



# The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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"Dedicated to Researching and Honoring the True Bard"



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"...I have seen a lady's nose that has been blue, but not her eyebrow" *The Winter's Tale* 2.1.14

Fall 2007

## William Shakespeare and the Authorship Controversy: A Study in Literary Triumph and Historical Tragedy

Allegra Krasznecwicz

*Allegra Krasznecwicz is a junior at Santa Catalina School in Monterey, California. She recently won the Monterey County and the California State History Day Competitions for her paper on the Shakespeare Authorship controversy. Although she started reading and performing Shakespeare in junior high school, it was during the summer of her freshman year in high school when she spent a month in London and Oxford that her interest in Shakespeare and the authorship mystery began to develop. Under the tutelage of her middle school teacher, Ms. Forbes Keaton, Allegra continued her research into the subject and decided to develop it into a paper for the History Day Competition. She presented her paper on October 6, 2007, to the Shakespeare Authorship Conference in Carmel.*

"To be or not to be, that is the question." This familiar quotation from *Hamlet* is one

of the countless manifestations expressing Shakespeare's profound understanding of the human condition that has transcended the centuries. His mastery of words and his ability to express the mind's intricacies with the utmost grace, insightfulness, and poignancy has bestowed upon him a legacy of genius. Behind his masterpieces however lies a puzzling void of primary sources concerning his private life and public involvement in Elizabethan England's literary society. This absence



Allegra

sance society. The triumph of Shakespeare is his prolific literary genius expressed within the most renowned works of literature; however, the authorship controversy illuminates a tragedy for historians, scholars, and actors who wish to further their insight of the author and his works beyond the timeless words to discover their historical significance.

*His mastery of words and his ability to express the mind's intricacies with the utmost grace, insightfulness, and poignancy has bestowed upon him a legacy of genius. Behind his masterpieces however lies a puzzling void of primary sources concerning his private life and public involvement in Elizabethan England's literary society.*

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of documentation raises suspicion in the minds of many Shakespearean scholars and historians, leading to a question regarding the authorship of the plays. In response, an alternative candidate has been advanced as the potential author: Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, whose well-documented experiences at court would have allowed him to use the plays as an expression of the follies and achievements of English Renais-

The authorship controversy reminds scholars and historians alike that the masterful plays, regardless of their author, remain the most triumphant works of the English language. Shakespeare captured the essence of humanity and displayed it in a timeless array of words that have moved millions throughout history to tears of laughter and grief. Countless, frequently-repeated ex-

(cont'd on p. 6)

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## President's Page

Dear Friends:

As our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year winds down and we look ahead toward our 51<sup>st</sup> year, I want to mention a few significant developments with you and also share my thoughts about the state of our society.

First of all, a quick reminder. Publication of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary anthology of articles continues to proceed apace. We hope to have the completed volume in the hands of members by early 2008. The volume is entitled: "Report My Cause Aright." Society members will receive one copy of the anthology free of charge but we encourage members to buy extra copies and give them away as gifts to friends, relatives, libraries, and schools. We need your support to ensure that this anthology not only helps us spread the word about Oxford and the authorship issue, but also turns into a fundraising vehicle for the Society.

For those who could not attend our annual meeting and conference in Carmel, California, in October, here are some highlights from my perspective. In terms of important breaking news from the annual meeting, I call your attention to the following items:

- 1) At our annual meeting on Friday morning, October 5th, Stephanie Hughes made a surprise announcement. She told the annual meeting that she would be stepping down as editor of *The Oxfordian* after publication of the current edition. Stephanie explained that she had been giving the matter a great deal of thought for many months and that she ultimately decided it would be a good time for her to resign after completing work on the tenth edition of *The Oxfordian*. She also mentioned that she had several

other projects she wanted to work on, including a book she has neglected for too long and that she simply couldn't continue to devote the enormous amount of time and energy required to produce *The Oxfordian* every year. Society members present gave Stephanie a very warm round of applause and a standing ovation in appreciation for her excellent work and dedication over the years. Now the Society will focus on the difficult task of trying to replace Stephanie at the helm of *The Oxfordian*. A number of impressive candidates have already expressed interest in the position. The Publications Committee and the Board of Directors hope to be able to announce a decision by February 2008.

- 2) Former Society President Frank Davis did not seek re-election to the Board of Trustees. I want to thank Frank for his years of dedicated service on the Board. Frank assures me that he will be an active member of the Society and that he will continue serving on the Publications Committee.
- 3) I want to formally welcome our newest member of the Board of Trustees: Andrew Frye. Andrew is a high school English teacher who has made a point of introducing his students to the Shakespeare authorship issue and the case for Oxford. I believe Andrew will make a major contribution to the work of the Society, especially as it relates to our outreach efforts to students, teachers and the educational community in general. Welcome aboard Andrew!

(cont'd on p. 13)

## GREETINGS

Welcome to the SOS Newsletter. This edition is dedicated almost entirely to the SOS/Shakespeare Fellowship Conference in Carmel, California held in early October. As always, the annual conference was informative, inspirational, and plain ol' fun. You can read a brief summary of the conference in this newsletter. The star of the "show" was Allegra Krasznegewicz, a high school junior from Monterey, California who wrote an essay on Oxford authorship and entered it in an essay contest and became a state finalist. You can read more about her and her essay in this newsletter as well an interview with

her conducted by SOS president Matthew Cossolotto. It is pretty well understood that the future of authorship studies is with the youth. With that in mind, I threw in the article I presented at the conference which has to do with Shakespeare in the classroom. Richard Whalen contributed an obituary and an update on Oxford publication. John Shehan gave a report on the "Declaration of reasonable Doubt" which he has made into an important international document. It appears here again. If you haven't done so, go to the website and sign it. Enjoy this newsletter.

Lew Tate, ed. [tate3211@bellsouth.net](mailto:tate3211@bellsouth.net)

## Carmel Authorship Conference

By Richard Joyrich

The Carmel Authorship Conference convened at the Golden Bough Playhouse in Carmel, CA. Everyone was very pleased with the venue; Carmel is a gorgeous place.

There were four talks Thursday afternoon. Dr. Earl Showerman started us out with another of his series of talks on Shakespeare's use of Greek sources, most of which are typically ignored by orthodox scholars who find it difficult to reconcile with the education received by their favored author. Dr. Showerman pointed out that, although we know about Shakespeare's use of *Plutarch's Lives* for the plots of the Roman plays, Shakespeare also used Plutarch to get names for most of the characters in *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Timon of Athens*. Showerman points out that this use of names of historical or mythic-historical people for characters in plays can lend some dimension to the characters for those in the audience who are educated enough to pick up on this (another indication that the plays were probably first written for the court and also that the author was "educated" as well).

Dr. Helen Gordon described the two secret societies which existed in Elizabethan times and still do to some extent, the Freemasons and the Rosicrucians. She maintains along with other scholars that there are many uses of terms and ideas from these groups in the Shakespeare plays and sonnets. There is some evidence that Oxford was part of both of these groups (as was Francis Bacon), whereas there is no evidence that William of Stratford had any ties to them. She then proceeded to discuss Oxford's use of cryptography which he based on Rosicrucian and

Freemason coding techniques to code messages into the dedication to the sonnets regarding the names of Henry Wriothesley, Elizabeth, E de Vere, as well as their mottos, with the underlying subtext of Wriothesley being Oxford and Elizabeth's bastard son.

After a break John Hamill gave his talk on the sonnets but from a completely different interpretation. This time it was from the point of view that the sonnets refer to homosexual love of the poet for the Fair Youth, not love of a father for his son, Hamill's take on the sonnets is that the Dark Lady is Elizabeth Trentham, Oxford's second wife and that Henry Vere, Oxford's son and heir, may have been in reality a bastard son of Elizabeth Trentham and Henry Wriothesley, the Fair Youth. He gets much of this from consideration of the anonymous *Willobie His Avis*. The marriage of Oxford and Elizabeth and the birth of Henry Vere took place in 1592-3. In 1593 the name "Shakespeare" appeared for the first time as the author of "Venus and Adonis".

The last talk on Thursday, by Lew Tate, was not really about the authorship. It was more about how Shakespeare is disappearing from being required study at colleges. Tate also related that he more successfully taught Shakespeare by relating it to current events and ideas. His talk focused on some of the parallels between *Henry V* and our current post-9/11 and Iraq situations.

Friday morning began with the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, during which a resolution was passed which directed the Board of Trustees to work with the Shakespeare Fellowship to form a new combined organization

The talks began with Dr. Frank Davis on an intriguing annotation found in the First Folio belonging to Glasgow University which amplified his recent article in the *SOS Newsletter*. In the "List of Principall Actors" found at the beginning of the Folio, listing William Shakespeare first, someone, (evidence shows that he was an original owner or at least a contemporary with the Folio), put short annotations under eleven of the actors' names. Dr. Davis discussed evidence that the annotator knew the actors personally or knew that they were no longer alive at the time of the printing of the Folio. The outlying annotation is under Shakespeare. Glasgow University reads it as "leass for making". Davis finds in the OED that "leass, which could also be spelled many ways including "leass", had a meaning of "false or untrue or lie" until 18th century." Making" was,

of course, a term for writing or producing a work such as a play. Is this annotator implying that Shakespeare was NOT a writer of the plays?

Lynne Kositsky then reported on her fortuitous discovery of what apparently was Strachy's first draft of the famous "letter" which orthodox scholars claim HAD TO BE a source for *The Tempest*, fixing its date at this "first draft" which might not really be written by Strachy but was certainly the basis for Strachy's later letter. This later letter, called True Reportory, was 23,000

words. The earlier letter is much shorter (3,000 words) and does not contain any of the terminology found in the later "letter" which orthodox scholars claim Shakespeare used in his description of the tempest in the play. Kositky's point is that Strachy took this earlier letter and added (plagarized) many travel books and descriptions of storms, etc to make up his famous "letter" which was not published until 1625. It was these other descriptions (all found in books before 1590) that were the real sources for Shakespeare.

During lunch at the elegant La Playa Hotel we heard Stephanie Hughes talk about how this is the 10th anniversary of her editing the Oxfordian and that it has been a wonderful time, but she feels it is time for her to step down as edito. The search is already on for someone else to continue this publication. It is scholarly and is therefore accepted at University libraries and the Library of Congress. Newsletters are not.

After lunch Dr. Roger Stritmatter gave a humorous talk called "Lynne and Roger's Excellent Adventure" detailing their attempts to give a paper on the Strachy letter at various international and national orthodox Shakespeare meetings. Of course, the humor was in how he changed the locations and names of the meeting organizers to "protect the guilty," not in how Lynne and Roger were treated. Even though their paper is not "Oxfordian," except that their



Scholars at Work

conclusion destroys the necessity of dating the *Tempest* to 1611 as they show that the sources Strachy used to write his "letter" and that Shakespeare used in *The Tempest* for his descriptions of storm scenes were dated much earlier, they were not invited to present their paper at any of these meetings and were treated quite badly in the various E-mail exchanges which ensued. However, some good news is that some articles by them WILL be appearing soon in traditional journals such as *Review of English Studies* and *Shakespeare Yearbook*.

Richard Roe then gave another in his series of talks regarding the Italian connection to Shakespeare, hopefully soon to be published in book form. Roe went over some history of relations between Spain and Venice which resulted in alterations of how Venetian merchants did business such as, using foreign ships instead of only Venetian ones and adopting new banking practices. This all took place around 1573 and had a profound impact on the way English merchants would have to do business around the Mediterranean. Roe showed that Shakespeare knew about these new business practices and describes them in *Merchant of Venice* and *Taming of the Shrew*. Of course, de Vere was right there in Venice and other parts just at this time.. It was pointed out that the new ways of doing business in Italy and environs was "headline news" in the late 1570s NOT in the 1590s when orthodox scholars maintain these plays were written. He therefore concludes that de Vere wrote them in the 1570s for the court and other educated audiences which would be interested in the new business models and that the plays were later produced for the "masses."

The next talk, by Marty Hyatt was about how the Sonnets have many underlying structural patterns. He described one of them wherein the Sonnets can be made to represent a Calendar of Weeks. This may help in dating certain sonnets or seeing how certain sonnets can be found to have special meaning for the author. The important point of this structure is that it can be found without any preconceived idea of what the exact meaning for the author might exist.

John Shahan then reported on his "Declaration of Reasonable Doubt" which made an amazing world-wide splash recently when all the major news services picked up on the public signing of it by Derek Jacobi and Mark Rylance. There are now 1103 verified signatures, and Shahan states that he expects Jeremy Irons, Michael York, and Roland Emmerich, who is still planning on making his movie about Oxford, will sign the Declaration soon. If you haven't signed yet, please go to [www.DoubtAboutWill.org](http://www.DoubtAboutWill.org).

The day finished with a rousing game of Oxfordian Jeopardy hosted by Alex McNeil. This is always a favorite with conference attendees. The game was won by Stephanie Hughes, but Ren Draya



Johns, Shahan and Hamill

and Michael A'dair gave it a good try. This seemed to be the hardest Jeopardy challenge yet from Alex.

Saturday morning began with the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship, at which was approved the same resolution passed by the SOS to direct the Boards of the SOS and SF to form a Joint Merger Committee to study the possibility of forming a new organization out of the two existing ones.

After the meeting the presentations began with Katherine Chiljan speaking on *A Lover's Complaint*, a short work mostly neglected by scholars. It was printed along with the Sonnets in 1609. It concerns a woman who is spurned by a young man she loves. The description of the young man seems to correspond with what we know about the young Oxford. Chiljan reported that the orthodox scholar Brian Vickers has been pursuing removing *A Lover's Complaint* from the Shakespeare Canon, believing it is by John Davies. She disputes this and thinks that Vickers may be doing so because he recognizes the similarity of the young lover to Oxford.

The next talk was by Ramon Jimenez on the three Henry VI plays. It was a kind of survey on what these plays contain and how they are actually quite good and deserve to be staged more often. Jimenez told us that there is more disagreement by orthodox scholars over these three plays than any other ones by Shakespeare; such as, what order were they written in, whether there was collaboration with other playwrights, and how they were related to earlier anonymous plays. With a chuckle, Jimenez said that there are only three things the scholars agree on and, ironically, they are wrong on all three. These are that the plays are Shakespeare's first history plays, that they were written between 1589-92, and that they were written by William of Stratford. The presentation was spiced up by performance of excerpts of the plays by professional actors. In this case it was none other than Stephen Moorer and Julie Hughett who would later be seen as the Royal Couple in *Macbeth*).

A preview of the coming generation of Oxfordians was on view with the talk by Allegra Kraszneczewicz. She is a junior in a local high school who recently won the California History Day paper competition and placed highly in the national competition with her paper on the Authorship of Shakespeare promoting Oxford as the author. She presented her winning paper and then thanked her English teacher, who, although he is Stratfordian, nevertheless gave her the encouragement she needed. The

audience was left with a very optimistic feeling that the paradigm shift is really beginning.

During a catered lunch right there at the Golden Bough we then heard Richard Whalen talk about the mostly overlooked subplot of the Thane of Ross in the play *Macbeth*. The basic idea is that



Richard I and Richard II

Ross is not just a messenger. He is actually a calculating courtier engaged in subtle intrigue which Macbeth recognizes and uses. As Whalen points out, this is exactly the kind of thing Oxford saw at Elizabeth's court firsthand.

Immediately after this talk we all rushed around to the other side of the building to enter the smaller Circle Theater to actually see the play *Macbeth*, starring Stephen Moorer. It was a very exciting and well done performance of the play, marred only a little by the fact that the part of the Thane of Ross was cut out. Apparently the director hadn't heard Richard Whalen's talk yet.

After the matinee performance of *Macbeth*, the presentations continued with two talks on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Stephanie Hughes discussed her opinion (gaining favor with many Oxfordians) that this play was written for the May, 1594 wedding of Thomas Heneage and Mary Browne, dowager Countess of Southampton, the mother of Henry Wriothesely-the likely Fair Youth of the Sonnets. Stephanie is of the opinion (she is quick to point out that it's only a theory, without any "hard" evidence) that Mary Browne was a young Oxford's first love before she was forced into marriage with the 2nd Earl of Southampton in 1564. Hughes then painted a somewhat lyrical description of Oxford's unhappy childhood spent without his parents or any children of his own age around and how such a childhood could have been the impetus for the development of his artistic talents.

Peter Austin-Zacharias then spoke of the world of the fairies in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* and how it could be looked at in various ways such as a world of lightness and innocence or a world of darkness and terror. He gave examples of how different artistic people described it through their work, encompassing many genres of art or music. He particularly focused on Mendelssohn with the differences between his earlier "Overture" and his later "Incidental Music" and the painter John Henry Fuseli who painted scenes from the play in a very dark manner.

After these two talks on *MND* the conference attendees made their way across town, about ten blocks, and up the hill to the outdoor Forest Theater for a catered picnic dinner, followed by a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The performance was very well received. Stephen Moorer, as the director, brought out the comic elements in the play extremely well. It was certainly a fine way to end this very full day of the Conference.

Sunday morning began with a Panel Discussion on the two plays presented, *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, led by Ren Draya with Richard Whalen, editor of the new Oxfordian edition of *Macbeth* and Stephen Moorer. Many insights into these plays

and the way they had been performed were brought up. Particular attention was centered on whether Macbeth's death had suicidal elements as was presented in Stephen's performance and the use of comedy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Rima Greenhill then gave the third in her series of talks on *Love's Labour's Lost* and the hidden allusions to contemporary political and economic matters between England and Russia. This talk discussed the naming of some of the characters in the play and the historical Russians they are meant to represent or at least remind the educated audiences of. In brief, the correlations are Don Armado=Ivan the Terrible, Costard=Ivan's first son, also named Ivan, whom Ivan the Terrible accidentally killed, Sir Nathaniel=Fyodor, Ivan's second son and successor as czar, Moth=Dmitri, Ivan's third son, who was deposed and killed by Boris Gudenov, who

corresponds to Holofernes in the play. Of course the historical relationships between these people do not correspond with the relationships of the characters in the play completely, but there are interesting "clues" in what they say to each other. Greenhill's conclusion is that the author of the play knew intimate details of the political dealings with Russia; *i.e.* he had to be a court insider, and the play was, at least originally, intended for a court audience.

Dr. Earl Showerman then returned for another of his talks about Greek sources for Shakespeare plays. In this one he discussed the influence of Euripides' *Alcestis* on the ending of *Much Ado About Nothing* and also *The Winter's Tale*. It is the source of the "coming to life of someone thought dead" idea as well as other references in the play. Dr. Showerman talked about how orthodox scholars, while recognizing *Alcestis* as the source for this plot device, tend to explain that Shakespeare got it through intermediate works which were published in Latin or English. However, it was pointed out that these putative other sources either didn't mention the "coming to life" part of the story or were published in Paris where William of Stratford couldn't get them. The real author had to be able to access the original Greek work.

Finally, although sadly, it was time for the farewell luncheon banquet. During the lunch Matthew Cosolotto gave his talk about some highlights of the 50 years the SOS has been in existence.

During the Awards Ceremony, Richard Whalen was named Oxfordian of the Year and Stephanie Hughes was thanked again for her 10 years as editor of the Oxfordian.

There was barely time to thank Stephen Moorer for the amazing job he did in putting on the Conference before he had to leave to prepare for another performance of *Macbeth*.



Stephanie Hopkins Hughes

(Authorship Controversy continued from page 1)

pressions and phrases are derived from his works, such as: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be. . ." (*Hamlet*), "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (*Richard III*), "Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (*Twelfth Night*), as well as "forever and a day" (*As You Like It*), "I have not slept one wink" (*Cymbeline*), and "in my mind's eye" (*Hamlet*). Furthermore, 1,700 words in the Oxford English Dictionary such as *dwindle*, *laughable*, *majestic*, and *lustrous* were coined by Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is not only his mastery of words that enraptures readers and audiences; Shakespeare's portrayal of love, insanity, jealousy, and vengefulness as manifested by his complex characters remain the most profound interpretations of the human psyche. His plays proffer insights that are both riveting and relevant no matter the century or culture. Both on stage and more recently on film, actors and directors including Lawrence Olivier, Orson Welles, and Kenneth Branagh have delighted in performing Shakespeare's dramatization of the human condition and contributing to the multitude of creative interpretations of his works. Because the themes and characters are enduring, the plays can be set and dressed in any location or time period. For example, modern film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays include *Richard III* directed by Richard Loncraine set in Fascist England and Baz Luhrmann's version of *Romeo + Juliet* set in L.A. and involving gangs.

Despite the timeless truths so eloquently expounded upon in the plays, tragedy is an inherent aspect of Shakespearean scholarship for both those who accept William Shakspeare from Stratford-upon-Avon, frequently referred to as the "Man from Stratford," as well as those who advocate Oxford's authorship. For Anti-Stratfordians, this tragedy transcends the attribution of the plays. Dr. Roger Stritmatter, a professor at Coppin State University, comments that if de Vere were to become the accepted author, the "outcome will not only affect how we read and understand [the plays], but even has implications which go far beyond the field of Shakespearean studies per se, involving as it does questions of literary psychology and history."<sup>2</sup> To historians passionate about the intricacies of Elizabethan England, this possible loss dims our perception of the period and robs scholars of a new dimension of historical richness that could be further investigated if the plays' authorship would be reexamined. For Stratfordians, the tragedy of the authorship question is just as profound. They find it unfortunate that some scholars overlook the beauty of Shakespeare's writing while searching for clues pertaining to authorship. Dr. Philip Schwyzer, a professor at University of Exeter explains, "The authorship controversy has led many otherwise intelligent and sensitive people to read the plays, not as works of art, but as puzzles to be solved or 'cracked.'"<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the lack of records documenting the life of the "Man from Stratford" cannot be disregarded in Stratfordian studies of the plays. This causes many to view Shakespeare's works as literary achievements isolated from the author, depriving them of the enrichment gained through the analysis of how an author's life experiences, status in society, and interaction with other contemporary literary figures affect his works.

These factors cannot be expounded upon in traditional Shakespearean studies because historians possess very few sources that

provide concrete evidence regarding the "Man from Stratford." His birth in April 1564 to John Shakspeare, an illiterate glove maker,<sup>4</sup> was recorded in the baptismal record of Holy Trinity Church. The documentation reads, "26 Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakspeare xxx."<sup>5</sup> For the next 18 years there are no documents concerning Shakespeare, nor are there references to him as a student at either the Stratford Grammar School or in contemporary lists of students at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.<sup>6</sup> Even if the young Shakspeare did attend grammar school, the rudimentary Latin and the fundamental grammatical principles of the English language taught at these institutions do not nearly account for the vast reservoir of knowledge the playwright exemplifies in his writing.

Many Stratfordians account for this lack of education by emphasizing that Shakespeare's innate genius was enough to write the plays, and a man of such outstanding and unparalleled intellect did not need a university education. Yet the plays clearly demonstrate that their author possessed a vast array of knowledge in countless subjects including: law, court life, sports of the aristocracy (hunting and falconry), philosophy, Biblical scholarship, English and European history, French, Italian, Spanish, and the classical languages, music, astronomy, medicine, military exploits, navigation, and the exploration of the New World. The sheer volume of topics that are expressed with considerable fluency reveals not only natural genius but intellectual augmentation through extensive education as well. For example, lawyers, including Nathaniel Holes of the U.S. Supreme Court and the British judge Lord Penzance, have often taken up the side of Anti-Stratfordians because they recognize that Shakespeare's substantial understanding of the law would have required some type of legal education.<sup>7</sup>

Yet it is not only the playwright's impressive reservoir of knowledge about various subjects that holds scholars and audiences in awe. Shakespeare was a master of the English language, possessed a massive vocabulary, and is credited to be the creator of 1,904 words. The nearest comparisons are as follows: Francis Bacon with 866 words, Ben Johnson with 838, George Chapman with 802, and Edmund Spenser with 606.<sup>8</sup> In response to this ongoing dispute about the education required to write the plays, Elizabethan scholar Joseph Sobran states, "In the end, calling the Shakespeare plays works of genius tells us very little about them. 'Genius' is not an explanation. . . We can't make up the deficit in our knowledge of Shakespeare using superlatives."<sup>9</sup> Yet because of the inescapable absence of documentation surrounding the "Man from Stratford's" education, extraordinary genius is the only solution traditional Shakespearean scholars can rely on.

This trend reflecting a dearth of records pertaining to the "Man from Stratford" continues throughout the rest of his life. The second document historians possess that sheds light on this elusive figure is a church register recording his marriage as "willm Shagspere" to "Anne hathwey of Stratford in the Dioces of worcester maiden"<sup>10</sup> on November 28, 1582. Additional parish registers recording the births of his three children conclude the documentation of the first half of Shakspeare's life. The following period, from 1585 to 1592, is known as the "lost years" due to the absence of any public or personal references to Shakspeare,<sup>11</sup> though it is speculated he trav-

eled to London and began his literary career during this time. The plays began production in 1594 though none bear the playwright's name until four years later.<sup>12</sup> A record from 1599 lists Shakspeare as one of the owners of the Globe Theater, home to the acting troupe known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, suggesting that he had achieved financial success.<sup>13</sup> From 1604 to 1611 there are no London records mentioning his name,<sup>14</sup> the very years during which Stratfordians date the majority of Shakespeare's most well-known plays. Scholars conclude that he was probably in Stratford during the height of his literary career, alienated from London's intellectual stimulation. Until his death in 1616, Shakspeare's name appears in only a few inconsequential legal transactions when he testifies in a lawsuit over a dowry in 1612 and purchases a house in the Blackfriars district in 1613.<sup>15</sup>

Accompanying the scarce documentation of the "Man from Stratford's" life is a perplexing absence of interaction between the playwright and other literary figures. Although Shakespeare's contemporaries including Ben Johnson and Edmund Spenser critiqued and praised his plays and poetry, they never commented on the author as an individual beyond his works. These references are impersonal and valuable solely from a literary, not a historical, perspective. Furthermore, during an era when other authors were honored by eulogies and ceremonies at their death, there is no such documentation recorded for Shakespeare. Only a month before the bard's death, the less celebrated playwright Francis Beaumont died and was recognized by a multitude of eulogies and a burial in Westminster Abbey. Both Ben Johnson and Edmund Spenser, two other prominent literary figures, were similarly honored at their deaths with eulogies and interment in Westminster Abbey.<sup>16</sup> In fact, no contemporaries mention Shakespeare or pay tribute to his legacy until 1623 when *The First Folio* was printed with many of his previously unpublished plays.

Yet perhaps the most bewildering and frustrating document of Stratfordian studies is Shakspeare's will. There is no doubt surrounding the authorship of this document, for it begins with the statement, "In the name of God Amen I William Shakspeare. . . in perfect health and memorie. . . doe make and ordayne this my last will and testament. . ."<sup>17</sup> The will specifically describes household items and money, bequeathing to a Stratford companion the exact amount of "thirteene poundes, sixe shillings, and eight pence," and "unto my wife my second best bed."<sup>18</sup> He also leaves money to the actors Heminges, Burbage, and Condell, co-owners of the Globe Theater,<sup>19</sup> supporting the "Man from Stratford's" role as a theater investor but not necessarily as a playwright. Yet this document does not mention the manuscripts of the 18 plays yet to be published or any books,<sup>20</sup> though in his works Shakespeare frequently references texts and borrows from various literary sources and it would be expected of an author of such high intellect and knowledge to possess an extensive and prized library.

It is this alienation of the "Man from Stratford's" documented life from literary society that has led to a question revolving around the author's identity. Over fifty candidates, including Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley (the sixth Earl of Derby), and even Queen Elizabeth have been suggested since the mid-nineteenth century, but the outstanding figure of the twenty-

first century is Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.<sup>21</sup> An accumulation of persuasive evidence supporting his candidacy suggests that the genius behind the plays has possibly been found. His well-documented biography demonstrates the education, literary connections, passion for theater, and adventure-filled life reflected in Shakespeare's works. Born in 1550, de Vere was a precocious child, attending Cambridge University at nine, receiving his bachelor's degree at fourteen, his master's degree from Oxford at sixteen, and then attending law school.<sup>22</sup> He came from a highly educated family that was quite involved with the literary arts. De Vere's maternal uncle, Arthur Golding, was the renowned translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that is frequently referenced in Shakespeare's plays. Henry Howard, his paternal uncle, was the creator of the sonnet now known as the "Shakespearean Sonnet" because of the playwright's extensive use of this poetic form.<sup>23</sup> He possessed an extensive library throughout his life which included a Bible filled with marginal notes next to the passages referenced to in Shakespeare's plays.<sup>24</sup>

In the midst of his education, Oxford's father died, and in 1562 the twelve-year-old earl was sent to live with Queen Elizabeth's chief secretary, advisor, and lord treasurer Sir William Cecil, who became the administrative head of the government and received the new title Lord Burghley in 1571.<sup>25</sup> Also in 1571, Oxford became a member of the House of Lords, and he was actively involved in politics for the remainder of his life. In 1586, he participated the trial that condemned Mary Queen of Scots to death, and two years later, he served on one of the British ships that defeated Philip II's Spanish Armada.<sup>26</sup> Oxford was an avid traveler and frequently voyaged

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throughout the European continent where he visited Paris, Strasburg, Padua, Florence, Sicily, and Venice, the site of one of his homes.<sup>27</sup> There is not doubt that the earl possessed extensive and direct contact with military life and numerous European cities, two subjects that are recurrently dwelled upon in Shakespeare's plays.

Yet de Vere was not solely a politician, naval captain, and world traveler. The arts, theater in particular, played a prominent role in his life, and he proffered his support to literary figures through generous patronage. Although his involvement with the theater was limited because of his noble rank, he participated from a distance by sponsoring an acting troupe, temporarily leasing Blackfriar's theater, and acting as the patron of Anthony Munday, author of *Sir Thomas More*, a play containing multiple passages modern scholars attribute to Shakespeare.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Oxford was referred to as a poet and playwright by multiple contemporaries. For example, the literary critic Francis Meres wrote in *Palladis Tamia* of 1598, "The best for comedy among us be Edward Earl of Oxford."<sup>29</sup> This suggests that de Vere was writing under a pen name because not a single play bearing his own name survives today.

Although the necessity of using a pen name is disputed, writing plays produced for money was not considered a suitable occupation for an Elizabethan aristocrat and Oxford's reputation would have been tarnished to be openly associated with the theater. The theater locales, called the liberties, were in no way considered appropriate for those of elevated status. They were situated outside of the walls of London along with other rowdy and vulgar forms of entertainment including taverns, prostitution, and exhibitions of bear-baiting and cock-fighting.<sup>30</sup> Although this scandalous and crime-filled environment was scarcely fitting for an individual of noble blood, aristocrats frequently concealed their theatrical connections. George Puttenham, a courtier, respected poetry critic, and the probable author of the anonymously published book of literary criticism called *The Art of English Poesie*, states in this work, "I know very many notable gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published without their own names to it. . . ." <sup>31</sup> Later he specifically references de Vere, writing, "Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford."<sup>32</sup> This passage suggests that in an attempt to conceal his connections with the theater and avoid scandal, de Vere's works were credited

to a different name. The repeated contemporary references to the earl as a playwright have lead some scholars to believe that these mystery plays were most likely those published under the name of Shakespeare.

Not only do contemporary references to de Vere as an accomplished playwright bolster the claim that he is the potential genius behind the plays, but extensive similarities between Shakespeare's works and events of de Vere's own life further support his authorship. On one of his crossings of the English Channel, pirates attacked his ship,<sup>33</sup> an incident that the Prince of Denmark endures in *Hamlet*. The majority of Shakespearean scholars believe Lord Burghley to be the model for the character of Polonius in *Hamlet*, and the subtle references to his character quirks in the play suggest that the author must have been closely associated with this figure who was became de Vere's legal guardian when the young earl was only

twelve years of age. An example in the play that demonstrates the degree of familiarity that the author possessed with Burghley can be found when Polonius has spies watch his son in Paris. The advisor of Queen Elizabeth had a similar penchant for spying on his relations and sent agents to follow his own son sojourning in Paris.<sup>34</sup> *Henry IV Part I* also contains personal events from Oxford's life. In 1573, de Vere and three companions ambushed travelers on the exact same stretch of road between Rochester and Gravesend as Prince Hal, Falstaff, and their rowdy cohorts did in this play.<sup>35</sup> Similar to the Capulet and Montague rivalry in *Romeo and Juliet* were the repeated street brawls between Thomas Knyvet and de Vere. Knyvet was the cousin of Anne Vavasor, a former lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth whose prospects had been ruined due to

her affair with the Earl of Oxford, and Knyvet sought to avenge Vavasor's honor by belligerently confronting her lover.<sup>36</sup> These fights, which reflected the same jealous and vindictive tensions between the feuding families in Shakespeare's most famous romance, were not ended until a London councilor intervened.

The multitude of similarities between de Vere's life and the plays offer persuasive evidence which supports him as the true author. However, many scholars dismiss him as a feasible candidate because of his death in 1604, when, according to the Stratfordian chronology, over a dozen plays had yet to be published.<sup>37</sup> It is entirely possible that de Vere wrote the plays before his death that were then published at a later date, a theory that has to be embraced by Stratfordian scholars as well. Scholars can deduce the approximate year in which the author could have written a specific play

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*It is this alienation of the "Man from Stratford's" documented life from literary society that has led to a question revolving around the author's identity. Over fifty candidates, including Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, William Stanley (the sixth Earl of Derby), and even Queen Elizabeth have been suggested since the mid-nineteenth century, but the outstanding figure of the twenty-first century is Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.* <sup>21</sup>

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by looking at the outside texts and events referenced. The plays in question utilized sources ranging from 1516 to 1603, coming to an abrupt end a year before Oxford's death.<sup>38</sup> It seems strange that the "Man from Stratford" would stop alluding to contemporary publications after 1603 when he still had 13 years to live. *The Tempest* is the one play that Stratfordians use to discredit Oxford's potential authorship because of Ariel's mention of "the still-vexed Bermoothes," a place that scholars assume to be the Bermudas. A shipwreck occurred off these islands in 1609, and the captain, William Strachey, wrote a letter recounting this event. This account was not published until 1625, yet Stratfordian scholars assume that Shakespeare saw the letter earlier in manuscript form and incorporated the exotic Bermudas into his play. Yet this was not the first shipwreck to ever occur in the Bermudas, and during his lifetime, Oxford himself received a letter recounting the wreck of one of his own ships off these isles.<sup>39</sup>

Unless de Vere's claim to authorship can be resolutely excluded with solid and undisputable evidence, the uncertainty surrounding the identity of the individual behind Shakespeare's brilliant works will continue to play a large role in historical Shakespearean studies. The lack of historical evidence supporting the authorship of the "Man from Stratford" restricts the study of the plays from both sides of the controversy and forces the literary triumph of the Bard to walk hand-in-hand with the tragedy of his lost identity. It may be that for centuries, praises have been sung to the wrong man. From a literary perspective, this is not a misfortune because the plays are immortal, their themes timeless, and they will be able to be studied, appreciated, and mulled over by students, teachers, actors, and directors for centuries to come. However, the tragedy manifested in the authorship question is most significant from a historical perspective. If de Vere were accepted as the author, historical analyses of the plays would be revolutionized, both on paper and on stage. Shakespearean scholar, actor, and director Stephen Moorer explains, "Actors can never know too much. If we know de Vere was the author, then people could use history in approaching a role to discover new things."<sup>40</sup> A convincing example is found in *Henry V*, when on the eve of Agincourt, a French noble asks a comrade, "My Lord Constable, the armor that I saw in your tent tonight, are those stars or suns upon it?" (3.7.69-70). From an Oxfordian perspective, this quotation has extensive historical significance and relates to the Battle of Barnet during the War of the Roses. The Earl of Oxford's Lancastrian forces, wearing stars on their armor, faced the Yorks' forces, wearing armor engraved with suns. During the fight, a Lancastrian commander fired at oncoming soldiers, mistaking Oxford's stars on their armor for suns, an error securing victory for the enemy.<sup>41</sup> This one line of the play

thus interpreted changes *Henry V*'s historical perspective and adds layers of meaning.

As a prominent aristocrat and a ward of one of England's most powerful men, Oxford had a direct view into court intrigues to draw upon in his writing. It would be fascinating for historians to analyze how Oxford manipulated and ridiculed political and social ideas to express his views on society. Scholars could also compare de Vere's relationships with other prominent Elizabethan personages to characters in the plays. Furthermore, historians have recognized connections between political events of the time and the performances of particular plays to sway public opinion. For example, when Scottish James I became King of England in 1603, *Macbeth*, a play that tells the tragic story of a noble and moral king reclaiming the throne of Scotland from an evil usurper, was widely performed in the Globe Theater. If Oxford's authorship could be accepted, the idea of the plays as tools of propaganda could be further analyzed and enriched considering his close relationship with the royal family.

These new dimensions of the plays cannot be uncovered to their full potential while "Man from Stratford" is the established author because of the alienation of his documented life from the plays. As a commoner, it must be assumed he was receiving information about court life and events abroad secondhand, another factor estranging him from his subject matter and the fluency with which he wrote about such topics. Therefore, traditional Shakespearean scholarship overlooks the wealth of potential historical significance that could be investigated if the plays' authorship could be regarded in a new

light. Yet the authorship controversy also creates an intellectual tragedy for Stratfordians because of the dearth of information they possess about the "Man from Stratford" and the void of historical knowledge surrounding their interpretations of Shakespeare's works. The consequences of the authorship question are far-reaching for all involved and prove to be detrimental for Shakespearean scholarship regardless of Stratfordian or anti-Stratfordian affiliation. Whether wondering about the genius behind the triumphant works, searching beyond the words for clues pointing to authorship, or simply enjoying the beauty of the language, the realization that there is a deep void of historical knowledge regarding the plays' true author can be considered tragic to any inquisitive historian or admirer of the world's most preeminent author.

### (Endnotes)

- 1 Anne Mallibard. "Shakespeare's Influence." 2007. *About Inc.* <<http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm>>.
- 2 Roger Stritmatter. "Re: The Shakespeare Authorship Controversy." Interview by e-mail to the author.
- 3 Philip Schwyzer. "Re: The Shakespeare Authorship Controversy." Interview by e-mail to the author.

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*Unless de Vere's claim to authorship  
can be resolutely excluded with solid  
and undisputable evidence, the uncertainty  
surrounding the identity of the individual  
behind Shakespeare's brilliant works  
will continue to play a large role in  
historical Shakespearean studies.*

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- 4 Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing) 9.
- 5 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 21. Translation from Latin: 26 April son John Shakespeare xxx.
- 6 Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 253.
- 7 John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996) 20.
- 8 Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 235.
- 9 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 9.
- 10 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 21.
- 11 Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing) 10.
- 12 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 22.
- 13 Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 16.
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- 15 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 24.
- 16 Richard Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994) 16.
- 17 *The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare*, <<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakspere/shakwill.html>>.
- 18 *The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare*, <<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakspere/shakwill.html>>.
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- 20 Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) 146.
- 21 John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996) 8.
- 22 Daniel Wright, *Who was Edward de Vere?* <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.
- 23 Daniel Wright, *Who was Edward de Vere?* <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.
- 24 Roger Stritmatter. "The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence." February 2001. *Shakespeare Fellowship*. <<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/bibledissabsetc.htm>>.
- 25 Daniel Wright, *Who was Edward de Vere?* <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.
- 26 John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London, England: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996) 162.
- 27 Daniel Wright, *Who was Edward de Vere?* <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.
- 28 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 123, 133.
- 29 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 138.
- 30 Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (New York, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing) 26-27.
- 31 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 135.
- 32 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 135.
- 33 Daniel Wright, *Who was Edward de Vere?* <<http://www.deverestudies.org/who.cfm>>.
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- 37 Anne Mallibard. "Play Chronology." *Shakespeare Online*. <<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/keydates/playchron.html>>.
- 38 Joseph Sobran, *Alias Shakespeare* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1997) 156-157.
- 39 Richard Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who was he?* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994) 120.
- 40 Stephen Moorer. Telephone interview.
- 41 Richard Desper. "Stars or Suns?" *Shakespeare Fellowship*. <<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/starsorsuns.htm>>.

## Annotated Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

- Meres, Francis. *Palladis Tamia*. 1598.
- As cited in: Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.
- Francis Meres, who lived from 1565 to 1647, was an English churchman and writer who attended Cambridge University. His book *Palladis Tamia* is a critical analysis of contemporary literary works. This was a valuable source in my research because Meres listed Edward de Vere as the best English comedy playwright, but modern scholars have nothing but some early poems and letters surviving under Oxford's name. By interpreting this primary source, I utilized it to support my argument that it is likely de Vere used a pen name because he was referred to as an excellent playwright although no historic references regarding a specific play written by him exist.
- Puttenham, George. *The Art of English Poesie*. 1589.
- As cited in: "Puttenham, George: The Art of English Poesie." Available from <http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccernew2?id=PutPoes.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all>. Internet: accessed 15 January 2007.
- Georges Puttenham, an English courtier who attended Oxford University, lived from 1520 to 1590. Although *The Art of English Poesie*, one of the most important critiques of Elizabethan poetry, was published anonymously, modern scholars credit it to him. This text was useful to me because of its insight into the literary scene of the contemporary English court and the relationship between the nobility and the theater. It supported my argument that de Vere was writing plays under a pen name through statements declaring that many nobles tried to conceal the authorship of their works "as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned." Furthermore, Puttenham specifically mentions de Vere's name as the most prominent and talented nobleman concealing the identity of his writing.
- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Originally published circa 1603. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Edition, 2005.
- Using events and characterizations in *Hamlet* together with the observations of the Elizabethan scholar Richard Whalen in his book *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*, I went beyond the literary triumph of this play and analyzed it as a historical document containing valuable information pertaining to the authorship controversy. Although the works of Shakespeare to me will always be the most eloquent, profound, and magnificent tributes to the power of the English language, this paper gave me the opportunity to look at them from a historian's perspective and uncover a new dimension behind the plays. Anti-Stratfordian scholars have discovered a vast range of similarities between Edward de Vere's life and allusions and characters in *Hamlet*. The accumulation of these connections analyzed in my paper present a persuasive collection of evidence supporting Oxford's authorship.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry IV, Part I*. Originally published circa 1598. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Edition, 2005.

I analyzed this play and Whalen's observations in the same manner as I did with *Hamlet*. Once again, I was given the valuable opportunity of using the perspective of a historian to examine a literary triumph and recognize the connections between the play and Oxford's life in order to bolster his candidacy as the true author.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Originally published circa 1600. New York: Washington Square Press New Folger Edition, 1995.

This play was a very valuable primary source as it provided specific historical evidence pertaining to how Shakespeare's works can be interpreted differently when regarded with an Oxfordian perspective. Roger Desper's observations connecting *Henry V* (found in the article "Stars of Suns," see annotation below) to the War of the Roses exemplify the new dimension of historical information that has the potential to be uncovered, and this bolstered my argument relating to the historical tragedy surrounding the authorship question.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Originally published circa 1597. Norwalk: The Easton Press, 1940.

*Romeo and Juliet* provided another significant source of similarities to de Vere's life. When examining this play as a historical document and comparing it to events of Oxford's life, the parallel between the Montague and Capulet brawls and the Knyvet and Oxford skirmishes became apparent and served as another piece of evidence to support de Vere's claim to the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

Holy Trinity Church, Stratford Parish Registers. 1564, 1582, 1583, 1585. As cited in: Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.

In his book, Joseph Sobran included registers from the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon that recorded William Shakespeare's baptism (April 26, 1564), William Shakespeare and Anne Hathway's marriage (November 27, 1582), the baptism of Susanne Shakespeare (May 26, 1583), and the baptisms of Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare (February 2, 1585). These registers, which account for all the evidence documenting the first half of Shakespeare's life, demonstrate the lack of records historians have for the "Man from Stratford." I used these primary sources to illuminate how little is actually known about Shakespeare and reinforces the validity of the authorship controversy.

The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare. March 1616.

As cited in: "The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare." Available from <http://fy.hiwaay.net/~paul/shakspeare/shakwill.html>. Internet: accessed 20 October 2006.

This site provided the complete and unabridged will of William Shakespeare. It was fascinating for me to analyze this document and look at the multiple occasions where it is specific in bequeathing household items and money, but fails to mention anything related to literature or books. Shakespeare's will is one of the most important documents for Anti-Stratfordians, and it has been the cause of great bewilderment for many Shakespearean scholars. This primary source gave me the valuable opportunity of analyzing a historical document and then using it to support my argument.

### Secondary Sources:

Anderson, Mark and others. "Shakespeare Authorship FAQ." Available from [http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/?page\\_id=34](http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/?page_id=34). Internet: accessed 10 October 2006.

The Shakespeare Oxford society is committed to advancing the recognition of Edward de Vere in the authorship controversy as the potential author of Shakespeare's works. Their website provides an excellent introduction to the controversy, the reasons for its origin, the importance of this academic question in history and in literature, and the candidacy of de Vere. Although it does not address specific evidence as much as other sources, it does illuminate

the authorship of Shakespeare's plays as a valid and interesting debate with significant consequences and effects. Furthermore, this website closely examines the chronology of the later plays to prove that they all could have been written before 1604, the year of Oxford's death.

Desper, Richard. "Stars or Suns?" Available from <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/starsorsuns.htm>. Internet: accessed 12 March 2007.

Richard Desper's article about how *Henry V* relates to the War of the Roses from an Oxfordian perspective not only provided me with a persuasive and concrete example exhibiting how Oxford's authorship could historically alter the plays, but it also illuminated the tragic loss of historical richness potentially lying beneath the veil of the "Man from Stratford's" supposed authorship. As a student of history, this example detailing how the historical time period and significance of *Henry V* could change if Oxford was the author thoroughly convinced me of the tragedy accompanying the authorship question.

Dunton-Downer, Leslie, and Alan Riding. *Essential Shakespeare Handbook*. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2004.

This book is a comprehensive survey of Shakespeare's life, works, and the Elizabethan theater. It was most helpful in providing a Stratfordian perspective on the authorship controversy. The biography of Shakespeare was interesting to compare with Anti-Stratfordian biographies to expose authors' agendas as well as to note the multiple instances in which Stratfordian biographers are forced to speculate and fill in gaps of missing information with their own ideas.

Kathman, David and Terry Ross, eds. "The Shakespeare Authorship Page: Dedicated to the Proposition that Shakespeare Wrote Shakespeare." Available from <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/>. Internet: accessed 10 October 2006.

As suggested by its title, this Stratfordian website provided an extensive overview of the opposite side of the controversy, and it specifically focused on disproving Edward de Vere as the potential author of the plays. As I analyzed this opposition to Oxford, I was not only able to balance my research but also to think critically about the authorship controversy and how to defend the Oxfordian perspective when faced with such an argument. By examining the topics brought up in this article, I formulated ideas about how to use Shakespeare's biography as a way to disprove him as the real author.

Mabillard, Anne. "Play Chronology."

Available from <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/keydates/playchron.html>. Internet: accessed 2 January 2007.

This website provided a complete listing of the dates the plays were written according to Stratfordian scholars. Although this list was helpful, the historical accuracy of any play's chronology is questionable because it is impossible for historians to determine the exact year a play was written without concrete evidence. To verify that most Stratfordian scholars agreed with this listing, I compared it to chronologies found on other sites and in books. Although they were not all identical, the general time periods were the same. Having this chronology was helpful because I could reference during what years and points in Shakespeare's career Stratfordians think he wrote the plays. For example, during the years 1604 to 1611, when this chronology stated that some of the greatest plays were written, there are no London records about Shakespeare, suggesting he was in Stratford.

Mallibard, Anne. "Shakespeare's Influence." Available from <http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm>. Internet: accessed 10 January 2007.

A list of the most frequently used words first coined by Shakespeare is posted on this website, demonstrating the profound influence the author continues to have on the English language today.

Michell, John. *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1996.

Although the author's position is Anti-Stratfordian, this book offered an overview of eight Elizabethan candidates and their claims to authorship, including the "Man from Stratford" himself. It also presented a valuable description of the extent of Shakespeare's education, the subjects written about in the plays, and the breadth of the author's vocabulary. This book was an excellent introduction to the authorship controversy and its most prominent candidates, and it helped me to form my own opinion regarding the true author of Shakespeare's plays.

Moorer, Stephen. Interview by author, 27 January 2007. Telephone interview.

Mr. Stephen Moorer is the Director of the Pacific Repertory Theater in Monterey County as well as an experienced Shakespearean actor and scholar. He provided valuable insight on the tragedy of the authorship controversy from an Oxfordian point of view along with his knowledge as a director, actor, and scholar eager to apply history in approaching Shakespearean roles.

Ogburn, Charlton. "The Man Who Shakespeare Was Not (and Who He Was)." Available from [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/ogburnarticle.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/debates/ogburnarticle.html). Internet: accessed 21 October 2006.

This website, based on the Public Broadcasting program aired about the authorship question, delivered a complete overview of the Oxfordian perspective of the authorship controversy. It was also one of the few sources that delved in depth about why the identity of Shakespeare matters, and although it was not in a historical context, it helped me to develop my ideas about the tragedy accompanying the authorship question. This article also provided insight on the immense and essential role personal experience plays in writing and how the "Man from Stratford" would have had only second-hand access to the subjects he wrote about. Furthermore, the fact that Ogburn's views were broadcasted by PBS' Frontline sheds light on the validity and far-reaching importance of the authorship controversy in modern Shakespearean scholarship.

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

This book, dedicated to the proposition that Edward de Vere was the true Shakespeare, was instrumental to me because of its extensive description and analysis of the lack of literary evidence and connections accompanying the recorded biography of the "Man from Stratford." In addition, Price provides an in-depth examination of Shakespeare's will. One of the most frequently addressed topics in the book is what the author refers to as "personal literary paper trails," which include all types of evidence pointing towards the author's active involvement in the London literary scene and his interaction with other writers, playwrights, and poets during his own life—all which are absent from Shakespeare's recorded life.

Schwytzer, Philip. Interview by author, 1 February 2007. E-mail.

Dr. Philip Schwytzer is the Senior Lecturer in Renaissance Literature and Culture at the University of Exeter, England. He was exceedingly helpful in answering my questions about the tragedy of the authorship controversy, and his Stratfordian insight shed a new light on this tragedy. He believes that even those who insist that the "Man from Stratford" is truly Shakespeare have uncovered a kind of tragedy because when people question the plays' authorship they read them not as magnificent works of literature, but as codes or messages to provide clues about the real author's identity.

Shakespeare, William. *Coriolanus*. London, Globe Theater, 10 August 2007.

The experience of attending *Coriolanus* at the Globe Theater transformed the way I view Shakespeare and it gave me a strong sense of what Shakespearean theater was like in Elizabethan England.

Everything in this theater is produced in a manner faithful to that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The stage is an exact replica of the Globe Theater where Shakespeare's plays were first revealed to the world. Even the viewing experience was authentic. I stood in the yard as a "groundling" (peasant) only a few feet from the actors to watch the play. There was considerable interaction between the actors and the audience in the production, and the audience was drawn into the action on stage. For example, when Coriolanus gave his grand speeches to the plebeians of Rome, the groundlings truly felt like the plebeians. Attending this Globe Theater production enhanced my understanding of Shakespeare and Elizabethan England in a tangible way, and it was truly an amazing experience.

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Stratford-Upon-Avon, Royal Shakespeare Theater, 15 August 2007.

This performance was a contemporary version of the timeless romance *Romeo and Juliet*. The costumes and sets were stark and minimal, leaving room for the power of Shakespeare's language and the fresh interpretations of the actors to be emphasized. This reflects the principle that no matter the costuming, setting, or interpretation of a Shakespeare play, it can retain its emotional poignancy, linguistic power, and relevance to human nature. Furthermore, this performance took place in Stratford, the birth of the accepted Shakespeare. Although it has obviously become more industrialized and commercialized, Stratford is isolated from the intellectual stimulation of London and Oxford, and its rural and remote setting spurred my curiosity pertaining to the authorship question.

Sobran, Joseph. *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.

This was a highly beneficial book because of its inclusion of a wide variety of primary sources, including records from the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford and excerpts from Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (see primary sources). Furthermore, the text was very informative, especially the in-depth biography of Edward de Vere. This book gave me the opportunity to analyze and interpret historical documents and place them within the context of my own paper as well as the opportunity to uncover the authorship controversy in its historical setting. The first half of the book was dedicated to the lack of evidence and records surrounding the life of the "Man from Stratford" while the second half expounded upon a variety of evidence and primary sources supporting Edward de Vere's claim to authorship.

Stritmatter, Roger. "The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Bible: Providential Discovery, Literary Reasoning, and Historical Consequence." Available from <http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/bible-dissabsetc.htm>. Internet: accessed 20 January 2007.

Although I chose not to delve into detail on this subject in my paper, the marginalia of Oxford's Geneva Bible is another source of convincing evidence supporting his authorship. On this website, Roger Stritmatter thoroughly analyzes the notes de Vere made next to numerous passages in the Bible and the references to these passages in Shakespeare's plays.

Stritmatter, Roger. Interview by author, 15 March 2007. E-mail.

Dr. Stritmatter, an assistant professor at Coppin State University, provided me with invaluable insights pertaining to the tragedy of the Shakespeare authorship question on both a literary and historical level. As an Oxfordian scholar who analyzed de Vere's Geneva Bible and its importance to the authorship question (see annotation above), Dr. Stritmatter illuminated how Shakespeare's works could be looked at differently if Oxford was the author, and he emphasized the significance and validity of the authorship controversy in both Shakespearean and historical studies pertaining to Elizabethan England.

Whalen, Richard. *Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994.

This book proved to be a valuable source of information for two reasons: first, it presented both the Stratfordian and Oxfordian views of the authorship controversy, and secondly, it provided an excellent listing and description of the similarities between Oxford's life and the plays. The first half of the book was dedicated to presenting all of the information historians possess about the "Man from Stratford's" life as well as a chapter supporting the Stratfordian perspective of the authorship controversy. This account aided me in acquiring balanced research and assuring that I understood both sides of the controversy. The second half of the book chronicled Edward de Vere's life story while linking it to events that occur in the plays. There is a variety of evidence supporting Oxford's claim as author, but after reading this book I found the extensive accumulation of connections between the plays and de Vere's life to be the most convincing.

Wright, Daniel. "Who was Edward de Vere?"

Available from <http://www.authorshipstudies.org/who.cfm>. Internet: accessed 13 October, 2006.

This website provided a detailed biography of Edward de Vere that is filled with similarities between his life and the plays. This biography was helpful not only because of its comprehensive account of Oxford's life and adventurous escapades, but also in its description of his various connections to other literary figures both through his family and artistic patronage.

(President's Page continued from page 2)

- 4) Congratulations to the other members of the Board who were re-elected to three year terms: Virginia Hyde, Michael Pisapia, and Brian Bechtold.
- 5) The Board held a meeting in Carmel several hours after the annual meeting. The main item on the agenda was the election of key officers. John Hamill was re-elected to serve as First Vice President for the coming year. I want to thank the Board for unanimously re-electing me to serve another year as president.
- 6) The membership of our Society and the Shakespeare Fellowship separately adopted an identical resolution calling for the combination of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and the Shakespeare Fellowship into one organization. The resolution instructs the Joint Merger Committee to produce a proposed organizational structure and by-laws for the memberships of both organizations to consider at their annual meetings in 2008.

With regard to other developments at the conference, I was struck by the presentation by Allegra Krasznecwicz. As you'll see from my interview with her and from her presentation itself, Allegra is a remarkably articulate young woman who is very well informed about the authorship issue and the case for Oxford. She has enthusiastically agreed to help us create and conduct an outreach program for young people. One idea I hope we'll make progress on this year is to create a bureau of speakers willing and eager to visit local schools and colleges to introduce students to the authorship question. I will be asking new Board member Andrew Frye and other members of the Society to help us develop a comprehensive program for reaching out to high school and college students in the coming years. I'll be reporting more to you on this program in the coming months.

## Isabel Holden

Isabel Holden of Northampton, MA, a trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Society in the 1990s, died last August as the result of a fall. She was 93 years old.

In a long obituary, the local newspaper said she would be "remembered for her scholarship, intellect, generosity, dry wit, and lively interest in the community and the world." Oxfordians who knew her would second that.

She was vice president then president of the Northampton historical society for twenty-five years, and for many years she was president of the Friends of the Forbes Library in Northampton.

At a memorial service for her in October, she was eulogized by family members and by Charles Beauclerk of Otley Hall in England, who served as a society trustee with her.

Her husband, Richard Holden, president of the Northampton National Bank for twenty-four years, died in 1998. She is survived by her daughter, Constance Holden, a senior writer for *Science Magazine* in Washington DC.

Members should be aware that we are beginning to consider locations for next year's joint conference with the Shakespeare Fellowship. We have determined that it's time to return to the East Coast. One location being actively considered is New Haven, CT. We are also looking into the possibility of holding the conference in or near New York City. No firm decision has yet been made. If you have any thoughts about these or other locations, please contact the office.

Turning more generally to the state of our society, I'm encouraged by a number of things that I saw in Carmel. I am always delighted to see how much time and energy many members of the Society are willing to devote to our important mission. We're dedicated, as we say on the website, to a noble cause: Researching and honoring the true Bard. I want to encourage more members of the society to become active members, to help us spread the word and recruit new members.

If you have not already done so, I hope you will take advantage of our Recruit-A-Member program by sponsoring friends, relatives and colleagues to join the Society at half price for the first year. If every current member recruits just one new member, our membership base will double. If each of us recruits five or ten new members, the Society will grow exponentially. More members mean additional resources to support our work. But very importantly, a larger membership base will translate into greater credibility in reaching out to the media and to foundations and other sources of additional funding. I guess you could say, when it comes to membership size truly does matter.

Best wishes,  
Matthew

## SOS President Matthew Cossolotto Interviews Allegra Krasznekewicz

*After hearing Allegra speak so eloquently at the Carmel conference, I asked her whether we could conduct an interview for the forthcoming newsletter. Allegra agreed immediately. I'm sure readers will agree that Allegra is a remarkably articulate and well-informed student of the authorship question. Following is a portion of our lengthy interview.*

**Matthew Cossolotto: When and how did you first hear about the Shakespeare authorship issue?**

Allegra Krasznekewicz: My middle school history teacher, Forbes Keaton, was aware of my love of Shakespeare, and in sixth grade, she introduced me to the authorship controversy. But it was not until after visiting Stratford-upon-Avon that I began to research the topic in depth. Going to England helped me to see Shakespeare from a historical perspective, not solely from a literary one. Upon my return, my interest was sparked, and I approached the authorship issue by researching the major candidates and deciding for myself who I thought was the most probable author. The History Day Competition I entered was a way for me to present my ideas to a wider audience.

**MC: What is it about this topic that you find so fascinating?**

AK: I feel that any study of Shakespeare would be incomplete without an analysis of the authorship controversy. It adds layers upon layers of richness to the plays from literary, historical, and psychological standpoints. As a student, hearing the Stratfordian biography again and again was unsatisfying—it left too many questions unanswered, too many blanks unfilled. By investigating the authorship controversy, not only was I able to piece together whom the real Shakespeare might be, but I also had the opportunity to approach historical research differently. No longer was I being spoon-fed dates and names from a textbook. I had to question the facts and decide for myself what I felt the truth was. Furthermore, it was an opportunity for me to connect the two subjects I am most passionate about—English and history. Before I was fully aware of the authorship question, the literary and historical aspects of Shakespeare's works were always separated in my mind, and my studies were deprived of the insight of how an author's life influenced his works. Upon researching Oxford's claim, this gap was bridged and my understanding of Shakespeare was enhanced in multiple ways.

**MC: Can you tell me more about the California History award you won? How many students competed? Did you read your paper to a large audience? What was the response like during the competition?**

AK: Firstly, I submitted my paper to the Monterey County History Day Competition. This competition allows students of all ages to enter a poster, paper, website, or performance on any topic that adheres to the yearly theme. Last year, the theme was "Triumph and Tragedy in History." After winning the senior historical paper division and four other special awards at the

county level, I competed at the state competition. Papers are submitted in advance, and all that is required during the actual event is an interview with a panel of judges. At the state competition, both the judges who interviewed me were exceedingly receptive and interested in my topic. One of them was actually a high school English teacher who related to me that she had been trying to incorporate the authorship controversy into class discussions of Shakespeare. There were around 75 other papers in my division, and I was one of the two winners selected to compete on a national level.

**MC: How did you do in the national competition?**

AK: At the national competition, the judges received my paper quite differently. One of them stated that he hadn't read Shakespeare in a long time—which was not a good sign! None of them had been aware of the authorship controversy, and I was not received with the same enthusiasm and curiosity as I was at the state competition. Their main criticism was that my topic did not conform to the theme of triumph and tragedy, and needless to say, the winning papers were about wars. But I was extremely lucky to have gone as far as I did. My topic was not very conventional, and I was surprised that it wasn't received with more skepticism in the first place.

**MC: What are the three most compelling reasons why you think the Stratford attribution is wrong?**

AK: I found the Man from Stratford's will to be one of the most intriguing documents I looked at, and it was one of the major factors which convinced me of the validity of the authorship controversy. The fact that there is not a single book or manuscript mentioned while pedestrian household objects are described in great detail is shocking to me. I also feel that the dearth of education the Man from Stratford received is another prominent factor discrediting the Stratfordian theory. The argument that Shakespeare's genius was enough to write the plays is unconvincing. Not only could Shakespeare write beautifully, but he knew something about everything: law, medicine, the military, the aristocracy, foreign languages, history. . . the list could go on and on. I do not feel that a grammar school education (if he even received one) could be nearly enough to account for this plethora of knowledge. Finally, I think that the silence surrounding the Man from Stratford's death strongly suggests that Shakespeare was being used as a pen name. It must be more than mere coincidence that the practice of entombing prominent authors in Westminster Abbey and reading eulogies at their deaths was not employed when Shakespeare died.

**MC: What three facts or reasons do you think offer the strongest support for the Oxford claim?**

AK: I believe that Oxford's social status and the opportunities his elevated rank offered him bolster his candidacy. Although some Stratfordians see this as social snobbery and elitism, I

feel that Shakespeare's range of knowledge and his familiarity with the aristocracy strongly suggest that a member of the nobility wrote the plays. Not only did being the ward of Lord Burghley offer Oxford an incredible education, contact with some of the most brilliant and influential individuals in his society, and multiple travel experiences, but it also accounts for Shakespeare's understanding of the nobility as reflected in the plays. Furthermore, I feel that Oxford's literary connections and interest in theater support his claim. He was in no way estranged from contemporary literary society, and references to Oxford as a talented playwright indicate that his involvement in theater went beyond patronages and acquaintances. I also found myself particularly convinced by the connections between Oxford's own life and the plays. The numerous similarities suggest that these connections are more than simple coincidence, and authors frequently draw upon personal experience in their writing.

**MC:** *What is the single most important thing our Society could do to interest younger people in the authorship debate?*

**AK:** From my experience, I have found that the only place the majority of high school students are exposed to Shakespeare is in the classroom. Therefore, I think the most influential thing the Society could do would be to get written information about the controversy into high school classrooms either through teachers or interested students. One way this could be accomplished would be to use existing student publications and web pages at high schools to introduce student bodies to the issue.

**MC:** *Would you like to help our Society develop a program to reach out to young people about the authorship issue and the case for Oxford? What would you like to do exactly?*

**AK:** I believe that young people are very receptive to discussion of the controversy, as it adds a new and interesting dimension to the study of Shakespeare. I would be honored to help your Society foster knowledge of Oxford's claim by speaking to students and teachers and by contributing articles and research geared to a high school audience. Another idea I have is to hold a conference for high school students and teachers to discuss Shakespeare's plays and their relation to the authorship question.

**MC:** *What do you think of the idea of forming a speaker's bureau, including young people, to go to high schools and colleges to speak with younger people about the authorship question? Would you be willing to become part of such a program?*

**AK:** I think that's an excellent idea. And I'd really like to be part of it. Most high school students experience Shakespeare at school. And I think centering the outreach program in schools would be a really good idea.

**MC:** *Why do you think many English professors believe so strongly that there's no room for doubt about the Stratford theory? What evidence do they have that is so persuasive?*

**AK:** I think that some professors believe that it is impossible that the true identity of Shakespeare would have been able to be completely concealed for 400 years. Tradition had dictated

that the Man from Stratford was the author of the plays, and adherence to this status quo is an easier, if less satisfying, way of approaching Shakespeare. I also think that biographers of the Man from Stratford have taken liberties in idealizing and romanticizing his life. The story of a boy born in a rural town to an illiterate glove-maker who then changed his fate and achieved inestimable fame appeals to the popular modern day belief that a person of any social status can achieve fame and renown. I feel that Stratfordian scholars do not have concrete, specific, irrefutable evidence to support their claim. Instead, they rely on traditional beliefs and the fictionalization of the Man from Stratford's life to forward their ideas and attempt to discredit the authorship controversy. Furthermore, based on my own experience, English teachers make the choice to focus solely on the literary aspects of Shakespeare's works, depriving their students of the historical importance of the author's life to the plays.

**MC:** *Where do you go from here in terms of your interest in the authorship question? Do you plan to continue to study or write about this topic during and after college?*

**AK:** I have definitely just begun what I hope will be a long path of research and discovery pertaining to the authorship question. In college, I am planning to double major in English and history, and even if professors I encounter aren't open to the controversy, I will still continue my studies and writing on this topic. At the moment, I am doing some research about Oxford and the sonnets. I did not really look at this issue much in my paper, and it has captivated my attention. As I continue my research, I hope to continue contributing to thoughtful analysis of the subject and to challenge Stratfordians wherever I encounter them. Also, my dream is to become a professor and a writer some day, and this would allow me the further opportunity to continue my research and discussion.

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## Nine / Eleven, Iraq, and *Henry V* : Shakespeare in the Classroom

By Lew Tate

On September 12, 2001, the Fall Session of Savannah College of Art and Design opened. My first class that day was a composition class wherein I gave the students the opportunity to write of the attacks. Not all did, but of the ones who turned in responses, I found a depth of feeling that was at once disturbing and exhilarating. Subsequent writing and discussions made small inroads into addressing the fear, confusion and loss of security felt by many students. Over time, through the aftermath of 9/11, the run up to the Iraq War, and the war itself, the Shakespeare classes became the more dramatically affected.

The relevance of Shakespeare seemed to naturally become more pronounced and less abstract as we could make easy identifications with even the most shocking happenings of the plays. *Henry V* serves as an example. In the prologue the Chorus asks our pardon for the inadequacies of the "unworthy scaffold" and asks that the play on our "imaginary forces work." Perhaps the "vast fields of France" are planted in our minds' eyes, but certainly the images for these young readers and audiences for whom war has been distant and historical have become real and personal. The carnage at Agincourt could more readily be seen and felt after the carnage of New York, Washington, and the fields of Iraq. The raised diction of Henry at Harfleur and at Agincourt on Saint Crispin's Day, always stirring, took on new energy as the world heard America's president preparing the country for war, a war seen as righteous. The links between these events, *Henry V*, and our lives overleapt themselves.

The story in *Henry V* opens with two churchmen, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop Ely, plotting to get Henry involved in a war in France. As an academic exercise I have pointed out power, politics, and corruption of the Fourteenth Century Catholic church and the religious tensions of Sixteenth Century England. This presentation took on new depth as we considered the role of the church in the war with France and the death and destruction in the name of Allah and the invocation of God in the rhetoric of the West in the aftermath of the destruction, and the religious orientation of constant death and destruction in the Middle East. On being told that the English had won the day at Agincourt, Henry responds, "Praised be God and not our strength for it" (4.7.87). Soon after, being told that ten thousand French lay dead, Henry to Fluellen acknowledges that God fought for England, and the English army sings "Te Deum" and "Non Nobis" in triumph and humility (4.8.123). The sentiment seems sincere. Henry seems pious. Faith must be communicated in order to understand the characters and their motivations. Henry's prayer the night before the battle elucidates his faith, "Oh, God of battles! Steel my soldiers' hearts. Possess them not with fear..." (4.1.294-295). Accentuating the zeal of faith in God aids in teaching the play. Recent events are complementary. Teaching the irony of war in God's name is more effective and easily felt in light of the religious fervor of 9/11. War, with or without religion, is taken from the abstract in *Henry V*. The parallels with suicide bombings, crashing planes, and bombs drive this concept home.

Ten thousand dead at Agincourt! Ten thousand resounds. Not so long ago administrators and chroniclers (media) of war whispered of death and dismemberment. Collateral damage it was called. Now we, many of us, call for the deaths of al Qaeda and other combatants, and we are daily apprized of body counts. It is more difficult to accept ten thousand dead with detachment. Also, we are reminded that our victims and war dead are part of ongoing violent history as were the slain in France a long time ago. Of course, battles are throughout the canon: Shrewsbury, Tewksbury, Salisbury, Rome, and Troy, to name a few. Did not Richard III need to be stopped? Yet, in *Troilus and Cressida* the war at Troy does not seem meritorious, and it ends in futility. Does not Shakespeare present his audiences, his students with their own feelings? An internal struggle is successfully presented when both sides of the struggle are portrayed honestly. Teachers are better able to present the complexities of the dichotomy. Henry V, the warrior, is heroically presented, a source of English pride; Henry VI, an unsuccessful warrior is largely an ignominious character. Macbeth is an effective soldier, therefore a hero, "...he unseamed him from the nave to th' chaps, / And fixed his head upon the battlements." (1.2.21-22). Thus goes a description of one of his successes. King Duncan comments, "O valiant cousin, noble gentleman!" (1.2.24) The vocation of Coriolanus is war, and in that he is extraordinarily accomplished. These two, along with Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, and other martial protagonists help us face the double edged sword of bellicosity, damning the terrorists and praising avenging forces.

Perhaps some truth lies in the cause. Early in *Macbeth* Scotland has to stop Norway and the traitorous McDonwald; later MacDuff has to stop the rapacious Macbeth. The causes are patriotic. Students have asked on occasion if mutilation, though historically and dramatically accepted, is acceptable. Did Henry V really need France? As of this writing, public and private debate rages over America's invasion of Iraq – a righteous war? Maybe Williams, a soldier of Henry, helps: "But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all, 'we died together at such a place... I am afraid there are few that die well that die in a battle; for how can they charitably dispose of anything, when blood is their argument?" (4.1.134-143) The dilemma of Williams holds up well for students of Shakespeare and helps personalize war and aids them in finding their own voices. Personal pride and accomplishment drive Henry, yet we hear deference to God and love of England.

Canterbury invokes the memory of past successes against France such as those of Edward the Black Prince. Exeter follows, "Your brother and kings and monarchs of the earth/Do all expect that you should rouse yourself, as did the former lions of your blood" (1.2.122-123). Westmoreland follows, "They know your grace hath cause and means and might; /So hath your highness. Never king of England/had nobles richer and more loyal subjects, /whose hearts



have left their bodies here in England/And lie pavilioned in the fields of France..." (1.2.124-129). Throughout Henry's call to his men at Harfleur we hear "England."

Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more  
Or close the wall up with our English dead...  
On, on you [noblest] English  
Whose blood is let from your fathers of war-proof...  
... and you, good yeomen  
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here  
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear  
That you are worth your breeding, which I doubt not...  
Cry, God for Harry! England! And Saint George! (3.1.1-34)

The difficulty in capturing the fervor of nationalism has diminished. Thousands of Americans have died, and the deaths continue. For a time Americans sang "God Bless America" together, wept at memorial services, and were moved by the flag and other patriotic images. There was easier access to students to awaken empathy for Shakespeare's characters. Over time with many more deaths and a war becoming more complicated to understand, students' natural skepticism surfaced and questions about the run up to the war with France held also for the run up to the war in Iraq. This provided a great opportunity for discourse in the classroom. It also provided real time and fictional examples of complicated issues with inconclusive solutions. Henry V's father takes the throne, and England is better for losing Richard II, yet Henry V continues to pray for forgiveness for his father's sin and his treason. MacDuff

and Malcom have personal reasons enough for killing Macbeth, yet love of Scotland is their prime motivation. Coriolanus is a great soldier but not a patriot. He is condescending and insulting to the people, and when banished, he turns traitor. Students of Shakespeare are able to be brought to terms with the intricacies of patriotism in his work, in the world around them, and in themselves. Modern history also has proven Shakespeare right in his delving into the darkness of our hearts and the extreme actions born there. He helps us interpret these events, and in turn the events help us relate to the darkness.

In act four of *Henry V* Fluellen discovers that the French have killed the boys in their force.

Kill the poys (sic) and the luggage! 'Tis  
Expressly against the law of arms. 'Tis as arrant a  
Piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offer't;  
In your conscience now is it not? (4.7.1-4)

Gower responds, "...the king, most worthily, hath/caus'd every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat./O 'tis a gallant king!" (4.7.9-10) In the same scene, Henry reacts to the atrocity threatening to "skir" away the French cavalry if they do not join his forces. "We'll cut the throats of those we have, /and not a man of them shall taste our mercy." The French kill children, Henry murders prisoners, Richard III kills children, Macbeth kills children, Titus Andronicus and Tamora have dueling revenges with each other's children. Finding the good guy continues to plague our abilities to sort things out. Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and other modern

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seats of atrocity become reference points for the atrocities of the French and the English in the killing field of Agincourt. In light of recent violence and cruelty over the planet perpetrated upon innocent victims including children, these characters, even "Titus," can hardly be seen as over the top. Interpretations may differ as to why infanticide occurs throughout history and literature, but the mayhem remains, and the students are left to deal with them. Shakespeare may not deliver the definitive look into the heart, but the look is less murky. As the glass becomes clearer, we are caused to perform the unpleasant task of putting a face on evil.

Always I have taught ingredients of Shakespeare's work; among them are history, characterization, stagecraft, themes, language, and passion. From the above, we have learned that the word "passion" is passionless. Nine/eleven and the war in Iraq have helped bring the passion of Shakespeare into the classroom. War is real. On occasion a class will fall into a quiet moment, rich in electricity, the palpable quiet an actor and his or her audience may feel when an emotional connection has been made. Such a moment has come after a dramatic reading from Act four, scene seven of *Henry V*, Exeter reporting to Henry on the deaths of the Duke of York and the Earl of Suffolk.

...Suffolk first died; and York, all haggled over,  
Comes to him, where in gore he lay insteeped,  
And takes him by the beard, kisses the gashes  
That bloodily did yawn upon his face.  
He cries aloud, "Tarry, my cousin Suffolk!  
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven.  
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast;  
As in this glorious and well foughten field  
We kept together in our chivalry...  
And so, espoused to death, with blood he sealed  
A testament of noble-ending love.  
The pretty and sweet manner of it forced  
Those waters from me which I would have stopped;  
But I had not so much of man in me,  
And all my mother came into mine eyes  
And gave me up to tears (4.7.26-32).

Students with Shakespeare informing their perceptions of war, soldiers, and power and with their reading of Shakespeare informed by contemporary events have encountered "the muse of fire" and have been raised to "the brightest heaven of invention."

## Oxford

I teach the authorship issue in Shakespeare classes. A few moments in *Henry V* provide opportunities to do so unobtrusively. The quote above begs the question, from where does the Stratford man draw the intimacy of the account of Exeter to the king of Suffolk's and York's battlefield deaths? Oxford, it can be pointed out, had been in and seen battle in Scotland and the low country of Europe albeit briefly. He also would know of the tension of the eve of battle. He describes it through the Chorus in the prologue to Act four.

...Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames  
Each battle sees the other's umbered face.  
Steed threatens steed, in high and boastful neighs  
Piercing the night's dull ear; and from the tents  
The armorers accomplishing their knights,  
With busy hammers closing rivets up,  
Give dreadful note of preparation (4.1.8-14).

A man who has been in the field and who is descended from generations of soldiers can write these words.

Much of the Oxford thesis depends on the writer being a nobleman. The Dauphin of France insults Henry by sending a gift of tennis balls. Henry answers,

When we have match'd our rackets to these balls,  
We will in France, by God's grace, play a set  
Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.  
Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler  
That all the courts of France will be disturb'd  
With chases...(1.2.259-266).

The above shows an intimate knowledge of the royal game of tennis and an intimate knowledge of the language in a punned threat of the destruction of France.

Dr. Richard Desper delivered a paper at the 2006 SOS / SF joint conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan entitled "Stars or Suns: The Portrayal of the Earls of Oxford in Elizabethan Drama". The presentation focused on act three, scene seven which is a discussion among the French noblemen the night before the Battle of Agincourt. Lord Rambures asks the Constable of France about his armour. He asks him if there are stars or suns upon it. The answer is "Stars." Dr. Desper goes on to explain that the heraldry described is that of the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. He further observed that in the film *Henry V*,

The director, Kenneth Branagh employs this icon.

Students come into the Shakespeare class perhaps because it is the only English class that fits their schedules or because they just were not paying attention; some are curious, and some love Shakespeare and are excited to take it. Regardless, all must be served. If the class does not affect their lives in some dramatic way, I have failed them. *Henry V* presently is a play filled with characters, events, and actions with which students can be made to see, amid all of the virtues of Shakespeare, applications to the here and now, their lives, our lives. I awaken anxious to go at this challenge though I do not always sleep well confident that I have met the challenge.

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## Concordia Connections Issue

November 2007

*Concordia Connections*, published by Concordia University in Portland OR, is the first university magazine to embrace the Shakespeare authorship question as a legitimate subject for research and study.

The featured article in the current issue is "The Quest for the True Author of William Shakespeare's Works" by a graduating senior. Professor Daniel Wright, founder and director of the Shakespeare authorship studies conference, contributed the inside-front cover essay on "A Teachable Moment." And last April's conference is covered in a photo spread. (Next year's conference will be April 3-6.)

Courtney Smith, class of '07, fulfilled her senior project as a reporter for the issue and as author of the featured article. She concluded that Concordia University "wants us to think critically, ask questions, constantly pursue knowledge and follow the quest for truth" including, for example, "pursuit of the Shakespeare authorship question."

In an interview, Mark Wahlers, university provost, told her, "The authorship studies degree program is the perfect example of our mission to train and encourage critical thinkers." Concordia University and Brunel University in London, are the first universities to establish an M.A. program in Shakespeare authorship studies.

Dan Wright, who is also founder and director of the Shakespeare authorship studies center at Concordia, wrote in his essay:

"It is in engaging Shakespeare that we discover one of the more important avenues to travel in this quest to discover truth. Given that there is serious debate amongst scholars about the identity of the poet-playwright who called himself Shakespeare, learning how to seek the truth in discovering who this writer was provides an important model for inquiry into the nature of truth itself. . . .

"[The quest] begins, therefore, in humility, not arrogance; in confidence, not certainty. It concludes, perhaps not in attaining the goal of the quest but in the satisfaction that the journey toward the goal is always one well-taken when it is shared and enjoyed by others."

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor

In his essay on the Shakespeare authorship controversy (summer 2007), John Shahan rightly deplores orthodox stonewalling around the Stratford man. At the same time, he notes that English professors are not monolithic in their view of the issue, and he cites as an example *The New York Times* survey showing that (only) 82 percent of Shakespeare professors think there's no good reason doubt that he was the author. The picture may well be even better than that, and I'd like to suggest why.

While the *Times* survey found that a surprising 17 percent do find reason to doubt the Stratford man's credentials, there are more examples of scholarly inquiry and perhaps incipient skepticism within the Shakespeare establishment. To cite a few—all from just the last decade or so:

Four of the leading Shakespeare professors engaged Oxfordians with essays in the *Harper's Magazine* special issue. They were Jonathan Bate, Harold Bloom, Marjorie Garber and Gail Kern Paster. Garber, a senior professor at Harvard, is the author of *Shakespeare After All*, and although she devoted only three paragraphs to the authorship controversy in her book she listed seventeen works as suggested readings—and nine are by Oxfordians, including Looney, Ogburn, Sobran and myself. And Gail Kern Paster, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, joined me in a two-hour debate before six hundred people at the Smithsonian Institution.

Another establishment Shakespearean, Brian Vickers, author of the acclaimed *Shakespeare Co-Author*, has concluded that today's Stratford monument of a writer, a mainstay of the Stratfordian argument, is not the original, which depicted a sackholder. (summer 2007 issue)

David Bevington of the University of Chicago, editor of the Harper Collins/Longmans edition of the collected works of Shakespeare, discussed the authorship controversy twice in public forums, one of them with me on NPR Chicago, and provided helpful comments on the manuscript of my edition of *Macbeth*.

James Shapiro of Columbia University, a Stratfordian, is writing a book that apparently may analyze the authorship controversy as an historical, societal and cultural phenomenon. It's conceivable it might be at least somewhat even-handed.

Besides the *Times* survey, there is additional evidence that the ranks of English professors are not monolithic in their views of the authorship controversy:

Dan Wright at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, and Bill Leahy at Brunel University in London have launched the first M. A. programs in Shakespeare authorship studies.

Next April will be Dan's 12<sup>th</sup> annual authorship studies conference. As many as ten professors have delivered research papers at the conferences, and more have been in attendance. Former chair of the English department, Dan is also the founder and director of the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Center at Concordia, where he has the full support of the university president.

So far, about seventy-five professors have signed the online declaration of reasonable doubt about the identity of Shakespeare, including deans and department heads at Concordia. Their support was formally announced at the conference banquet last April, an announcement held the same day as the declaration signing in California.

More than two hundred university professors have demonstrated in their writings "a more-than-passing interest in the authorship

controversy” (including Oxfordians, skeptics and stonewallers) and receive my twice yearly newsletter. In the early 1990s, only a handful could be identified as having some interest.

The University of Massachusetts-Amherst awarded Roger Stritmatter of Coppin State University a Ph.D after he successfully defended his dissertation on Oxford’s Bible.

Eight English literature professors are editing Oxfordian editions of Shakespeare plays.

Felicia Londre of the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Kristin Linklater of Columbia University described in scholarly books their conclusion that Oxford was the true author.

The Tennessee University School of Law sponsored a two-day symposium on “Who Wrote Shakespeare” with speakers from both sides of the issue and published the proceedings in *The Tennessee Law Review*.

*The Shakespeare Newsletter* from Iona College, which claims more than 2,000 subscribers, mostly professors and theater people, has printed Oxfordian articles and letters, the latest an ongoing exchange between the editors and myself on their evidence for the Stratford man: his will, the monument and the First Folio front matter.

More than a dozen Oxfordian professors raise the issue in their classes. Michael Delahoyde at Washington State University designed and taught an honors course on Oxford as Shakespeare, a course that was probably a first for any university.

The extent of these examples just from the past decade is unprecedented. Nothing like it occurred in academia before the mid-1990s. Along with the *Times* survey they testify to the recent change in attitudes in academia, especially among a few of the leading establishment Shakespeareans. The bastions of orthodoxy are not all that monolithic.

The Online Declaration of Reasonable Doubt about Shakespeare’s identity may well prove to be a powerful accelerating force persuading more professors in the Shakespeare establishment that Shakespeare’s identity (in the concluding words of the declaration) “should henceforth be regarded in academia as a legitimate issue for research and publication and an appropriate topic for instruction and discussion in classrooms.”

Yours,  
Richard F. Whalen

To the Editor

Christopher Paul’s article on a new letter by J. Thomas Looney reveals the PT Theory (Oxford had an affair with Queen Elizabeth), and it also illustrates the essential conundrum of Oxfordian scholarship versus Oxfordian publicity. Those whose main interest is in seeing Oxford fear that the PT Theory will bring the whole enterprise into “ridicule” and thus tailor their research to fit the existing theories. Those favoring the PT Theory regard the truth as more important, letting the historical chips land where they may.

Obviously, Looney did not do subsequent research or question his findings about the man named Edward de Vere. Following, Looney’s own logic, there is little to confirm that Oxford was in fact the son of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford. The plays and works as autobiography never show the Author to be concerned

with the life of a noble in the court, rather they show an Author overwhelmingly concerned with the rights, duties and privileges of a monarch. Nowhere, does the Author reveal himself to be a mere earl. Rather when he speaks in the authoritorial voice is as King Lear, Prince Hamlet, Prince Bertram, the Duke of Naples etc.

The limitations of the orthodox Oxfordians (PT-deniers) is that they can never really do a good psychobiography of Oxford versus the Author. An earl as an author is a better fit than a grain dealer, but it is far cry from explaining the motivation of the Author writing *Venus and Adonis*, which clearly indicates the author (killed by a boar) has sexual intercourse with a Queen and as Jonathan Bate explains, a love child as the result.

Personally, I think the mission to convince academia that Oxford is the author Shakespeare is a fruitless one, and that articles written with that purpose are boring beyond belief. Oxford will be established as Shakespeare when there is a cultural tsunami that simply destroys all opposition, and that will be a major movie that portrays Oxford as Shakespeare (with or without PT Theory). Let the Stratfordians alone and live in their parallel universe and proceed with Oxfordians studies regardless of the consequences. Oxfordian research no matter how convincing, or how mountainous is not convincing to Stratfordians and trying to keep it pure so that there is no “ridicule” is a fruitless and limiting effort.

Paul Streitz

## *THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER*

The Shakespeare Oxford Society welcomes articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters, and news items of relevance to Shakespeare, Edward de Vere and the Authorship Discussion. *It is the policy of the Shakespeare Oxford Society to require assignment of copyright on any article submitted to the Newsletter.* Please contact the editor with any questions.

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# Declaration of Reasonable Doubt

## About the Identity of William Shakespeare

© *Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (SAC)* — [www.DoubtAboutWill.org](http://www.DoubtAboutWill.org)  
[Download a copy of the declaration](#)

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

— William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*

To Shakespeare lovers everywhere, as well as to those who are encountering him for the first time: know that a great mystery lies before you. How could William “Shakspere” of Stratford have been the author, William Shakespeare, and leave no definitive evidence of it that dates from his lifetime? And why is there an enormous gulf between the alleged author’s life and the contents of his works?

In the annals of world literature, William Shakespeare is an icon of towering greatness. **But who was he?** The following are among the many outstanding writers, thinkers, actors, directors and statesmen of the past who have expressed **doubt that Mr. “Shakspere” wrote the works of William Shakespeare:**

- [Mark Twain](#)
- [Henry James](#)
- [Walt Whitman](#)
- [Charles Dickens](#)
- [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)
- [Orson Welles](#)
- [Leslie Howard](#)
- [Tyrone Guthrie](#)
- [Charlie Chaplin](#)
- [Sir John Gielgud](#)
- [William James](#)
- [Sigmund Freud](#)
- [Clifton Fadiman](#)
- [John Galsworthy](#)
- [Mortimer J. Adler](#)
- [Paul H. Nitze](#)
- [Lord Palmerston](#)
- [William Y. Elliott](#)
- [Harry A. Blackmun](#)
- [Lewis F. Powell, Jr.](#)

Present-day doubters include many more prominent individuals, numerous leading Shakespearean actors, and growing numbers of English professors. Brunel University in West London, and Concordia University in

Portland, Oregon, now offer degree programs in authorship studies. **Yet orthodox scholars claim that there is no room for doubt** that Mr. Shakspere wrote the plays and poems traditionally attributed to him. Some say that it is not even an important question.

We, the undersigned, hereby declare our view that there is room for reasonable doubt about the identity of William Shakespeare, and that it is an important question for anyone seeking to understand the works, the formative literary culture in which they were produced, or the nature of literary creativity and genius.

### The Problematic Case for Stratford’s Mr. Shakspere

Many people think that Mr. Shakspere (a frequent spelling of his name, used here to distinguish him from the author) *claimed* to have written the works. No such record exists. The case for him as the author rests largely on testimony in the First Folio collection of the plays, published in 1623, seven years after he died. However, nothing in the contemporaneous documentary evidence of his life confirms the Folio testimony. If Mr. Shakspere was the author, there should be definitive evidence of it from his lifetime. There is none. Not that there are no reasons to think that Mr. Shakspere wrote the works, but we find them inconclusive.

There are four main reasons to identify Mr. Shakspere of Stratford with the author William Shakespeare. First, the name “William Shakespeare” (often “Shake-speare”) appeared on the title pages of many of the poems and plays published during his lifetime. Second, Ben Jonson wrote a key phrase in the First Folio referring to the author as “Sweet Swan of Avon,” and Leonard Digges refers to “thy Stratford monument.” Third, fellow actors Heminges and Condell, mentioned in his will, point to him as the author in the Folio. Fourth, the effigy and inscription on his Stratford monument suggest that “Shakespeare” had been a writer. These four reasons would seem to amount to a prima facie case for Mr. Shakspere (evidence sufficient to establish

a presumption of fact, unless rebutted by other evidence); however, each of them is problematic.

1. It is not certain from the title pages that the name printed on them necessarily refers to Mr. Shakspere. Mr. Shakspere’s last name was spelled numerous ways, even after many of the works had been published. The name on the works was virtually always spelled one way, “Shakespeare;” but it was often hyphenated — a rarity for English names at the time. Scholars have no definitive explanation for the hyphenated name. Mr. Shakspere’s name was *never* hyphenated in other contexts, such as his business dealings in Stratford. On his baptismal record, even on his monument, Mr. Shakspere’s name was spelled with no “e” after “k.” The same is true of its three appearances in his will, twice spelled “Shackspeare,” and once “Shakspeare.” Some think that it may have been pronounced with a short “a,” like “Shack,” as it was quite often spelled.

2. The First Folio testimony does point to Shakspere as the author, but should this be taken at face value? It is very unusual that the identity of such a great writer would depend so heavily on posthumous evidence. Neither Ben Jonson, nor Leonard Digges, ever wrote a personal reference to Mr. Shakspere while he lived. Not until the year Shakspere died did Jonson refer to “Shakespeare,” and then only to list him as an actor. Other than their two brief allusions, neither Jonson nor Digges offered any further identifying information — not his dates of birth and death, or names of any family members, or any revealing episode from his life. Short on individualizing facts, they gave us generalized superlatives that describe the author, not the man.

3. Perhaps the strongest link to Mr. Shakspere is the apparent testimony of actors Heminges and Condell. Neither of them was a writer, however, and several scholars doubt that they wrote the passages attributed to them. Some think their Folio testimony sounds like a sales pitch, urging undecided readers to purchase. Most orthodox scholars are untroubled by the lack of corroboration, limited specifics,

ambiguities, puffery and unclear role of Mr. Shakspeare's fellow actors. Skeptics ask why the Folio is not more straightforward, and why such a great outpouring of eulogies only occurred following seven years of silence after his death.

4. Yes, today the Stratford monument effigy clearly depicts a writer; but it does not look the same as the one erected in the early 1600s. A sketch by a reputable antiquarian in 1634 shows a man with a drooping moustache holding a wool or grain sack, but no pen, no paper, no writing surface as in today's monument. Records show that the monument was "repaired." Apparently the effigy was also altered to depict a writer. The monument's strange inscription never states that Mr. Shakspeare was the author William Shakespeare. For anybody living in Stratford, who may have known him, the epitaph could appear to say no such thing. It neither names, nor quotes from, any of the works; and it never mentions poetry, plays, acting or theater. Most orthodox biographers have little to say about the inscription, and some even describe it as enigmatic. Epitaphs of other writers of the time identify them clearly as writers, so why not Mr. Shakspeare's epitaph?

### Why We Say the Evidence Does Not Fit

If the case for Mr. Shakspeare were otherwise sound, the problems in these four areas would hardly matter. Unfortunately, once one looks beyond them, one finds no contemporaneous evidence that Mr. Shakspeare was even a professional writer, much less that he was the poet-playwright William Shakespeare. Further, much contemporaneous evidence that has come to light seems at odds with his having been Shakespeare. Of a few great writers, like Homer, we know nothing at all; but there is only one great writer about whom the more we learn, the less he appears to have *been* a writer. How can this be for England's Shakespeare?

Not one play, not one poem, not one letter in Mr. Shakspeare's own hand has ever been found. He divided his time between London and Stratford, a situation conducive to correspondence. Early scholars naturally expected that at least some of his correspondence would have survived. Yet the only writings said to be in his own hand are six

shaky, inconsistent signatures on legal documents, including three found on his will. If, in fact, these signatures are his, they reveal that Mr. Shakspeare experienced difficulty signing his name. Some document experts doubt that even these signatures are his and suggest they were done by law clerks. One letter addressed *to* Mr. Shakspeare survives. It requested a loan, and it was unopened and undelivered.

His detailed will, in which he famously left his wife "my second best bed with the furniture," contains no clearly Shakespearean turn of phrase and mentions no books, plays, poems, or literary effects of any kind. Nor does it mention any musical instruments, despite extensive evidence of the author's musical expertise. He did leave token bequests to three fellow actors (an interlineation, indicating it was an afterthought), but nothing to any writers. The actors' names connect him to the theater, but *nothing* implies a writing career. Why no mention of Stratford's Richard Field, who printed the poems that first made Shakespeare famous? If Mr. Shakspeare was widely known as William "Shakespeare," why spell his name otherwise in his will? Dying men are usually very aware of, and concerned about, what they are famous for. Why not this man?

Mr. Shakspeare grew up in an illiterate household in the remote agricultural town of Stratford-upon-Avon. There is no record that he traveled at all during his formative years, or that he ever left England. Both of his parents witnessed documents with a mark; but most surprisingly, neither of his daughters could write. One poorly-executed signature exists for his daughter, Susanna, but it only suggests a functional illiterate. His younger daughter, Judith, twice signed with a mark when witnessing a deed for a Stratford neighbor. Mr. Shakspeare may have attended the Stratford grammar school, but records to confirm this do not exist. Records do survive for England's two universities at the time, but no record places him at either of them. Most orthodox scholars make no claim that he ever attended any university, inside or outside of England.

Some say that the Stratford grammar school would have provided all the formal education Mr. Shakspeare would have needed to launch him on a trajectory consistent with

the author's literary output. We disagree. The works show extensive knowledge of law, philosophy, classical literature, ancient and modern history, mathematics, astronomy, art, music, medicine, horticulture, heraldry, military and naval terminology and tactics; etiquette and manners of the nobility; English, French and Italian court life; Italy; and aristocratic pastimes such as falconry, equestrian sports and royal tennis. Nothing that we know about Mr. Shakspeare accounts for this. Much of the knowledge displayed in the works was the exclusive province of the upper classes, yet no record places Mr. Shakspeare among them for any length of time. The works are based on myriad ancient and modern sources, including works in French, Italian, Spanish, Latin and Greek not yet translated into English. How Mr. Shakspeare could have acquired knowledge of these sources is a mystery.

The gap between Mr. Shakspeare's youth in Stratford and the first record of him in London is known as the "lost years." But for a few church records, the first twenty-eight years of his life could be described as lost. Scholars know *nothing* about how he acquired the breadth and depth of knowledge displayed in the works. This is not to say that a commoner, even in the rigid, hierarchical social structure of Elizabethan England, could not have managed to do it somehow; but how could it have happened without leaving a single trace? Orthodox scholars attribute the miracle to his innate "genius," but even a genius must *acquire* knowledge. Books were expensive and difficult to obtain during those times, except at universities or private libraries. No book that Mr. Shakspeare owned, or that is known to have been in his possession, has ever been found. Academic experts on characteristics of geniuses see little reason to think that Mr. Shakspeare was a genius.

No record shows that any William Shakespeare ever received payment, or secured patronage, for writing. After dedicating his first two poems to the earl of Southampton, Shakespeare issued no more dedications. Why would any writer motivated by profit, as we are told Mr. Shakspeare was, not visibly seek patronage? Some scholars claim that the earl of Southampton was his patron, but no record shows that they ever met. A phrase in one

of the dedications (“The warrant I have of your honourable disposition...”) suggests not. Not only did prominent patrons of other writers not support Mr. Shakspeare, they did not comment on him. Up until 1623, those who commented on the author, or on his works, never indicated that they knew him. Shakespeare, the author, wrote no commendatory verse, and nobody addressed any to him while he lived.

Contrary to the traditional view that the author became a prominent public figure, there is no record that he ever addressed the public directly, either in person or in writing (other than the two early dedications); and no record shows that either Elizabeth I, or James I, ever met Shakespeare, or spoke or wrote his name. Even after one of his plays was performed as part of the Essex rebellion, Shakespeare was not mentioned. Almost uniquely among Elizabethan poets, Shakespeare remained silent following the death of Elizabeth. Early in the reign of James I, records place Shakspeare in Stratford while plays were staged in London for the Court. Why was the popular playwright and leading actor of the King’s Men not part of such events?

It is not that there are no documents for Mr. Shakspeare; there are close to seventy, but all are non-literary. They reveal a businessman of Stratford, plus a theater entrepreneur and sometime minor actor in London. A few records show him delinquent in paying taxes, and he was cited for hoarding grain during a famine. A William Wayte, evidently threatened by him, sought “sureties of the peace against William Shakspeare.” In 1612, allegedly at the height of his fame, a London court called him simply a “gentleman of Stratford.” He sued over small business matters, but never once objected to an unauthorized publication of the works. The orthodox see nothing unusual in the lack of documentation for Mr. Shakspeare’s ostensible career, but he is the only presumed writer of his time for whom there is no contemporary evidence of a writing career.

Stranger still, this alleged prolific writer is said to have retired in his late-forties, with his faculties intact, and returned to the same market town from which he came, never to write a play, a poem, or even a letter. There is no record that he ever put on a play in Stratford, or that any of its residents viewed him as a poet. Several people who knew the man, or knew who he was, seem not to have associated him with the author, including his son-in-law, Dr. John Hall, poet Michael Drayton and prominent historian William Camden. Nobody, including literary contemporaries, ever recognized Mr. Shakspeare as a writer during his lifetime; and when he died in 1616, no one seemed to notice. Not so much as a letter refers to the author’s passing. If Mr. Shakspeare was Shakespeare, surely *something* dating from 1616 should mention the author’s death. Even Heminges, Condell and Richard Burbage, whom he mentioned in his will, had no recorded reaction. Nor did those who held rights to previously published editions of plays or poems rush new ones into print.

Scholars have found few, mostly dubious connections between the life of the alleged author and the works. Why are virtually all of the plays set among the upper classes, and how did the author learn of their ways? Why is only one play set in Mr. Shakspeare’s Elizabethan or Jacobean England? Why are so many in Italy? How did he become so familiar with all things Italian that even obscure details in these plays are accurate? Why did he never mention Stratford, and never write a play that seems to reflect his own life experiences? While pouring out his heart in the Sonnets, why did he *not once* mention the death of his 11-year-old son? Perhaps a few apparent incongruities could be explained away, if taken in isolation; but there are so many! Sam Schoenbaum, among the most-quoted traditional Shakespeare biographers, after decades of research, wrote that, “Perhaps we should despair of ever bridging the vertiginous expanse between the sublimity of the subject and the mundane

inconsequence of the documentary record.” (Shakespeare’s Lives, Second Edition)

Finally, Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, found Shakespeare’s elusiveness “exasperating and almost incredible ... After all, he lived in the full daylight of the English Renaissance in the well documented reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I and ... since his death has been subjected to the greatest battery of organised research that has ever been directed upon a single person. And yet the greatest of all Englishmen, after this tremendous inquisition, still remains so close to a mystery that **even his identity can still be doubted.**” (“What’s in a Name?” *Réalités*, November 1962.)

We make no claim, in signing this declaration, to know exactly what happened, who wrote the works, nor even that Mr. Shakspeare definitely did not. Individual signatories will have their personal views about the author; but all we claim here is that there is “room for doubt,” and other reasonable scenarios are possible. If writers and thinkers of the stature of Henry James, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain and all the rest of the outstanding people named above, have expressed doubt that Mr. William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the works attributed to him, why is it even necessary to *say* that there is room for doubt? There clearly *is* doubt, as a matter of empirical fact — *reasonable* doubt, expressed by very credible people. Reasonable people may differ about whether a preponderance of the evidence supports Mr. Shakspeare, but **it is simply not credible for anyone to claim, in 2007, that there is no room for doubt** about the author.

Therefore, in adding our names to those of the distinguished individuals named above, we hereby declare that the identity of William Shakespeare should, henceforth, be regarded in academia as a legitimate issue for research and publication, and an appropriate topic for instruction and discussion in classrooms.

[Sign the declaration now](#)

## Recollections of Peter Moore on the Occasion of His Passing

W. Ron Hess

What a tragic loss! Many an evening while he lived in Arlington, Virginia, I would drop in on and chat for hours with Peter Moore (a chain smoker, his house was like a proverbial smoke house). And he joined me and my family for several evenings in return, once when I had invited Prof. Alan Nelson to join us. The result was Prof. Nelson's inviting Peter and I to come several nights a week down to his place near the Folger for several weeks in an "impromptu seminar" to read through with him photocopies and transcripts of Oxford's collected letters, helping him to verify his transcriptions. Peter was able to point out many errors in Alan's transcriptions of nearly every letter. Peter was also a good friend of Tom Bethel, another notable Oxfordian researcher who has dropped out of publishing but may still be alive.

Prof. Nelson and Prof. Steven May sponsored Peter for two months of researching at the Folger in late-1994 for his projected book about Oxford's uncle, the Earl of Surrey, though Peter's angle was more military than poetical. He wanted to vindicate Surrey's military tactics, which were sound, showing that had Henry VIII given Surrey the latitude and support he'd asked for, the minor defeat that brought on Surrey's disgrace and recall wouldn't have occurred). I would love to see Peter's notes on this, because I suspect this yearning for Surrey's vindication was something the Howard and deVere families adhered to, and possibly influenced Oxford's outlook, re: knight-errantry, "the poetic knight," and military service.

Peter and I would discuss the latest articles he was writing, often for Gary Goldstein in *The Elizabethan Review*. When I brought Peter an early draft of one of my articles, he was quite frank about its Weaknesses. I cringe whenever I stumble across it now, but he urged me to pursue more positive aspects, and so I began to pursue the lines of research that have kept me busy to date. I credit Peter Moore and Peter Dickson both for steering me toward the Munday links to Oxford and Shakespeare that I now feel are the keys to everything.

About mid-1995 he explained to me his personal plan to no longer publish in Oxfordian journals but to instead subtly subvert tangential issues through publishing in more mainstream literary publications, such as those Gary listed below, thereby building up his academic credentials preparatory to a major paper favoring our cause from the wings. Not a bad strategy, as both Peter and Diana Price have shown. I have searched out some of Peter's non-Oxfordian publications and found them excellent, but as I've said, tangential to the authorship question. Still, his strategy did deprive us of about 15 years of Oxfordian insights; and now that he's departed, his carefully-established academic credentials won't be benefiting our cause as much as he had planned.

There were sections of my Vol. I which heavily drew from the discussions I'd had with Peter, so much so that I offered to share credit with him for parts of my Chapters 6 and 7. But Peter said he'd tell me if he thought I had borrowed too much and declined the invitation. My Vol. II Appendix B and an article in the 1999 Oxfordian drew heavily on Peter's ER article about dating Shakespeare's plays, although I leaned toward an earlier regime than Peter advocated, relegating his generally late-1580s or early-1590s dates to periods of rewrite or revision. As I pointed out a few months ago, it's almost certain that Hank Whittemore's dating system, i.e., that nearly all of the sonnets dated to circa 1601-04 and reflected the Essex rebellion, derived consciously or unconsciously from a series of articles Peter had written in the SOS Newsletter circa 1990 though I've criticized Peter's dating of # 107 to Oxford's deathbed, since by his system that relegated #s 108-154 to Oxford's afterlife.

We didn't agree on everything, but Peter was a

well-researched, almost invariably sound advocate for our cause. For the record, he leaned toward the bisexual bard argument and privately ridiculed Prince Tudor. I should point out Peter confided to me that he'd ghost researched many parts and proofed all of Joe Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare* though he hastened to note that Joe was the masterful writer of the whole book, and Peter had quietly collaborated with Charlton Ogburn Jr. in the corrected second edition of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. When I organized the January 1994 Burford-Matus debate in Arlington, Virginia, Peter generously shared with Charles Burford and me an extensive collection of talking point papers that may have helped Charles to win over Matus (though I believe Charles could do as much vs. any Strat debater).

So, when Sir Isaac Newton said he'd stood on the shoulders of giants, he had in mind the same situation that we Oxfordians can apply to Peter Moore. I'll bet that Peter left many papers, texts, and unpublished articles that can be retrieved. If Gary's working on that, he'll be quite busy for a long, long time. Just the Surrey book would be quite a task.

### The Shakespeare Oxford Society is seeking an Editor for The Oxfordian

The position will be for one year with option for renewal. Applicants for the position, submit your resume and request information about applying from John Hamill, Chairman of the Publications Committee, at [HamillX@pachell.net](mailto:HamillX@pachell.net) and return to him as soon as possible.

The position pays \$6,000 a year for the annual publication of *The Oxfordian*. A decision will be announced on or before February 1, duties to begin March 1, 2008.