



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



Vol. 39: No. 4

"The history of the world is but the biography of great men." - Thomas Carlyle

Autumn 2003

Nelson's Flawed Life of Oxford

By Joseph Sobran

Since 1920, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, has emerged as the favorite candidate of most anti-Stratfordians for authorship of the Shakespeare works. He has by now eclipsed the chief previous challenger, Francis Bacon. Yet professional scholars have paid little attention to Oxford, except to ridicule claims of his authorship of the greatest plays in English literature.

Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (Liverpool UP, 527 pp.), by Alan H. Nelson, is only the second biography of its subject, the first being Bernard M. Ward's 1928 *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604*. Both books are important contributions to the Shakespeare authorship debate. Ward was driven by the conviction that Oxford was "Shakespeare"; Nelson aims to refute, by implication, the Oxfordian thesis.

Nelson, who teaches English at Berkeley, goes far deeper into the documentary records than the amateur scholar Ward did. Even Oxford's partisans must be grateful for his diligence. One thing is certain: the authorship debate will never be the same.

Oddly enough, Nelson refuses to admit that he is joining battle in the debate. He refers to it in derisive quotation marks as the "authorship controversy," as if it weren't really a controversy at all, even though he has been a vigorous participant in it for many years. I myself have debated him twice, in San Francisco and Washington, and he reviewed my pro-Oxford book *Alias Shakespeare in The Shakespeare Quarterly*. And it is obvious that the only reason Oxford merits a biography at all is that he has become the most plausible challenger for the claim to the Shakespeare works.

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27th Annual SOS Conference in NYC Performance & Publishing Take Center Stage

By Gary Goldstein and Stephanie Hughes

The Shakespeare Oxford Society held its 27th consecutive conference in New York City, drawing healthy attendance from SOS members and various Oxfordian Societies: England's De Vere Society, the Chicago Oxford Society, the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Concordia University Conference, members of the press and publishing industries, as well as actors and theater students. A number of surprise guests punctuated the proceedings, adding a festive and exciting atmosphere to the various venues around New York.

The Debate

The conference was, appropriately, kicked off by a debate between four leading Stratfordian and Oxfordian scholars and researchers — on a

cool New York evening at Symphony Space's Thalia Theater on upper Broadway.

Given that the conference was in Manhattan, the nation's center of publishing, theater and media, it also yielded a fitting moderator — Lewis Lapham, editor of *Harper's* magazine, which had published, in April 1999, a cover story on the authorship of the Shakespeare canon assayed by 10 Oxfordian and Stratfordian scholars.

After opening remarks by Gerit Quealy, this year's conference chairman, to introduce the question to the nearly full 175-seat theater, Mr. Lapham set out clear instructions for both sides. "I don't know

who wrote the Shakespeare plays," intoned the evening's moderator in his resonant basso voice. He asked each panelist to not only "stick to the facts" but to avoid making conditional and inferential statements. Then he put a powerful restriction to both sides of the debating table — only documentary evidence would be allowed into the debate, a standard not always honored by either side. To keep all debaters to the ten minute

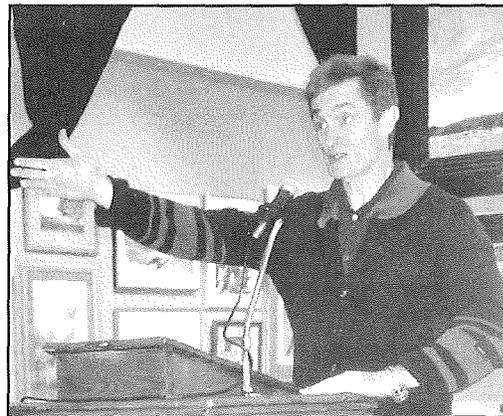
speaking rule, Mr. Lapham employed an equally resonant bell throughout the evening.

The moderator's initial question was directed at the Stratfordian panelists: what evidence do we have that William Shakespeare, grain merchant from Stratford, wrote the plays?

Professor Alan H. Nelson of

University of California, Berkeley immediately shot back, "William Shakespeare from Stratford on Avon was not a grain merchant." As for documentary evidence, Nelson declared that William Shakespeare is a rare name, so much so, that no other person with that name was living in London at the time the plays were produced and printed. The name was attached to the published plays and poems since 1593. Richard Field, a fellow Stratford native, printed the first Shakespeare title, *Venus and Adonis*. Furthermore, the professor stated that the First Folio is replete

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Renowned RSC actor Roger Rees delivers the St. Crispin's Day speech at the conference on Saturday, Oct. 25th

Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

Published quarterly by the
Shakespeare Oxford Society
1555 Connecticut Ave. N.W. Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036
ISSN 1525-6863
www.shakespeare-oxford.com

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

The Newsletter welcomes research articles, book reviews, letters and news items. Contributions should be reasonably concise and, when appropriate, validated by peer review. The views of contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the Shakespeare Oxford Society as a literary and educational organization.

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Letter from the President

The year 2004 has a special meaning for Oxfordians as we celebrate the four-hundred-year anniversary of the death of Edward de Vere. Our progress in gaining recognition has come slowly but is steadily increasing as we uncover more evidence for our case that the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford was the true author of the Shakespeare canon. This remains our primary mission.

I consider it an honor that I have been chosen to serve as President of the Shakespeare Oxford Society for this special year. It is a challenge that I take seriously and I can promise that I will give the job my best effort. The members of this Society should be aware that Trustees on the Board spend many tireless hours trying to keep the Society moving in a positive direction. As part of this effort, we on the Board continue to request input from the membership and invite participation with your energies and ideas.

It has been most heartening to see the robust response to our recent donor drive, which has helped to maintain our financial status in good order. As previously reported, membership dues account for just forty percent of our working budget, and we rely heavily on gifts to support production of both *The Oxfordian* and the quarterly Newsletter. I am also pleased to report that

our October 2003 conference in New York City was a great success financially as well as in the quality of research papers presented. Although there were others involved, we owe a great debt of gratitude to Gerit Quealy for the organization and production of the conference, which will set a high standard for subsequent conferences. Plans for our 2004 conference is under way and it appears likely that the conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia at the remarkable Emory Conference Center of Emory University.

This year's issue of the journal, *The Oxfordian*, marks yet another success for the Society thanks to the efforts of Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, who was given a well-deserved award at the New York Conference for her work in editing the journal since its inception six years ago. We are also pleased to now have Gary Goldstein as editor of our SOS Newsletter, and we look forward to his efforts in continuing to keep us informed in the year ahead. We also plan to make improvements on the SOS website in the coming year.

Let us all pull together during 2004 and make this year a landmark for our quest. Our success or failure depends solely on the amount of effort we put forward: "Make no delay: we may effect this business yet ere day."

My best regards to all,
Frank Davis

SOS Elections

At the Annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in New York on the morning of October 25, members elected several new Board members, and officers were appointed for the 2003-2004 year:

- Dr. Frank M. Davis, President (Savannah, GA)
- Gerit Quealy, First Vice President (New York, NY)
- John Shahan, Second Vice President (Glendale, CA)
- Joe C. Peel, Treasurer (Nashville, TN)
- Dr. C. Wayne Shore, Recording Secretary (San Antonio, TX)

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- John A. Hamill (San Francisco, CA)
- Matthew Cossolotto (Yorktown Heights, NY)
- Ramon Jiménez (Berkeley, CA)

The current SOS roster totals 550 members in the United States and overseas.

The Ten Restless Ghosts of Mantua: Shakespeare's Specter Lingers Over the Italian City

Part Two - Castiglione and the Gonzaga Family of Mantua

By John Hamill

Part One of this article (SOS Newsletter, Summer 2003) revealed Shakespeare's knowledge of the works of Giulio Romano and Pietro Aretino that were specific to Mantua. Allusions to Mantua identified in Shakespeare's works were: 1. The sculptures of Giulio and the *Postures of Aretino* in *The Winter's Tale*, 2. Giulio's Trojan Mural in *The Rape of Lucrece*, 3. Giulio's Hall of the Horses and Aretino's play *Orazia* in *Venus and Adonis*, 4. Giulio's Hall of the Giants in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and 5. Aretino's play *Il Marescalco* in *Twelfth Night*. Part Two reveals another five "Mantuan Ghosts" that make indirect allusions to Mantua, and presents two plays that have scenes set in Mantua and two plays that make reference to Mantua.

6. *Hamlet* — Castiglione's Tomb, Mantua

According to scholars, Count Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528) influenced Shakespeare, and was reflected in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet*. By the end of the century it had been translated into every major European language. It was so influential that it was said that Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, kept three books at his bedside: the Bible, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Castiglione's *The Courtier*.⁽³⁵⁾ Castiglione's fame was such that two renowned artists painted his portrait: Raphael and Giulio Romano, and Rubens made a copy of Raphael's painting.

Castiglione wrote *The Courtier* during his extended stay at the court of Urbino. The book is comprised of a series of dialogues in which the speakers were modeled on real people, including Guidobaldo Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, his wife, Elisabetta Gonzaga of Mantua, and his nephew and heir, Francesco Maria della Rovere. Castiglione, who was related to the Gonzaga family, returned home to Mantua in 1516 to finish writing *The Courtier*. Castiglione died in Toledo, Spain,



Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione
by Raffaello Sanzio

in 1529 while serving as the ambassador of Pope Clement VII. His body was returned to Mantua where he was buried in a tomb designed and built by his friend Giulio Romano in Santa Maria delle Grazie, the same church that was filled with polychrome statues (Ghost 1), which seems to evoke the "gallery" in *The Winter's Tale* chapel setting for Hermione's statue.

Even before he wrote *The Courtier*, Castiglione was well known at the English court: the Duke of Urbino sent him in 1505 as an envoy to Henry VII, and he was knighted. The next year he journeyed to England to receive, as the Duke's proxy, the Order of the Garter. Castiglione's tomb would have drawn Englishmen visiting northern Italy⁽³⁶⁾; it is therefore very likely that the author, if he was visiting Mantua, would not have resisted seeing Castiglione's tomb, which featured another sculpture by Giulio, whom he lauded in *The Winter's Tale*. Giulio is also buried in Mantua, across from his home, in the church of San Barnaba. In Mantua, Shakespeare had the opportunity of paying homage to men he apparently had admired.

The Courtier describes the ultimate attributes and behavior of the gentleman, who, according to Castiglione, is of noble birth, has a broad education, is good at sports like tennis, hunting, and riding, dances and has musical and artistic abilities; in sports and in the arts, he should not seem professional, but retain his status as an amateur. Among many other attributes, the courtier should especially be loyal and truthful.⁽³⁷⁾

Shakespeare uses Castiglione's rules in *Love's Labour's Lost* to show how a king and his courtiers should act, but do not.⁽³⁸⁾ At the beginning of the play, Ferdinand, the King states:

Your oathes are past, and now
subscribe your names:

That his owne hand may strike his
honour downe,

That violates the smallest branch
herein:

If you are arm'd to doe, as sworne to
do,

Subscribe to your deepe oathes, and
keep it to.(I.1. 23-27)

Yet, the men in the play betray and deceive each other and the women that they pursue. Shakespeare punishes the men for not being truthful, they end up by themselves, the very way they had planned on being in their oath. Castiglione states: "No punishment can be enough for those courtiers who turn gentle and charming manners and noble qualities to evil ends."⁽³⁹⁾

In *Hamlet*, Hamlet's mature, reflective nature, "Renaissance man" attributes and noble conduct have led many scholars to believe that Shakespeare modeled him after Castiglione's ideal. W.B.D. Henderson said, "Without Castiglione we should not have had a Hamlet."⁽⁴⁰⁾ It has been noted that Polonius' famous admonitions to his son Laertes, for example: "Give thy thoughts no tongue. . . Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar," etc.(I.3), reflect Castiglione's precepts: "Not to be a

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Ghosts (cont'd from p. 3)

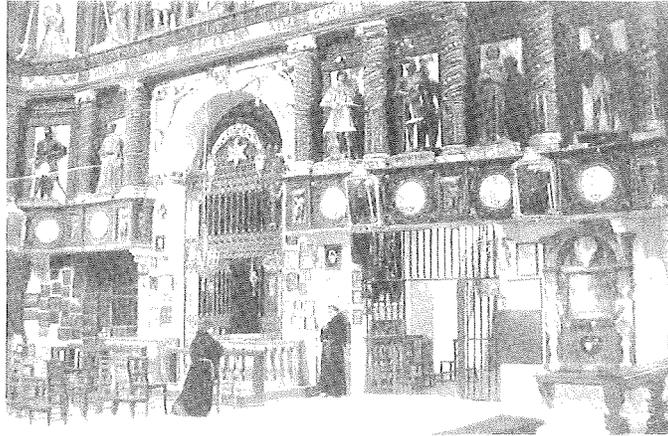
babbler, brauler, or chatter, nor lavish of his tongue. . . To fellowship him self for the most part with men of the best sort and of most estimation, and with his equals, so he be also beloved of his inferiours."

Academia readily accepts Castiglione's influence on Shakespeare because *The Courtier* was available in England, both in English (translated by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561) and Latin (translated by Bartholomew Clerke in 1571), and was published in several editions.(41) It is significant that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who personified many of the attributes of Castiglione's ideal courtier, such as displaying ability in sports, arts and music, yet maintaining his status as an amateur, wrote the preface to Clerke's translation.

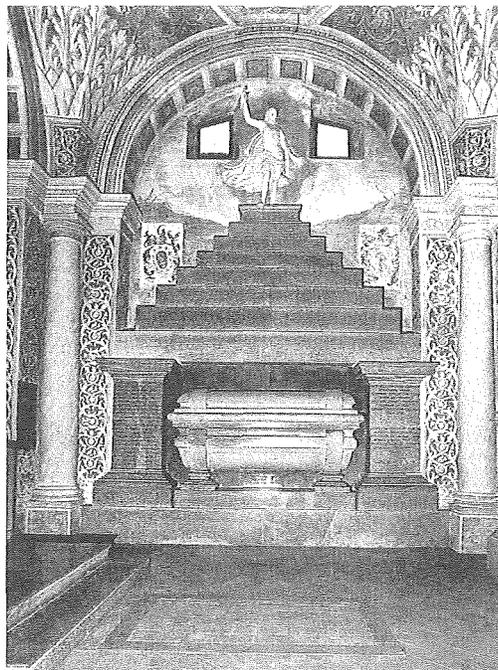
7. *Hamlet* — The Murder of Gonzago and the Gonzago of Mantua

In Act II, Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, while arranging a performance with the players, Hamlet asks them, "Can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?" The play is "The Image of a murthure done in Vienna, Gonzago is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista, you shall see anon, 'tis a knavish piece of work." Hamlet describes the plot, of "one Lucianus, nephew to the King" who "poysons him i'the Garden for his estate, his name's Gonzago, the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian. . ." In *The Murder of Gonzago*, the King is murdered by his nephew, who pours poison in his ear while he sleeps in the garden. The author specifically emphasized this act by having the scene performed twice before the court, once in the silent show and again when it is performed aloud. Was Shakespeare alluding to an existing story or even an actual event?

While the sources for *Hamlet* are well known and documented, the specific source for *The Murder of Gonzago*, the "play within the play," eludes scholars. Geoffrey Bullough, who wrote eight volumes on Shakespeare's sources, raised one possibility (42), which he quotes from C. Elliot Browne's *Notes on Shakespeare's*



Interior Gallery of Santa Maria Delle Grazie



Tomb of Castiglione by Giulio Romano

Names (1876): "The story of the Play is certainly taken from the murder of the Duke of Urbino by Luigi Gonzaga in 1538, who was poisoned by means of a lotion poured into his ears."(43)

The murdered Duke of Urbino was Francesco Maria della Rovere (1490–1538), nephew of Pope Julius II and one of Italy's most important military leaders. His wife was Eleonora, sister of Federigo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. In 1538, when Della Rovere, as Captain General of the Venetian forces, was preparing an expedition against Suleyman the Great, he suddenly fell ill and died at his villa in Pesaro. "When a post-mortem revealed traces of poison in his

father's body Guidobaldo [the Duke's son] arrested his father's barber-surgeon who had visited him during his illness. The man confessed under torture that he had poured poison into the Duke's ears at the instigation of Luigi Gonzaga," a relative of the Duke's wife. (44)

Della Rovere's murder has even more direct parallels with Hamlet's play. Della Rovere's title was Duke, and the two earliest quarto editions of *Hamlet* have references to a "Duke" as the victim, which changed to "King" in the Folio edition. Also, both murders take

place in a garden setting, and the alleged murderer is related to the victim. Furthermore, the Player Duke's wife had the same first name as Della Rovere's grand-aunt, Battista Montefeltro. According to the play, the Player King had been married for thirty years, as had Hamlet's parents, just as Della Rovere had been married for thirty years at the time of his death; and like Della Rovere, old Hamlet was a famous soldier.

How did Shakespeare learn the circumstances of Della Rovere's murder? In the words of Hamlet, the *Murder of Gonzago* was "written in very choice Italian," yet no such manuscript or book has been found. As the first paper detailing Della Rovere's murder was not published until 1902, Bullough surmises that Shakespeare saw a now lost play about this murder performed by an Italian acting troupe in England. However, an actual source accessible to Shakespeare has yet to be found.

At the time of Oxford's grand tour of Italy, echoes of Della Rovere's murder still surrounded Mantua. Della Rovere's son, Guidobaldo, had recently died in 1574; one of his life goals was to find his father's alleged murderers, whom he believed were in the vicinity of Mantua. Also, a book written by Paolo Giovio, including a short biography of Della Rovere, was reprinted in 1575, featuring for the first time an engraving of Titian's famous portrait of Della Rovere.(45) Although the book mentioned that Della Rovere was poisoned, it did not name the method or the name

(cont'd on p. 5)

Ghosts (cont'd from p. 4)

Gonzago, but it may have revived interest in, and discussion about, the old murder in Mantua. It is interesting to note that playwright Pietro Aretino, who was closely connected with the families affected, became involved in the murder investigation, and related his findings to Federigo, Duke of Mantua and Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino. (46)



Portrait of Pietro Aretino by Titian

8. *Hamlet* — The Ghost and the Titian Portrait

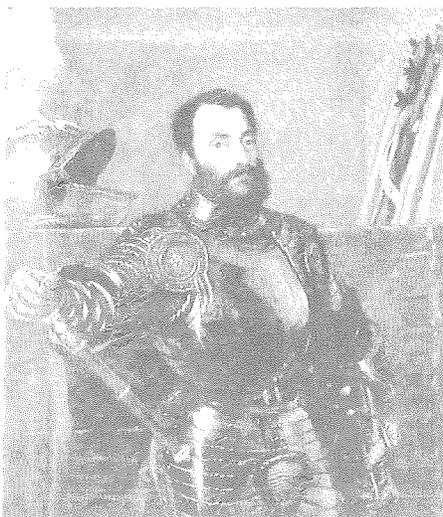
The sources of the Hamlet story by Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest were originally published in Latin and French. Belleforest's text is recognized as the direct source for *Hamlet*, but it did not appear in English until 1608. (47) Since *Hamlet* was first published in 1603, either Shakespeare was fluent in French, (as Oxford was) or he used another English source based on the French translation. This is one reason that scholars postulate the fabled *Ur-Hamlet*, a lost play by Thomas Kyd or someone else, performed by 1589, as a source for Shakespeare. Three details added by Shakespeare in the Hamlet story that are not in the original sources of *Hamlet* by Saxo Grammaticus or Belleforest were the poison in the ears, the play within the play, and the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father.

Shakespeare describes the ghost of the old warrior Hamlet in great detail: he manifests himself "Armed at point exactly,

cap-a-pe (head to foot)," "in complete steel," with field-marshal's "truncheon" (held at hip), with "Hyperion curls," beard "grizzled" and "sable silvered," and helmet with its "beaver up," with "his eyes fix'ed upon you," and "A countenance more in sorrow than in anger." (I.1, I.2, I.4, and III.4). As noted by Bullough, this description exactly parallels a portrait of Della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, painted by Titian in 1536. (48) The ghost is repeatedly described in full armor. Remarkably, Della Rovere was buried dressed in his armor. (49)

After the murder of the Duke in 1538, his wife, Eleonora Gonzaga, returned to Mantua and probably brought the painting with her. From there it passed into Paolo Giovio's portrait collection, who had an engraving done of the painting for his book. After Giovio's death in 1552, Cosimo I, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, took over the collection and placed it in the Uffizi Palace in Florence, where it remains to this day. (50)

Della Rovere's murder and his portrait by Titian clearly parallel King Hamlet's murder and the description of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, and dispels any doubt that this story is the source of *The Murder of Gonzago*. It is proof that Shakespeare had knowledge of Gonzaga family history and Italian painting. The Titian portrait should be world famous for its portrayal of the Ghost of Hamlet, but remarkably, neither art historians nor Shakespeare scholars note this and so it remains an unrecognized ghost. Shakespeare of Stratford's access to



Portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere, 1536-1538 by Titian

this painting is unexplainable. The Earl of Oxford certainly had the opportunity to see the portrait during his 1575 visit to Florence.

9. *Measure for Measure* — Duke Vincenzo of Mantua

Another reference to the Gonzaga family is in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. It is curious that while the play is set in Vienna, all the characters have Italian rather than German names. Most notably the character known throughout the play simply as "the Duke" is named in the character list as "Vincentio, the Duke." No Duke of Vienna was called Vincentio. To 16th century European courts and nobility, "Vincentio, the Duke" would immediately call to mind Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga of Mantua (1562-1612), who was involved in a notorious sexual scandal that lasted for several years. The details of this scandal spread throughout Europe and would have been widely known at the Elizabethan court. (51)

Three days after Vincenzo's marriage to Margherita Farnese the Duke of Parma's daughter in 1581, rumors of his impotence, homosexuality and infidelity surfaced. Both the bride and the groom were subjected to humiliating tests to verify their ability for a conjugal life. In 1583, after two years of attack and counter-attack, Pope Gregory XIII officially annulled the marriage. Later, when marriage negotiations began between Vincenzo and Eleonora de Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany's daughter, the Grand Duke demanded proof that the prospective bridegroom was capable of copulating with a virgin. This led to a special convocation of the College of Cardinals and they voted, after an acrimonious debate, to require a test, which was to be witnessed by Cesare d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. Vincenzo Gonzaga was forced to agree to this ruling, if he wanted to marry Eleonora and hopefully produce an heir, which was critical to ensure the political independence of Mantua. A virgin was procured, and Vincenzo duly presented himself in Ferrara, only to return to Mantua in haste, without undergoing this bed-test. Vincenzo later agreed once again to undergo the test, this time in

(cont'd on p. 6)

Ghosts (cont'd from p. 5)



Titian, Federico II Gonzaga,
Madrid, Museo del Prado

Venice, and another virgin was procured. Despite a humiliating public report on his performance, it was concluded that Vincenzo was indeed a suitable spouse for the Grand Duke's daughter, and they were married in 1584; it proved to be a successful marriage, and they produced five children.(52).

In spite of this happy ending, the deep humiliation Vincenzo suffered at having these intimate details of his life revealed to such public scrutiny and judicial abuse, could have reminded Oxford of what he had endured with his own accusations of sodomy and infidelity in 1580/81. The themes of *Measure for Measure* reflect the story of Vincenzo: moral problems arising from sexual desire, the abuses of judicial authority, but ultimately a happy ending.

One source for *Measure for Measure* was a real event that took place in 1547, at the court of Ferdinando Gonzaga, governor of Milan and brother of Federigo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua.(53) A judge promised mercy to the wife of a condemned murderer in exchange for sex, and then executed the criminal anyway. The aggrieved widow went to the authorities, who first forced the judge to marry her and then executed him. The event was reported in a letter in Latin written from Vienna, and inspired the several recognized sources of the play. First is the drama in Latin of Claude Rouillet, *Philanira*, which was translated into French

(1563). More important as a source, however, was a novella in Italian by G.B. Giraldi Cinthio, published in his collection of *Hecatommithi* (1565). Various details suggest that Shakespeare knew this Italian work directly. Shakespeare follows the events in Cinthio's text closely, including the comic and bawdy sub-plot involving Mistress Overdone and her bordello. Boyce states Shakespeare "could have read Cinthio in the original Italian, in a French translation, or in some now-lost English translation; he certainly did one of these, for another, untranslated Cinthio tale inspired *Othello*."(54)

Elements of *Measure for Measure* that were not included in these sources were the Mariana story and the bed-trick, which he also used in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Remarkably, Oxford himself was subject to a bed-trick, which was related by Francis Osborne (who worked for Oxford's daughter Susan) in the mid 17th century, and by Thomas Wright in his *The History and Topography of the County of Essex* (1836). (55)

Measure for Measure strongly displays Shakespeare's familiarity with the Gonzaga family. There is one last reference to Gonzaga and Vienna, the line in *Hamlet*: "The image of a murder done in Vienna, Gonzaga is the Duke's name."

10. *Merchant of Venice* — Marquis of Montferrat

The first scholar to notice the reference to the Marquis of Montferrat in *The Merchant of Venice* in relation to Shakespeare's knowledge of Mantua appears to have been Gregor Sarrazin in 1894.(56) In Act I, Scene 2, Nerissa makes a passing reference to Bassanio, "a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in the company of the Marquis of Montferrat" (line 120). The Marquis was never mentioned again in the play. There was a historical marquessate of Montferrat, so was Shakespeare alluding to a real person? Perhaps the answer to this question lies in identifying Portia's home in *The Merchant of Venice* called "Belmont."

Research by Noemi Magri reveals that the Villa Foscari on the River Brenta near Venice matches the description of Belmont in the play.(57) In July, 1574, an extraordinary gathering of nobility took

place (including the Dukes of Venice, Angouleme, Ferrara and Nevers) at the Villa Foscari to meet with Henri III, the new king of France. According to Noemi Magri, the celebrations for the event were so extraordinary that "contemporary historians recorded them as an exceptional event of great splendour."

One of the illustrious guests at the event was the last Marquis of Montferrat, Guglielmo Gonzaga (1538-1587). He also held the superior title of Duke of Mantua and was the father of Vincenzo Gonzaga, later Duke of Mantua, to whom Shakespeare almost certainly alluded in *Measure for Measure* (Ghost 9).

If the author was indeed alluding to Guglielmo Gonzaga, why would he refer to him as the Marquis of Montferrat instead of the high title, Duke of Mantua? The reason might be that the marquessate of Montferrat was the hereditary land of the Paleologi, the last descendants of the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople. Guglielmo inherited the title of Marquis of Montferrat through his mother, Margherita Paleologo. There was no family name more prestigious in Italy. It is important to note that in July, 1574, Montferrat was still a marquessate, but six months later, on January 23, 1575, Emperor Maximilian I elevated Guglielmo to Duke of Montferrat(58). This was a unique event, making Guglielmo the sole Italian duke of two duchies, and would still be celebrated when Oxford arrived in Italy a few months later. In one line, in another stray comment with no relevance to the plot, Shakespeare revealed his expert knowledge of European nobility.

It was less than one year after the grand meeting at Villa Foscari that the Earl of Oxford met King Henri III in Paris. Since Oxford was traveling to Venice, the Villa may have been a recommended place to visit. Magri speculates that Oxford met Duke Guglielmo, who was "the ruler of one of the great centres of learning in Renaissance time."(59). It is interesting to note that under both Dukes Guglielmo and Vincenzo, Mantua was famous for its theater performances.(60) "With Duke Guglielmo, a patron of artists and musicians, Mantua reached its maximum splendor."(61). This is the time Oxford would have been in Mantua. (cont'd on p. 18)

Michael Wood Lectures at the Smithsonian on a Catholic Shakespeare

By Peter Dickson

On October 29, Michael Wood lectured at the Hirshhorn Museum at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC on Shakespeare's purported Catholic faith, just two days after Stanley Wells had appeared (see the report on Wells' lecture in this edition of the newsletter, page 16).

The point of contention is Stanley Wells' open hostility to the secret Catholic Bard theory (see his *Shakespeare: For All Time*, reviewed in this issue by Ramon Jimenez) and Wood's strong emphasis in his new book-and-film combination entitled, *In Search of Shakespeare*, which focuses on the growing biographical evidence pointing to Shakespeare's strong, enduring and secret attachment to Roman Catholicism. [Editor: Dickson's essay, "Bardgate: Was Shakespeare a Secret Catholic?", has just been published in volume six of *The Oxfordian*, the annual journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.]

When I handed a copy of my book review essay to Wood before his lecture he was a bit stunned by its detailed analysis. I mentioned that we had exchanged faxes in July 1998 on the Catholic Question (the text of Wood's reply to me was posted on HLAS not long ago). He then suddenly remarked: "I do not know if he was a secret Catholic".

I was a little surprised because the thrust of his book is that the Stratford man was a hard-core Catholic to at least 1585, which means until August 1588 for all intents and purposes, and Wood is strongly impressed, as he stressed in his talk, with the defiant recusancy of the favorite daughter (Susan Shakespeare) right after the 1605 Gunpowder Plot. Then there is the Stratford man's 1613 purchase of the notoriously Catholic hideout the Blackfriar's Gatehouse. Wood on page 340 of his book cannot help concluding that he "dyed a papist," as the Anglican cleric Richard Davies claimed in the late 1600s. So we are asked to believe that the Stratford man was NOT a secret Catholic? Trying to prove or assert (as Wells tries) such a negative proposition in the face of such a consistent pattern of evidence represents a state of denial.

In any case, Wood was in top form, his intellectual enthusiasm is infectious, and he hit all the high notes of the Stratford man's ultra-ultra Catholic family and its struggle against what he called "the Elizabethan Police State". He spared no effort to underscore how strongly Catholic this personal and family background was. Yet he would occasionally retreat or soften the thrust a bit, using phrases like the faith of the old England, and remarks about how the Stratford man per se was not a sectarian or doctrinal Catholic. But how so when after 1580 the police state was breathing down the necks of Catholics? The problem here is how really Catholic is a person who conforms outwardly to avoid fines and torture but does nothing more to sustain one's Catholic identity? Not very Catholic. But Wood never comes to this conclusion, at least not in his book, and he knows the Catholic significance of the Blackfriar's real estate deal in 1613 (see page 331).

Whatever the truth, Wood speaking as an historian, not a literary critic, opened his lecture with some candid, humorous and intellectually honest remarks about the lack of documentation about the Stratford man — virtually nothing very revealing between his marriage in 1582 and the purchase of New Place in 1597. He said he was surprised at first why there had been no documentary film on the Bard, "but after I looked closer I now know why". For the first half of his 52 years on earth, Wood noted there are, at best, only six documents relating to the Stratford man. Wood cited the few that there are: marriage, baptism records, etc.

Then astonishingly, Wood recalled a conversation with the famous Simon Schama who once asked him about his next film project. Wood said: "A biography of Shakespeare". Schama replied: "I would not touch that. There is no evidence, you know". Wood's audience appropriately laughed at this account of the exchange with Schama.

Given the problems associated with sources, Wood (a trained medievalist at Oxford University) said he decided to take

what he described as a "Gothic approach", trying to contextualize Shakespeare in terms of "the lost (Catholic) world of his parents". He stated that there were around 60 documents relating to the Bard's father (John Shakespeare), others relating to kin, especially on the maternal or Arden side of the family. He said he was surprised how much evidence had been overlooked by Shakespeare scholars, whom he again described as mostly literary types disinterested in social or political history.

After all this, Wood still admitted openly that there was "no indication in the documentary record (here meaning non-literary documents) of the inner life or psychology". Unlike Jonson, Wood sees Shakespeare as "totally self-effacing". "The Sonnets give a hint". And Wood noted that "their raw self-expression" had to be autobiographical, "but they remain difficult to interpret".

If these problems with the lack of or difficulty of sources were not enough, there is a second problem according to Wood. Specifically he strongly emphasized that the Bard that we know is essentially a product of the "British Literary Establishment," with the "persistent feature of keeping the biographical account separate from the history of the time or epoch". . . "a denial of the essential history of the period". In this regard, he quoted Peter Brooke of the London theatrical scene, who insists that "biography does not matter". . . "history simply does not matter". Wood also noted that in her critical remarks about his new book, Germaine Greer said the same thing: "history is irrelevant in view of the Bard's universality". Wood said to the audience that "this is an extraordinary thing to say". He underscored his amazement at this "persistent avoidance of history or historical facts".

In sharp contrast Wood argued that Shakespeare lived in "a very interesting time," one in which the break with Rome was very slow, which was the case in Warwickshire, and thereby raising the key

(cont'd on p. 8)

Michael Wood Lectures (cont'd from p. 7)

question of where did the Shakespeare-Arden family stand? Wood then reviewed the mountain of evidence that makes their staunch Catholic orientation undeniable (what he presents in his book, which is what makes his book so great). Wood concluded that one should look at Shakespeare historically and ground him within his family background.

In the question and answer period, I made a passing reference to the handling of the sensitive suicide issue in the dramas being most awkward coming from a person inwardly Catholic. Wood dodged that topic.

A questioner just before me brought up to Wood the hostility of Professor Wells to any suggestion of a Catholic bias or orientation. Wood admitted that this was the case. Wood did not try to down play his sharp differences with Wells, and underscored that whereas he was an historian, Wells was really not. He suggested clearly that Wells and others in the Shakespeare field were literary types disinterested in history or avoiders of historical facts.

At one point, in some exasperation, Wood remarked: "I really do not understand their reluctance to engage on this issue," meaning here again the Catholic Question. Wood as an historian sees them as being in denial. In fairness, I point out in my essay that this denial makes sense when you consider the problems Wood ignores in trying to explain how the Stratford man can come from an ultra Catholic network in South Warwickshire and still quickly transcend this background by the early 1590s.

Wells, like most scholars before him, believes that the Bard transcended not only Catholicism but Christianity generally and his entire epoch, being a God-like figure with a universal mind beyond time and place. In sharp contrast, Wood sees him as a hard-core Catholic well into the late 1580s, if not long after that, and is skeptical of transcendence. But Wood fails to offer the reader convincing argument or evidence of how he could be inwardly Catholic under intense pressure from an Elizabethan Police State and at the same time have a non-sectarian or non-doctrinaire mentality or world view — phrases which Wood uses to slip out of the trap formed by the very

biographical evidence which he rightly exposes as crucial.

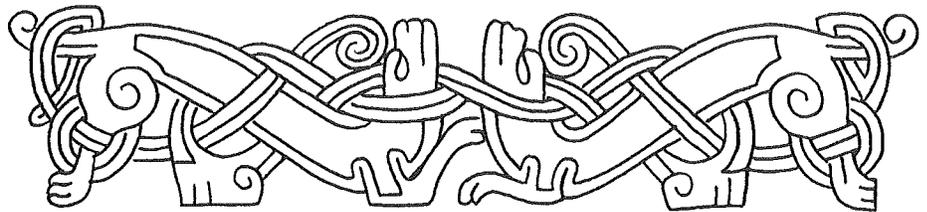
Wood concluded his interesting lecture by recalling the late Samuel Schoenbaum's remark at the end of the revised 1991 edition of *Shakespeare's Lives*, that the time had not yet come for someone to be able to produce a real, meaningful biography of

the Bard "in the modern spirit." But Wood said: "I have made an attempt at that. . . and that there is more evidence to find or more out there."

Peter W. Dickson is a private scholar currently at work on a book entitled, Shakespeare and the Men Who Stole the Bard.

THE OXFORDIAN/6

The Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society



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A Flawed Life of Oxford (cont'd from p. 1)

"My main purpose," Nelson assures us in his introduction, "is to introduce documents from Oxford's life, many of them written in Oxford's own hand. Since documents alone do not make a biography, however, I have felt duty-bound to point out their significance for an accurate estimation of Oxford's character. If I judge Oxford harshly from the outset, it is because I neither can nor wish to suppress what I have learned along the way. True believers will of course spin Oxford's reprehensible acts into benevolent gestures, or will transfer blame from Oxford to Burghley, Leicester, Queen Elizabeth, or even to Oxford's much-abused wife Anne. I beg the open-minded reader to join me in holding the mature Oxford responsible for his own life, letting the documentary evidence speak for itself."

But already we sense a problem. If the documents speak for themselves, why is it necessary to "point out their significance"? Is it only "true believers" who "spin" the evidence?

Despite his pre-emptive charges against these "true believers" (who he assumes will not be "open-minded" about the facts), Nelson is generous to Oxfordians for their efforts to shed light on Oxford's life and he names several to whom he is indebted. Oxfordians, for their part, now stand in Nelson's debt for breaking much new ground in his research, even if it is unflattering to (and strongly biased against) their candidate.

Nelson calls Oxfordian scholars "partisan," which is fair enough, but he is hardly impartial himself. His clear purpose is to discredit Oxford in almost every respect. He portrays him as an "egotist," "thug," "sodomite," "atheist," "vulture," traitor, murderer, rapist, pederast, adulterer, libeler, fop, playboy, truant, tax evader, drunkard, snob, spendthrift, deadbeat, cheat, blackmailer, malcontent, hypocrite, conspirator, and ingrate. Some of this finds support in the records, as even Oxford's admirers usually acknowledge, but it hardly proves what Nelson wants it to prove: that Oxford couldn't have written the Shakespeare works. After all, many great writers have been men of dubious character.

It is true enough that Oxford made plenty of enemies; but he also made plenty of loyal friends. Impartial, "open-minded"

scholarship would hardly accept the charges of his enemies with total credulity, while ignoring or dismissing the word of his friends. Yet this is Nelson's method.

Nelson seldom misses a chance to disparage Oxford. Apparently his years of research have failed to turn up a single fact to Oxford's credit. The reader's respect for his impressive scholarship soon gives way to weariness at his obsessive denigration, which shows him no less biased than those who adulate Oxford. He is always ready to believe Oxford's most scurrilous foes — he takes the phrase "monstrous adversary" from one of them, who in the same sentence says luridly that Oxford "would drink my blood" — but he largely

Nelson calls Oxfordian scholars "partisan," which is fair enough, but he is hardly impartial himself.

omits the many contemporary tributes to Oxford's genius (unless he can ascribe them to base motives). About the only thing Nelson is willing to credit Oxford with is elegant penmanship.

Though Nelson belittles Oxford as a poet, a scholar, and even a letter-writer, he has oddly little to say about his high literary reputation in his own day. Only about twenty short lyrics have survived under Oxford's name, but they hardly suffice for an evaluation; he must have written much more than that to draw such generous and copious praise (little of which Nelson cites). And though none of Oxford's highly lauded plays have survived under his name, Nelson is willing to assume that they were of no particular merit. He bases his attacks entirely on slight evidence, when he would have been wise to heed Richard Whately's dictum: "He who is unaware of his ignorance will be only misled by his knowledge." It is certain that Oxford produced a substantial body of work, whether or not this included the Shakespeare plays and poems, and that this commanded great respect. Nelson makes his judgment of what is missing on a very fragmentary record — and on his own antipathy to Oxford.

He even argues, from a few minor grammatical errors in casual letters, that Oxford's Latin was poor, in spite of the testimony of a hostile witness (whom he does quote) that Oxford "spoke Latin and Italian well." He also neglects to mention that Oxford wrote an elegant Latin preface to a translation of Castiglione's *The Courtier* and that Oxford, during a two-week visit to the noted scholar Johann Sturm, evidently conversed with Sturm entirely in Latin. Since Nelson eagerly presents (and amplifies) every detail he can find that seems damaging to Oxford, it is suspicious that he suppresses so much that is favorable to him.

In short, Nelson argues that Oxford was a scoundrel, ergo he couldn't have been "Shakespeare." This non sequitur informs the whole book. The same argument was advanced by the late A.L. Rowse, who offered as conclusive proof the fact that Oxford was accused of being, as Rowse put it, a "homo." Of course this fact may tell the other way: I think the Shakespeare Sonnets, or at least the first 126, are now widely recognized as being homosexual love poems (as I contended in my own book). Beyond that, a major theme of the Sonnets is the poet's recurrent lament that he is "in disgrace" — something Oxford had reason to complain of, though William of Stratford apparently didn't.

Because Nelson ostensibly excludes the "authorship controversy" from consideration, he doesn't feel he must confront the seeming links between Oxford and "Shakespeare." Thus, for example, he says hardly anything of the young Earl of Southampton, whom Lord Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law, tried to marry off to Oxford's daughter in the early 1590s, the same time, it appears, that "Shakespeare" was urging Southampton (or someone remarkably like him) to marry and beget a son.

In fact, the earls of Southampton, Pembroke, and Montgomery — the three dedicatees of the Shakespeare works — were all, at various times, candidates for the hands of Oxford's three daughters. An interesting coincidence, at least, but Nelson's biographical strategy allows him to avoid mentioning it. The same strategy allows him to deal only glancingly, if at all,

(cont'd on p. 10)

A Flawed Life of Oxford (cont'd from p. 9)

with other interesting coincidences. Two of the chief literary influences on “Shakespeare,” Henry Howard (Earl of Surrey) and Arthur Golding (translator of Ovid), were Oxford’s uncles. Many details of Oxford’s 1575-6 Italian journey pop up in the Shakespeare works. Phrases from Oxford’s letters frequently appear in those works too. Burghley himself, as many orthodox Stratfordian scholars have discerned, is clearly the model for the snooping Polonius. Oxford, like Hamlet, was captured by pirates in the English Channel.

All this is missing from Nelson’s biography. He does mention that those “true believers” think Oxford was Shakespeare, but he leaves the impression that he has no idea *why* they think so, just as he has no idea why Edmund Spenser, George Puttenham, Francis Meres, and many other Elizabethan writers called Oxford a poet and playwright of great distinction — except that they somehow thought it worth their while to curry favor with the most impecunious patron in England. For Oxford received his most lavish praise after he had wasted his huge family fortune and was reduced to wheedling for money himself. From a cynic’s point of view, he was no longer worth flattering. He was truly “in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes.” Yet some men loved and admired him.

Agreeing with Oxford’s enemies, Nelson, in spite of his own intent, makes this “monstrous adversary” a man of dimension, an abundant personality, too energetic and colorful to be dismissed by moralistic censure. The book reads like a Puritan American parson’s biography of Falstaff. All the author can see in his subject is pure vice. That is all he is equipped to perceive. But the subject escapes the biographer’s categories. Sinful as he no doubt is, he is *alive*. Everything you can say against him may be true, in a narrow and literal sense. “Use every man after his desert, and who shall ’scape whipping?” But beware of being “right” about such a man.

Rarely has an author so nakedly loathed his subject. I have read more dispassionate biographies of Hitler and Stalin. Nelson’s disapproval of Oxford recalls Tolstoy’s detestation of Shakespeare.

Having relieved himself of the duty of facing evidence in favor of Oxford’s

authorship, Nelson simply pretends it doesn’t exist. Yet in his review of my own book, he had no choice but to confront it, since I spent 30 pages on the Sonnets alone. Far from treating the argument as absurd, Nelson could only offer the weak rejoinder that the poet’s self-portrait might, if only we had more data, match William Shakspeare as closely as it matches Oxford. “The Sonnets,” he wrote, “may bear a distinct relationship to what we do not know [about Shakspeare] (which must be vastly more than what we know); nor are they by any means impossible to reconcile with the little that is known [about Shakspeare].”

But Nelson fails to explain how any new information could possibly make Shakspeare

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appear as an aging man of high social rank who had fallen into disrepute by the 1590s. The best he could offer was the risible suggestion that Shakspeare might have “felt” older than he actually was because he was “prematurely balding” — a desperate guess based solely on the Folio portrait, since we have no reason to assume that Shakspeare’s hairline had receded “prematurely” and the poet refers to his “lines and wrinkles,” but not his hair loss. And early baldness, however unwelcome, would hardly give its victim a sense of impending death.

The poet also twice speaks of himself as “lame” — the very word Oxford used of himself in several letters he wrote in the 1590s. (We have no indication that Shakspeare was lame.) He mysteriously hopes his “name” will be “buried” and “forgotten” after his death, which he would hardly do if he were putting his real name on his published works (which he expects to outlive him). He uses about two hundred legal terms, some fifty of which also appear in Oxford’s private letters; the Sonnets also use dozens of the same words, images, metaphors, and arguments we find in Oxford’s 1573 published letter to Thomas Bedingfield. In that review, as in his book,

Nelson has nothing to say about all these coincidences. He merely adopts an air of assumed authority to evidence which many readers have found overwhelming.

The Sonnets offer perhaps the strongest evidence in favor of Oxford’s authorship. They have always made Stratfordian scholars uneasy, because what they tell us is so hard to square with even “the little that is known” about Stratford’s William. The very fact that they are often described as “fictional” tells us how feeble any biographical nexus with William is. If he had written them, surely they would be the strongest and most irrefutable proof of his authorship, and there would be no need to place them in the category of mere inventions or pure “literary exercises,” as so many orthodox scholars do.

We may state the point even more forcefully. If William had written the Sonnets, their contents would naturally be the starting point for all Shakespeare biography. After all, they would have the status of the poet’s unquestionable self-revelations, and all other biographical data would have to be organized around them. In that case, the Sonnets alone would have ruled out any doubt of their author’s identity, and no “authorship controversy” would have been possible.

Instead, the biographers have had to organize their data around the dubious Folio testimony of William’s authorship, consigning the Sonnets to a marginal place in the sketchy story of William’s life. Only because we do know so little about his life is it barely possible to imagine the Sonnets as his own account of himself, and even at that they present baffling difficulties. But if we accept Oxford as their author, the puzzles evaporate and they make excellent sense. This is why Nelson could claim no more than that if we knew enough about William, they might make as much sense as they do if read as Oxford’s self-disclosures. In effect, he conceded that our present knowledge favors, and does nothing to disprove, Oxford’s authorship of the Sonnets.

The Shakespeare works also display their author’s familiarity with contemporary Italy, as Ernesto Grillo showed in his book *Shakespeare and Italy*. In the same review, Nelson could only suggest that it was “not

(cont'd on p. 16)

Conference (cont'd from p. 1)

with references to William Shakespeare and Warwickshire. "There is a perfect triangulation of contemporary references to William Shakespeare as the author of the plays," Nelson said. He went on to note the Stratford Monument to Shakespeare, the Blackfriars real estate lease, the Mountjoy lawsuit, the loan to Mr. Clayton and the reference to Roscius as several of these. There are internal references in the plays too, he added, such as the reference to Barton Heath, a village nearby Stratford in Warwickshire.

Robert Brazil's response included that William Shaksper of Stratford did sell malt and also hoarded grain during a time of famine, for which he was fined by the town of Stratford. That Richard Field also carried out publication projects for the Earl of Oxford. That the Clayton loan involved another William Shakespeare living in London at the same time. That the reference to Roscius is to an actor and not a writer. And that there is contemporary evidence that shows William Shaksper of Stratford to be brokering plays written by other people.

Hank Whittemore scored an early victory by asking the Stratfordian panelists, "What document specifically links William Shaksper of Stratford on Avon to the plays?" To which Irwin Matus responded, "There is no such document."

Mr. Matus then stated that people with advanced degrees would not have been able to write the plays. Instead, a thorough grounding in the works of Ovid or a grammar school education of the time was good training to be a dramatist.

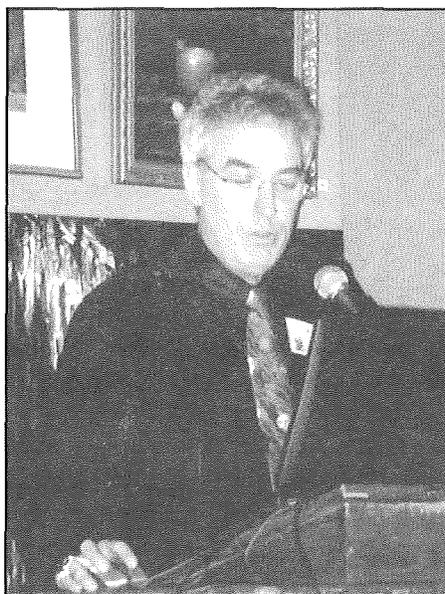
Professor Nelson reversed himself on the issue of Shaksper being a grain dealer: "Yes, William Shaksper hoarded grain. But he was never professionally a grain dealer. He was an actor by profession. If William Shaksper was a grain dealer and tax evader, then so was the Earl of Oxford."

Robert Brazil asked the professor to explain why the daughter of William Shaksper was illiterate, to which Mr. Nelson responded that the daughter of no known poet of the era was literate, as a rule. Mr. Matus stated that Susan Shaksper's signature is on a deed dated from 1639.

At this point, Mr. Lapham interjected a comment, saying that he had yet to hear any

evidence linking the man (William Shaksper) to the plays. Professor Nelson replied by asserting that there is a fine correlation between the facts, William Shaksper and the authorship of the plays.

At this juncture, Hank Whittemore stated that the 17th Earl of Oxford lived the life we see in the plays, first as a ward, then as a traveler to Italy, then as a husband who doubts the paternity of his child. Oxford is linked directly to all other writers of the time, especially John Lyly and Anthony Munday, both of whom served Oxford as



New York Times writer and editor William Niederkorn giving his presentation on authorship coverage through the years by the "paper of record"

secretary. Oxford's poetry anticipates that of Shakespeare's, and proceeded to quote verse from Oxford and Shakespeare nearly 30 years apart in composition that demonstrated poetic similarities.

Mr. Whittemore also pointed out that the professor left out the Earl of Oxford's Latin preface to the translation of *The Courtier* as well as his English introduction to *Cardanus Comfort* in his new biography of De Vere, both of which demonstrate his literary and intellectual interests and his proficiency in both Latin and English at an early age. Robert Brazil pointed out the importance of this, given that Hamlet paraphrases directly from Cardanus Comfort, adding that Shakespeare used a

plethora of literary sources that Oxford was responsible for in translating or for publishing.

Professor Nelson replied that the evidence offered by the Oxfordian panelists are all internal to the works, while his side has offered external evidence linking William Shaksper to the plays. Irwin Matus then asked: "Where is the evidence linking Oxford to the writing of the plays for his own company of actors?"

At this point, Lewis Lapham noted that neither side had presented conclusive evidence. "I think both arguments are circumstantial. On one side we have a voice but not a man; on the other, we have a face but not a man. Why is your candidate the most likely author? You have some servings of documents on behalf of William Shaksper. The Oxfordians have internal evidence and the personal life." He then asked the Stratfordian panelists whether the strongest case for William Shaksper was that the author was an actor.

Professor Nelson answered that Shaksper was a man of the theater in London, while the Earl of Oxford was not, then declaimed the First Folio to be *prima facie* evidence of Shaksper's authorship of the canon.

Robert Brazil responded that Oxford was patron of two acting companies — one in London and another in the provinces — over a period of twenty years, and as such, was intimately involved with the theater. Although no plays of his survive, he was publicly praised by contemporaries as a dramatist for being "the best for comedy" (Meres, 1598). As for the First Folio, Brazil countered that there was a direct line of transmission of the First Folio to Oxford's immediate family, given that one daughter was married to the Earl of Pembroke, one of the two noblemen who had subsidized the printing of the First Folio, the other being Pembroke's brother, the Earl of Montgomery.

Hank Whittemore dramatically closed the debate by informing the Stratfordian side that Oxfordians were on a great adventure, while they were on a sinking ship.

More than two hours after it had begun, Mr. Lapham delivered a concise summary of the evening's debate: "Both sides present a circumstantial case. Neither is conclusive."

(cont'd on p. 12)

Conference (cont'd from p. 11)

Research Papers

Research presentations at the Society's annual conference were delivered primarily at the National Arts Club, a Victorian architectural dream, lavished with quality works of art, stained glass, walnut paneling and marble floors. And gazing at attendees through the fence that surrounds Gramercy Park, just across the street, was a statue of Sir Edwin Booth garbed as Julius Caesar.

Sounding the keynote for conference attendees was Kristin Linklater, Chair of the Graduate Theater program at Columbia University, and author of *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*.

Professor Linklater began by posing the question: what feeds the passion for Shakespeare, and answered it, stating, "A powerful chemistry of imagination that leads to truth when the facts of the Earl of Oxford's life are applied to Shakespeare's plays. It gives me and my students at Columbia an entrée into the dramatist's intentions and psychology. It helps us see the hand that held the pen that was dipped into ink to write those wondrous words."

She expanded upon this theme of authorial intent by noting that to properly act Shakespeare, theater professionals need to know as much as possible about the five "P"s — the personal, professional, psychological, political and philosophical attributes of the author and his or her social environment.

To illustrate her point, Linklater then recited Sonnet 65, explaining how an understanding of the author's biography had enhanced her interpretation of the poem.

On the other hand, there are those in the theater community not as open minded. Professor Linklater related how a famous Shakespeare director told her, "I don't care who wrote them; we have the plays." Would he have said that about Samuel Beckett or George Bernard Shaw? Linklater asked. "I think not."

Linklater finished by recalling the concluding remarks by Hank Whittemore the night before at the debate, reminding everyone that Oxfordians are on a great adventure in bringing to light the true author of the Shakespeare canon.

In keeping with the theme of the conference, Roger Rees, a renowned member of the Royal Shakespeare

Company, surprised attendees on Saturday morning, October 25, offering a thrilling rendition of the St. Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V*.

The research component that followed was not only extremely enjoyable, it produced two papers of importance. An excellent PowerPoint presentation by Christopher Paul accompanied his examination of contemporary archival evidence that the 17th Earl of Oxford did not die in 1604, but went into retirement, similar to the dukes in *Measure for Measure* and *As You Like It*. Evidence consisted of personal letters and legal memoranda by the Countess of Oxford, their son Henry, the 18th Earl, and other participants in the legal battle initiated by Edward de Vere to recover possession of Waltham Forest during King James' reign.

"The bulk of the legal documents say exactly what we should expect them to regarding Oxford's date of death," noted Paul, "despite certain puzzling contradictions pertaining to specific details in some of them. It is several personal letters that appear to betray those legal documents," either by referring to the 17th Earl after June 1604 in the present tense or failing to refer to him as deceased, and therefore raise a question about the 17th Earl's recorded date of death.

Paul provided further negative evidence by demonstrating the total silence that surrounded Oxford's death in June 1604 by his contemporaries, many of whom had written of other events and personalities concurrent with the time of his passing.

While this point was not conclusively established by his documentation, Paul is continuing his research, with plans for presenting his subsequent findings to the Society.

The second major paper was delivered by Robert Brazil, who focused on the role of Stationer Gabriel Cawood in the registration of many of the Shakespeare plays and poems in quartos during the 1590s. Cawood, intriguingly enough, was related to Sir Thomas Smith, Oxford's boyhood tutor, and also had served as a courier for Lord Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law. There are other Cawood connections to Oxford that resonate with meaning for the authorship issue.

Cawood published Thomas Watson's collection of poetry, *Hekatompathia*, in 1582, which was dedicated to Oxford; Robert Southwell's poems; and, amazingly, all 23 editions of John Lyly's two Euphues novels throughout Lyly's long career, much of it spent as secretary to the 17th Earl of Oxford. Then, after becoming a warden of the Stationers' Company, Cawood registered many anonymous works during the mid-1590s that ended up in the Shakespeare canon.

In 1594, the following titles were entered under the hand of Cawood: *Titus Andronicus*, *First Part of the Contention*, *Taming of A Shrew*, *Ravishment of Lucrece*, *Chronicles of King Leir*, *A Winter Nights Pastime*, *True Tragedy of Richard III*, and a re-register of *Venus and Adonis*, (first registered and published in April 1593).

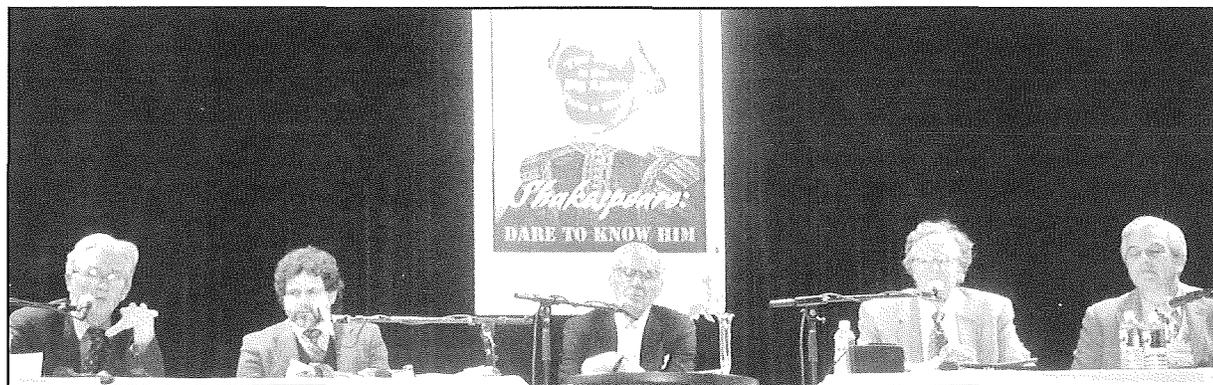
In 1597, while Cawood was Master Warden, *Richard III*, and *Henry IV, p1*, were registered. In addition, other important apocryphal or pre-Shakespeare plays were entered during Cawood's tenure, including a lost version of *Cleopatra*, the Scandenbergh play of Oxford's Men, the *Famous Victories of Henry V*, *Menaechmi*, *Lochrine*, and *Parisimus Prince of Bohemia*.

Brazil's contention is that the early Shakespeare quartos deliberately found their way into print from the top down, as it were, not haphazardly through aggressive play brokers selling corrupt playscripts, as many orthodox scholars contend. He concludes that Cawood, whose income over several decades was based on books from Oxford's entourage, then found himself in the top position of authority in the Stationers' Company and was able to secure copyright and publication for dozens of works from Oxford's archive, many of which have been ascribed to Shakespeare, though much still remains unattributed.

Author Richard Whalen's presentation argued that the Stratfordians do not have adequate evidence that the Shakespeare plays were written to be performed for a popular audience in the public theaters and thus written by a commoner for commoners. Whalen noted that twice as many recorded Shakespeare performances, as compiled by Stratfordian scholars, were played before royalty and aristocrats during the Elizabethan

(cont'd on p. 14)

*The Debate,
from left to right:
Hank Whittemore,
Robert Brazil,
moderator Lewis
Lapham,
Alan Nelson, and
Irvin Matus*



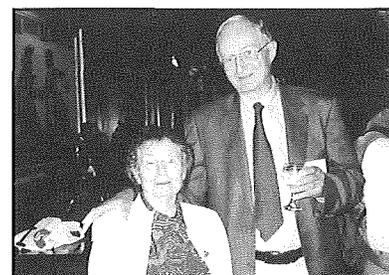
*Kristin Linklater in action, delivering
her Keynote speech to the assembly on
Friday, October 24*



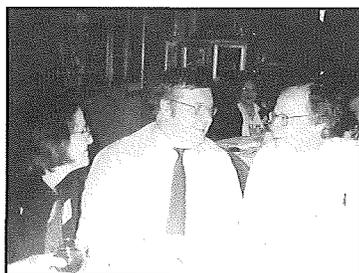
*Author Francine Segan
with her new cookbook,
Shakespeare's Kitchen*



*Mark Anderson reading
a chapter from his
upcoming bio of Oxford*



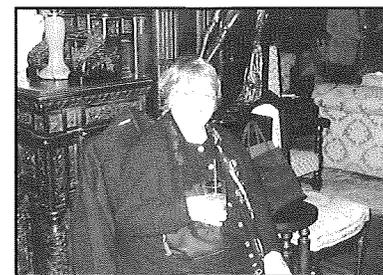
*Presenter and author Richard Whalen
with author Norma Howe*



*Professors Daniel Wright and Alan
Nelson enjoy the banquet dinner with
SOS member Ann Childs looking on*

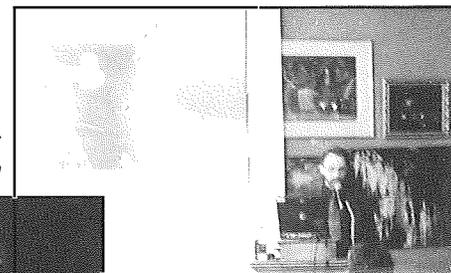


*Conference Chair Gerit Quealy directs COS
co-founder and presenter Bill Farina*



*SOS member K.C. Ligon relaxes in the
lounge of the National Arts Club*

*Right: Christopher Paul presents
his exciting new research*



*Left: Musical diversion at the
banquet dinner performed by
Francine Wheeler, Robert Brazil
and Cole Wheeler*

Conference (cont'd from p. 12)

and Jacobean eras than before commoners.

Professor Daniel Wright discussed the anomalous treatment by Shakespeare of the historical earls of Oxford, leaving out entirely the naughty 9th earl and also leaving out the ignominious defeat of the glorious 13th earl, substituting for his defeat a leading role in another battle, when the real earl was actually decamping for Scotland.

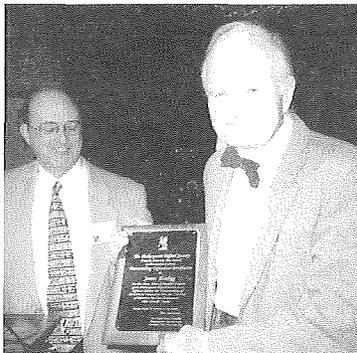
Mark Anderson enlightened attendees on Oxford's tour of Italy, reading a chapter from his literary biography of Oxford as Shakespeare, due to be published in 2005. Bill Farina, co-founder of the Chicago Oxford Society, spoke on Oxford as a man of theater, examining the direct links between the 17th Earl and the Elizabethan theater world.

New York Times editor and writer William Niederhorn provided an extensive visual presentation of the coverage of the Shakespeare authorship issue from the 1850s to the present day in the pages of the *New York Times*, for whom he has recently written a number of articles on the Oxfordian case for authorship.

Novelist Sarah Smith and dramatist Amy Freed spoke engagingly of their experiences in writing about the authorship issue, with Ms. Freed, pleased to have her play *The Beard of Avon* produced, first in repertory and opening in New York one week after the SOS conference (see "Oxford In Print and On Stage," pg 21 for details of its opening and profile of the dramatist).

Other high points included a presentation on the ongoing argument among Stratfordian academics regarding the purported Catholic leanings of the Stratford Shaksper (see Peter Dickson's report on author Michael Wood's lecture in Washington, pg 7), Professor Nelson answering questions about his new book, *Monstrous Adversary, a biography of Edward de Vere*, and a special appearance by author and food historian Francine Segan, speaking on her new book, *Shakespeare's Kitchen*.

Many of the conference papers will appear in ensuing issues of the *SOS Newsletter* or *The Oxfordian*.



SOS President Dr. Frank Davis presents awards to Jim Hardigg, Stephanie Hughes, and a bouquet from the board to Conference Chair Gerit Quealy

The Saturday night banquet offered delicious food, augmented by awards given by SOS president Frank Davis, to *Oxfordian* editor Stephanie Hughes, honoring her work in editing the journal for the past six years and to James Hardigg for his generous and continual support of the Society in its efforts to disseminate information about the authorship issue. Ms. Quealy also received a bouquet of flowers from the Board for her diligent work over the past year putting the conference together and the evening was capped with a beautiful musical performance by Robert Brazil, and the lead singers of the group Swanky Hotel, musically illustrating that Oxford poems were, in fact, song lyrics.

Sunday in the Theater with Oxford

The Producers Club in the theater district was the final venue of the conference, with papers and panelists speaking from a peculiar set arranged for that evening's theatrical performance. But Ms. Quealy explained that, "in the theater world you have to roll with the punches" and many seemed to enjoy the anachronistic setting.

Although many had already enjoyed Ramon Jimenez's excellent piece on the early play *Edmond Ironside*, which he delivered at the De Vere Studies conference in April (also in the current issue of *The Oxfordian*), this time the presentation was

embellished by extensive readings from the play by actors James Newcombe and Tom Kelly. No amount of description can attain the impact provided by professional actors reading words that, as soon as they reach the brain (via the ear), register in flashing lights: "This is Shakespeare!"

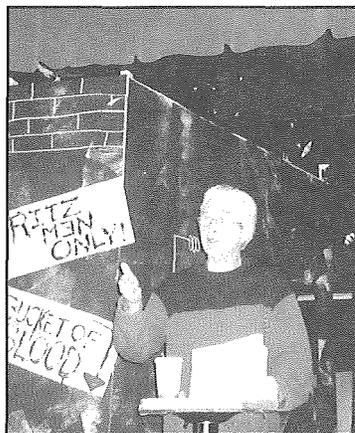
Hank Whittemore also entertained attendees once again with his exciting explication of Ben Jonson's role in the Shakespeare "cover up."

A highlight of this conference was the participation of Kristin Linklater, Chair of Graduate Theater at Columbia University, as both keynote speaker and later as moderator of a panel at the Producers Lounge comprised of Oxfordian theater professionals and academics — Caleen Jennings, Professor of Theater at American University in Washington DC, actor James Newcombe from the Oregon Shakespeare

Festival, as well as Broadway producer and director, Edgar Lansbury. The theater panel discussed in detail how an Oxfordian authorship influences productions of the plays and the authorship issue itself.

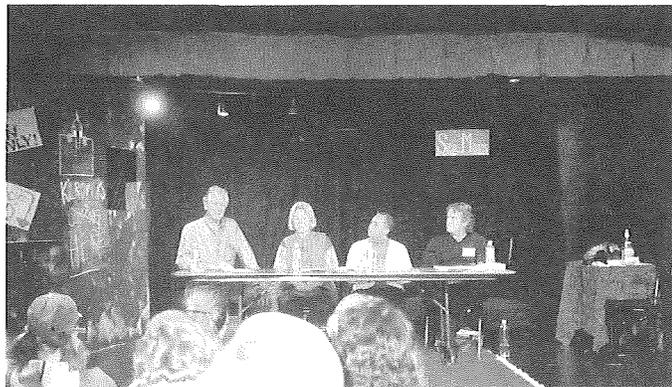
Professor Jennings informed the audience that after founding a theater company, she went on to produce a number of Shakespeare plays at the Folger in Washington. When she broached the Folger scholars about the Oxfordian case, they

(cont'd on p. 15)



Hank Whittemore expounds on Ben Jonson

Conference (cont'd from p. 14)



Theater panel with producer Edgar Lansbury, moderator Kristin Linklater, Professor Cateen Jennings and actor James Newcombe

responded by saying that “we don’t know the answer so it’s fruitless to pursue the question,” and, furthermore, that “the authorship issue takes away from our study of the plays.” As a result of that exchange, Jennings proceeded to write a play to introduce the issue and the evidence on Oxford’s authorship of the plays to the academic community.

Mr. Lansbury faced similar problems regarding the Oxfordian case for authorship: “Whenever I give a talk, people often respond by saying, ‘what difference does it make? It won’t change the plays.’” However, Mr. Lansbury believes the history in the plays has been changed by the dramatist, adding, “I would think it would therefore matter to historians, but they are so committed to their academic beliefs, they won’t be engaged.”

For Mr. Newcombe, knowledge of Oxford’s biography helps shape his performances since it enables him to access the psychology of individual characters in the canon. For example, knowing that Oxford lost his father when he was 12 years old offers Newcombe insight into how the dramatist dealt with authority and father figures in the plays, which he applies when playing specific characters, such as Bolingbroke, as he did recently for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Speaking from the audience, actor Tom Kelly noted that there are no good annotated editions of Shakespeare to help performers better understand the author’s intentions. To remedy that, he recommended that the Society publish an Oxfordian annotated edition of each drama in the canon, detailing the contemporary biographical and political

allusions that are incorporated into all of the plays.

Picking up on Mr. Kelly’s idea of how to aid performance, Mr. Lansbury noted that the Shakespeare plays were actually lifelong works in progress that went through multiple revisions, by both the playwright and the acting companies over a period of decades, as many of

the Shakespeare plays were produced several times during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.

Author and former SOS president Richard Whalen raised the issue of theatrical productions informed by an Oxfordian authorship. While Stephen Moorer, director of the Carmel Shakespeare Festival, has long produced the plays as though Oxford were the author, Mr. Whalen stated he could not perceive any real difference between a Stratfordian production and those produced by the Carmel Shakespeare Festival.

Suzie Elliott turned the question in another direction, asking, “Does it matter if the actors and director are Oxfordians, or if the public is Oxfordian and knows the allusions and historical context that are in the plays? The listening that takes place by the audience changes the perception of the drama — what you’re taking in is different even if what’s happening on the stage is the same as a Stratfordian production.”

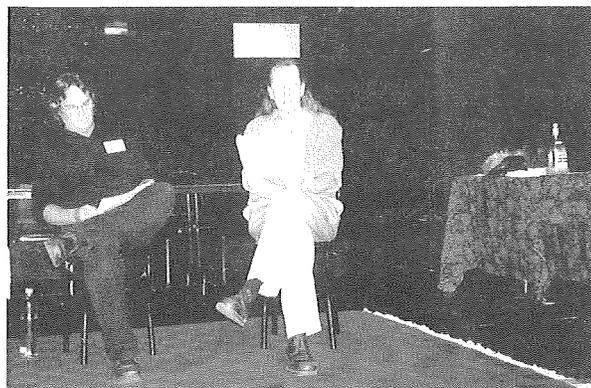
Ron Destro agreed, saying that for the audience, “knowing that the plays are rooted in a particular person’s experience and observation, and not just imagination, changes the way audiences understand the content of the plays.”

There was general agreement by panelists that knowing the dramatist’s identity informs spectators and theater professionals alike because both can then understand the original intent behind the creation of the characters and plot — not in

each specific instance but in the general philosophy that informs the entire canon.

Professor Linklater added that she is intrigued by the layers of disguise that Oxford wove into so many characters in the plays. “Overall,” she continued, “the more you can feed the actor’s imagination, the more you can bring onto the stage, by increasing the level of emotional resonance.”

Newcombe felt that “change will come through the audience as young people are engaged in the issue by seeing the plays produced in an Oxfordian context. As the authorship comes into public consciousness



Actors James Newcombe and Tom Kelly perform scenes from Edmund Ironside to accompany Ramon Jiménez’s paper

through the living theater, opinion will change.”

Professor Linklater augmented this view, telling the audience that the graduate theater students from Columbia University who attended the conference throughout the weekend felt personally and professionally affronted by the 400-year-old fraud perpetrated against them by orthodox academics.

And another positive note: Professors Linklater and Jennings said that they would seek to make a presentation or set up a panel of speakers on the authorship issue at a future meeting of the Association for Theater in Higher Education.

* * *

Throughout the long weekend in Manhattan, as attendees were treated to multiple venues, from the Upper West Side to Gramercy Park to the theater district on Broadway, even the lower East Side (for those who attended either the Public

(cont'd on p. 16)

Stanley Wells at the Smithsonian

by W. Ron Hess

British historian Stanley Wells spoke at the Hirshhorn Museum in the Smithsonian in Washington, DC on October 27. Not much new was said that Oxfordians haven't heard a thousand times, but he didn't restrict himself from tearing into non-Stratfordians. Wells delighted in telling how he had once been involved in a cross-Atlantic radio address, which included A.L. Rowse and Samuel Schoenbaum, during which he sandbagged Rowse by announcing that he'd checked out Rowse's transcription of a document related to "Aemelia Lanier" and found that, contrary to Rowse's claim that Aemelia was a "brown lady," in fact the manuscript in question had said she was a "brave lady." So much for Rowse's take on the "dark lady" controversy! Wells went into some detail about poor Rowse's "sputterings" and eventual capitulation on and off the air.

One questioner later asked Wells' opinion about other claimants to the authorship, and Wells spent 10 minutes digressing — first on Bacon, then on Marlowe, and, only after he had gotten the crowd roaring with laughter about the inanities of those two earlier candidates,

did he then attack Oxfordians. He started with the old saw about most of the plays worth mentioning having been written after Oxford had died. En route to his rollicking end about "Looneys" and fools, Wells mentioned how Oxford "died too soon," "was too mean-spirited and quarrelsome to have been Shakespeare," and added, "And if that doesn't make the Oxfordians' case absurd enough, the most recent biographer of the Earl of Oxford [presumably Prof. Alan Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary*] knocks out the last props to support such a ludicrous candidate as Oxford was."

Wells seems to have blazed a trail for future orthodox Stratfordian scholars: they now should aspire to being the hosts of "Saturday Night Live," where the humor of their fictions and false assertions will have its optimum effect. I wondered how many sputterings Wells himself would have exhibited had I asked him the question I had wanted to raise. But as we stood in line to get Wells' autograph on our copies of his new book, *Shakespeare: For All Time*, with its one-line favorable review by Dame Judy Dench prominently placed on both the front and back of its dust-cover (though it was

certainly her voice narrating an Oxfordian videotape a year or so ago), Dr. William Causey and I reminisced about the speech. Here's what I would have asked had I been recognized:

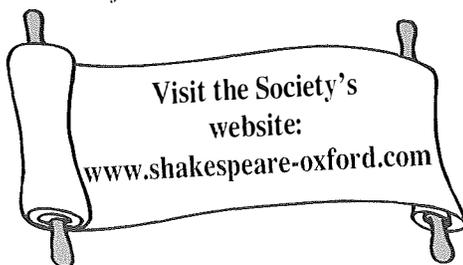
"Dr. Wells, I noticed that in your speech you saw fit to declare as 'naive' the opinion of Manningham in 1603 that many were mourning for the death of Queen Elizabeth; to relegate to 'incorrect' the contemporary opinion that in 1601 *Richard II* was already an 'old play'; and to propound without qualification that both Mr. Shaksper and Richard Field attended the Stratford grammar school, possibly together, when the records of that school and its enrollments simply no longer exist. Thus, my question is this Sir, 'To what degree do you feel it is the obligation of a Shakespeare scholar to disembark from reasonable evidence and contemporary testaments in order to prefer the scholar's own opinion of what really happened?'"

Ron Hess is author of the trilogy, The Dark Side of Shakespeare, which can be ordered online at <http://home.earthlink.net/~beornshall/index.html>.

Conference (cont'd from p. 15)

Theater's performance of *Two Noble Kinsmen* or a dress rehearsal of Moonwork's *Julius Caesar* which subsequently received high praise from the *New York Times*, newcomers to New York were given a more comprehensive sense of this marvelous city than would have been possible if located in one place the entire time. All in all, it was an enjoyable and memorable event.

Gary Goldstein is editor of the Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter and Stephanie Hughes is editor of The Oxfordian.



A Flawed Life of Oxford (cont'd from p. 10)

impossible" that Shaksper had visited Italy too, "perhaps" in a company of traveling actors (though again there is no evidence whatever for this improbable surmise). In his book he altogether fails to mention striking links between Oxford's letters from Italy and Shakespeare's Italian plays.

The only reason Nelson wrote this book — and the only reason anyone will read it — is the "authorship controversy" Nelson both deprecates and dodges. Though *Monstrous Adversary* is beyond question an important addition to that debate, readers can draw their own conclusions from the fact that Oxford's detractors continue to find it necessary to deal with the evidence so disingenuously.

Syndicated columnist Joseph Sobran is author of Alias Shakespeare, among other books. His website is located at www.sobran.com.

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Professor Wells and the Silver Bullet Question

By R.C.W. Malim

In 1999 I was fortunate enough to have a small article published in *The Spectator* on why Oxford and not Shakespeare should be considered the “Man of the Millennium.” The article did not raise as much interest as I had hoped, with only a handful of replies to the editor — three of which were published.

One letter which was not published was a very intemperate effusion from Professor Wells, the doyen of orthodox critics. The editor passed this to me and I replied directly. I received a courteous reply to the effect that he had lost my article and would be pleased to help me with any questions I might have. I sent him a further copy with some questions, and after some fruitless correspondence, he announced that he was much too busy to deal with unprovable theories.

My next brush with the Professor was at the Bath Shakespeare Festival in 2001 when, at the authorship conference, I was able to ask him, having heard Charles Beauclerk’s masterly summation of the Oxford case, whether he thought the Oxford authorship case was a suitable subject for academic study. He did not.

At the Bath Shakespeare Festival in 2003, Professor Wells was again invited to speak. In the course of some rude remarks about conspiracy theories (which I thought I had dealt with in my earlier correspondence by saying such theories were an “orthodox” figment pinned on Oxfordians and had no place in our case), he did say he would debate the authorship question. I took this as an invitation.

I had prepared myself by looking up the famous quotation from Professor Park Honan in his *Shakespeare - A Life* (OUP, 1998, 55), to which Eddi Jolly originally drew our attention: “He (Shakespeare on his alleged arrival in London) was dazzled by models of verbal patterning he was slow to outgrow, and one of his handicaps was that he was likely to imitate styles long out of date. . .”

In effect I was asking if it was the Stratfordian case that Shakespeare began

his career by writing plays in a style 10 years out of date, in which case how did he avoid starvation let alone achieve the success attributed to him.

I put this to Professor Wells, asking him to bear in mind that Shakespeare had come from a provincial backwater to London, so we are given to understand, to make his fortune in a cut-throat but underpaid market, where it would have been essential to be right up-to-date with the fashions of playwriting. The Chairman attempted to cut me off, but I was able to say the scenario was tosh, and inquire if the Professor agreed with Honan.

Professor Wells replied by saying that Stratford-upon-Avon was far from being the cultural backwater that I suggested, as I would see from his most recent book, and that the early plays were “derived from” Marlowe. Anyway, he continued, the whole Oxfordian thesis was rubbish. This reply was greeted with enthusiastic applause by about 40% of the audience of 250, the remainder keeping silent.

Beta double minus would seem the correct verdict on the Professor’s reply.

Stratford’s claims to be a center of excellence rest on their association with the authorship of the plays, and there is no independent evidence, let alone that Shakespeare took advantage of such facilities as there might have been. Nor does the Professor’s book show that there was anything extraordinary in the facilities available. Indeed, large parts of the Professor’s reasoning is based on the usual circularity, i.e. as Shakespeare wrote the plays, he must have received much of his education at Stratford, which must have been a center of excellence to equip Shakespeare to write the plays.

Marlowe’s command of euphuism, the fad to which Honan and I were referring, is not generally noted. Perhaps Professor Wells would tell us how much of *Love’s Labor’s Lost* is “derived from” Marlowe.

I wrote again to the Professor, this time with a copy of the above paragraphs. To his credit, he replied: “the fact is that

Shakespeare was known as the plays’ author in his own time and this was not questioned for over two centuries after he died. This inevitably means that theories to the contrary presuppose a conspiracy theory to conceal the truth.”

In my reply to Wells, I recommended Diana Price’s book to him (*Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*) and invited him to refute one of its central conclusions, that Shakespeare was not recognized as the author at the time.

Further, Professor Wells had said that Honan’s comment was irrelevant as to dating. I pointed out that every relevant fact must have a date and that date is absolutely crucial to this argument. Stylistically, as Professor Honan’s logic concedes, the date of composition of *Love’s Labor’s Lost* is 1575 to 1582.

The question’s next outing was at the Shakespeare Authorship Trust’s Conference in June 2003, where it was put to the advocate for Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, Professor Rubinstein, Professor of History at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth. He conceded that it was a good question and made no attempt to answer it. I ought to point out that in the absence of any orthodox scholar to support the Warwickshire man, the Professor was dragooned in to make the case; he did say that he could make as good an anti-case, but he still did not provide an answer. An edited version of the preceding paragraphs was supplied to each person attending the conference; no Baconian or Marlovian challenged the thesis behind the question.

It seems to me that the question is not answerable by any orthodox scholar, because (as Professor Wells kindly demonstrated) any reply only makes the situation worse from his point of view, and the orthodox position is further damaged. Similarly, using the same question to the Baconians, Marlovians and Derbyites, one may dispose of their claims, since each of their candidates agrees with the basic

(cont’d on p. 20)

Autumn Meeting of the De Vere Society

By Kevin Gilvary

The De Vere Society returned to the picturesque town of Henley-on-Thames for its autumn meeting on September 20th, thanks to Alan Robinson, who organized the meeting in Henley's medieval barn. Of course, Henley is less famous for debating literary issues than for its renowned rowing regatta and its lovely high street leading to an ancient bridge. I am pleased to report the day was warm, the meeting cheerful, the ideas exhilarating.

First on the agenda was a consideration by Richard Malim: Did Oxford know Ronsard? With Richard expounding the arguments and Patricia Poullain reading the French, members found out more. "Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85), poet and humanist, was the central figure of the French poetical Renaissance" (Oxford Guide to French Literature). His *Elegies*, *Mascarades et Bergeries* were lyrical pieces for court entertainments, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth and including poems addressed to herself, to Leicester and to Burghley. There is a prediction that a great poet has been born in England who will extol the exploits of English kings. This prophecy was seen as fulfilled towards the end of his life. Who else but Oxford-Shakespeare? Perhaps Ronsard is an undervalued influence on Shakespeare (e.g., more than just Sonnet 104, 'To me, fair friend, you can never be old.').

Mike Llewellyn delivered a detailed report on the Authorship Conference at Shakespeare's Globe in June 2003. The ambitious weekend event, sponsored by the Shakespeare Authorship Trust and chaired by the Globe's Mark Rylance, featured William Rubinstein, Professor of History at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, and author of the cover story on authorship in the August 2001 issue of *History Today*, who defended the case for Shaxper.

Rubinstein's 12 primary reasons for taking the Stratford man at face value will be outlined in the next DVS newsletter — with a suitable rebuttal for each. Since Charles Beauclerk, president of DVS, was unable to attend, Nicholas Hagger put the case for De Vere. His detailed and thorough

exposition of the Oxfordian case was very well received and drew praise for its conviction and its lucidity. The case for Bacon was put weakly as the speaker concentrated more on Bacon's philosophy of learning rather than why he might make a good candidate for the Authorship. A better case was put for Marlowe (as discussed in the DVS newsletter review of the Marlovian TV film 'Much Ado About Something').

The second day was devoted to reasons why the Authorship matters to one particular play, *Richard II*, which was in production at the time. It seems that only an Oxfordian interpretation makes sense of *R2*. Positive reference was made to the DVS leaflet "*Richard II* and the Earl of Oxford" which has been on sale in the Globe bookshop. Much credit must go to the Globe's artistic director, Mark Rylance, for organising the event, which is to be repeated next year.

Members also heard from the society's former treasurer, Alan Robinson, on Shaxper's finances. Alan described how the Shaxper family had gone from some affluence in William's youth through penury to considerable riches. Since there is little to show how he got his money (and it is laughable to think he did it as a professional playwright), it would appear to derive from illegal activities. Alan's paper will appear in the next issue of the DVS newsletter.

The afternoon was then given to consideration of celebrations for De Vere's quadcentenary throughout 2004. With the House and Keep at Heddingham unavailable, Charles Bird explained how the parish council hope to stage an exhibition on De Vere in the village. Sally Hazelton's play, *Edward's Presents*, will premiere in Southwark in January 2004. Finally, while the Society will not be able to go to Cambridge University, as originally planned, an event for the first weekend in July 2004 is now being planned for the Globe or nearby.

Kevin Gilvary is the editor of the De Vere Society Newsletter.

Ghosts (cont'd from p. 6)

Direct Evidence in the Plays of a Knowledge of Mantua

As outlined in this paper, there are ten indirect references, or ghosts, to Mantua in the Shakespeare canon. Four plays make direct references: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Romeo and Juliet* have scenes set there, and *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Love's Labour's Lost* mention Mantua.

To this day, many scholars still believe that Shakespeare's knowledge of Mantua is erroneous. Professors Stephen May and Alan Nelson state that Shakespeare reveals his lack of geographic knowledge by having "travelers make sea voyages between non-seaports in Italy." (62) Professor Stanley Wells, Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare series states: "Though Italy is the setting for around half of his plays, nothing in them would have required personal knowledge of the country, and he makes errors - such as Prospero's departure from the 'gates of Milan' in a barque (*The Tempest* I.2. 130-144) - which suggest that geography was not his strong suit." (63)

Although Mantua and Milan do not border the Adriatic, they were accessible to it by the Po River and numerous canals. In 1970 Louis Wright, Director Emeritus of the Folger Shakespeare Library, stated: "Critics have sometimes found fault with Shakespeare's sense of geography in having Valentine, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, take ship in Verona for Milan. Actually, Renaissance cities of northern Italy were linked with an intricate system of waterways, and one could make his way from Verona to Mantua, Ferrara, Modena, Parma, Cremona, Piacenza, Pavia, Milan, and other centers by boat - perhaps a safer way than risking assault by bandits on the roadways." (64) Even today there are week-long 'Shakespeare' themed tourist boat cruises from Venice to the inland cities of Padua, Verona, and Mantua. (65)

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the author also mentions the ships of Mantua when Tranio tricks the Pedant, who is from Mantua, to hide for his life:

'Tis death for any one in Mantua
To come to Padua. Know you not the cause?

(cont'd on p. 19)

Ghosts (cont'd from p. 18)

Your ships are stay'd at Venice, and
the duke,
For private quarrel 'twixt your duke
and him,
Hath publish'd and proclaim'd it
openly:(IV.1 82-86)

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the author also correctly mentions the forests near Mantua (which is known for its agriculture, not forests), where Valentine and Silvia are assaulted by bandits. Patches of pine and poplar forests still remain near Mantua. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and its original 15th century source, it is mentioned that Mantua has the plague. It may be coincidental that the plague struck Mantua in early 1576, at the time that the Earl of Oxford was visiting northern Italy. Perhaps one of the reasons Oxford left Italy in March was because the plague had already started. The plague did not strike Mantua again until 1630.

Shakespeare even makes a direct reference to a Mantuan poet, as noted in *Love's Labour's Lost*, when Holofernes recites a Latin verse and then refers to its author: "Ah good olde Mantuan, I may speake of thee as the traveller doth of Venice, Venetia, Venetia, chi non ti vede, non ti pretia. (Whosees thee not, praises thee not) Olde Mantuan, olde Mantuan, Who understandeth thee not, loves thee not."(IV.2.96-102). The "good olde Mantuan" was Giovanni Battista Spagnuolo (1447-1516), a prolific Mantuan poet who used many mythological images as Shakespeare did in his work.(66)

Conclusion

Research spanning the last two centuries has revealed Shakespeare's correct understanding of Mantuan art, history, and geography. How Shakespeare could have obtained this knowledge without knowing Italian and Latin and going to Mantua is a mystery. Taken separately, any of the above connections and "stray comments" might seem coincidental. Taken together, they constitute evidence that the author of the Shakespeare canon had first hand knowledge of: Giulio's sculptures and paintings, Aretino's *Postures* and plays, Castiglione's *The Courtier* and his tomb; the family histories of Dukes Federigo,

Guglielmo and Vincenzo; Titian's painting of Della Rovere and the method of his murder; and boat travel to Mantua, and other northern Italian cities before he wrote *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. These connections have been noted before, but have been largely overlooked by Shakespeare scholars — and by many Oxfordian scholars too.

All of these coincidences are haunting enigmas — ghosts if you will — that have yet to be put to rest. These Ten Mantuan connections are Ghosts that do not cry out for revenge as in *Hamlet*, they cry out for recognition.

The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance from Katherine Chiljan, Scott Fanning, Ramon Jiménez, Noemi Magri and George Zumpf, all of whom provided essential material for this paper.

Notes

35. Joseph J. Thorndike, Jr., ed., *The Horizon Book of the Renaissance*, 1961, p. 316.
36. Rita Severi, "What's in a Name. La Fortuna di Giulio Romano Nel Periodo Shakespeariano", *Giulio Romano e l'espansione europea del Rinascimento*, Mantova, Palazzo Ducale, Teatro scientifico del Bibiena, 1-5 ottobre 1989, Accademia nazionale virgiliana, 1991, p. 410.
37. W. B. D. Henderson, ed., *The Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, London, 1937, pp.xii-xvi.
38. Walter Cohen, Introduction, Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *Love's Labour's Lost*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co.Inc. 1997.
39. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Courtier*. Trans. George Bull. New York: Penguin Group, 1967, 289.
40. Henderson, ed., *The Courtier*, pp.xii-xvi.
41. On the broad popularity of *Il Cortegiano* see John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 416, and also Sydney Anglo, *The Courtier's Art: Systematic Immorality in the Renaissance* (Swansea, 1983), pp. 5 and 10. Hoby's English edition first appeared in 1561, and was reprinted in 1577, 1588, and 1603. The 1588 edition had French and Italian parallel columns. Bartholomew Clerke's Latin translation, which first appeared in 1571, saw a sixth edition in 1612.
42. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, v. VII, 1978, p. 30.

43. Bullough, 1978, p. 31. According to Bullough, "Browne got his information from James Dennistoun's 1851 *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*."
44. Bullough, "The Murder of Gonzago," *Modern Language Review*, v. 30, 1935, p. 435.
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58. Romolo Quazza, *Mantova attraverso i secoli*, Mantova, 1966, p. 161; and Giuseppe Coniglio, *I Gonzaga*, Varese, 1967, p.339.
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60. Kate Simon, p. 219.
61. Noemi Magri, 'Italian Art in Shakespeare, Giulio Romano and the *Winter's Tale*', *De Vere Society Newsletter*, July 2000, p. 12.
62. Peter Rush, 'Shakespeare question debated at Smithsonian', *Shakespeare Matters*, Summer 2003, p. 12.
63. Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare, For All Time*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 27.
64. Louis B. Wright, 'Birth of A New Age', *The Renaissance, Maker of the Modern Man*, National Geographic Society, 1970, p.21.
65. Hugh A. Mulligan, 'Shakespeare's Italy - Italian Cruise Pays Homage to Shakespeare', *The Associated Press*, June 24, 2003. See also: Sevenday Po River Cruises on MV Casanova., www.deilmanncruises.com.
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Book Reviews

Hamlet: Poem Unlimited, by Harold Bloom. 154 p. Riverhead Press, 2003

Shakespeare: For All Time, by Stanley Wells. 442 p. Oxford University Press, 2003

The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare, edited by Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells. 539 p. Oxford University Press, 2001

By Ramon Jiménez

Much more than a literary critic, Harold Bloom is a literary phenomenon. He is the author of twenty-eight books, many of them lengthy, on the whole range of literature — from the Biblical book of “J” to William Butler Yeats. Formerly a professor at Harvard, and now at Yale and NYU, Bloom’s brilliance and eccentricity have attracted a cult-like following.

In *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited*, he has produced an uncharacteristically slim book, one even shorter than the play, but one full of intriguing insights and unorthodox opinions. In his preface, Bloom confesses to having devoted too much time in his earlier *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998) to the relationship between Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and the *Ur-Hamlet*, and consequently having omitted most of what he thought and felt about the extant play. In *Hamlet: Poem Unlimited*, an essay of less than 25,000 words, a quarter of which are quotations, he offers to remedy that omission. He adds an observation that is not heard often from Shakespearean scholars: “The enigma in confronting Shakespeare’s plays is the question of Shakespeare himself. Where does he stand, implicitly, in relation to his own work?” Much of his book, Bloom writes, “devotes itself to meditative surmises upon Shakespeare’s involvement in the mysteries of his final *Hamlet*.”

For the reader skeptical of the Stratfordian theory, this promises to be interesting. Unfortunately, the promise is not kept. “Shakespeare himself,” the alleged author from Warwickshire, appears but once in the book — as does the word “Stratford” — in a throwaway sentence in the last chapter about the drinking bout with Jonson

and Drayton. For all his minute examination of the play and his musings about the author, Bloom cannot find a single connection between *Hamlet* and Stratford-upon-Avon. This is all the more startling because Bloom is one of those who believe that it was Shakespeare himself, just a few years out of Stratford, who wrote the *Ur-Hamlet* in 1589 or so. According to this scenario, “our world’s most advanced drama,” as Bloom terms it, “which establishes the limits of theatricality” was probably gestating in the house on Henley Street when the author was in his early twenties.

Bloom is known for his obsession with Shakespeare’s characters, and for his attitude that it is only they who matter. His habit of discussing them as if they were real people exasperates many readers, especially the New Historicist critics, who see them simply as components in a poetic drama. In his discussion of the characters in *Hamlet*, it is as if Bloom himself were on the stage — a portly figure moving furtively among them, noting their motivations, commenting on their personalities, and speculating about what they would have thought, said, or done in different circumstances. Half-a-dozen of them have their own short chapters, including Fortinbras and the Gravedigger.

Bloom calls Horatio “the straightest of straight men” but, aside from Hamlet, the most important character in the play. He is the prism through which the audience sees Hamlet. Their mutual affection is stronger than that between any other characters. Bloom observes that Ophelia’s death enabled her to escape a fate even worse — marriage to Hamlet. He admires Gertrude’s “amiable lustiness,” and notes that her marriage to Claudius (“a wretched shuffler”) was a happy one until Hamlet spoiled it. “Gertrude had much to endure,” says Bloom, “and little to enjoy, in her brilliant son.” Bloom’s personification of *Hamlet’s* characters reaches its comic acme when he speculates that since Hamlet’s father was the killer of Fortinbras’ father, had they ever met they would have had nothing to say to each other.

Hamlet himself receives the most attention, of course, and it is a mixed bag of opaque observations and gnomic comments.

In one place, Bloom calls him a pragmatic nihilist, and in another he is “death’s scholar.” Not only does his “power of mind” exceed ours, he knows it. He is “a frontier of consciousness yet to be passed.” And it is the “negative power” of this consciousness that is the “malaise that haunts Elsinore.” Speculating on Hamlet’s probable sexual experiences, Bloom quotes Aldous Huxley’s phrase “high birth, low loins.”

In the end, or rather, at the beginning, Bloom answers his own question about where the author stands in relation to his work. Strangely, or perhaps typically, he concludes, contrary to the opinion of most critics, that there is little or nothing of the man Shakespeare in the man Hamlet. This appears to be an inadvertent admission that he can find no concurrence between the Stratford businessman and his most deeply-realized character. Instead, Bloom sees the author in the Ghost, and in the Player King, which he claims were “roles he evidently acted.” If he has a better reason for this opinion, he does not reveal it. In fact, he sees the author and Hamlet as “mighty opposites” in “true combat.”

Hamlet: Poem Unlimited tends to confirm that, as one critic wrote, “Bloom is worth reading, even when he rambles.” But what a shame that the man who confesses that “Shakespeare is my model and my mortal god” cannot find him in the character in whom most readers see a brilliant, if distressing, self-portrait.

A book-lined study at New Place

At the other end of the scale, so to speak, are two weighty volumes, each full of facts, footnotes, and photographs. Their glossy pages reflect the measured and conservative approach of another Shakespearean icon — Stanley Wells, a retired professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Birmingham. In his retirement, Wells has gathered up as many jobs and titles as any man can handle — Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Vice-Chairman of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare series, and of the *Oxford Complete Works*. He has written or edited a

book a year for the last 30 years, nearly all of them about Shakespeare. His latest work, *Shakespeare, For All Time*, is a conversational narrative of the orthodox and familiar story of Shakespeare's life and writings — more than half the book being devoted to what Wells calls the "afterlife." No anecdote about Stratford and the Stratford man is too poorly documented to be omitted, and Wells adds a few speculations of his own — that Shakespeare kept a commonplace book, wrote with a quill pen, and used only one side of the page. He guesses that at New Place there was "a comfortable book-lined study situated in the quietest part of the house"

Conversely, Wells avoids definitive statements about most of the standard Shakespearean riddles. He has no particular candidate for the Dark Lady or "Mr. W. H." He doesn't know if the Sonnets are autobiographical, but if he had to guess, he would say that most of them are. On the other hand, there are some things he is sure about, such as the nature of Shakespeare's Italian connection. "Though Italy is the setting for around half of his plays, nothing in them would have required personal knowledge of the country, and he makes errors — such as Prospero's departure from the 'gates of Milan' in a barque (*The Tempest* 1.2.130-144) — which suggest that geography was not his strong suit." Professor Wells has perhaps not kept current with the research into Shakespeare's knowledge of Italy. All four assertions in his sentence are false.

The book is filled with dozens of the customary photographs and color plates that appear in any decent coffee table biography, but it is Wells' personal recollections and observations that make this one different, and a little more entertaining. For instance, he mentions a radio broadcast during which he pointed out to A. L. Rowse, champion of Emilia Lanier as the Dark Lady, that he had misread the word "brave" as "brown" in Simon Forman's description of her, thus supposedly vitiating the only evidence that she was dark. (See also page 16.)

Wells also candidly discusses his approach to his own edition of the *Oxford Complete Works*, stating that he "felt strongly that there was no point in a timid

conservatism that shied away from the application of hypotheses which, though they might be ultimately unprovable, had the weight of rational thought behind them." Thus he justified a variety of departures from previous editions, such as substituting the name "Oldcastle" for "Falstaff" (but only in Part I of *Henry IV*), and "Ensign" for "Ancient" as Iago's title. Other changes that had the "weight of rational thought" behind them were the replacement of several traditional play names (*Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3, Henry VIII*, etc.) by their alleged earlier titles, and the addition of Thomas Middleton as co-author of *Timon of Athens* and *Macbeth*.

But even the innovative Wells has nothing but scorn for another proposition that has considerable "rational thought" behind it — that Shakespeare of Stratford never wrote anything. In his brief discussion of the authorship question, Wells resorts to the usual *ad hominem* assault on anti-Stratfordians, using such words as "fanaticism," "vociferous," "long-winded," and "impervious to reason." "Who knows what motivates the theorists," he asks. Is it "snobbery"? Is it "the desire for ten minutes of fame"? Or is it "mere eccentricity, bordering even on mental instability"? Who knows, indeed, what motivates such unscholarly derision? In his only attempt to address the evidence for the Earl of Oxford's authorship, Wells declares that Oxford is disqualified because of his death in 1604, and because his claim is based on an impossible "conspiracy theory." Wells has apparently overlooked the fact that in the murky world of Elizabethan drama, the authors and titles of most of the estimated 2000 different plays are entirely lost. Most of the remaining fraction that were printed appeared without an author's name. He thinks it "patently ludicrous" that the authorship of forty or so of them was concealed.

Burford Works Texas

In *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, another glossy and outsized volume fit for the coffee table, Stanley Wells is joined by co-editor Michael Dobson, a professor of Renaissance drama at the University of Surrey. Presented in an encyclopedic format, the *Companion* visits

every corner of the Shakespearean universe, past and present. It contains synopses and short discussions of all the Shakespeare plays (though *Edward III* is not treated as such), with an emphasis on stage and screen history. There is a paragraph or two on every person with any possible Shakespearean association, from Lucius Seneca and Geoffrey of Monmouth (a probable source, in Latin, for details of English legends) to Patrick Stewart and Helen Mirren. Many of the so-called "stage personnel" included are still alive, but all the sixty or so 20th century scholars and critics included are dead, except the octogenarian Norwegian Kristian Smidt.

It is a tribute to the vigor of anti-Stratfordian scholarship that every Shakespearean biographer now finds it necessary to address the authorship question, and Dobson contributes several entries on the subject, including one on the "Defoe theory," which he cutely attributes, "appropriately," to George M. Battey. His treatment of the other claimants is a farrago of errors, insults, and fantasies. Here is one example that perhaps illustrates Dobson's own frustration, as well as the carelessness of his editor at the OUP: "Since the 1980s the Oxfordian theory has been enthusiastically propagated by one of de Vere's descendants, the Earl of Burford (sometimes to the embarrassment of his father, the current Earl of Oxford), who has successfully appealed in particular, to the displaced snobbery of wealthy Texans."

Aside from its errors, omissions, and rigid adherence to Stratfordian dogma, the *Companion* has sufficient information to be of some use to the casual grazer in the Shakespearean pasture. But it is far inferior to O. J. Campbell's 1000-page *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, and even to Charles Boyce's *Shakespeare, A to Z*, either of which can be had at half the price.

Although all three books under review purport to embrace the Stratfordian Shakespeare, each in its own way avoids grasping him too firmly. Harold Bloom ignores Stratford and cannot find its famous native in any of his works. For his biography's cover, Wells shuns the grotesque Droeshout portrait in favor of the questionable, but more presentable,

(cont'd on p. 24)

Mark Rylance Addresses Oxfordian Students at U. Michigan

By Thomas Hunter, Ph.D., Oberon Chair

Oberon is pleased to announce that it has brought the authorship question to the University of Michigan and that it has established the student group, the Shakespeare Oxford Union, with the assistance of Mark Rylance, artistic director of the Globe Theatre in London and chairman of the Shakespeare Authorship Trust.

Mr. Rylance appeared in mid-November at the University as Olivia in an Elizabethan presentation of *Twelfth Night* with the Globe Theatre Company, which this autumn toured throughout the United States in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Ann Arbor, and Chicago.

Speaking before a joint meeting of Oberon and the Shakespeare Oxford Union in November, Mr. Rylance related the importance of authorship to the presentation of Shakespeare both as an actor and

director. He emphasized that the purpose of the Authorship Trust was to nourish open and cooperative discussion of the issue by all sides in a positive way. Mr. Rylance, also a Friend of the Francis Bacon Research Trust, stated that he thought that the works published under the name of Shakespeare were influenced by many minds, not the least those of Francis Bacon and Mary Sidney as well as the Earl of Oxford. Mr. Rylance in fact came early to the meeting to watch the PBS program, "The Shakespeare Mystery," being shown for background to his presentation.

Mr. Rylance played to a standing-room only audience at both the Oberon-SOU meeting and the performance of *Twelfth Night*, opening many minds to the authorship issue at the former and providing a most memorable evening of Shakespeare at the

latter. Moreover, the audience attending the production of *Twelfth Night* received notes by Barbara Burris for an Oxfordian interpretation of the play.

Established more than five years ago, Oberon is a southeast Michigan group dedicated to encouraging inquiry, research and debate into Edward De Vere as Shakespeare. Oberon acts to serve local students and teachers as a resource for Shakespeare studies, especially with regard to the authorship issue. To that end, Oberon recently hosted a presentation by novelist Sarah Smith, who not only spoke at the October meeting at the University of Michigan but to college and high school classes in the area as well.

For further information, please contact Oberon chair Thomas Hunter at everoxford@hotmail.com.

Book Reviews (cont'd from p. 23)

Chandos. For the dust jacket of their *Companion*, Wells and Dobson eschew the garbled signatures on the Stratford will, and substitute an idealized handwritten name "Shakespeare" by some unknown penman. This reluctance of orthodox

scholars to acknowledge the yawning disparity between the world's foremost dramatic genius and their village candidate is further evidence of the gulf between the truth and the Stratford fantasy.

* * *

A member of the Editorial Board of The Oxfordian, Ramon Jiménez is the author of two books on Julius Caesar and the ancient Roman Republic: Caesar Against the Celts and Caesar Against Rome.

Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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