary Hastings, who in her youth was in fact under contract to marry Oxford when he came of age. Serena, a Mediterranean beauty he meets in Italy, is based on reports that Oxford had at least one affair on his trip abroad. Also imagined are the personalities of his mistress, a tempestuous and seductive Anne Vavasour, and his second wife, a steady, faithful Elizabeth Trentham.

Altrocchi adds just enough invention to provide dramatic motivations: Why, for example, Oxford at 19 killed the undercook in William Cecil Lord Burghley's household, how Burghley forced his daughter's marriage with Oxford and why the wedding was postponed for three months. He also has Oxford traveling to Greece and Turkey. (He told the reviewer that he has evidence supporting the itinerary, if not yet proving it.)

In his novel, Queen Elizabeth is her usual imperious, impossible self. She seduces the teenage Oxford, and they are the parents of the 3rd Earl of Southampton. Burghley is the arch-villain. He is suspected of fathering his daughter's first child. He has Oxford's papers destroyed, and he persuades the queen to require Oxford to use the pen name William Shakespeare, although everyone knows he is the author.

For Altrocchi, Oxford is brilliant, sensitive, kind, fun-loving and after his marriage to Elizabeth Trentham "a truly contented husband." This is certainly the contrary of the "deeply flawed human being" who, Charlton Ogburn said in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, would be judged "not likable" by most readers of his biography. The truth must be more complex; it probably lies somewhere between the two opposing views.

Fictionalized biography can entail other hazards, too. When applied to William Shakespeare of Stratford, it subverts biography. His biographers often fictionalize the dull facts of his life, embellishing them to concoct a romantic myth that he was the great poet/dramatist known as William Shakespeare. Among the most flagrant violators of biographical integrity are Russell Fraser, Garry O'Connor (reviewed in the Spring 2000 issue) and Stephen Greenblatt, editor of the *Norton Shakespeare*, who even says "let us imagine" and then imagines how the Stratford man gained the experiences he needed to become a writer.

At the risk of alienating biography purists, Altrocchi calls on considerable powers of imagination and narration to tell Oxford's

story in a way that could reach and intrigue those who have not yet examined the case for him as the true author.

Along with Charlton Ogburn and Paul Nitze, Altrocchi is one of the few second-generation Oxfordians. His mother, Julia Altrocchi (1893-1972), also a novelist, contributed many research articles to publications of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, where he was class president, Dr. Altrocchi, professor of neurology, taught at Stanford Medical School and at the University of Oregon Medical School in Portland, the city, as it happens, of Concordia University and its annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference. At the conference in April, Altrocchi delivered papers on the hare-lip he discovered in portraits of Burghley and the errors and falsifications in the Droeshout portrait of "Shakespeare" in the First Folio. Retired in 1998, he lives in Old Lyme, CT.

Aspiring authors will be interested to know that Altrocchi's book is produced by Xlibris, a new Internet company hailed for its innovative use of computer and printing technology. Random House bought 49 percent of it. Xlibris formats a book after the author sends in digitized text and then prints it on demand as orders are received. Its no-frills service is at no cost to the author, who receives royalties for copies sold. More services and better design can cost up to \$1,200.

Altrocchi's book, which has a four-color jacket, sells for \$25 in hardcover and \$16 in softcover. Distribution is through phone at 1-888-7-XLIBRIS, one of the on-line book stores on the Internet, or by special order at traditional book stores. With luck, the book could be picked up by a traditional publishing company for broader marketing.

At least four other novels about the 17th Earl of Oxford are being written or offered to publishers. If the manuscripts don't find a publisher—a difficult task at best—they can reach the public through Xlibris, which has produced more than 100,000 books.

Column
The Paradigm Shift
 Mark K. Anderson

“Ingenuity for imposition”

There’s a sentence printed in the Holy Roman Empire in Latin in 1615 that I’m curious about.

The sentence appears in an anonymous publication that has a curious history of its own. The book, entitled *Secretioris Philosophiae Consideratio Brevis... Confessione Fraternitatis R.C. in lucem edita*, appeared in Latin in Kassel (a city in what is now central Germany) and caused quite a sensation. The year before, another anonymous book called *Fama Fraternitatis* first appeared, calling for the founding of a utopian Protestant brotherhood based on the legend of Christian Rosencreutz. *Confessio*—as it’s now called—continued the drumbeat, and reprints and translations of these two pamphlets, as well as many responses to their claims, continued to litter the marketplace for years afterward.

These two texts are today given the dubious label “The Rosicrucian Manifestos.”

As one scholarly consideration of the *Fraternitatis* texts put it, “All that can be known of the Rosicrucian ‘movement’ is really the history of the publication of its manifestos.” (Dickson, 763)

And just a cursory glance at the literature about Rosicrucianism and the *Fraternitatis* texts reveals that any would-be investigator is soon lost amidst many sources of questionable authority making many assertions of questionable authenticity. Not a voyage to be undertaken casually.

Until recently, I hadn’t really considered what if any relevance the burgeoning secret-society movements of the early 17th century had to do with the Shakespeare authorship issue.

But then I came upon that sentence.

It appears in the context of the anonymous author’s disparaging remarks about the underhandedness and duplicity of the times circa 1615. The polemicist speaks of the phony alchemy being promulgated and, in general, the many ways men of worth deceive others around them. As his one noteworthy example of the chicanery about which he speaks, the author mentions a “stage-player.” He doesn’t name names, but I wonder if in fact we know the man he’s

referring to anyway:

For conclusion of our Confession we must earnestly admonish you,” states the *Confessio*, “That you cast away, if not all yet most of the worthless books of pseudo chymists [sic], to whom it is a jest to apply the Most Holy Trinity to vain things, or to deceive men with monstrous symbols and enigmas, or to profit by the curiosity of the credulous; our age doth produce many such [examples], one of the greatest being a stage-player, a man with sufficient ingenuity for imposition. (Cap. XII)

A man with “sufficient ingenuity for imposition”? Look up the word “imposition” in the OED and it’ll tell you it’s “the act of attaching, affixing or ascribing bestowal (of a name, etc.).” (Def. 2, first attested usage 1387)

Of course, this is an English translation of the Latin original. In fact, English versions of this brief text—the whole “book” is only three times the size of this essay—are abundant. Some are available on the Internet. (For instance, two different translations can be compared at: <http://www.sricf-ca.org/confessio.htm>, and: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/confesio.htm>.)

I found two things most curious about the many copies of *Confessio* out there: First, the original Latin text was surprisingly hard to find. (After searching in vain in the Union Title Catalog and library databases around the U.S., I eventually had to go to the British Library to track a copy down.) Second, not every English rendition of *Confessio* included the “stage player” anecdote cited above.

In fact, the first English translation of *Confessio*—Thomas Vaughan’s *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R.C., Commonly of the Rosie Cross* (1652)—elides the phrase about the “stage player” with “sufficient ingenuity for imposition.” The mysterious thespian only appears in later translations.

Here’s the key phrase in Latin:

Quales aetas nostra plurimos produxit: unum ex ijs praecipuum
 Amphithaetralem histrionem, hominem ad imponendum satis ingeniosum.

I am not prepared to state unequivocally that this is an allusion to Shakespeare of Stratford, in his capacity as the “stage actor” who ingeniously imposes his own name on the Shakespeare canon. But it would certainly be my first guess.

Two objections might be raised to this theory, however. First, the timing is rather odd—when *Confessio* appears, it’s still another eight years before the First Folio fix is in. Second, the “Shakespeare interpretation” of these lines would indicate that the Shakespeare subterfuge was already salting the gossip of European intelligentsia by the early 17th century—and still being actively suppressed from the English readership during the Interregnum. Neither of these potential objections are particularly damning or fatal, but both of them combined with the vagueness of the allusion make for a theory that could at least use a little more buttressing.

Might there be another *Amphithaetralis histrionem* on the Continent circa 1615 (perhaps a “pseudo chymist”/ *pseudochymicorum*) about whom the *Confessio* author could be speaking? Is there anything about Thomas Vaughan’s personal history that would indicate a predisposition to suppressing English state secrets from appearing in the English media—even when there’s no monarch around to object? The man now credited with primary authorship of the *Fraternitatis* texts is a German scholar named Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654).

Since Andreae’s authorship is sometimes disputed, it may be useful to reiterate the arguments in his favor. In a study of his life, quoted from above, Donald R. Dickson points out two strong pieces of evidence linking Andreae with these two anonymous works: First, in an undisputed text from his pen, he quotes from *Confessio* and a sequel to *Confessio*—more than a year before the sequel is published. Second, Dickson quotes a 1642 letter by Andreae in which he speaks of a utopian writing of his from 1620 that could be “place[d] in opposition to the unworthy mockery of the fiction of the Rosicrucian Fraternity.”

So, although he may have later disowned

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

The newsletter welcomes articles, essays, commentary,
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From the Editor:

As We Like It?

After an eventful April for Shakespeareans of all stripes (Stratfordian and anti-Stratfordian), May came upon us with even more Shakespeare news, this time news making front pages around the world and raising many questions—again—about who is Shakespeare.

As most of our readers have probably heard by now, a new Shakespeare portrait has surfaced in Canada (story, page 2) supposedly a life-painting of the Stratford mandating from 1603, painted—perhaps—by one John Sanders, a scene painter for the Globe Theatre.

What some of us find remarkable already about this story is how the major media has reported it, which might best be characterized by an editorial (“As We Like It”) from *The Boston Globe* of May 17th: “This new purported Will is young and whimsical with a Mona Lisa-like smile, as though he were distilling a thought into a perfect couplet, envisioning the Forest of Arden, or simply daydreaming.”

Sounds like love at first sight to us. *The Globe* concludes with, “But the most rigorous science cannot answer the most intriguing question: Is it Shakespeare? Like a complex character in a play, this portrait may remain forever ambiguous about its truth...”

And *The Globe* is not alone in waxing poetic over this new Will, even before a consensus is achieved on whether or not to accept it as authentic. *The London Times* has also already weighed in with its thoughts, and there are undoubtedly other such paeans we have yet to learn of.

The thinking here is that this latest news should be seen in the context of our report in the last newsletter about Prof. Stephen Greenblatt's upcoming million-dollar Stratfordian biography (*Will in the World*) and other projects such as the BBC's upcoming documentary about Shakespeare (i.e. Stratford) and the Catholic issue, expected in another year or two in the UK, or the current Royal National Theatre production of *Hamlet* (reviewed in this issue, page 3) in which the politics are edited out as surely as Victorians once edited the sex out.

In short, just as the paradigm seemed—to some of us at least—poised to shift, we may instead be seeing the early signs of a major counter-offensive, taking us into a new era of “Paradigm Struggle,” with the stakes sky-high for everyone.

So place your bets now: how many think this new portrait will wind up adorning Greenblatt's *Will in the World* just a couple of years hence?

The betting here is that it will.

Goodbye to a friend

It was a sad irony that our friend and devoted Oxfordian, James Fitzgerald, passed from this world on April 27th, the day of the Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge, an event at which he had been a regular for years, just as he had been an Oxfordian and a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society for years (in fact, Jim's name appears on membership lists dating back to the 1960s ...an old-timer indeed!).

Readers of our newsletter undoubtedly recognize Jim's name from his frequent contributions to the newsletter, the last of which—his letter challenging some of Roger Stritmatter's Latin translations—was published in our last issue. The letter was

typical in its use of language, and in its thoughtful, knowledgeable commentary on the finer points of the Latin language, a subject that is critically important to those trying to come to grips with the Elizabethan era and its publications, but which is fading skill among most of us today.

Jim's knowledge, skill and wit on Shakespeare, the authorship debate and classic literature will all be missed. And of course, he and his “conspiratorial grin” (as his family fondly always called it) and great good humor will be missed by all who knew him and who enjoyed those shared long talks and good times while embarked on the exciting adventure that has brought us all together.

Letters:

To the Editor:

Congratulations to all on another fine issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Fall 2000).

After reading three potent articles by Peter Dickson, Roger Stritmatter and Mark Anderson, discussing three publications within the context of one decade of King James' reign, I felt taken back to a familiar question: What is England without Shakespeare?

From an Oxfordian view, would Queen Elizabeth have survived without the Bard's history plays giving the Tudor reign a popular and legitimate air? My guess is yes, but I would love to hear some discussion of, "if not, why not?"

Also from an Oxfordian view, would King James' attempted alignment with Spain have changed without the manuscripts of "Shakespeare" lurking in the background, reminding him and his court of England's glory once removed? Without the impending publication of the First Folio, which was arguably England's "Declaration of Independence," would James have been successful in 1623 in arranging a royal marriage between England and Spain?

Without England's independence, what would have become of the Royal Society during the 16th and 17th centuries and its enormous influence upon philosophy and science, including the formative principles to which Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers gave credit?

Is there a need to require (1) that Shakespeare to be taught in high school and college and (2) the authorship question be fairly stated covering the historical consequences that follow from Stratfordian/Ox-

fordian contending points of view?

We are living in a room with a large elephant, and Oxfordians seem to be the only ones in the room able to distinguish the obvious. What is today's world without Shakespeare? We need to talk about it.

George Anderson
Minneapolis, Minnesota
December 9, 2000

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing the excellent article by Dr. Merilee Karr on the concept of the authorial "icon" ("Semiotics and the Shakespeare Authorship Debate," Winter 2001 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*). As Dr. Karr states, the traditional "icon" of William Shakespeare offers nothing to illuminate the plays of Shakespeare. One might wonder, then, why so many people cling so fervently to such a useless image. But the image is not useless. Rather its usefulness comes from a different source.

The Shakespeare icon presents an almost miraculous picture; a commoner, without benefit of aristocratic advantage and education, through sheer talent and inspiration creates the greatest literature in the English language by writing works that focus almost entirely on educated aristocrats. The traditional Shakespeare image offers up a great hope: that world-class inspiration and talent may be found in anyone, irrespective of class or birth.

The traditional Shakespeare icon is an icon not really for interpreting the works of Shakespeare, but is instead an icon that exalts the creative nature of man. It is precisely the improbability of the image—the miraculous aspect of it—that makes it so attractive. The example of Shakespeare

shows that mankind has the potential for great talent despite lacking both training and wealth. Compared with this, the image of Oxford or another nobleman as the author of Shakespeare's works is deflating. True there is great talent. But it is no longer so miraculous, and no longer does the example of Shakespeare—understood to be Oxford—inspire us with the same hope that class and education are irrelevant to the ability to create great works.

The disappointment felt by traditionalists as they lose their belief in the traditional Shakespeare icon must be similar to the disappointment of those religious fundamentalists who became convinced of Darwinian evolution. Yes, we are still here, and yes, we are still marvelous creatures. But we are, in some way, not as special as we thought we were.

Edward H. Sisson
Washington, DC
10 May 2001

To the Editor:

Some time ago, when I received the photocopy, for transcription and translation, of the MS account of the inquiry by the Venetian Inquisition into the choir-boy whom Lord Oxford took with him to England, I expressed doubt about the correctness of the reading of the boy's surname as *Cogno*.

The handwriting in the photocopy was not always very clear and my reading of the surname in its Latin form was *Coqui* not *Cogni*. However in my translation I retained *Cogno* as the apparently authoritative version. In order to remove doubt, I have since examined the original MS which, thanks to Nina Green of Canada, I traced to the Archivio di Stato, Venice (Location: Santo Uffizio, Busta 41, Fascicolo *Orazio Cuoco*).

By comparing the *q's*, *g's*, *u's* and *n's* in the MS, it is possible to establish without doubt that the correct reading is *Coqui*, Latin genitive of *Coquus*, Italian *Cuoco*, English *Cook*. The choir-boy's name was *Orazio Cuoco*, not *Cogno*, a surname deriving from a job, trade or profession. Although the confusion is understandable, I feel that the mistaken form ought to be corrected, and through your columns I am asking readers and the website operators to do so.

Noemi Magri
Mantova, Italy
5 March 2001

Ed. Note: This letter was originally published in the October 1998 De Vere Society Newsletter.

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

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Anderson (continued from page 19)

it, Andreae appears to be the pen behind *Confessio*.

If he was indeed speaking of the Shakspeare/Shake-speare subterfuge in *Confessio*, Andreae could have arrived at this knowledge through one or more routes. First, since it's now known that Edward de Vere had visited the German scholar Sturmius in 1575—a man who spoke highly of de Vere later in life—there may be a connection to Andreae through German scholarly channels. Second, there are many Shake-speare performances on record in Germany from the early 17th century, so it's possible that Andreae became aware of the Stratfordian ruse through scuttlebutt surrounding these events.

Third, and perhaps most important, Andreae had himself had previous personal experience with controversy-plagued cryptonymic writings. As a result, he likely would have had at least a cursory interest in tales of other contemporary authorship dilemmas: He was expelled from the University at Tübingen in 1607 for being the author of a pasquinade that alleged adultery against a bride-to-be with powerful family connections. For several years, before he eventually completed his studies, he became what Dickson calls a "wandering teacher-scholar" throughout Germany. (764)

Here he could have come into contact with the undoubtedly emerging legends about the strange authorship problem in London.

In any event, in 1615, he writes about *somebody* who sounds a lot like Shakspeare. The timing is admittedly odd—nothing much is happening vis-à-vis the Shake-speare myth at this time.

On the other hand, as we are all well aware, sometimes there's a slight delay between the creation of a myth and its eventual dissolution.

Sources consulted:

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

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Video

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

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Berney (continued from page 17)

problem: Oberon's line "Ill-met by moonlight proud Titania" is delivered in a sun-drenched forest glade. In fact, most of the fairy scenes seem to have been photographed in full sunlight.

The cast is star-studded, but the casting doesn't always work. The gorgeous and talented Michelle Pfeiffer seems oddly vacant as Titania. Rupert Everett (Oberon) murmurs all his lines—if you haven't memorized the text you won't understand a word he says. Sophie Marceau's Hippolyta is indistinguishable from Anna Fiel's Hermia. As Theseus, David Strathairn seems to be giving us his impression of Fred—"Won't you be my neighbor?"—Rogers. Kevin Kline's Bottom was widely praised by the critics, but for me he is one of the main problems with this production. Kline and Hoffman have changed his character: he's not Bottom the Weaver, he's Bottom the Boulevardier, lounging at a sidewalk café, dressed in a white linen suit, sipping capuccino, flirting with the ladies. When he speaks, his malapropisms, coming from one who looks so suave, are not funny but embarrassing. And he has a wife who goes through the town square looking for him. Now, a wife is like Chekhov's gun—if you see her in the first act she should be used in the last.

One would think Bottom's affair with Titania would change his relationship with his wife in some way, but the wife simply disappears. And finally, Hoffman shirks the ass's head; Kline gets the Easter Bunny treatment, with big fuzzy ears and three days' worth of stubble. Perhaps Kline's contract specified that his face be recognizable at all times, but it kills a line like "methinks I am marvelous hairy about the face."

The above is the bad news. Now for the good news: there are some gems in this production. Hoffman has apparently studied the Reinhardt production, for Stanley Tucci's Puck is Mickey Rooney, aged by 40 years, the balding head adorned by stubby horns, the youthful exuberance replaced by amused resignation. Reinhardt's gnome band has morphed into a deliberate reference to the Star Wars cantina scene, and our introduction to Puck ("How now, spirit, whither wander you?") is brilliantly re-imagined as a pickup in a singles bar. Tucci is the soul of this production and makes it well worth seeing.

There were two other performances that stood out for me. One was Roger Rees as Peter Quince, who disappeared so completely into the character that I didn't recognize him until the closing credits, in spite of my familiarity with his work in *Nicholas Nickleby* and the sitcom *Cheers*. The other was the

Philostrate of John Sessions, who combined unctuousness, servility and embarrassment so deftly that a small part became large.

After viewing the preceding three videos, checked out from various suburban libraries, I received a catalog from a mail-order video company that advertised a 1968 version of *Dream* by the Royal Shakespeare Company for \$15. I paid my money and got the video. It was well worth it. The video, directed by Peter Hall, is apparently based on a stage production by the RSC, for the actors are supremely comfortable with their lines. Of all the productions considered here, this one is surely the best-spoken.

Hall has assembled an all-star cast. The women in particular, are wonderful. Hermia is played by 23-year-old Helen Mirren, 13 years younger than when she did Titania in the BBC version. Diana Rigg, who gained fame in *The Avengers* (a 60s' TV series), plays Helena very effectively and attractively (although both she and Mirren are lumbered with awkward miniskirts). Judi Dench has a costume less dated—it consists solely of a few strategically placed ivy leaves. Her Titania is the most vivid and impassioned of any considered here. Barbara Jefford, in a black leather minidress and buskins, is every inch an Amazon queen.

(Continued on page 24)

Join the Shakespeare Oxford Society

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

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Berney (Continued from page 23)

Oberon and Puck are played by Ian Richardson and Ian Holm. Richardson is probably best known for his portrayal of the murderous politician Francis Urquhart in the 1990 BBC production *House of Cards*, which is essentially a modernization of *Richard III*. Holm has played a number of roles, including Polonius in the Zeffirelli *Hamlet* (1990) and the title role in the 1998 version of *Lear*.

In this *Dream*, Puck and Oberon (to remind us that they are fairies) have their faces painted green and their mouths bright red, looking rather like frogs who have been sucking Christmas candy. Although Holm tries to make his character playful by flapping his tongue and snapping his mouth, both he and Richard have shrewd, hard-edged personas, and the longer scenes they share together can be oppressive.

This production has a well-crafted ass head, and Paul Rogers is fine as Bottom. His scene with Cobweb and Mustardseed is genuinely amusing.

Some libraries have a video of Benjamin Britten's operatic version of *Dream*, composed in 1960. Opera is so different from spoken drama that I would not have included it in this account had I not noticed that this production—from the 1981

Glyndebourne Festival—was directed by Peter Hall.

The libretto was adapted from the play by Britten and Peter Pears, and is in three acts of about 50 minutes each. The first two acts are set in the moonlit forest, very effectively represented by the set. The opera opens with a chorus of fairies (young boys with wings) who introduce Puck. He is charmingly played by Damien Nash, as young as Mickey Rooney in the Reinhardt film, but without the annoying laugh. We then have the quarrel between Oberon and Tytania (Britten's spelling) followed in the usual fashion by the rehearsals of the Mechanicals and the quarrels of the Athenian couples. This abridgement works well, emphasizing the unity of time and place.

The Third act has two scenes—the first in the forest at dawn, when Tytania is relieved of her enchantment; the second in the ducal palace, when we meet Theseus and Hippolyta for the first time, find that the lovers are reconciled, and watch the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe.'

Hall must have been satisfied with his choice of Mechanicals in his 1968 production, since they have the same look about them in the opera. Curt Applegren is particularly good—perhaps the most lovable Bottom in the videos reviewed here. In this

version, 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is the highlight of the show, and the reason is that Britten the composer suddenly cuts loose and starts having fun, introducing gavottes and waltzes, parodying operatic conventions, and letting the trombone roar like a lion. Britten is no doubt a great composer but you don't find many tunes to whistle in the first 2 1/2 acts.

Britten wrote the part of Oberon to be sung by a countertenor, a male singer who uses falsetto to sing in the female range. In this production, the part is taken by James Bowman. As an actor he is stiff and immobile and his face rarely betrays any emotion, quite a contrast with Ian Richardson's quick ferrety Oberon in Hall's 1968 version (I suspect when you're casting countertenors the choice may not be wide).

As I watched, I became increasingly annoyed with Bowman—aside from the Munchkin hairdo, there was something off-putting about the bland oval face, the scruffy little goatee, the prissy, upturned mustache. I felt as if I'd seen that face before, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

Then, suddenly, in the final scene, it came to me: Bowman had been made up to look like the bust of Shakspeare in the Stratford chapel!

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