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

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Demonography 101: Alan Nelson's *Monstrous Adversary*

By Peter R. Moore © 2003

Professor Alan H. Nelson of the University of California at Berkeley has produced *Monstrous Adversary, The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool University Press, paperback, 527 pp., \$32.00). Nelson's biography of Oxford offers a mass of new documentary information on his subject, with additional material available on his website: <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/oxdocs.html>. Nelson deserves thanks and praise for this research, as well as for his openness in sharing his archival discoveries.

In six of his chapters (29, 45, 46, and 75-7), Nelson analyzes Oxford's poetry, literary patronage, and sponsorship of acting companies. The contents of these chapters should remind readers that Nelson hails from the English Department of one of America's leading universities. When analyzing metrical conventions, the niceties of dedications, or the history of theatrical troupes, he shows the sure touch of an expert in his field. I do not imply that readers must accede to Nelson's every judgment on these matters, though I find little to disagree with, but readers should recognize an obvious professional. Unfortunately, Nelson cannot do history.

Monstrous Adversary is a documentary biography composed of extensive quotations from contemporary letters, memoranda, legal records, and the like, stitched together with Nelson's comments. Nelson asks in his "Introduction" that we let "the documentary evidence speak for itself" (p. 5). His request fails for two reasons. First, documentary evidence rarely makes sense without the appropriate

(cont'd on p. 15)

Oxford, Hamlet, and the Pirates: The Naked Truth

By Christopher Paul © 2003

Oxfordians have made much ado comparing Edward de Vere's attack, and subsequent release, by pirates to that of Hamlet's, and rightly so. This is a detail not found in the Saxo Grammaticus or Belleforest sources, but original to Shakespeare's version of the story. There has been debate among commentators since the nineteenth century as to whether Hamlet arranged the rendezvous with the pirates in advance or if the attack was merely *deus ex machina*. After intense scholastic scrutiny, the former has been all but entirely ruled out, while the latter has met with much dissatisfaction in its apparent contrivance.

In his 1983 *Shakespeare Quarterly* article, "Hamlet's Encounter With the Pirates," Karl P. Wintersdorf expounds upon many of these views, noting that it has been argued "Shakespeare allows a fortuitous happening, and allegedly a very unlikely one at that, to determine the course of events at a crucial point preceding the catastrophe." He quotes, among others, K. R. Eissler's objection regarding the "improbable pirates of mercy and Hamlet's sudden and equally improbable return to Elsinore," and Alan Sinfield's comments vis-à-vis Hamlet's "amazing delivery through the pirates. . . so improbable, and so unnecessary to the plot, that we may suppose Shakespeare wishes the audience also to be impressed with the special intentions of providence." (435)

From there, however, Wintersdorf sets out to ratify this perception of implausibility by citing various examples of piracy in Elizabethan literature and pointing out that "Shakespeare was also familiar with historical accounts of pirate activities, such as the capture and murder in 1450 of the Duke of Suffolk, an incident incorporated

in 2 *Henry VI* (IV.i)," and goes on to write, "In any event, the pirate incident in *Hamlet* would not have seemed as melodramatic, fortuitous, and improbable to the Elizabethans as it appears to some modern critics, for the simple reason that in Shakespeare's day the seas between England and the Continent swarmed with pirates." (436)

As Wintersdorf stresses the point that Europe's shores from the Baltic to the Mediterranean were infested with pirates from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, he studiously avoids any mention of the virtually unprecedented waylaying of England's premiere earl, Edward de Vere, in 1576, which generated a flurry of heated exchanges between a roster that included the Queen of England, the Prince of Orange, the Lord Treasurer William Cecil, the Secretary of State Francis Walsingham, and the Earls of Sussex and Leicester, among others.¹

It should come as no surprise to Oxfordians that this remarkable footnote in history would be avoided in the journal *Shakespeare Quarterly*, or any other orthodox Shakespearean publication for that matter. Editor Harold Jenkins, for instance, writes in the Introduction to the Arden *Hamlet*: "For the episode of the pirates, which neatly tightens the plot by returning Hamlet to Denmark without the digression of English adventures, it is still less necessary to seek a specific source. In tales either of fact or fancy pirates were familiar enough." (104)

Oxfordians, on the other hand, have never had to seek far for said "specific source." The pirate attack in *Hamlet* is, of course, only one of numerous substantial

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Naked Truth (cont'd from p. 1)

parallels intrinsic to the very fabric of that preeminent work which find their counterpart in the biography of the 17th Earl of Oxford. It appears, however, that Oxfordians have not taken this particular parallel far enough.

Let us first review the context of Hamlet's encounter with the pirates as it appears in Shakespeare's play. I have emphasized the words "let," "letter," and "letters" each time they occur in the space of this short scene, since the repetition seems to be no accident. Derek S. Savage was the first commentator to note this repetition in his 1950 book, *Hamlet & the Pirates; an exercise in literary detection*, referring to it as a "punning passage" containing an "obvious verbal play in the opening line upon *let* and *letters*, repeated in the last sentence of the quotation." (77)

While Savage was searching for a different meaning, could Shakespeare/Oxford have been intentionally playing upon the word to comment upon the great number of letters that were generated as a result of his own capture by pirates? I have also emphasized the word "ambassador," since at least one of these letters regarding the Earl of Oxford's incident was from Michel de Castelnau Mauvissiere, the French ambassador to England at that time, which we'll review below. There may also be a possible pun on "bore/boar." Although I would push none of these particular points too far, they are nevertheless noted along the way.

Enter Horatio, with others.

Hor. What are they that would speak with me?

Gentleman. Sea-faring men sir. They say they have **letters** for you.

Hor. **Let** them come in. [*Exit Gentleman.*]
I do not know from what part of the world I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter SAILORS.

[*1.*] *Sail.* God bless you, sir.

Hor. **Let** him bless thee too.

[*1.*] *Sail.* "A shall, sir, and[']t please him. There's a **letter** for you, sir—it came from th' **embassador** that was bound for England—if your name be Horatio, as I am **let** to know it is."²

Hor. [*Reads.*] "Horatio, when thou shalt

have Overlook'd this, give these fellows some means to the King, they have **letters** for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compell'd valor, and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did: I am to do a [good] turn for them. Let the King have the **letters** I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb, yet are they much too light for the [**bore**] of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England, of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. [He] that thou knowest thine, Hamlet."
Come, I will [give] you way for these your **letters**.

And do't the speedier that you may direct me

To him from whom you brought them.

Exeunt. [ACT IV, SCENE VI] (1223)

The next scene begins immediately upon Horatio's exit. After the exchange of just a few dozen lines between King Claudius and Laertes regarding the death of Polonius, a messenger enters. In addition to "letters," I have here emphasized "naked."

Enter a MESSENGER with letters.

King. [How now? What news?

Mess. **Letters**, my lord, from Hamlet:] These to your Majesty, this to the Queen.
King. From Hamlet? Who brought them?

Mess. Sailors, my lord, they say, I saw them not. They were given me by Claudio. He receiv'd them
Of him that brought them.

King. Laertes, you shall hear them.

—Leave us.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

[*Reads.*] "High and mighty, You shall know I am set **naked** on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking you pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden [and more strange] return.

(cont'd on p. 3)

Naked Truth (cont'd from p. 2)

[Hamlet.]

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?

Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer. Know you the hand?

King. 'Tis Hamlet's character.

"Naked!"

And in a postscript here he says "alone."

Can you devise me?

Laer. I am lost in it, my lord. . . [ACT IV, SCENE VII] (1224, emphasis added.)

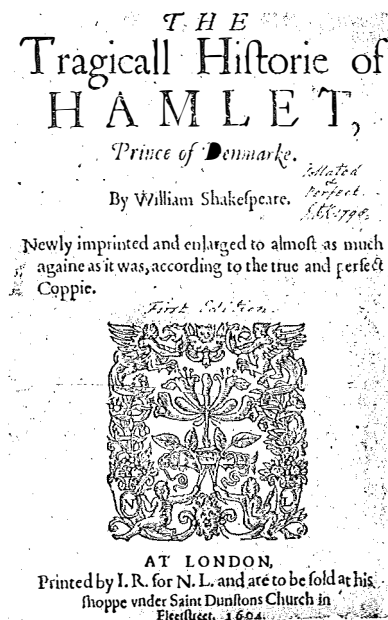
Claudius is so struck with Hamlet's description of himself as having been "set naked on your Kingdom" that he repeats the word in wonder: "Naked!" Not only is he lost in it, but so is Laertes. One could say it is the mere astonishment that Hamlet has so suddenly and mysteriously returned. But as veteran actors of Shakespearean works can attest, Shakespeare rarely repeats a word in such close proximity without the specific purpose of calling attention to it; the actor's challenge is to determine the playwright's design in so doing. In this case, how are we meant to interpret "naked?" The conventional wisdom, as offered in various modern editions of the play, is that naked means "stripped of all possessions," "destitute," "unarmed," "without following," and certainly this explanation has had to suffice, as it's difficult to imagine Hamlet means he has been stripped *literally* naked. However, when one evinces that the playwright himself suffered precisely this humiliation, new avenues of interpretation are immediately opened up and the emphasis of the iterated "naked" becomes understood in a completely different light.

In elucidating Oxford's attack by pirates in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Charlton Ogburn, Jr. writes, "On the way [home], during the crossing of the Channel, his ship was set upon by Dutch pirates, and according to the French Ambassador, writing on April 21st, he was stripped to his shirt and escaped with his life only because a Scotsman had recognized him." (556).

Unfortunately, Ogburn only flirts with what Mauvissiere actually wrote. Conyers Read also offered an account in *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth*, stating that Oxford "started home, apparently in a fine rage, which was not alleviated by the fact that his ship was intercepted by pirates and

he was stripped to his shirt." (133) Read's endnote, however, offers a more faithful account of what Mauvissiere actually wrote, when he admits that "Oxford had been stripped naked, and only escaped with his life because a Scotsman had recognized him." (557)

This intriguing endnote led me to track down the only copy of Mauvissiere's letter in the Baschet Transcripts at the Public



Title page from the 1604 quarto of Hamlet

Records Office. The letter is fairly lengthy, but I cite the relevant portion forthwith: Monsieur de Castelnau Mauvissiere to Henri III. London, 21 April, 1576
In the original French:

Elle a aussi esté merueilleusement irritée de ce que le comte d'Auxfort, revenant d'Italie, gendre du grand thesaurier et des premiers comptes de ce pays cy, a esté mis **tout nud** et vollé jusques à la chemise, avecques ung fort mauvais traictement et en danger de savie, s'il n'eust esté cognu par ung Escossoys. Lad[ite] Roynne d'Angleterre luy a envoyé le mylord Hauard jusques à Douvres pour luy faire la bien venue et le consoler, car on dict qu'il apportoit unne infinité de belles hardes d'Italie, qui luy ont esté prinses, où il a ung infini regret. (PRO 31/3/27 95899) [emphasis added]

Translated into English:

[Queen Elizabeth] was also marvelously annoyed that the Earl of Oxford, son-in-law of the Great Treasurer and one of the premier earls of this country, while returning from Italy, was stripped **completely naked** and robbed down to his shirt, with extremely bad treatment and in danger of his life, if he had not been recognized by a Scotsman. The aforementioned Queen of England sent to him my Lord Howard as far as Dover in order to welcome and console him, because someone says that he was bringing an infinite number of beautiful items from Italy, which were taken from him, for which he is very sorry.³ [emphasis added]

Perhaps the lone Scotsman who recognized Oxford for the great nobleman that he was and intervened on his behalf finds its correlation in Hamlet's description of the pirates as "thieves of mercy." But what is more to the point is that, although Oxford was robbed of his Italian treasures, Mauvissiere's description of him as being stripped "tout nud," or "entirely naked," was meant in the *literal* sense, even if the pirates did actually leave Oxford standing in his "chemise," or shirt (one can only hope that the shirt's length offered the earl enough dignity to cover his own jewels).

This, in and of itself, is remarkable enough when compared with Shakespeare's emphasis of Hamlet as "naked," yet there is still another source that may be taken to corroborate the first. Until recently, Oxfordians have been mainly familiar with Nathaniel Baxter's 1606 *Ourania*, no thanks to Professor Alan Nelson's unfortunate attempt to prove Baxter was reporting to De Vere's youngest daughter, as well as to the world, that the earl had picked up a nasty case of syphilis while in Italy. But for the purposes of the current article, I shall relegate a rebuttal of Nelson's interpretation to a rather lengthy endnote⁴, so that we may here concentrate on the matter at hand. Baxter's complete acrostic dedication is as follows:

(cont'd on p. 4)

Naked Truth (cont'd from p. 3)

To the Right Noble, and Honorable Lady
Susan Vera Mongomriana.

V Aliant whilome the Prince that bare this
Mot,

E Ngraued round about his golden Ring:

R Oaming In VENICE ere thou wast
begot,

A Mong the Gallants of th' Italian spring.

N Euer omitting what might pastime
bring,

I Talian sports, and Syrens Melodie:

H Opping *Helena* with her warbling sting,

I Nfested th' Albanian dignitie,

L Ike as they poysoned all Italie.

V Igilant then th' eternall majestie,

E Nthraled soules to free from infamie:

R Emembring thy sacred virginie,

I Nduced vs to make speedie repaire,

V Nto thy mother euerlasting faire,

S O did this Prince begette thee
debonaire.

S O wast thou chaste and princely Nymph
begot,

V Nder *Cecilius* education

S Trong in allyed friendes of highest lot,

A Midd the court of estimation

N Or doe I giue thee this for adulation:

N O Pen can show thy propagation,

A Ll heauens blesse thine operation.

N Aked we landed out of Italie,

I Nthral'd by Pyrats men of noe
regard,

H Orror and death assayl'd Nobilitie,

I F Princes might with crueltie be
scar'd

L O thus are excellent beginnings hard.

C Onioyn'd thou art to great Mongomria,

A Peerelesse Ladie onely fit for him:

S Ober and chaste, he was in *Cardiff*
Cambria,

T He Knight I knew before mine eyes
were dimme,

I F Temperance, and continence, an Earle
may trimme,

V Nder the Orbe of mightie *Phaebes*
round,

S Ydneian Knights like him are hardly
found.

N. B

Of course, Baxter's poem presents some unique problems in syntax and continuity. But rather than spend time here dissecting

the poem as a whole, simply consider certain constraints a poet faces when composing an acrostic poem. For now, I have emphasized the penultimate stanza, which is the section we will concentrate on. Again, the significant lines are (in modern spelling): "Naked we landed out of Italy/ Enthralled by Pirates, men of no regard/ Horror and death assailed Nobility/ If Princes might with cruelty be scarred/ Lo, thus are excellent beginnings hard."

Baxter certainly writes as if he had been with Oxford on his continental tour, vividly describing the incident upon the return trip home in the plural "we." His mention of the pirates' "cruelty" and that "horror and death assailed Nobility," accords perfectly with Mauvissiere's description of Oxford's roughhousing by the same blackguards, who said that it was "with extremely bad

Enter a Messenger with Letters.
Messen. Thence to your Maistie, this to the Queene;
King. From Hamlet, who brought them?
Mess. Saylers my Lord they say, I saw them not,
They were given me by *Claudio*, he receiued them
Of him that brought them.
King. *Laertes* you shall heare them: leave vs.
High and mighty, you shall know I am fet naked on your kingdom,
tomorrow shall I begge leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall first
asking you pardon, there-vnto recount the occasion of my suddaine
returne.
King. What should this meane, are all the rest come backe,
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?
Laer. Know you the hand?
King. Tis *Hamlets* character. Naked,
And in a postscript heere he sayes alone,
Can you deuise me?
Laer. I am loth in it my Lord, but let him come,

*Hamlet: "I am set naked on your kingdom."
(Act IV, scene VII)*

treatment and in danger of his life." And then there is Baxter's tantalizing description: "Naked we landed out of Italy." Is Baxter speaking literally or metaphorically—in other words, does he mean "nude," or "destitute?" Or could he mean both? Baxter used the word "naked" in both of these senses in five other instances elsewhere in the *Ourania*, and Shakespeare used the word "naked" approximately 56 times in his known works—its usage equally divided between the literal and metaphorical applications.

So what sense of "naked" did Shakespeare, in the voice of Hamlet, intend to convey? And what sense of the word was Baxter suggesting? Surely Baxter did not mean to imply, with the plural "Naked we landed out of Italy," that the entire crew arrived back home stark naked—although it's possible Oxford was not the only one

who was stripped. But that Baxter was hinting at the literal definition is hardly farfetched when placed beside Mauvissiere's description of the same notorious incident. And when placed alongside the passage in *Hamlet*, the similarity cannot be denied:

Baxter: "Naked we landed out of Italy."

Hamlet: "You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom."

Baxter refers to Oxford as a "Prince," and both he and Shakespeare describe the Prince's condition upon landing on their respective mother shore. Although Baxter is describing Oxford's return to England, and Hamlet is describing his return from (the intended voyage to) England, the Oxfordian interpretation has always been, in any case, that Denmark equals England, and that Hamlet equals Oxford. If Oxford wrote the play *Hamlet* under cover of the pen-name Shakespeare, did he intentionally use the adjective "naked"—not once, but strangely, twice—to highlight his own personal encounter and narrow escape from pirates? Although the answer must ultimately remain speculative, the evidence suggests that perhaps he did.

Endnotes

1. Cf. *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, 1575-7*, Vol. 11, pp. 310-11, 336-7; *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre*, Vol. 8, pp. 396-7.

2. It's interesting to compare the association of words in this passage with certain ones found in Oxford's letters. The sailor speaks of a *letter* from the *ambassador* bound for England, whereas Oxford wrote to Burghley on 17 March 1575 "the king hath given me his *letters* of recommendation to his *ambassador* in the Turk's court, likewise the Venetian *ambassador* that is here, knowing my desire to see those parts, hath given me his *letters* to the Duke." Additionally, the sailor wants to ensure he is addressing the proper person when he says "if your name be Horatio, as I am *let* to know it is," whereas Oxford consistently used the word "let" in a similar vein, such as "I am here to *let* you *understand*" or "I would to God your Lordship would *let* me *understand* some of your news. . .," to offer but two of numerous examples. [emphasis added.]

(cont'd on p. 5)

Naked Truth (cont'd from p. 4)

3. Thanks to Linda McLatchie for her invaluable assistance with the translation of Mauvissiere's letter. I have elected to use the somewhat generic word "items" for the description of what Oxford was bringing back from Italy, which were sacrificed to the pirates. The French word Mauvissiere used was "hardes," which Ms. McLatchie interpreted as "garments" or "old clothes." But according to the circa 1571 *A Dictionarie French and English*, "hardes" meant "stuff, implements." (STC 6832)

4. Professor Nelson's claim (that Nathaniel Baxter's reference to Hopping Helena's warbling sting was a testament that Oxford departed from Italy with syphilis) was first published in the Spring 1995 Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter (Vol. 31, No. 2B). Nelson then posted this preposterous assertion on his website, and has further maintained it in his book *Monstrous Adversary*, despite a thorough debunking by Oxfordian scholarship. Foremost among these rebuttals was Peter Moore's response, which was published alongside Nelson's original article. Still another demolition of Nelson's outlandish contention was offered by current SOS President Dr. Frank Davis in his article entitled, "Her Warbling Sting" — Music, Not Malady (The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter, Summer 2001, Vol. 37: No. 2). While I highly recommend that readers look up these articles for themselves, I offer here some additional observations.

Firstly, common sense alone negates the suggestion that Baxter would broach such a subject as "a besmirched reputation and a sexually transmitted disease" (*Monstrous Adversary*, 138) in a poem honoring Oxford's daughter, in which he immediately goes on to speak of her conception afterwards—not to mention the further panegyric on Oxford that Baxter included later in *Ourania*. It's also a stretch to consider, as Nelson does, Oxford's relationship with the Venetian courtesan Virginia Padoana as independent evidence that this is what Baxter was talking about. Nelson also attempts to justify Baxter's definition of the word "poyson" by making an unwarranted leap to George Coryate's 1611 *Crudities*, in which Venetian courtesans' venereal disease is referred to as "poyson." Other contemporaneous definitions of "poison" can just as easily be cited which seem much more likely to represent the manner in which Baxter used it. For instance, the metaphor of music as poison can be found in several examples, such as in the 1595 *Emaricdulfe*, in which the author, identified only as "E.C.," wrote:

Their daintie concord and sweet musick is,
That poysons grieffe and cureth all annoyces

Or many examples of poison infecting the various senses could be served up, such as

this from Philip Sidney's *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*.

Since then my harte did loose his wonted place,
Infected so with her sweet poysons might

Without expounding, Nelson also states in his book that "A 'warble' is literally a raised lump in the skin caused by the gad-fly, or 'warble-fly': *OED*." (139) Nelson has disingenuously called attention to the word as a noun, and even then only offers a partial definition. The noun "warble" is more fully defined in the *OED* as "A small hard tumour, caused by the pressure of the saddle on a horse's back. . . . A small tumour or swelling on the back of cattle, deer, etc. produced by the larva of a gad-fly. . . . a sort of worm that breeds betwixt the outer and inner skin of beasts. . . ." It's not only difficult to see how this definition could have anything to do with sores caused by venereal disease, but Baxter is not using the noun, but rather the adjective or verb form, which the *OED* defines firstly: "Warbling: The action of the verb in its various senses, *esp.* soft and melodious singing." This is almost

N Aked we landed out of Italie,
I Nihral'd by Pyrats men of noe regard,
H Orror and death aflayl'd Nobilitie,
I F Princes might with crueltie be scar'd
L O thus are excellent beginnings hard.

Acrostic on Oxford from
Nathaniel Baxter's *Ourania* (1606).

certainly the definition Baxter had in mind, modifying as it does the "syrens Melodie" in the line preceding it. Dr. Davis's article, mentioned above, explicates the musical term "sting" as meaning an extended, wavering musical note played upon the lute (a "sting grace note"). That is a viable argument, as is the possibility that "warbling sting" was actually intended to be "warbling string," first suggested by Nina Green; there are such printer's errors elsewhere in *Ourania*.

Really, the bottom line — which is demonstrable — is that "warble" or "warbling" was *always* associated with music in the poetry of that era, and this is precisely how Baxter has used it no less than five times within *Ourania*. This fact alone renders Nelson's interpretation nonsensical, and should be sufficient to demolish it.

For frame of reference, here is each instance of Baxter's usage [emphasis added]:

N Euer omitting what might pastime bring,
I Talian sports, and Syrens Melodie:
H Opping Helena with her warbling sting,
I Nfested th' Albanian dignitie,
L Ike as they poysoned all Italie.

So well he could his warbling Notes diuide,
That other Shepheards did his layes admire,
And set their Notes, as he their Pipes did guide,

The noble chaunting Hound with pleasing throat,
With bace and treble, meane, and tenor noat.

Warbling his voice, making the horne to sound,
Orderly tunes t' immortalize the Hound:

And now enioyning poore Endymion,
As plaine song for his Pipe to warble on:

The eare began to heare melodious notes
Of daintie Birds, from out their warbling throates.

Baxter was not the only one who always used "warble" in connection with music, so did every other contemporaneous writer, including Shakespeare.

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Christopher Paul has published articles about Oxford on both sides of the Atlantic. His latest research dealing with the mystery of Edward de Vere's death will be published in the 2004 edition of *The Oxfordian*. He has been a professional actor for 25 years, is a member of Actors' Equity, and a senior member of the Atlanta Shakespeare Company.

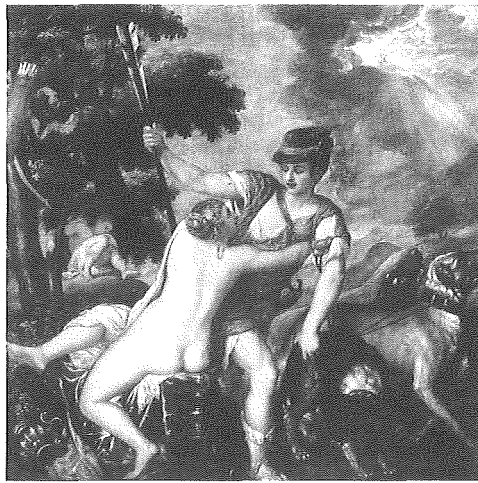
Edward de Vere and the Courtesan Culture of Venice

by William Farina © 2003

As Noemi Magri recently highlighted in The De Vere Society Newsletter in a series of articles, Titian's treatment of the *Venus and Adonis* theme departed from Ovid's version of the story in a variety of details—and Shakespeare incorporated Titian's artistic "departures" into his poem of the same name. The most idiosyncratic of Titian's five versions on the subject depicts Adonis wearing a hat, not mentioned by Ovid but repeatedly referred to by Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis*. This particular version of the painting, which can be seen today in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, may have been on display in Titian's house during De Vere's visit to Venice in 1575-1576. Moreover, we know that Titian's house was a popular gathering place for the nobility of his time.¹

Titian was criticized by his contemporaries for his departures from Ovid's work, and one may speculate on his motivations.² Recall that 16th century Venice was renowned for, among other things, its courtesan culture. This culture was so prevalent that the construction of the Venetian Arsenal was reportedly financed by a special tax on prostitution.³ Perhaps Titian was representing the young men of Venice, in the allegorical character of Adonis, as being distracted by these courtesans, in the allegorical character of Venus, when they should have focused on going off to fight the Turks. In any event, it is certainly plausible that the model for Venus may have been a Venetian courtesan.

When the 25-year old De Vere arrived in Venice in 1575, the most famous courtesan of them all was at the height of her fame, both as a courtesan and as a published poet—the ubiquitous Veronica Franco (1546-1591). Franco's best-known volume of poetry, *Terze Rime*, was published in 1575, a year which saw Venice as a center for both writers and the book publishing industry—not only for Italy, but for all of Europe. Franco's patron was the retired Venetian Senator Domenico Venier, whose palazzo was one of the most prestigious literary salons in Europe, especially for poets interested in the Petrarchan sonnet



Venus and Adonis (with hat). By Titian.

form, as well as themes inspired by Ovid.⁴ Some of the notable poets known to frequent this salon included Franco, Bernardo and Torquato Tasso, Pietro Aretino, Venier's nephews Marco and Maffio, and of course, Domenico himself.

While Venice circa 1575 would therefore have been a likely destination for Shakespeare had he traveled there, Edward de Vere was, in fact, staying in the city at that very moment in time. Previously, Oxford had sponsored the publication and translation of Italian authors in England, such as Castiglione (in Latin) and Cardano (in English). De Vere spoke fluent Italian and his uncle, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, had pioneered the Petrarchan sonnet form in English. Another uncle, Arthur Golding, is credited with the first English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁵ It would therefore have been of interest to De Vere to attend Venier's salon for its literary sophistication, not to mention its hedonistic lifestyle.

As for Veronica Franco, in 1574 she had been chosen to entertain the visiting King Henry III of France, to whom she subsequently dedicated some of her poems. Six years later, in 1580, she sought out Montaigne, who was in Venice, to give him a copy of one of her books, which Montaigne then kept for his famous library in Bordeaux.⁶ Could she have also met De Vere during his Italian travels? Even if not, it is unlikely a visiting nobleman such as De Vere

would have failed to notice or be influenced by the courtesan culture of 16th century Venice. These experiences (including an encounter of Titian's painting) may have provided the initial inspiration for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*.

While we have no evidence that De Vere met Titian or Franco, we do know something of his whereabouts. Immediately adjacent to and southeast of the Cannaregio District (location of Titian's house and the Venetian Ghetto setting for *The Merchant of Venice*), is the Castello District, home of two churches noteworthy for Oxfordians. The first is the Church of San Giorgio dei Greci, where De Vere attended mass.⁷ That he elected to frequent a Byzantine, orthodox church in the Venetian "Greektown" should not surprise us. This non-Catholic, non-Italian venue named after the patron saint of England would have been the politically correct choice.

Also in Castello is the Church of Santa Maria Formosa, about a five-minute walk from the Piazza San Marco, where De Vere met the choirboy Orazio Cuoco.⁸ Santa Maria Formosa was also the parish church for Veronica Franco, as well as her patron Domenico Venier, whose palazzo faced the church at 6129 Campo Santa Maria Formosa⁹ and whose literary salon was one of the most famous in Europe. Unfortunately, Franco's exact whereabouts



Portrait of Veronica Franco.
By Tintoretto, c. 1575.



Entrance to Tintoretto's house in the Venetian ghetto.

in 1575-1576 are not known; there is some indication she temporarily left Venice to escape the plague.¹⁰ DeVere apparently bolted early from the pre-Lenten carnival of 1576 for similar reasons, taking Orazio Cuoco with him back to England as a page.¹¹

Professor Alan Nelson has discovered that DeVere did become involved with at least one Venetian courtesan, named Virginia Padoana, who lived off the Campo Santa Geremia,¹² (again, not far from the Ghetto setting of *The Merchant of Venice*). While Dr. Nelson claims that DeVere contracted a sexually transmitted disease as a result of this liaison, based on lines from a 1606 poem by Nathaniel Baxter, this argument has been effectively refuted by Dr. Frank Davis.¹³ In addition, Professor Margaret Rosenthal has noted that, about one generation earlier (in 1543), one Lucietta Padovana had been absolved of charges she had flouted Venetian laws restricting the circulation of courtesans within church premises.¹⁴ Whether she was related to the Virginia "Padoana" known by DeVere some 32 years later is uncertain.

Interestingly, Jacobean poetess Amelia Bassano Lanier (1569-1645), one of the leading candidates for Shakespeare's Dark Lady, also had Venetian roots. Her father, the court musician Baptista Bassano, came to England from the Veneto. In her younger years, Amelia Bassano had been the mistress of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon (and Lord Chamberlain). She appears to have been, at least on her father's side, a product of the same culture that produced Veronica

Franco.¹⁵ Both women also had to endure later in life a religious backlash from societies grown intolerant of their former way of life, although there would have been obvious and profound differences between Bassano's Puritan England of the early 1600s and Franco's Venetian Republic of the late 16th century.¹⁶ Nevertheless, both women are credited with writing excellent poetic descriptions of country houses, where each nostalgically recalled happier times.¹⁷

During this period, Italy, unlike England, not only allowed women such as Franco to be published writers, but permitted women to act on the stage as well, events which likely caught DeVere's attention and imagination. As for Shakespeare's poem, the Oxfordian theory maintains that DeVere wrote *Venus and Adonis* during or immediately after his Grand Tour ended in 1576, and thus was the "first heir of my invention," as Shakespeare notes in the dedication to the poem, first published in 1593. The poem was considered very risqué for its time, and may have also been influenced by the permissive poetic license then in fashion among Italian poets.¹⁸

In the larger context, DeVere's qualifications and claim on the authorship of *Venus and Adonis* (under the pen name William Shakespeare) are compelling. He was in the right place at the right time to have seen Titian's painting as well as experience first hand the society that inspired the painting itself, which even orthodox critics see as having affinities with Shakespeare's poem. He was also related to the translator of Shakespeare's source material (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), had literary connections with the poem's

printer Richard Field,¹⁹ and personal associations with the dedicatee Henry Wriothesley.²⁰ As for William Shakspeare of Stratford, all we know for certain is that his name resembles the one used in the dedication—and that, like Titian's Adonis, he had been involved, perhaps reluctantly, with an older woman, Anne Hathaway.

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Endnotes

¹ Proper protocol for a visiting foreign nobleman would have required first paying respects to the Doge, and then to Titian, as the living embodiment of Venetian culture. Magri, *Influence of . . . Works*, pp. 7-8.

² Dr. Magri identifies the ancient relief known as "Psyche uncovering Cupid" as an artistic model for some of these departures. Magri, *Influence of . . . Works*, pp. 3-4.

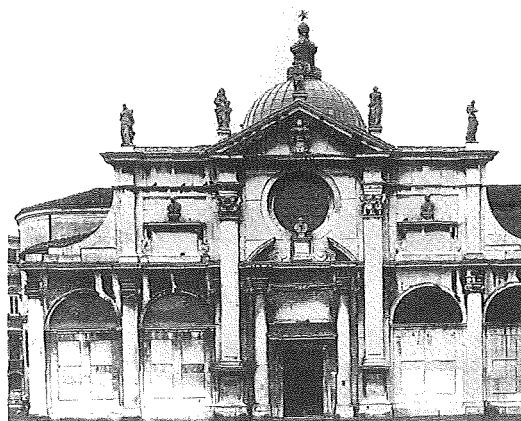
³ Rosenthal, p. 268 n. 44. A Renaissance example of a vice tax.

⁴ Rosenthal, pp. 5, 89, 177-178, 211, 304-305 n. 102.

⁵ Magri, *Venetian Inquiry*, p. 7. Furthermore, after DeVere returned to England, he was lampooned for his Italianate manners and dress. Ward, pp. 189-190.

⁶ Rosenthal, pp. 116, 119. Montaigne, whose first language was Latin, was one of the great book collectors of his day.

(cont'd on p. 7)



Church of Santa Maria Formosa, Venice.

De Vere (cont'd from p. 7)

⁷ Magri, *Venetian Inquisition*, p. 7. Castello, because of its convenient location, is still one of the most popular tourist destinations in Venice. *Access*, pp. 176-189.

⁸ (Magri, *Venetian Inquisition*, p. 6). De Vere was accused of pederasty by his enemies (Sobran, p. 125).

⁹ Rosenthal, pp. 66, 89. This palazzo still exists. *Access*, p. 178.

¹⁰ Rosenthal, pp. 162, 209. Franco is believed to have retreated near Verona to Fumane, the country villa of Marcantonio Della Torre, another outstanding artistic and literary patron of the age. Fumane is praised as an artistic haven in the 11th book of Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (Rosenthal, p. 346n. 90), a major Shakespearean source and a work probably known to De Vere.

¹¹ Cuoco's parents were among the victims of the plague. Magri, *Venetian Inquisition*, pp. 5-7.

¹² This information comes from a 1587 letter by Sir Stephen Powle from Venice. Nelson, pp. 138-139.

¹³ Dr. Davis provocatively queries why such a statement would be made in a poem dedicated to De Vere's youngest daughter Susan. Davis, pp. 3-4. That De Vere suffered from a sexually transmitted disease does not seem far-fetched by itself; that he contracted such a disease specifically in Venice appears solely based upon the city's reputation, rather than any particular statement of fact.

¹⁴ Lucietta's successful defense did not deny she was a courtesan, but rather that the law was meant to apply only to common prostitutes and not to a married, professional woman such as herself. The court apparently ruled that courtesans were in fact subject to the same restrictions, but that Padovana herself was exempt due to her married status. It is safe to say that De Vere, as an English Venetian tourist during this same period in history, would have encountered social mores quite different from those then prevalent in England. Rosenthal, pp. 71-72.

¹⁵ Like the courtesan Franco, Bassano and Shakespeare's Dark Lady stand accused of prostitution and/or promiscuity. Rowse's theory has been attacked over the years by both Oxfordians and orthodox scholars for various reasons; we remain intrigued. *Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady*, pp. 1-37.

¹⁶ Rosenthal, pp. 45-48, 162-163. Even at its most censorious, Venice would have been more tolerant than Puritan England. Franco was essentially a love poet; Bassano, after marrying, became for the most part a religious poet.

¹⁷ Franco praises Fumane, Bassano, Cookeham. Rosenthal, pp. 240-242. See also Rowse, pp. 137-143.

¹⁸ Some of this license was directed toward Franco herself. Rosenthal, pp. 18-19, 35-37.

¹⁹ Field published *Diverse Sermons of Calvin* (1581) by Thomas Stocker, *The Arte of English*

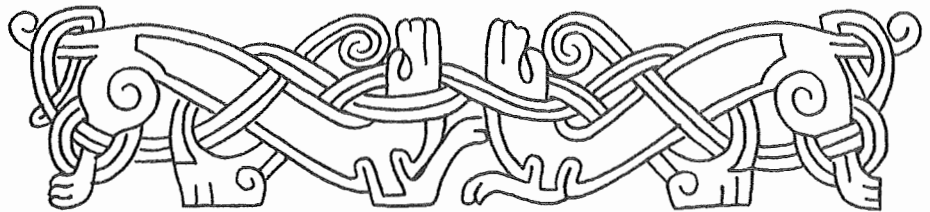
Poesie (1589) by George Puttenham (?), the 1596 edition of *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, *Ecclesiastes* (1597) by Henry Lok, and the 1603 edition of *The Courtier* by Baldesare Castiglione, translated by Bartholomew Clerke. All mention Oxford or contain dedications to him. Brazil, pp. 102-103.

²⁰ Wriothesley was at one point engaged to De Vere's eldest daughter Elizabeth. Ward, pp. 313-314.

Bill Farina is Director and co-founder of the Chicago Oxford Society (COS), an Illinois not-for-profit group dedicated to increasing the general appreciation of Shakespeare. Over the past four years, COS has sponsored and co-sponsored over 20 Oxfordian events at academic and theatrical venues in the Chicago area.

THE OXFORDIAN/6

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Capturing Student Interest in the Authorship Debate: Studying Intentional Droeshout Portrait Errors

By Paul H. Altrocchi, MD

Students and the authorship debate

Time's glory is to calm contending kings,
To unmask falsehood and bring truth to
light.

— *The Rape of Lucrece*

Oxfordians are aware that Martin Droeshout's engraving of "William Shakespeare" in the *First Folio* of 1623 not only conveys the impression of a loutish simpleton but also contains a number of intriguing errors, anatomical and otherwise. (1) Most Oxfordians believe the errors are clearly intentional, designed to trigger questions in the viewer's mind regarding the authenticity of the portrait and thus the validity of the *Folio's* supposed author.

Most Stratfordians convince themselves that Droeshout's youth and artistic immaturity explain the "mistakes." The late Professor Samuel Schoenbaum, for instance, stated that the engraving's many defects "are all too gross and can be ascribed only to the artist's ineptitude." (2)

The Droeshouts were a family of Flemish engravers and painters who had lived in London for three generations and had earned an outstanding artistic reputation. Martin was born in 1601 and died about 1650 after a notable career as painter, portraitist, and book decorator-engraver. There is no evidence that Martin Droeshout ever met William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon, who had died in 1616, seven years before Droeshout was commissioned to do the *First Folio* portrait.

The engraving bears no resemblance to the original tomb statue of Shaksper in Stratford's Trinity Parish Church. Since there were no other sources from which to work, it is highly likely that the famous Droeshout engraving, touted as the "only true portrait" of the great playwright, William Shakespeare, is a complete Droeshout fabrication.

The same engraving was used for the 1685 *Fourth Folio* as for the 1623 *First Folio*. Natural deterioration of the brass over 62 years likely accounts for the darker shading of the 1685 portrait, which more clearly shows certain errors such as the non-anatomical bulge at the forehead.

Student involvement in the Shakespeare authorship debate has risen to new levels in Oregon and Washington public high schools (3) and elsewhere, transforming students from passive onlookers into keenly active participants in the quest for a solution to the world's greatest literary mystery: who was the true writer of Shakespeare's plays?

Using the Droeshout engraving's multiple "mistakes" as a teaching technique

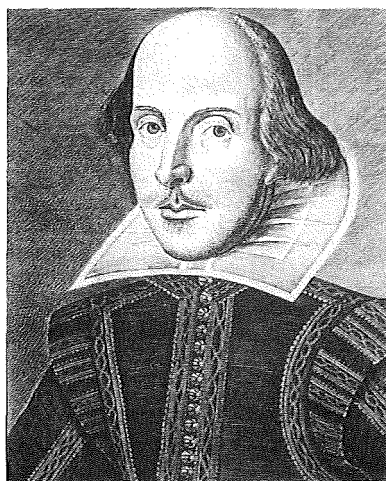


Figure 1. Droeshout portrait of
"William Shakespeare," *First Folio*, 1623.

is one effective way of initiating Junior High and High School students into the intellectual fascination of the authorship debate. (4) The current list of Droeshout errors is outlined below. Right and left refer to "Shakespeare's" right and left, not the observer's right and left.

Readers are further encouraged to discover more errors in the engraving, some of which are discerned more clearly using a magnifying glass. Nine additional portrait errors are added in this paper to the original list of 21 that were published in 2001. (1)

Figure 1. Droeshout portrait of "William Shakespeare," *First Folio*, 1623.

A. Erroneous General Features

1. Multiple sources of lighting; shadows are illogical

2. Differently etched background patterns on either side of the head

B. Erroneous Head Features

3. Head is disproportionately large for the size of body

4. Head is positioned too far forward of the neck and torso

5. Non-anatomical bulge on forehead, especially notable in Figure 2

6. Two right eyes (first pointed out by the neurologist, Sir W. Russell Brain)

7. Right pupil eccentric in location (which can be a normal variation)

8. No eyelashes

9. Non-symmetrical positioning of ocular orbits

10. Difference in size of eyes

11. Highly prominent and non-symmetrical "bags" under both eyes

12. Medial right eyebrow extends abnormally down onto the nose

Figure 2. Droeshout portrait made from the same brass engraving as in Figure 1, *Fourth Folio*, 1685.

13. Non-symmetrical haircut

14. Unusual lateral protrusion of lower hair on left

15. Left ear is backwards

16. Mouth and chin are angled abnormally to the left, with nose remaining midline

17. Abnormal shape of central upper lip, i.e., "Cupid-like"

18. Midline lip indentation skewed to left within the mustache

19. Right lower lip ends abruptly, not reaching the corner of the mouth

20. Unshaven and disheveled, especially above the mustache

21. Evidence of a wig along edge of hair on the left

22. Dark line of a facial mask below left mandible

23. Left ear misshapen, providing odd continuity between mask and wig

C. Erroneous Neck Features

24. Neck too long, giving appearance of head floating in space

25. Non-symmetrical shape of ruff

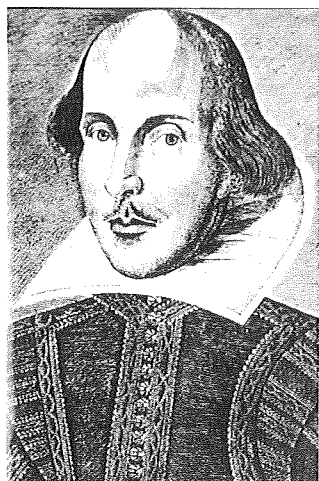


Figure 2.
Droeshout
portrait
made from
the same
brass
engraving
as in Figure
1, Fourth
Folio, 1685.

26. Non-symmetrical design within ruff
27. Left side of ruff ascends steeply upwards in back

D. Erroneous Torso Features

28. Proximal arms and shoulders are not symmetrical
29. Right side of jacket is actually the back of the jacket's left side, thereby making the entire jacket design non-symmetrical
30. Jacket buttons do not point in the direction the torso is facing

The Droeshout as a teaching tool

Study of the *First Folio's* Droeshout engraving has proven to be effective and provocative in capturing students' interest in the Shakespeare authorship enigma. (3) In junior high and high school English classes embarking on the study of Shakespeare, teachers have distributed copies of the Droeshout engraving to students as a homework assignment, asking them to study the portrait and uncover as many errors as they can.

A master list is then drawn up by the class, discussing whether the types of error are those expected from an artist in his twenties who has not yet reached the peak of his craft, or are they manifestations of an adroit artist's skillful intent? If the class decides the errors are intentional, the discussion moves onto the real question—why? What could be the real purpose of including such an error-filled portrait illustrating such an important contribution to world literature as the First Folio, which preserved 37 plays by Shakespeare, twenty

never before published?

This teaching opportunity readily becomes an engaging and dynamic introduction to the authorship question. (4) Teachers refrain from rendering their opinion as to the solution, only emphasizing the authenticity of the mystery and validity of the debate as a legitimate inquiry in the study of English Literature.

Using the Droeshout engraving's remarkable roster of intentional artistic errors has proven very effective in capturing a high degree of student interest in the Shakespeare authorship debate.

The author appreciates the help of English teacher Cate Waidyatilleka in the preparation of this paper.

Endnotes

1. Paul H. Altrocchi. "I Never Saw A Stupider Face." *The De Vere Society Newsletter*, July 2001 (England).
2. Samuel Schoenbaum. *Shakespeare's Lives*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1970.
3. 5th, 6th, and 7th Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conferences, 2001, 2002, 2003, Concordia University, Portland, Oregon.
4. As taught annually at a private school in Hawaii.

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Q&A with Richard Whalen: Shakespeare's Audiences

At the recent Society conference in New York City, Richard Whalen (author of *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*) delivered a paper on Shakespeare's audiences that critiqued the orthodox premise that the dramatist wrote the plays for a popular audience at the public theaters. In an email exchange, he explained how he happened to investigate Shakespeare's audiences and the problems he encountered. — Editor

What led you to research Shakespeare's audience? Oxfordians already read the plays as sophisticated works for an educated audience that would get the allusions to court politics and intrigues.

One thing leads to another. I've embarked on an Oxfordian edition of *Macbeth*, and writing the introduction about the author, etc. I realized I hadn't seen documented, historical evidence about his audience. Stratfordian editions of the play all have a section labeled "His Theater" or something like that, and then they talk about the Globe. I thought my edition should have a section like that, too, but I didn't know where the plays were performed and for what kind of audiences. I wasn't sure what my research would turn up, but it happened to fit the Oxfordian proposition.

Were you surprised?

Yes and no. I was surprised that Stratfordian scholars had not looked at the performance statistics. It's simple arithmetic, although compiling, classifying and verifying them is not all that much fun. But then I realized that perhaps they did not want to look at the statistics, which do not support the nearly unanimous view that the Shakespeare plays were written for a popular audience in the public theaters, like the Globe, which is all you hear about.

What's the bottom line? Where were the Shakespeare plays performed during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras?

There are about 2 1/2 times more records of performances at court, the private theaters, universities, law schools and manor houses than for the public

theaters—30 to 12. This is a telling but imperfect ratio. It does not reflect how often the Shakespeare plays were performed anywhere. We'll never know that. The records are sparse, fragmented, incomplete, sometimes vague or ambiguous.

So, where they were performed implies the audience?

Yes, and that's pretty clear, except that scholars generally agree that a few aristocrats occasionally went to the public theaters, too.

How can anyone know what audience the dramatist had in mind?

I agree. We can't really know, and that includes the Stratfordian scholars, too. Nevertheless, for them it's become an unstated assumption, when it's not explicit, that the playwright was a commoner writing for commoners. They are obsessed with the Globe, which, of course, was built almost halfway through the supposed career of their man. The best anyone can do, in my view, is count where the Shakespeare plays were performed. I can't think of any better documentary evidence to get at what audience the plays were written for.

Why should anyone care what audience the dramatist had in mind?

I suppose it's not crucial to Shakespeare scholarship, but if the dramatist was not writing for the public theater it says something about who he was and what he was trying to do. So it may add to the overall evidence for Oxford as the author of the plays. And it may help resolve the disconnect between the learned sophistication of the language and the Stratfordian idea of an audience of unlettered groundlings and tradesmen at the Globe. And maybe the plays ring even more true if the reader or theatergoer understands that the playwright is talking to his peers through his characters, even the buffoons. Especially the buffoons.

What "historical, documentary records" did you use?

Not primary source materials. I didn't have to. This was a compilation of the Stratfordian reports of performances of Shakespeare plays, and an analysis of the Stratfordian use of what they found in the primary sources. I counted what they accepted, including probable forgeries, and then checked to see if their own evidence supports their view of the Shakespeare plays being performed primarily for commoners. And it doesn't. Most of the data for my compilation is scattered through E. K. Chambers's six volumes of *The Elizabethan Stage* and Campbell and Quinn's encyclopedia.

You mentioned "private" theaters. Were they really private?

You're right; they weren't. Anyone could go, if they had the money. Stratfordian scholars designate as "private" the Blackfriars, for example, to distinguish it from the big theaters like the Theatre and the Globe that were open to the general public for a penny and up. Admission to the much smaller Blackfriars was, I think, five to ten times more expensive, so it was much more exclusive. And it was indoors. It was upscale, not private in the usual sense of the word, although it was located in a "private" enclave in London, not under the direct control of the Puritan city government.

Do you have a publisher for your Oxfordian edition of *Macbeth*?

Far from it. After I finish the introduction and get into editing the text (from an Oxfordian perspective, of course), I'll do a comprehensive proposal and research publishers.

What about the publisher of your book?

Greenwood no longer sells through bricks-and-mortar bookstores, so I'd like to find a traditional publisher that might buy the idea of a series of Oxfordian editions. In any case, it's an interesting project, a real challenge. And I know other Oxfordians have contemplated or embarked upon Oxfordian editions.

Oxfordian News

By Gary Goldstein

BBC Series on a Catholic Shakespeare Aired in February. The Public Broadcasting System British historian Michael Wood's BBC documentary, "The Life and Times of William Shakespeare," in four separate one-hour segments during the month of February. The documentary was broadcast nationally to participating PBS stations at 8 PM on Wednesdays on February 4, 11, 18, and 25, 2004.

Oxfordian Publishes Article on Shakespeare's Purported Catholicism. An abridged version of Peter Dickson's essay in the 2003 edition of *The Oxfordian*, "Bardgate: Was Shakespeare a Secret Catholic?", has been published in the February 15th issue of *The Weekly Standard* magazine under the title, "The Roman Plays?" (www.weeklystandard.com).

Univ. of Tennessee Hosts Authorship Conference

The University of Tennessee College of Law will present a 2-day conference, "Who Wrote Shakespeare? An Evidentiary Puzzle," June 4-5, 2004, in Knoxville, Tennessee. The faculty for the seminar is made up of prominent academicians and literary scholars including William Causey, organizer of two recent Smithsonian conferences on the authorship controversy; William Niederkorn of the New York Times; Diana Price, author of Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography; Ward Elliott, of Claremont McKenna College, author of several articles on the authorship controversy; and Richard Whalen, author of *Shakespeare, Who Was He?* For more information, contact Micki Fox, Conference Coordinator at fox@libra.law.utk.edu or by phone at (865) 974-8601.

Renaissance Magazine Publishes Oxfordian Article

The latest issue of *Renaissance Magazine* (www.renaissancemagazine.com), appearing in February, features an article on Edward de Vere as Shakespeare written by Oxfordian Jonathan Dixon.

The magazine's preview column highlights its appearance: "Was Shake-

speare Really Edward De Vere? Doubts about the identity of the writer named 'Shakespeare' date back to satires from the 1590s that implied that, during the bard's lifetime, some people believed that Francis Bacon was the secret author of Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis*. But despite the nagging dissatisfaction with the traditional attribution, no alternative has withstood close scrutiny, except one: Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford."

Jonathan is a licensed professional counselor, book illustrator, as well as an actor and member of the Theaterwork company in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is also a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.

Jonathan told the SOS Newsletter how the article came about. "Three years ago, *Renaissance* had a one-page article on the Shakespeare authorship mystery, noting Oxford as the current leading alternative candidate. It was not an in-depth piece, getting some facts wrong, and the author admitted to 'slight ridicule' of Oxfordians. Still the article was fairly respectful, and I wrote thanking them for the coverage, including an essay I had written summarizing some of the evidence against Shaksper and for Oxford. I noted that I had some hope they might use it at some point.

"Three years later I received an email from the editor saying she wanted to publish my article. I'm hoping the article will at least serve as an introduction to the Oxford case for the uninitiated."

Jonathan first heard of the Oxford theory in high school, on the original "Frontline" broadcast on PBS in 1989. What turned him around was Tom Bethell's article in the *Atlantic* magazine in autumn 1992. In 1994, while in graduate school, he discovered Marty Hyatt's first Oxfordian internet discussion group, then was referred to the Shakespeare Oxford Society by Charlton Ogburn.

He noted that, "I have found that many people are open to hearing about the Oxfordian case, but we have to go several extra miles to appear balanced, sane, and

"nice." If we get angry, defensive, or negative, it only confirms people's preconceived stereotypes. I can only guess that that is how the "Renaissance" article came about: I thanked them for their initial coverage, was polite in refuting a consequent angry letter from a Stratfordian "true believer," and simply asked the staff to read my essay as a way of becoming more familiar with the case. My presentation must have impressed them enough to do so, for three years later it will now lead to thousands of new readers learning more about Oxford. I'm certain that would not have happened if I had behaved negatively."

A New Book on George Puttenham

Shakespeare and George Puttenham's Arte of English Poesie, by Charles Murray Willis, in paperback (488 pages), \$21.95. For information and ordering, log onto: www.upso.co.uk/willis

The book explores the life of George Puttenham (1529-91), the reputed author of *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), a book closely related to the Shakespeare plays. Included are Puttenham's Partheniades poems, his Justification document for the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots (1587), and other documents, found in Puttenham's family archives, never before published.

The author claims that, "Recently discovered family documents indicate he had an important role as a writer of Protestant propaganda between 1578-91."

Puttenham was related to the seventeenth Earl of Oxford through his third cousin, Lord Edward Windsor, who was married to Katherine de Vere, Oxford's half-sister. Lord Edward Windsor was also the stepson of Puttenham's wife, Lady Windsor.

Charles Willis is a freelance journalist with an interest in historical subjects and has spent five years researching the life of George Puttenham. He is directly related to the family of George Puttenham through his mother Kathleen Putnam, a descendant of John Putnam (1580-1662).

Globe Theaters in Italy and Poland

England's *Guardian* newspaper reports that Italy and Poland are the latest countries to want a playhouse devoted to Shakespeare. Last autumn, an Italian version of London's Globe theater appeared in the Villa Borghese park in the heart of Rome.

The theater, built in oak at a cost of 2 million Euro, opened in October with a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. "We have tried to make it as Roman as possible," said Giuseppe Bigiano, in charge of construction. The building, described by *La Repubblica* as "like a giant [piece of] Leggo," is open air and has been erected without foundations.

In Poland, efforts are underway to reconstruct a Shakespearean theater that thrived in the Baltic port city of Gdansk almost 400 years ago, but has since been replaced by a carpark.

The new Gdansk theatre — a square, wooden-beamed building — will cost 4 million British pounds to construct and its patron, the Prince of Wales, has been helping to raise interest in the project. "We are counting on European Union funding for about 70% of the building," said Jerzy Limon, director of the Gdansk Shakespeare Foundation. "We hope it will be open by 2005." International sponsors and fund-raising events have already helped raise around half a million pounds

for the project.

The new theatre will hold 600 spectators and look much like the original, with wooden beams, a pit for standing spectators and the same bright colours as were used in Elizabethan times.

But the Baltic model — in a country where winter temperatures can fall to -4F — will also have fire sprinklers, air conditioning and a glass roof, to keep out the rain and the noise of traffic. "The plan is for the theater to stay open all year round," said Limon.

Around the world, some 20 Globe-type theaters have been built in honor of the Bard, most in the United States.

The Eighth annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference will take place at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, from April 15-18, 2004. This year's banquet honors Prof Paul Altrocchi, M.D., Stephen Moorer and Michael Dunn. Scheduled speakers include Professor Michael Brame, Professor Ren Draya, Michael Cossolotto, Professor Paul Altrocchi, Dr. Eric Altschuler, Professor Alan Nelson, Richard Whalen, and others. Conference registration is \$115. Awards Banquet (at the Columbia Edgewater Country Club) is \$50. The Conference opens at 6:00pm on Thursday, April 15, and closes at 3:00pm on Sunday, April 18. Registrations close with receipt of the first 200 paid registrations. To reg-

ister, download a registration form at www.deverestudies.org or write to Professor Daniel Wright, Director, The Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland, OR 97211-6099.

Oxfordians defined

In early January, the daily newsletter *Wordsmith* (<http://wordsmith.org>) informed its readers of that week's theme: "Earls who became words." One was cadogan (kuh-DUG-uhn), a noun denoting "a lidless teapot" derived from William Cadogan, 1st Earl of Cadogan (1675-1726), who was said to be the first Englishman to own such a pot.

Another listing was "Oxfordian (oksfORD-ee-uhn), noun." Defined as:

1. The theory attributing the authorship of William Shakespeare's works to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

2. A person who believes in this theory.

After Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604).

De Vere Society Conference

The 2004 Quadcentenary Events of the De Vere Society will be held Saturday, June 27th, with a Thames River cruise aboard the MV Artark, which is moored below Thames Bridge. The ship will take approximately 100 persons for a celebrity lecture followed by entertainment that will

(cont'd on p. 24)

2004 SOS Conference Scheduled for Atlanta

The 28th annual Shakespeare Oxford Society conference will be held October 28-31, 2004 at the DoubleTree Hotel Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia. The hotel is located in the fashionable northern area of Atlanta and is in walking distance of Atlanta's MARTA transit system and the famous Phipp's Plaza and Lenox Square shopping areas.

The year 2004 not only represents the 400th anniversary of the death of Edward de Vere, but it is also the 20th anniversary of Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious*

William Shakespeare. As Oxfordians are aware, Atlanta was important to the Ogburns; Charlton and his mother, Dorothy, left their manuscripts and books to the Woodruff Memorial Library at Emory University in Atlanta.

Our venue site will allow theater opportunities for both the Shakespeare Tavern and the Georgia Shakespeare Festival.

Further details on the conference will appear on the SOS web site and in the spring newsletter.

Call for Papers. For the 28th annual conference, members are especially invited to submit papers 30 to 45 minutes in length for presentation in Atlanta during October 28-31, 2004.

We also welcome scholars from all fields who can provide context and perspective with papers on the authorship issue, Shakespeare's works, and Oxford's role in Elizabethan society. Contact Frank Davis, President, SOS, 9 Lakewood Retreat, Savannah, GA 31411, or by email at davisfm@bellsouth.net.

What's in a Name, A Parody

By James Sherwood © 2003

I think it a shame we are spoiled by the stories of drunk Fitzgerald and bully Hemingway, Dickens walking the London slums at night and all the others—Jack London in the Klondike, Mark Twain on the Mississippi, the portrait of Henry James and his “Lady,” Hardy on his moors and Captain Joseph Conrad. Whoever your favorite author is, or mine, has spoiled us by the same pretention, that they were telling us the truth as they knew it—Carl Sandburg’s Chicago, O. Henry’s New York, John Marquand’s Boston, Faulkner’s Mississippi or Steinbeck’s Salinas Valley.

I don’t know what to think anymore when I read about who wrote what. Maybe Bret Harte really wasn’t a Gold Rush witness, or Melville a sailor or Balzac a Frenchman. Good grief!

All these years I’ve been told that Goethe was Young Werther, that Dante’s life was a hell, that Cervantes and Don Quixote—well, maybe I’d better just stop.

Here is a letter sent to me by a gentleman skeptic whose friend wrote him, “The works of Henry James were in fact composed not by James but by Israel Humpelmesser, a Pennsylvania Dutch farmer whose elementary education and sedentary habits paradoxically fostered an imagination transcending all known limits of literary inspiration.”

The friend of my friend, the skeptical gentleman, explained that Humpelmesser “for reasons of Amish doctrine” was forced to use a 19th Century New York Society scion to front for him as author of his works about 19th Century New York Society, and so he hired one Henry James.

I want to thank my gentleman friend for this report from his friend in Shrewsbury, New Jersey.

I would like to confess here for the first time that, contrary to historical tradition, Scott Fitzgerald did not go to Hollywood and write *The Last Tycoon*. That was penned by his friend Sheila Graham who could not finish it after their affair was cut short.

We all know, of course, that *Catcher In the Rye* was written by Charlie Chaplin who was at the time under such a cloud of disgrace because of the Joan Barry paternity

suit and his own marriage to the 16-year-old daughter of Eugene O’Neil that he had to hire a front man to pose as the author—and so his young wife Oona asked her ex-boyfriend to accept the job despite his being a recluse who didn’t want to be famous. His name was J. D. Salinger and he did accept the job of being Mr. Chaplin’s invisible celebrity author.

Which reminds me of another scandal regarding the Eugene O’Neil authorship question. Because of his tendency in his last years to write plays with an underlying theme of homosexuality, O’Neil was pressured into hiring a young man named Tom Williams to take that credit for him, to avoid any scandal that might reflect shamefully on his Nobel Prize.

Only problem is that Tom Williams’ own family was so scandalized by this job that they insisted Tom change his name to preserve the family reputation, so now the lost plays of Eugene O’Neil bear the name of an author who never existed, a complete fiction, namely one Tennessee Williams.

I won’t even touch on the story, which is still being censored, about how Harper Lee hired her childhood playmate to take credit for all her other works after *To Kill A Mockingbird* because they were so obviously written from a woman’s point of view, and thus were prejudiced. So the great body of Miss Lee’s work today is known under her pen name.

But there is always one completely reliable truth to count on.

Everyone knows who wrote Shakespeare. The man who never met a courtier portrayed them by the dozen. The man who never left England wrote like he’d traveled in Europe and lived in Italy.

What a great thing is genius.

I only wish more people had it. How much better Faulkner would have been writing about Japanese Kabuki, and Tolstoy if only he’d not done that Russian stuff and written more about football, and why didn’t Dostoyevski write comedy?

Well, there will only be one Shakespeare. No one can do what he did.

Except, perhaps, Steve Martin. I understand he’s doing Stephen Hawking’s books. Of course, that’s only a snobbish rumor probably put out by elitist publicists.

I do have this friend with a 1,500 page manuscript he’s showing around, however. He insists it can only be sold if it’s said to be written by a 350 pound transvestite cross-dresser who is willing to confess to mass murder and then be executed for the public good. So far no authorial candidates are willing.

The moral: Only believe the truth, “for truth is truth though never so old that time can not make that false which once was true.”

James Sherwood (www.opusbooks.com) has been a novelist and an Oxfordian for more than 50 years.

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Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 1)

context, which includes not only historical background information on the religious, legal, social, or cultural practices of a long ago era,¹ but also personal information, such as establishing who struck the first blow in a fight, or whether a witness was truthful in other matters.² As I will show, Nelson totally botches the context of event after event. Secondly, Nelson, who with some justice refers to Oxford's first biographer, B. M. Ward, as a hagiographer (250), pushes much further in the opposite direction, so much so that his study of Oxford may well be dubbed demonography.

The 17th Earl of Oxford was anything but a model nobleman of his time. He threw away his family fortune, he failed to develop the career expected of an earl by shouldering his share of local and national responsibilities, and he fathered a child out of wedlock. Quite possibly he also drank too much as a young man. On the other hand, he excelled in his generosity, he earned praise for his writings, and he retained the favor of his famously headstrong and moralistic Queen. But these facts have long been known. What does Nelson add to them? Quite a lot of detail and color: Nelson's persistence and skill as a document sleuth flesh out both major and minor events of Oxford's story. Unfortunately, Nelson the analyst relates to Nelson the researcher as Hyde relates to Jekyll—moreover, Nelson's obsessive denigration of Oxford carries him from error into fantasy.

I. A Nelson Sampler

In support of my criticism, I will begin by discussing Nelson's treatment of five episodes of Oxford's life. I will then examine Oxford's biggest scandal, the accusations between him and his sometime friends, Lord Henry Howard and Charles Arundel, before proceeding to the peculiarities of Nelson's writing style. Finally, I will consider some of the positive aspects of Oxford's story that can be extracted from Nelson's work.

My first example offers a very simple case of Nelson's historiographic ineptitude. His Chapter 13, "Necromancy," begins with quotations from Oxford's friends-turned-accusers in 1580-1, Howard and Arundel, to the effect that Oxford copulated with a female spirit, saw the ghosts of his mother

and stepfather, and often conjured up Satan for conversations. Nelson then explains in detail where, when, and, above all, how Oxford carried out these ungodly deeds. Unfortunately Nelson neglects to inform his readers that Howard and Arundel listed these items among the outrageous lies regularly told by Oxford.³ In other words, although neither Howard nor Arundel expected their contemporaries to believe that Oxford actually committed such acts, they failed to anticipate the stunning gullibility of Nelson. We can find out why Oxford told these horrendous falsehoods by turning to some of the documentary evidence found on Nelson's website, though omitted from the biography. After relating yet another of Oxford's tall tales — about peacefully ending a civil war in Genoa — Charles Arundel continued: "this lie is very rife with him and in it he glories greatly; diversely hath he told it, and when he enters

*Nelson the analyst relates
to Nelson the researcher as
Hyde relates to Jekyll.*

into it, he can hardly out, which hath made such sport as often have I been driven to rise from his table laughing, so hath my Lord Charles Howard [the admiral who defeated the Spanish Armada] and the rest."⁴ Not only does this remarkable testimony reveal a side of Oxford's character that Nelson studiously ignores, it also indicates the unbalanced nature of Oxford's foes, who thought they could damn him as a liar by describing his brilliance as a raconteur.

After concealing the unbalanced nature of Oxford's enemies, Nelson attributes insanity to one of Oxford's friends. Nathaniel Baxter accompanied Oxford on his trip to Italy in 1575-6, which Baxter described in a 1606 poem to Oxford's daughter, the Countess of Montgomery (138-9). Baxter's poem includes this seemingly cryptic stanza: "Never omitting what might pastime bring, / Italian sports, and Syren's Melodie: / Hopping Helena with her warbling sting, / Infested th' Albanian dignitie, / Like as they poysoned

all Italie." Without the slightest hint that another interpretation might exist, Nelson informs us that "Albania" means England, while "Hopping Helena" indicates a prostitute whose "warbling sting" is venereal disease. And so, according to Nelson, Baxter publicly "reveals" that the Countess of Montgomery's father caught syphilis in Venice.

But another interpretation emerges by assuming that "Albania" means the nation of that name, and that Baxter's "poysoned" means poisoned. Such an interpretation agrees with Venetian lore on four noble Albanian brothers who poisoned each other in Venice, especially given that John Florio's Italian dictionary defines "eleno," the Italian masculine form of the name "Helena," as deadly nightshade or belladonna, while Florio elsewhere translates the Italian "bella donna" as "Helen." But I lack the space to work through two rival interpretations, particularly when a far greater threat hangs over Nelson's reading.⁵ Baxter's verse was published in his popular work, *Sir Philip Sidney's 'Ourania,'* along with commendatory poems to other aristocrats. The next stanza in Baxter's poem informs the Countess that her father promptly hurried home to England in order to beget her upon her "everlasting faire" mother (actually the Countess was conceived ten years later). If we accept Nelson's interpretation, then we must conclude that Baxter and his publisher had literally taken leave of their senses by publicly proclaiming that the recently deceased Earl of Oxford carried a disgraceful and loathsome disease, which he presumably passed on to his first and second wives and their three children: the Countess of Montgomery, the future Lady Norris, and the eighteenth Earl of Oxford. The *Dictionary of National Biography* notes that Baxter's commendatory poems in *Ourania* were "evidently written with a view to some pecuniary reward." On the contrary, according to Nelson those poems were evidently written with a view to ostracism—if not specifically intended to provoke savage reprisals.

Oxford's departure from the Netherlands campaign for unknown reasons in October 1585 provides the next example of Nelson's

(cont'd on p. 16)

Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 15)

slipshod methods (296-8). English support for the Dutch rebels fighting for independence from Spain became urgent as the Spanish gained ground that summer, and several thousand troops were raised and dispatched pell-mell in August, with the size and organization of the army still undetermined. This advance force was led by Sir John Norris (misidentified by Nelson as his brother Henry Norris), with Oxford apparently commanding the cavalry contingent. Meanwhile fierce political maneuvering over the top command positions continued at Court, with the Earl of Leicester being selected, unselected, then reselected as commander-in-chief in September and October. Leicester naturally wanted his own choices, such as his nephew Sir Philip Sidney, for subordinate commands, but he yielded one position to pressure from Oxford's father-in-law, Lord Treasurer Burghley, on behalf of his son Sir Thomas Cecil.⁶ On October 21 Oxford returned to England. Leicester's commission as commander was signed on October 22, and he arrived in December with his twenty year old stepson the Earl of Essex, who received command of the cavalry. Although no one knows exactly why Oxford returned, we find something of an explanation in a letter printed by Nelson: Oxford had "letters of my Lord Treasurer's to him wherein he wrote of her Majesty's grant of the commanding of horsemen" (298). Nelson mistakenly refers to these letters as Oxford's "commission from Burghley" (299), but the Lord Treasurer had no authority to award military commissions. These were granted by the Queen in letters patent stamped with the privy seal, and no such commission exists for Oxford. Apparently the Queen sent Oxford without a commission, and then he lost out in the jockeying for position at Court. He may have returned because he had been superceded or simply to lobby on his own behalf—no one knows. But Nelson pretends otherwise: "As of mid-October, Oxford's loyalties were put to the test. Would he cooperate with Leicester and Sidney to advance the Queen's interests in the Low Countries? He would not." As far as Nelson is concerned, Oxford simply "quit his post in a fit of pique." Thus evidentiary complexity and uncertainty

dissolve before Nelson's inability to distinguish between private letters and the Queen's commission.

My fourth example of Nelson's strange ways with evidence deals with the Spanish Armada, which reached England on July



*Edward
de Vere,
17th Earl of
Oxford.
Ashbourne
Portrait.*

19, 1588, fought its way to Calais only to be expelled by fire-ships in the night of July 28-9, followed by a day of battle, and finally turned north for its homeward voyage on July 30.⁷ Oxford played a small part in these great events. He was with the Earl of Leicester's army at Tilbury near the mouth of the Thames, then sailed out to the fleet, returning to Tilbury on July 27. On August 1, Leicester, still expecting to give battle at Tilbury, wrote that Oxford disliked the Queen's proposal that he take command of the north Essex port of Harwich, a potential Spanish landing place, and so he went to Court to protest. According to Leicester, Oxford objected to being ordered away from the anticipated combat. And that is the last we know until Oxford took a conspicuous role, suitable to his rank, alongside the Queen at the November victory celebration. Nelson records these details (316-8), concluding that Oxford should have been severely punished for disobeying Leicester's order. This judgment fails on several grounds. First, Leicester says nothing about giving Oxford an order, rather than informing him of the Queen's intention; Leicester certainly says nothing about Oxford disobeying an order. Next, Nelson has no business assuming that Oxford did not end up at Harwich anyway, as the Queen may have overruled his protest. In the course of his researches in England, which included the Essex Record Office (xvii-xviii), Nelson could easily have tried

to discover who did command at Harwich in early August, but he did not bother. Finally, Oxford's place beside the Queen at the victory celebration seems to dispel any imputation of disgrace, particularly given Elizabeth's notoriously strong opinions and sharp tongue.

My fifth example concerns reports that Oxford plotted against the succession of King James while Queen Elizabeth lay dying in March 1603 (409-18). A few days before the Queen's death the Earl of Lincoln informed Sir John Peyton, commander of the Tower of London, that Oxford proposed that they support Lincoln's nephew, Lord Hastings, as heir to the throne rather than James of Scotland; both Lincoln and Peyton subsequently reported this information to the authorities. Nelson supplies the following essential information to help us sort out this issue. Lincoln was an "erratic and violent" man; it was his close kinsman, not Oxford's, who was being pushed for the crown; and Lincoln, not Oxford, had discussed the matter with the French Embassy, which opposed James. Peyton wrote of Lincoln that, "his fashion is to condemn the world if thereby he might excuse himself." After the proclamation of James as King of England, and the arrival in London of his advance man, Lord Kinloss, Peyton told Lincoln to inform Kinloss. Peyton later explained that he did not tell Kinloss himself, out of fear that Lincoln would deny his conversations with Peyton. Nelson urges Oxford as the instigator of this sedition, but the foregoing details, as well as others that I have omitted, allow sensible readers to identify Lincoln as the probable culprit. My principal objection to Nelson's treatment of this episode lies in these words: "Lincoln and Peyton agreed on one point: the most active opponent of James among English noblemen at the time of the Queen's death had been Oxford" (411). Peyton agreed to no such thing; he simply reported what Lincoln told him while making clear his mistrust of Lincoln. Readers unfamiliar with this affair have no real way of spotting Nelson's dereliction. Otherwise I will note three more objections. First, Nelson insinuates, as he says nothing at all about any other nobles opposing James, much less that Oxford—or Lincoln—was

(cont'd on p. 17)

Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 16)

"the most active." Next, Nelson displays hopeless naivety in using denigration of Oxford as his main criterion for source reliability. Finally, Nelson seems incapable of fitting together pieces of historical evidence into a coherent whole, preferring simply to snatch up any item that he can twist against Oxford.

The foregoing examples display Nelson's methods and limitations.

II. The Howard-Arundel Affair

We now come to the biggest scandal of Oxford's life, the mutual accusations between him and his former friends, Henry Howard, Charles Arundel, and Francis Southwell. After his return from Italy in 1576, Oxford became a Catholic, until Christmas 1580, when he denounced his three co-religionists for subversion. Howard and Arundel—but not Southwell—replied by accusing Oxford of a nonstop crime spree. Nelson utterly ignores the historical context of this affair, which may be summarized as follows.⁸ During the 1560s, Queen Elizabeth temporized with the Papacy and other Catholic powers, while generally turning a blind eye to the practice of Catholicism in England. That policy ended with the 1570 papal decree that Elizabeth had no right to the throne and that her subjects owed her no allegiance, followed by the infiltration into England of hundreds of English priests fresh from continental seminaries. The Queen and her Councilors watched with alarm as Catholicism grew in the later 1570s, and then the dreaded Jesuit order arrived in England in June 1580. The government's ultimate fear, which actually went back to the late 1530s, was invasion by a French, Spanish, or Imperial army, supported by a rebellion of English Catholics. The periodic Catholic-Protestant warfare in Europe and around the world of the early and mid-sixteenth century turned continual in 1567 (and stayed that way until 1648).

These facts, of which Nelson seems unaware, would have occupied the mental foreground of the Queen and her ministers as they evaluated Oxford's charges of subversive or treasonous activities against Howard and Arundel, as well as their countercharges of criminal conduct and personal misbehavior against Oxford. The

simplest way to evaluate the government's reaction to the various accusations is to note that Howard, Arundel, and Southwell were placed in confinement, while Oxford remained at liberty — until he was locked up from late March through June 1581 for fathering a child by one of the Queen's maids of honor. Subsequently, as discussed above, Oxford was twice chosen for military commands against Spain, while Henry Howard spent most of the remainder of Elizabeth's reign in obscurity.⁹ Charles Arundel fled England for France in fall 1583 in the wake of the Throckmorton plot, which sought to combine a French invasion of England with a domestic Catholic rebellion. Once in France, Arundel helped author the book later called *Leicester's Commonwealth*, a massive slander aimed at the Queen's favorite, the Earl of Leicester, which Elizabeth Jenkins summarizes as follows.

*The 17th Earl of Oxford
was anything but a model
nobleman of his time.*

This pungent, racy piece of journalism gives a sensational picture of Leicester as a master criminal, with his tribe of poisoners, bawds and abortionists, his Italian ointments and aphrodisiacs, the bottle at his bed's head worth £10 the pint, "his good fortune in seeing them dead who, for any cause, he would not have to live," the list of his victims beginning with his wife and ending with the Earl of Sussex.¹⁰

That one of Oxford's two accusers turned into a professional slanderer does not seem relevant to Nelson, who buries his sole mention of *Leicester's Commonwealth* in a footnote, which gives no explanation of this notorious libel beyond mislabeling it a "satire."¹¹

I turn now to the charges made by Charles Arundel against Oxford, specifically: seven

counts of atheism; sixteen counts of lying; thirteen counts of setting one person to kill another or setting two men against each other; approximately eight counts of attempted murder; several counts of sodomy and bestiality; continual drunkenness; six counts of bearing grudges against Arundel, Howard, and Southwell; and sixteen counts of undutifulness to the Queen.¹² Henry Howard's charges bear enough similarity in organization and wording to Arundel's for Nelson to recognize that the two men were obviously collaborating (259). It is hardly possible now to determine whether Oxford actually did say "that the cobblers' wives of Milan are more richly dressed every working day than the Queen on Christmas Day," or whether he did "break into my Lord of Worcester's house with an intent to murder him and all his men," as Arundel affirmed. We may, however, look at how several contemporaries responded.

Francis Southwell's hand appears only once in the numerous documents of accusation, but that one instance is highly significant. Howard smuggled an abbreviated set of his charges against Oxford to Southwell, with these instructions: "Add to this what particulars soever you have declared of him and they shall be justified. Here is nothing in this paper but may be avowed without danger as hath been determined." Southwell replied with several annotations and an addendum.¹³ Howard's document lists four items under the heading "Atheism," thirteen under "Dangerous practices," and four under "Buggery." Southwell wrote the Latin word "Audiui," that is, "I heard [it]," next to two of the blasphemy items, then added two more remarks by Oxford: that Solomon was blessed with 300 concubines, and that the Bible was written to keep men in obedience. In the dangerous practices category, Southwell ignored five charges of attempted murder, while placing his "Audiui" against three instances of Oxford's railing about the Queen, English Catholics, and the late Duke of Norfolk. Southwell added in the margin that Oxford "promised to sack London, and give me [Alderman] Day[']s house." Under buggery, Southwell passed over two specific charges, while posting a denial against a third, along with his

(cont'd on p. 18)

Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 17)

"Audi vi" regarding hearsay of Oxford's tendencies.

Thus far Southwell indicates that Oxford talked big, but nothing else. Now, however, we come to the addendum, in which Southwell makes clear his enmity toward Oxford. He discussed at some length charges related to prophecies, presumably subversive. Then he took up dangerous matters:

I cannot particularly charge my Lord [Oxford] with pederastion [pederasty], but with open lewdness of his own speeches, neither with Tom Cooke, nor Powers, nor any else.

I pray, my good Lord [Howard], in any matter of treason he [Oxford] may justly be charged withal let us have care of misprision [concealment]. By my intelligence I hear the Queen's Majesty hath clearly forgiven him, and therefore let us wisely and safely disable him.

I hear by you [that] Mr. Charles [Arundel] is my dear friend. In faith, my Lord, it is not best, for if the Earl could get one man to aver anything, we were utterly overthrown.

And so in his secret communication with Henry Howard, Southwell specifically stated that he could not accuse Oxford of homosexual acts, but only with having a foul mouth. Further, he warned that he and Howard will be implicated in any accusations of treason they might make against Oxford; I should add that the extent to which Catholic activities in the 1570s might be held treasonous in 1581 would have depended heavily on their context and implications, as well as on the authorities' attitude toward the accused. Finally Southwell clearly indicated that Arundel faced the greatest danger of prosecution, probably for treason, of any of the four.

However Southwell also said, in the middle quotation above, that he and Howard should "disable" Oxford, for an explanation of which we must turn to the heading of Arundel's principal document of charges against Oxford.

The strength of this monster's evidence against my Lord Henry [Howard], Mr. Southwell, and myself weakened and taken down by the sufficient proof of the man's insufficiency to bear witness against any man of reputation. For these respects [the accusations that follow] no less warranted by laws of honor and of arms than by the civil laws and the laws of our own country. [my emphases]

Although no lawyer, Arundel advanced a legal argument based on three current statutes that required two witnesses for proof of treason, with one statute calling specifically for "two lawful and sufficient witnesses."¹⁴ The first two groups of charges after Arundel's heading are atheism and lying. Thus, rather than defending against

Nelson is unwilling to let the evidence speak freely to the reader, presumably because he will not get the outcome he desires.

Oxford's focused charges of sedition or treason, Arundel countercharged with the aim of preventing Oxford from bearing witness. Arundel's delusion about eliminating Oxford's testimony crops up later in three letters, which contrast his own seven to eight months of confinement to the freedom of Oxford, "a person convicted of great beastliness."¹⁵ Arundel failed to grasp that Oxford had been convicted of nothing; to put it another way, Arundel, like Nelson, confuses accusation with proof. Meanwhile Southwell — also aware of the two witness rule — warned Howard that Oxford plus one further witness would destroy them. Southwell apparently used "disable" in the sense of OED definition 2, "to incapacitate legally . . . to hinder or restrain (any person . . .) from performing acts . . . which would otherwise be open to them," such as bearing witness. One wishes for more testimony from Francis Southwell.

One witness remains on the topic of Oxford's alleged homosexuality, Orazio Coquo, a Venetian singing boy who came with him from Italy, remained for eleven months in Oxford's house, and then went home. Henry Howard wrote that "touching buggery" Coquo "complained how horribly my Lord [Oxford] had abused him," while Arundel added that Coquo "made it [buggery] the quarrel of his departure" (140-1).¹⁶ Thanks to Nelson's impressive research we are able to read the interview of Coquo by the Venetian Inquisition that followed his extended trip to heretic England (155-7). That Coquo said nothing about homosexuality proves little, as he might have preferred to avoid that topic, while the Inquisition's interest centered on threats to his religion. But, as it happens, Coquo himself brought up his reason for leaving England, which was that a Milanese merchant in London advised him that his Catholicism would be endangered if he remained longer. Otherwise Coquo associated freely with other Italian musicians in London, performed before and spoke to the Queen (who tried to convert him), attended mass at the French and Portuguese Embassies, and reported Oxford as offering religious freedom to those in his household. In short, where Howard and Arundel can be checked against Coquo, their testimony turns out to be false.

But how did the Queen react to Howard and Arundel's accusations that Oxford tried to murder her favorite, the Earl of Leicester; her Principal Secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham; her Vice Chamberlain and favorite, Sir Christopher Hatton; Lord Worcester and all his household; Lord Windsor and all his household; as well as a string of other prominent courtiers, including Sir Walter Raleigh and Philip Sidney; not to mention the accusations of buggery, atheism, sedition, disrespect to her own person, etc, etc? Although, as noted above, the Queen swiftly and sharply punished Oxford's fornication with a maid of honor in the spring of 1581, she refused to take action on the basis of Howard and Arundel's charges. Her predecessors and successors were certainly capable of punishing crimes committed by peers against lesser folk. Her father hanged Lord

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Dacre for felony murder and beheaded Lord Hungerford for sodomy and soothsaying, while her sister hanged Lord Stourton for murder. James I hanged Lord Sanquhar for murder, and allowed his favorites, the Earl and Countess of Somerset, to be convicted of murder by poisoning, although he punished them with lengthy imprisonment rather than death, while Charles I beheaded the Earl of Castlehaven for sodomy.

Elizabeth did not ignore Oxford's misdeeds, although the surviving records fail to clarify the extent to which her disfavor was caused by his dalliance with the maid of honor and his subsequent feud with her kinsmen, or by the accusations of Howard and Arundel. Oxford was forbidden from the Queen's presence until May 1583, then restored to favor.¹⁷ His rehabilitation was presumably enhanced by Throckmorton's arrest that October, along with Arundel's flight to France, the expulsion of the Spanish ambassador, and the reincarceration for a year and a half of the ambassador's hired informant, Lord Henry Howard. Oxford's fall and rise may also be seen in his standing with the Knights of the Garter and in his military record. Although Oxford received numerous votes in the annual elections for membership in the Order of the Garter from 1571 to 1580, he got no votes in the elections of 1581-4. Clearly the combination of the Howard-Arundel affair, the illegitimate child and subsequent feuding, and the Queen's disfavor caused a heavy drop in his prestige. But just as clearly his respectable showings in the next three elections, 1585, 1587, and 1588, mark his rehabilitation. Apparently the six peers who voted for Oxford in these elections placed little trust in the Howard-Arundel smear.¹⁸ Meanwhile Oxford received offers of military commands in 1585 and 1588, while Howard's 1587 request to serve against Spain was rejected.¹⁹

I have tried in the preceding paragraphs to present the principal evidence on the credibility of the accusations against Oxford in 1580-1. To say that Nelson offers nothing equivalent actually understates the case. Nelson obliterates the whole issue of credibility by spreading most of the accusations across his earlier chapters, with titles like "Necromancy," "Atheist," "Sodomite," and "Prophet."²⁰ Nelson's

Chapter 48, "Tables Turned," discusses the charges as a whole in barely one page,²¹ including: "We have already considered both the form and substance of most of these charges" (259). This statement is perfectly true, as long as we realize that Nelson's "substance" simply means "content." The question of credibility never arises in Nelson's text. The critical testimony of Francis Southwell does not appear, even in a footnote.²² The disagreement between Orazio Coquo's statement to the Inquisition and what Howard and Arundel said about him goes unnoticed.²³ Arundel's connection to the Throckmorton plot is ignored, while his later profession as a manufacturer of defamation against Leicester is hidden in an uninformative footnote. Henry Howard's life of machinations, especially his role as a paid agent of Spain in the early 1580s, and as accomplice to his great niece, the murderous Countess of Somerset, go unmentioned. Although Howard died the

*The question of credibility
never arises in Nelson's text.*

year before the Countess's sensational trial, the obscenity of his letters, which were read in court, stunned contemporary observers, a point of particular relevance to our evaluation of the obscenities Howard charged against Oxford.²⁴ And Queen Elizabeth, in Nelson's telling, comes across as a spineless ninny, quite at variance with the portrait painted by her many biographers.

Nelson maintains his evasiveness in his recitation of the charges made by Oxford and Thomas Norton against Howard and Arundel (254-8),²⁵ which have nothing to do with bizarre personal behavior, but everything to do with Catholic invasion and rebellion. Nelson's verdict is that Oxford was guilty of betrayal, hypocrisy, petty-mindedness, and a lack of mental control (258). Only readers sensitized to Nelson's ways will notice his failure to say that Oxford's charges were false—and herein lies a mystery. It could be that even Nelson recognizes the fatuity of denying that Henry Howard and Charles Arundel were Catholic conspirators—or it could

simply be an oversight. The latter possibility, that is, lack of authorial control, draws support from the final sentence of Chapter 47, which accuses Oxford of "cramming his paper with . . . hatred and resentment of the whole Howard clan" (258). Oxford's two page paper makes no mention of the Howard family, but only names Henry Howard, along with one neutral reference to his brother. Despite Nelson's frenzy concerning Oxford's alleged hatred of his Howard cousins (249 and 251), Charles, Lord Admiral Howard of Effingham, voted for Oxford in the Garter elections from 1585 to 1588.

No responsible historian would ignore the political and religious context of Oxford's quarrel with Howard and Arundel. No real historian would fail to compare Howard and Arundel's accusations against Oxford to their subsequent conduct: Howard's record as a paid agent of Spain, and Arundel's series of lies in *Leicester's Commonwealth*. And no historian would both suppress and misrepresent the critical evidence of Francis Southwell. Nelson falls short on all counts.

III. Nelson's Style

I now turn from specific events to Nelson's style, in particular his penchant for suppression of evidence, insinuation, and outright cheap shot. Before offering examples, I will expand the quotation from his "Introduction" that I placed at the start of this article: "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" (5). As we shall see, Nelson is unwilling to let the evidence speak freely to the reader, presumably because he will not get the outcome he desires. The examples that follow could easily be multiplied tenfold. Incidentally, identifying the quirks of Nelson's style offers a peculiar charm to readers who succeed in overcoming the notion that *Monstrous Adversary* should be regarded as a genuine work of biography or history.

Thomas Fowle, the Cambridge M.A. who had been Oxford's tutor in 1558, was among a group of Puritan clergymen that committed a disorderly protest in Norwich
(*cont'd on p. 20*)

Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 19)

Cathedral in 1570, and Fowle later participated in the lawful suppression of Catholicism and promotion of Puritanism. Nelson informs us that this background “suggests that [Oxford] was tutored during his formative years by a religious fanatic of violent temper” (25). The sight of a professor from Berkeley, of all places, growing hysterical over a protest demonstration is truly amusing. But, of course, Nelson’s target is not Fowle, but Oxford, as Nelson adumbrates his ominous future. I would also like to single out Nelson’s weaselly verb, “suggests,” apparently designed to deflect criticism, as in: “I only suggested . . .”

In June 1563, the scholar Lawrence Nowell wrote that his instruction of Oxford, then age thirteen, “cannot be much longer required.” Nelson comments: “Perhaps Oxford had surpassed Nowell’s capacity to instruct him. More likely—since nothing indicates that Oxford was an enthusiastic student, and much indicates that he was not—Nowell found the youth intractable” (39). Here Nelson at least allows for both good and bad possibilities, although he provides no support for the opinion he places inside the hyphens. But later in the book Nelson returns to this episode: “Lawrence Nowell . . . declare[d] the 17th Earl incapable of further instruction” (437). So much for the pretence of objectivity.

Oxford experienced illness for a few months in 1569-70, then headed north to join the Earl of Sussex’s punitive expedition into Scotland. From Oxford’s medical expenses, plus the fact that a few of his later book dedications came from apothecaries, Nelson opines that, “we may infer that Oxford was chronically sickly, hypochondriacal, or both” (51). Once again Nelson qualifies his childish logic with a weaselly verb, “may infer”—after all, he may infer whatever he likes—but the plural subject, “we,” means that Nelson refuses even to accept responsibility for the inference.

The concluding paragraph of Nelson’s chapter on Oxford’s marriage in December 1571 opens thus: “It is difficult to believe that the happiness of the couple was complete” (77). The supporting evidence is the fact that Oxford’s bride was a virgin, along with Nelson’s opinion that Oxford

was a “buck,” although Nelson offers no evidence that the buck was not also a virgin. Note that Nelson’s requirement for happiness is both unmeasurable and absolute, not merely that the couple’s happiness might have been very great or almost complete. Note also the passive voice, which prevents us from knowing who finds it difficult to believe that this unmeasurable absolute requirement was met. In short, Nelson’s verdict is meaningless.

In 1572 Oxford gained possession of his inheritance, drawing Nelson to remark: “On May 30 the license Oxford had anticipated for most of his conscious life was finally issued” (83). No weasel verb here! Nelson forthrightly presents opinion as fact, but, alas, we are not informed whether the alleged fact is based on tangible evidence or on mind reading.

Nelson’s Chapter 21 consists of miscellaneous items from January to June 1573. He concludes with the observation that Oxford’s wife, age seventeen and a half years, had yet to become pregnant after two and a half years of marriage. Nelson insinuates: “To the extent that Oxford had been sexually active since December 1571, it was evidently with partners other than his young, pretty, and lawful wife” (107). Again the passive voice, along with an insinuation of adultery without a scrap of supporting evidence.

Speaking of the “sodomitical multiple sins . . . laid against Oxford,” Nelson avers that we have “active witnesses in the figures of Henry Howard, Charles Arundel, and Francis Southwell (before he got cold feet)” (214). Nelson’s words clearly imply that Southwell said something implicating Oxford in sodomy, but then got scared. In fact, Southwell’s only comment was, as given in the previous section: “I cannot particularly charge my Lord [Oxford] with pedication,” etc. In this instance, Nelson not only suppresses evidence, he misrepresents the suppressed denial as an affirmation.

Oxford’s first wife died of a fever on June 5, 1588 and was buried at Westminster Abbey on June 25. Nelson quotes an account of her funeral which lists two groups of participants in the ritual: mourners and carriers of banners. Nelson then cites the

observation of Lord Burghley’s biographer, Conyers Read: “It is not recorded that her husband was among those present” (309). And so Nelson would have us conclude that Oxford deserted his wife in death. The trouble with this conclusion, which probably explains why Nelson hides behind Read’s authority, is that neither Lord Burghley nor his two sons are recorded among those present, and so it seems that the Countess of Oxford was also deserted by her father and brothers. Actually all of them may have been there, but not in the two recorded categories of mourners or banner carriers.²⁶ Their absence, on the other hand, might be explained by the fact that the Spanish Armada sailed from Lisbon for England in May, although, unknown to the English, it was regrouping in Corunna on the date of the funeral.

In September 1595 Oxford received a letter of thanks from Henry IV of France for assisting in some unknown business with Queen Elizabeth. Nelson’s conclusion on this episode: “Similar letters sent on the same day to Burghley and the Lord Admiral [Howard of Effingham], and an even longer letter to [the Earl of] Essex, suggest that Oxford’s letter had no personal significance” (349). A minimally competent historian would have noted that Oxford’s association in the eyes of the King of France with the three most powerful and prestigious noblemen in England indicates that Oxford remained a figure of some consequence.

IV. Reading Nelson Against the Grain

Despite Nelson’s efforts to portray Oxford’s life as a half century of unbroken shame and disgrace, some positive aspects may be gleaned by readers who know where to look — and who possess the requisite background knowledge. To begin with, save for the period 1581-3, Oxford remained in favor with his hard-to-please sovereign Queen Elizabeth until her death. Moreover, her perception of his ability and loyalty caused her to choose him for military commands against Spain in 1585 and 1588.

Nelson meticulously records the fairly impressive vote totals that Oxford received for the prestigious Order of the Garter during

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Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 20)

1569-80 and 1585-8.²⁷ Nelson predictably invents an unpleasant explanation for Oxford's failure to gain any votes thereafter until 1604. Regarding his presumption that Oxford refused the Harwich command in 1588, Nelson imagines that: "the Queen did not forget the truth: while she lived, Oxford never received another vote for the Order of the Garter" (319). Aside from the lack of any evidence supporting this assertion, Nelson supposes Elizabeth as a moral coward who was unable to forbid Oxford from taking a prominent place in her victory celebration, but who chose instead to secretly blackball him with regard to the Knights of the Garter. Rather out of character for Elizabeth Tudor, especially as Nelson knows that she regularly ignored the vote totals and picked whomever she preferred for the Garter, while her deep disfavor for the Earl of Southampton did not prevent him from garnering a goodly number of Garter votes in 1599 and 1600.²⁸ But more can be profitably said on this topic.

Perhaps Oxford did not go to Harwich in 1588. Military history is full of soldiers, including some famous ones like George Patton, who used any hook or crook to get to the battle zone and avoid the rear echelon. The superiors of such men may well have regarded them as infernal nuisances, but no one calls them shirkers—except Nelson. But Nelson's contextual ignorance spills over into areas of his supposed competence. In 1589, the year after Oxford's supposed disgrace, Edmund Spenser wrote dedicatory sonnets to fourteen men, one of whom was Oxford, for the first edition of *Faerie Queene*. Nelson prints the sonnet to Oxford (383) but misses the context. The other thirteen men were Hatton, Burghley, Northumberland, Cumberland, Essex, Ormond, Howard of Effingham, Hunsdon, Grey of Wilton, Buckhurst, Walsingham, Sir John Norris, and Raleigh. Aside from Grey and Norris, to whom Spenser had personal connections, the other eleven were the top movers and shakers at Elizabeth's Court.²⁹ Like the supposedly deluded Henry IV of France, Spenser somehow managed to insert Oxford into this roll call of the mighty.

Oxford maintained relations, both friendly and unfriendly, with Sir Walter Raleigh over a period of twenty-five years,

but Nelson bungles their last known connection. After Essex's rebellion and execution in February 1601, Raleigh rose to the peak of his power and influence with the Queen, thereby eliciting from Oxford a witticism about upstarts, which was recorded by Francis Bacon and Sir Robert Naunton. Nelson reports these facts, but somehow twists them into a tale of Oxford gloating over Raleigh's downfall (397), which actually took place in 1603, and about which Oxford is not known to have expressed any opinion. Raleigh's destruction, incidentally, was engineered by the viperous Lord Henry Howard, who poisoned the mind of King James against Raleigh, naming him, among other things, "the greatest Lucifer that hath lived in our age," in a series of letters from 1601-03.³⁰

I will end this section by mentioning several of Oxford's friends. During his separation from his first wife, 1576-81, Oxford formed a double connection to Catherine Bertie, dowager Duchess of Suffolk, whom Nelson mistakenly calls a Countess (172-3, 176-7). In summer 1577 Oxford's sister and the Duchess's son decided to marry, but Oxford objected to the match, reportedly threatening death to his sister's fiancée, while the Duchess objected to Oxford's religion, unbridled tongue, and general demeanor. Nelson misses the obvious problem, which is that Oxford had become, or was soon to become, a Catholic, while the Duchess was a staunch Puritan who had fled England during Queen Mary's reign. But by December the Duchess said to Oxford's sister that, "now I wish to your brother as much good as to my own son." Meanwhile the Duchess tried to arrange a seemingly accidental meeting between Oxford and his infant daughter as a prelude to repairing his marriage. Otherwise, the wedding of Oxford's sister to the Duchess's son proceeded, and Oxford became the friend of his new brother-in-law.³¹

The poems in Nathaniel Baxter's 1606 *Ourania* include three eulogistic stanzas on Oxford (430-1), which merit examination as an acquaintance's reflection on Oxford's life. Baxter's first stanza essentially hails Oxford's prowess in tournaments which occurred in the 1570s and 80s. The first three lines of the second stanza allow that

Oxford wasted his fortune, while lauding him as learned, just, affable, and plain (presumably meaning honest or candid; OED, adjective, iv). The next four lines refer to the Howard-Arundel affair, denying that Oxford plotted against the Queen, but only that he put his trust in men who proved unjust. The third stanza returns to Oxford's learning, which displayed his honor as fruits prove the goodness of a tree. Baxter earns credit for his candor and courage, first by admitting that Oxford was a wastrel, secondly by defending him in the Howard-Arundel matter, as Henry Howard had by then become Earl of Northampton, a privy counselor, and a confidant of King James. Otherwise Baxter gives us four positive adjectives, perhaps appropriate tokens of a life that fell short of its promise.

Nelson spends a considerable number of words trying to portray Oxford as a sex fiend, although, prior to the appearance of Nelson's book, Oxford was known to have strayed only once in his life: his affair with the maid of honor in 1580-1. But Nelson doubles the count: a lighthearted letter from an English knight in Venice in 1587 reveals an old liaison between Oxford and the knight's neighbor, one Virginia Padoana, whom Nelson identified as a courtesan or high class prostitute (138-9). Score for Nelson! I also award him credit for printing the courtesan's reaction, as recorded by the knight, to a man she knew eleven years earlier: "Virginia Padoana . . . honoreth all our nation for my Lord of Oxford's sake." Not a bad compliment.

V. Conclusion

There is a maddening disparity between Nelson the diligent research assistant and Nelson the puerile demonizer. An objective scholar could have transformed Nelson's materials on Oxford's turbulent and messy life into an illuminating study of Elizabeth's Court. Instead readers of *Monstrous Adversary* end up asking who went further off the rails: Oxford or Nelson? And yet Nelson's approach—his belief that historical texts can be made to say whatever he wants them to say—did not arise from a void.

I noted at the start of this essay that Nelson cannot do history—but, after all, he
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Demonography 101 (cont'd from p. 21)

is a literature professor, not a historian. Nelson's treatment of historical texts is, in a surreal sense, a product of his academic discipline. Frederick Crews, one of Nelson's colleagues at the Berkeley English Department, lampooned the wackier tendencies in modern literary criticism in his two bestsellers, *The Pooh Perplex* (1963) and *Postmodern Pooh* (2001). Each book describes an imaginary conference where a group of academic critics analyzes the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, with each critic following his or her own specialty: Freudianism, Marxism, new historicism, post-colonialism, and so on. The critics regard Pooh as belonging to them individually, to be supplied with authorial intention, context, and meaning to suit each critic's tastes. In other words, the critic owns the text. One of Crews's characters, a cyberporn expert, concludes his interpretation with this advice: "If you want to make something else out of it, be my guest—just so you don't call your idea the point of the poem. The same rule applies to *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which is so easy to jam your own thoughts into that you can do it on autopilot after a while . . . The sky's the limit if you cheat a little by leaving out whatever doesn't fit your theory."³²

There, in a nutshell, is *Monstrous Adversary*: the application to historical documents of such fashionable lit-crit inanities as "the author is dead" and "all reading is misreading." Nelson wrenches his documents from their backgrounds, which he then replaces with his own commentary to support his thesis that Oxford was a monster. Nelson no more acknowledges an obligation to the normal rules of historical scholarship than a deconstructionist recognizes rules of literary scholarship. And just as the poststructuralist believes that texts are infinitely malleable, so Nelson feels entitled to recreate the past to suit his fancies.

Endnotes

¹ As a distinguished historian recently explained: "Common sense is prone to assert that 'the facts speak for themselves'. Historians know that this is just what they don't do. Facts . . . have to be scrutinized against a background, a setting, in a context." Richard Fletcher, *Bloodfeud: Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2003), 6.

² Nelson's introductory remark on his documents adds that he, "felt duty-bound to point out their significance for an accurate estimation of Oxford's character." As it turns out, this does not mean establishing the documents' contexts, but only asserting their implications.

³ See documents 3.1[3] and 4.2[2] on Nelson's website.

⁴ This passage is in Nelson's document 4.3[1.2], which he mentions on p. 206 as "(LIB-1/2)." I have modernized this and subsequent quotations.

⁵ See my "Response to Alan Nelson's 'Oxford in Venice: New Light on an Old Question,'" *Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter*, v. 31, n. 2B (Spring 1995), 7-11.

⁶ Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1960), 322-4. See also Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (New York, 1961), 303-6.

⁷ Nelson and I both give the Old Style (O.S.) dates used in Elizabethan England, while the Spanish and most modern books use the New Style (N.S.) introduced in 1582, which adds ten days, e.g., July 19 O.S. is July 29 N.S.

⁸ See Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (New York, 1991), 385-94.

⁹ Howard was readmitted to Elizabeth's presence around 1597; see Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London, 1982), 15.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York, 1958), 257.

¹¹ Reference to "satire," p. 275. On p. 472, Chapter 51, note 3, Nelson attempts to overturn the judgment of the modern editor of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, D. C. Peck, on Arundel's authorial involvement, without offering the least justification for his bare opinion.

¹² See Nelson's website documents 4.2 by Arundel and 3.1, 3.2, and 3.6 by Howard.

¹³ Nelson's documents 3.6.1 and 3.6.2.

¹⁴ *Statutes of the Realm*, 1 Edward VI, c. 12, §22; 5&6 Edward VI, c. 11, §9; 1&2 Philip & Mary, c. 10, §11, my emphasis. See my "Hamlet and the Two Witness Rule," *Notes and Queries*, 44 (Dec. 97), 498-503.

¹⁵ Nelson's documents 2.3.3, 5.7, and 5.8. On the treason statutes and witnesses, see Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765-9), 3.363-70; 4.350-2.

¹⁶ See also Nelson's documents 3.6.1[3] by Howard and 4.2[6.4] by Arundel.

¹⁷ Nelson understates the period of Oxford's disfavor by having the Queen award him a tournament prize in November 1581 (177-8); the tournament was actually in 1584. See Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* (Berkeley, 1977), 134; and Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great*, 258.

¹⁸ See my article, "The Earl of Oxford and the Order of the Garter," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, v. 32, n. 2 (Spring 1996), 1, 8-11; online at .

¹⁹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Howard,

Henry, Earl of Northampton.

²⁰ Chaps. 13, 40-2. See also pp. 140-1, 166-7, Chaps. 31, 35, 37-9, and 44.

²¹ Chap. 48 is slightly over two pages long, but half of it consists of quotations; the half written by Nelson is a little over one page.

²² The suppression of Southwell's evidence is on pp. 204, 214, and 259. Actually Nelson does cite Southwell's refusal to charge Oxford with pederasty, but changes the verb from Southwell's "can not" to "will not" (214).

²³ Compare pp. 140-1, 213, and 215 to pp. 155-7.

²⁴ See Peck, *Northampton*, 11 and 220, n. 17, on Howard as a Spanish spy; and 38-40 and 225, nn. 70-2, on his role in the poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury. I should add that while Howard clearly arranged for the false imprisonment of Overbury, he may not have been involved in the actual murder.

²⁵ See also documents 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, and 2.2.1 on Nelson's website.

²⁶ Sir Philip Sidney's funeral procession is detailed in a book of 32 plates showing 320 men, while indicating an actual total of 484. Seven men, including Sidney's two brothers, are designated as "mourners," while nine men carry flags. Sidney's widow and sister are omitted, probably because the women waited for the procession at the cathedral. Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney, Courtier Poet* (New Haven, 1991), 308-39.

²⁷ See Nelson's Index under "Garter."

²⁸ "The Earl of Oxford and the Order of the Garter," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, v. 32, n. 2, 1, 8-11.

²⁹ *Faerie Queene* was printed in 1590, but was registered for publication in Dec. 1589. Spenser had been Grey's secretary in Ireland, while Norris was governor of Munster, the province where Spenser lived. Of the thirteen men, all were or became Knights of the Garter, save Raleigh, Walsingham, and Norris. Fourteen of England's eighteen earls (as of Dec. 1589; Leicester, incidentally, died in 1588) did not get dedicatory sonnets.

³⁰ Peck, *Northampton*, 19-21.

³¹ See Nelson's Index entries for Bertie, Peregrine, and Vere, Mary.

³² Frederick Crews, *Postmodern Pooh* (New York, 2001), 137.

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Book Review

Shakespeare's Fingerprints, by Michael Brame and Galina Popova. Adonis-Editions on the Internet, 2002.

By Richard F. Whalen

Two professors at the University of Washington have published the first of three volumes arguing that Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, was the author not only of Shakespeare's works but also of the writings of many other Elizabethans whose names he appropriated. And they explain why in their view Oxford used so many different pen names.

Their work, begun a decade ago but generally not known until now, uses linguistic analysis of texts to find "Shakespeare's Fingerprints." They look for parallels in words, phrases, wordplay and the expression of ideas found in Oxford, Shakespeare and the other writers. Their conclusions will challenge Stratfordian scholars, who will dismiss them, at least initially, and will startle many Oxfordians, who may see a challenge to their conception of Oxford's genius.

The authors, Professors Michael Brame and Galina Popova, are professionals in linguistics. He studied linguistics under Noam Chomsky at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has been a professor at the University of Washington for more than thirty years and is editor of *Linguistic Analysis*. She is an affiliate professor at the university and also a specialist in Russian language and literature.

Their linguistic analyses tend to confirm what many Oxfordians have surmised based on the literary/biographical evidence, namely, that Oxford was the youthful author of free translations of *Romeus and Juliet* published as by "Ar. Br." (Arthur Brooke) and of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* published as by his uncle Arthur Golding; and that later he may well have written "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," attributed to George Gascoigne, the plays of his secretary John Lyly, and even the works of Robert Greene, including *Groatsworth of Wit*, which Stratfordians consider key evidence for their man from Stratford. But they go much farther.

The authors argue that Oxford used as

pseudonyms the names of more than thirty other Elizabethans, besides "Shakespeare" of Stratford. These include E. C. Esquier, George Peele, George Pettie, George Tuberville and George Whetstone (the "eo" in the "Georges" is considered significant). In this first volume, they offer proofs for nine appropriated names and promise that in future volumes they will confirm the rest—including, of all people, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe and Philip Sidney.

Oxford published under the names of many real people, the authors suggest, because his goal was to create singlehandedly an English language and literature, seemingly the work of many writers, that would surpass French and Italian in importance and would serve the new "mercantile-based Protestant regime." As the authors state in their concluding chapter:

"We have attempted to explain why de Vere adopted a range of pseudonyms and in particular why he appropriated names from living individuals, noting that pseudonyms based on names of living individuals served to instill within the populace at large an impression of a literature created by the masses for the masses, including commoners such as William of Stratford. Such an impression not only furthered de Vere's personal literary agenda, it meshed with Tudor interests and delivered the added bonus of a way to plausible denial by distancing that literature from government sponsorship."

They also expand upon wordplay that Oxfordians find in Shakespeare that points to Oxford as the author, especially the frequent use of the word "ever" and its variants for E. Vere and "O" for Oxford, as well as use of the Biblical phrase "I am that I am."

The authors say they were "originally inspired by both an interest in the formal properties of Shakespeare's language approached from a linguist's point of view along with a desire to better understand the sonnets and hopefully to provide answers to some of the questions left unanswered by orthodox critics."

They have read widely and deeply in Elizabethan literature and Oxfordian works,

and they demonstrate a firm grasp of the authorship controversy as it is debated today. Their writing is straightforward and colloquial, without the academic jargon of most English departments. Their scholarship is most impressive, even though their far-reaching conclusions will raise eyebrows.

To make their case, they employ the methodology of logic, including theorems, hypotheses, lemmas, and congruence symbols, which they explain in an appendix. Readers untrained in logic and linguistics will have no trouble understanding their techniques.

The 466-page volume is full of language convergences they find in Oxford, Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans, many of them strikingly powerful, especially in *Romeus and Juliet*. Some of the convergences, however, may be less convincing than others. At one point, the authors refer to "subtle linguistic clues" that may be too subtle to be accepted. They defend the validity of the subtle clues by arguing that it is the cumulative effect that is most persuasive.

Stratfordians will object that the parallels in language are nothing more than the common usage of the Elizabethan Age, "a shared store of vocabulary and expression," as the authors phrase the objection. Thus, the Stratfordians will argue, there is no significance to the language parallels; it's mere coincidence.

Anticipating the objection, the authors point to the cumulative effect of the parallels in language. They add that the "commonplace language" argument often fails "to determine who was responsible for the 'commonplace' in the first place" and why the so-called commonplaces are "repeated with such vigor." They suggest that there are deeper questions that have been begged and that Stratfordian critics "have not fully understood the nature of what they themselves claim to be commonplaces."

To bolster their argument, the authors cite a noted Stratfordian scholar, Kenneth Muir. He once wrote that if, for example, *Troilus and Cressida* had been published

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anonymously "it would have been easy to demonstrate Shakespeare's authorship by its links with *Lucrece* and the *Sonnets*, with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*." If Muir can do it, say Brame and Popova, so can we.

Nevertheless, their response to anticipated objections may seem inadequate to some readers. What needs to be done to forestall the inevitable skepticism is the hard (and boring) work of combing through the writings of other Elizabethans to show that their writings do not have the fingerprints that are found in the writings of Oxford, Shakespeare and the other

Elizabethans whose names Oxford appropriated. The next two volumes may address this issue.

In any case, it's worth noting that although Spenser, Marlowe and Sidney are among the cast of Elizabethans whose names the authors believe Oxford appropriated, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson and George Chapman are not.

This first volume by Brame and Popova promises a trilogy and further writings that will no doubt be the most daring and provocative work on the Shakespeare authorship question ever produced by

credentialed professors. Their conclusions are far-reaching and potentially explosive for Elizabethan studies.

Richard F. Whalen, a past president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, is the author of Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon, now in its seventh printing from Greenwood/Praeger. His research articles and book reviews have appeared in this newsletter for almost a decade, and also in The Oxfordian and in Harper's Magazine.

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Oxfordian News

include poetry readings and comparisons between the works written by Oxford in his youth, under his own name, and those published under a pseudonym. Following the annual general meeting, dinner will be aboard a similar vessel. For further information, contact Christopher Dams at chdams@lineone.net.

Dutch Authorship Conference

The First Dutch Conference on the Authorship Question, "Who Was

Shakespeare? The Man Behind the Mask," will take place in Utrecht, The Netherlands, July 8-10, 2004. The Conference will bring together historians, social scientists, literary and theatre professionals, students, and Shakespeare admirers to discuss the authorship question. The conference program consists of lectures by invited speakers, parallel sessions for participants to present their papers, an optional excursion and a social program.

For further information, visit their

website at <http://nse.let.uu.nl/shakespeare2.rtf> or contact: Jan Scheffer, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst at the Pieter Baan Centre, Utrecht (jhs@worldonline.nl) or Sandra Schruijer, professor of organizational psychology at Tilburg University (schruijer@yahoo.com).

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Address correction requested

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