



The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter



Dedicated to Researching and Honoring the True Bard

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Oxfordian-of-the-year award presented to Justice Stevens

Alex McNeil and Matthew Cossolotto



Melissa Dell’Orto, Thomas Regnier, Justice John Paul Stevens, Alex McNeil, and Michael Pisapia — November 12, 2009, Washington DC.

Photo Credit: Photo by Steve Petteaway, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society awarded the 2009 “Oxfordian of the Year Award” to John Paul Stevens, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Justice Stevens has long doubted whether William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon is the real Bard.

The award was conferred jointly by the Shakespeare Fellowship and the Shakespeare Oxford Society, the two leading American organizations that promote the case for Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the true author of the works attributed to Shakespeare.

On November 12, 2009, representatives of the two groups – Alex McNeil, Thomas Regnier,

Michael Pisapia, and Melissa Dell’Orto – traveled to Washington, DC, where they presented a plaque to Justice Stevens, recognizing him for his interest in and support of the Oxfordian thesis.

Appointed to the high court by President Ford in 1975, Justice Stevens has been interested in the Shakespeare authorship problem since 1987, when he participated in a moot court on the topic at American University. In an article published by *The Wall Street Journal* (April 18, 2009: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123998633934729551.html>), Justice Stevens expressed his view that “the evidence that (Shakespeare of Stratford) was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt.”

Letter from SOS President John Hamill

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Hello Shakespeare Oxford Society members. I am excited to take over this new responsibility to see what we can do together to promote the case for Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare. While we have made some progress, we still have many big challenges ahead.

I want to thank Matthew Cossolotto for his strong leadership over the last four years. With his public relations and outreach skills, he has guided the Shakespeare Oxford Society to more visibility. Under the leadership of Matthew and the publications committee, we expanded the purpose of *The Oxfordian* to reach orthodox academia and begin a dialogue on the authorship issue. It does nothing to promote the Oxfordian theory if we only keep talking to ourselves.

An historic Oxfordian milestone this year was Justice John Paul Stevens' announcement on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* (April 18, 2009) that "the evidence that (Shakespeare of Stratford) was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt."

Justices Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor also signed the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt that John Shahan has developed and promoted.

The BBC recently contacted *The Oxfordian* editor, Dr. Michael Egan, to develop a story on Oxford and the Shakespeare authorship. Egan gave an excellent account of Oxford's case. This is a very good development, and we need to capitalize on this momentum and increase our visibility in the media. To



John Hamill, August 2009 Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA

expand on this public relations trend, we are planning to have a board member focus on public relations and communications, and another on membership development and fundraising.

For these reasons, the priorities that I want to focus on for this year are outreach to the media and academia, and the promotion of research on the authorship issue. We must increase our membership and donations so that we can fund these activities. Raising membership and funds is critical to the Shakespeare authorship issue. We are facing a Goliath, and we can hardly afford a slingshot. I will be promoting fundraisers for specific proposals and I hope that our membership will rise to the challenge. You might come to view me as similar to a permanent SOS pledge-seeker, but this will be essential if we want to challenge the Stratfordians.

Please join me in supporting this effort. We need to keep on making dents in the Stratfordian armor until it falls apart and shows that the emperor has no clothes.

John Hamill, President
Shakespeare Oxford Society

SF/SOS joint conference Sept. 16-19, 2010

New Shakespeare Fellowship President Earl Showerman will chair next year's Shakespeare Fellowship/Shakespeare Oxford Society joint conference to be held September 16-19, 2010 at the Ashland Springs Hotel in Ashland, Oregon. Showerman has reserved a block of tickets at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland for conference attendees.

"The program for the 2010 joint authorship conference will include group tickets to three productions at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival: *Merchant of Venice* (9/16/10), *Hamlet* (9/17/10), and *Henry IV, Part I* (9/18/10). An emphasis will be placed on presentations relevant to the current plays in production and panel discussions that include members of the OSF acting company will also be included in the program," Showerman said.

One hundred tickets for each of the three productions have been reserved for the conference. Registrants may order up to two tickets per production with their conference registration, but additional tickets will be provided only by special request of the program committee. Group ticket prices are *Merchant* \$58, *Hamlet* \$66, *Henry IV* \$66. Group ticket orders will be closed on August 15, 2010. Orders for tickets after that date must be placed directly with the Oregon

Shakespeare Festival box office at 541-482-4331 or online at <http://www.osfashland.org/>. Other plays in production during the conference include *Twelfth Night*, *Throne of Blood*, *Ruined*, *American Night*, and the musical *She Loves Me*.

Travel

The Rogue Valley – Medford Airport has non stop connections to Portland, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver, Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles. The airport is 15 miles from Ashland; shuttle service is available. A block of 30 rooms has been reserved for the conference at the Ashland Springs Hotel: <http://www.ashlandspringshotel.com> or call 888-795-4545. Room rate for the conference is \$149 per night. The hotel is one-half block from the Oregon Shakespeare Festival theaters.

Other comparable, less expensive lodgings are available in Ashland within several blocks of the theater and conference site. These include: Bard's Inn Best Western <http://bardsinn.com>, 800-528-1234 Stratford Inn <http://stratfordinnashland.com> 800-547-4741 Plaza Inn <http://plazainnashland.com>, 888-488-0358 Columbia Hotel <http://columbiahotel.com>, 800-718-2530

Bed and breakfast establishments with comparable room rates are within walking

distance of the conference site and theaters. These include: Winchester Hosue, Anne Hathaway's B&B, A Cowslips Belle, Ashland Creek Inn, Chanticleer Inn, McCall House, Shrew's House, Iris Inn and the Peerless Hotel. For information consult Ashland's Bed and Breakfast Network at <http://abbnet.com>.

For more information about the conference contact Showerman at earlees@charter.net. For the 2010 Oregon Shakespeare Festival program, check the web at <http://www.osfashland.org>.

Call for papers: 2010 SF/SOS Conference in Ashland, Oregon

June 15, 2010 is the deadline for submissions to the 2010 SF/SOS joint conference in Ashland, Oregon. Preference for the 2010 conference will be given to papers that address the Shakespeare authorship question in relation to the Shakespeare plays in production at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival: *Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry IV*. General guidelines for presentation of papers are available at: <http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com/?p=193>. Proposals should be accompanied by an abstract of not more than 250 words and a brief biography of the presenter. To submit a paper, contact Bonner Cutting jandbcutting@comcast.net, John Hamill hamillx@pacbell.net, or Earl Showerman earlees@charter.net.

2010

SF/SOS Joint Conference, September 16-19, 2010, Ashland Springs Hotel, Ashland Oregon

Board of trustees approves changes in membership dues starting January 2010, reports on society finances

Reported by SOS Treasurer Susan Grimes Width and President John Hamill

At its December 2009 meeting, the Shakespeare Oxford Society board of trustees reluctantly decided that it was necessary to make some adjustments in the society's membership dues structure effective January 2010. Longtime members of the society will remember that our dues have not been changed for quite a few years.

As a reminder to all members, the SOS operates on a calendar-year basis. This means all members must renew their membership in January of each year. Please renew for 2010 as soon as possible!

Beginning in January 2010, the BOT created a new membership category called "Regular Member." A Regular Member will have full voting rights, receive any published newsletters and a copy of our annual journal *The Oxfordian*. Dues for a Regular Membership in 2010 have been set at \$65 a year.

Dues for a "Basic Membership" will be \$50 in 2010. Basic Members will have full voting rights and receive any published newsletters.

Dues for "Family Members" (two people) will increase from \$75 to \$100. Family Members will have full voting rights and receive any published newsletters and *The Oxfordian*.

Please see the 2010 Membership Dues Schedule below for additional details about all membership categories.

After resisting any dues increases for several years, the SOS

board of trustees determined that these adjustments to the dues structure are necessary because expenses have been rising and income from membership dues has been declining over the past few years. The cost of producing *The Oxfordian* every year amounts to roughly \$15,000. The quarterly newsletter costs more than \$12,000 a year in production and postage costs. The society also incurs miscellaneous additional expenses of roughly \$16,000 a year. A large portion of these additional expenses goes toward maintaining an office location with sufficient storage space for our library, back issues of publications, assorted Society files, and other materials. Among other things, having an office allows us to offer books and merchandise for sale, respond promptly to member inquiries, organize mailings, and maintain consistent phone/fax numbers and mailing address.

Add it all up and our total annual expenses amount to some \$43,000.

On the income side, our current level of membership dues contributed about \$15,000 in 2009. The combined income from contributions, investment earnings and the sales of merchandise generated about \$11,000 in revenue in 2009. This means our expenses in 2009 (\$43,000) exceeded our income (\$26,000) by about \$17,000. Needless to say, this fiscal imbalance cannot continue indefinitely.

To round out the picture on our finances, longtime members

may remember the establishment of a \$100,000 endowment fund for supporting authorship research. The SOS is almost three-quarters (\$74,000) of the way there! Our liquid assets consist of these endowment funds and approximately \$10,000 of non-earmarked cash on hand. Additionally the collection of approximately 1,800 books we own has been listed on our balance sheet at its cost of \$18,000. Our total assets at the end of 2009, therefore, amount to approximately \$102,000.

Vice Presidents Appointed for Fundraising and Communications

To address our fiscal situation, the board of trustees has made several decisions. One difficult step involves adjusting the dues structure (outlined above) to help defray some of our expenses. To explore additional ways to grow the society's membership base and increase income from various sources including individuals and foundations, the board has created a new position — vice president for fundraising and development/membership — to explore grants and other funding opportunities to support our authorship-related educational programs and publications. Richard Joyrich has been appointed to this important new position.

The board of trustees believes the society — with more than a half-century track record as a non-profit, educational organization — should be able to secure additional sources of funding for such worthwhile projects as the publication and distribution of *The*

Oxfordian to schools and libraries and a speakers bureau to provide educational presentations about Shakespeare and the authorship issue to schools, universities, and community organizations.

The board of trustees also created the position of vice president for communications and outreach to help the society increase its visibility through a more aggressive, integrated public relations/communications strategy. Former SOS President Matthew Cossolotto has been asked to assume this critical new role. The activities of the two new vice-presidential positions are closely intertwined. Increased visibility will enhance the Society's ability to attract funding, and vice versa. One current project to increase visibility is the ongoing distribution of *The*

Oxfordian Volume 11 to some 150 university English departments and the selected media outlets. Other ideas include publishing and distributing a monograph in 2010 about the posthumous publication of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in 1609. We will also be developing a public-relations strategy around newsworthy events in the course of 2010, including the April release of James Shapiro's book about the authorship question titled *Contested Will*.

While exploring ways to boost membership and increase funding, the board of trustees will actively consider ideas for reducing expenses, including the possibility of shifting to an electronic format for the newsletter. Such a move could reduce printing and mailing costs significantly.

We hope all members will pitch in by making additional donations over and above their annual membership dues. Society members can also help by recruiting more members; speaking to local schools; or forming local chapters of the SOS.

Because we operate on a calendar-year basis, members are strongly encouraged to renew their membership in the SOS as soon as possible in January 2010 according to the categories outlined in the table below. We sincerely appreciate the ongoing support of all members of the Society. We need your active participation as we seek to grow the society, increase funding, and pursue our mission of researching and honoring the True Bard.

2010 Membership Dues Schedule

Category	2010 Dues (2009)	Voting Rights	Newsletter or news online	<i>Oxfordian</i> ¹
Basic*	\$50 (N/A)	Yes	Yes	No [^]
Regular*	\$65 (\$50)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Family*	\$100 (\$75)	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes
Sponsor*	\$125 (\$100)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contributor	\$250	Yes	Yes	Yes
Patron	\$500	Yes	Yes	Yes
Benefactor	\$1,000 ²	Yes	Yes	Yes
Student*	\$30	Yes	Yes	No [^]
Member Recruit*	\$25 ³	Yes	Yes	No [^]

* For US/Canada residents; foreign add \$15.

[^] May purchase single copy of *The Oxfordian* at discounted price of \$20.

¹ Note: Effective 2010, individual copies of *The Oxfordian* will cost \$25 plus \$4.95 S&H.

² This category includes members who contribute \$1,000 and above.

³ Half price of Basic Membership for first year.

The Oxfordian seeks editors

Michael Egan

The Oxfordian invites applicants for the following positions:

- The book-reviews editor keeps an eye on the publishing world (online and off) through 2010, secures Shakespearean and English-Renaissance books to be reviewed, identifies and corresponds with reviewers, and makes sure edited copy comes in on time.
- The year's-work-in-attribution-studies editor reviews books and articles of specific interest to Oxfordian readers and writes a column for the next issue of The Oxfordian.
- Oxford-and-Oxfordians-in-the-news editor keeps a running record throughout the year of news items and developments and writes up a survey for the next issue of The Oxfordian.

Anyone who is interested in these non-paid positions may contact The Oxfordian Editor Michael Egan at drmichaelegan@comcast.net.

Deadline for the next issue of The Oxfordian is June 30, 2010. To submit articles please follow these guidelines:

- Submit Microsoft Word files.
- Submit by email to drmichaelegan@comcast.net.
- Use Modern Language Association reference system and format all additional comments as end-notes.
- Graphics are welcome.
- Play references should follow the style: I ii. 3.

Shakespeare Oxford Society members receive a copy of The Oxfordian as a benefit of membership. Join online at:

<http://www.goestores.com/catalog.aspx?Merchant=shakespeareoxfordsociety&DeptID=27020>

Non-members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society may order a copy of the latest issue by sending a request for The Oxfordian/11 (2009) The Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society to:

Shakespeare Oxford Society, P.O. Box 808, Yorktown Heights, NY, 10598-0808. Enclose a check for a total of \$24.95. (\$20 plus \$4.95 shipping via USPS Priority Mail)

Back issues of SOS publications may be ordered online at:

<http://www.goestores.com/catalog.aspx?StoreName=shakespeareoxfordsociety&DeptID=49368>

The Oxfordian update

Matthew Cossolotto

The Shakespeare Oxford Society recently mailed this year's *The Oxfordian* (Volume 11) — the first volume edited by recently appointed editor Michael Egan, PhD, an award-winning Shakespeare scholar who is open-minded on the Shakespeare authorship question.

For the first time *The Oxfordian* (TOX) is being mailed to chairs of English departments throughout the US. By sending 150 copies of TOX 11 with a cover letter from Dr. Egan directly to English departments, we are making our presence known to leaders in academia. We'll monitor the responses. We hope

this will open a dialogue on the authorship issue.

In his cover letter, Dr. Egan wrote: "I believe the Shakespeare authorship mystery is a legitimate and important area for investigation and that there are enough doubts or unexplored areas to continue serious academic research."

To order a copy of the latest issue of TOX, send a request for The Oxfordian/11 (2009) The Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society to: Shakespeare Oxford Society, P.O. Box 808, Yorktown Heights, NY, 10598-0808. Enclose a check for a total of \$29.95. (\$25 plus

\$4.95 shipping via USPS Priority Mail)

Back issues of SOS publications may be ordered online at: <http://www.goestores.com/catalog.aspx?StoreName=shakespeareoxfordsociety&DeptID=49368>

Here's a reprint of the November 30, 2009, press release we issued announcing the publication of TOX 11:

Shakespeare Oxford Society Announces Publication of *The Oxfordian* – Edited by Professor Michael Egan, Shakespeare Scholar Who Is Open-Minded on the Shakespeare Authorship Question

(cont'd on p. 31)

Death of Oxfordian Paul Blair in California

Derran Charlton

It is with deep regret that I report the death of the eminent Oxfordian Paul Blair of Pasadena, CA., who died at his home, aged 94 on the 24th June, 2009. Having enjoyed a small meal, Paul lay down for a short nap; and gently passed from nature to eternity. His warm hospitality in Pasadena and where ever he happened to be, with any of his friends, both sides of the Atlantic, was unbounded. He was a brilliant Beverly Hills and Pasadena lawyer, an avid Oxfordian, and a darling most generous man.

I first met Paul over twenty years ago, when he kindly invited me to his home in Pasadena to confer de Vere, and study at the nearby Huntington Library. On later visits he kindly introduced me to Carol Sue Lipman, President of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, where I was privileged to present several Oxfordian talks. I particularly recall visiting and talking Oxford at an annual weekend Vaquero Exhibition held on Paul's ranch near Santa Barbara. Incidentally, Paul's ranch was situated next to the ranches of President Reagan and Michael Jackson.

During his visits to England, Paul delighted in visiting Castle Hedingham and environs, beautiful York (the city of the centuries), and Scotland, the land of his ances-

tors. When I recently stayed at the home of Verily Anderson together with Paul's daughter Heather and her husband Michael, and many of Paul's English friends, we raised our hearts and glasses in happy memories of Paul.

Paul is succeeded by his daughter Heather, and his sons Duncan and Ian.

We all miss Paul, and will never forget his many Oxfordian endeavors.



Unknown gentleman in monocle and Paul Blair in green sweater at The Bell Inn, Castle Hedingham in 1997.
Credit: Darren Charlton



Paul Blair on far right at the California home of Elizabeth Taylor in 1999 during a meeting to arrange the Shakespearean Research Symposium in Detroit. From left: Roger Parisious, Jerry Downs, Johnny Price, Diana Price and her husband Pat Dooley, Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Blair. Credit: Darren Charlton

In memoriam: Andy Hannas



Ginger Renner, Andy Hannas, Sally Mosher in 1995.
Photo courtesy of Ginger Renner

Oxfordian researcher Dr. Andrew Hannas, 58, died accidentally September 24, 2009 at his home in Lafayette, Indiana. He was laid to rest October 02, 2009 in Grandview Cemetery, 1510 N. Salisbury Street, West Lafayette, Indiana. Dr. Hannas was a well-known Oxfordian who wrote articles for the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*.

Houston authorship conference

Richard Joyrich

The fifth annual Joint Shakespeare Fellowship/ Shakespeare Oxford Society Conference convened at 1:30 PM November 5, 2009 at the Intercontinental Airport Doubletree Hotel in Houston, Texas. After welcome remarks by outgoing Shakespeare Fellowship President Alex McNeil and Shakespeare Oxford Society Vice-President John Hamill (standing in for President Matthew Cosolotto who could not attend the conference) presentations began with Cheryl Eagan-Donovan. In her talk, "Oxford as Shakespeare in the 21st Century", she detailed recent productions of Shakespeare plays that have been re-imagined for a current twenty-first century audience to include popular themes of — as Cheryl says, "sex, drugs, and rock and roll". These productions feature modern language and music and use images of the Internet and other elements of popular culture. Cheryl believes that Edward de Vere, as a "party boy", would have loved this kind of thing. She pointed out how the plays of Shakespeare incorporate much music and culture of Elizabethan England even though many of them take place at other times or locations. There is, therefore, nothing wrong in modernizing the plays and making it easier to introduce the current generation to ideas of authorship.

Cheryl then showed a preview trailer for her upcoming documentary (based on the work of Mark Anderson) called "Nothing Truer Than Truth". Cheryl is seeking funding to continue work on this documentary. She is specifically interested in going

to Italy to film on-site at the places Edward de Vere visited and that influenced the plays he would later write.

The next presentation, by Ron Halstead, "The Influence of the Family of Love on the Theme of Forgiveness in *Measure for Measure*", described the Christian Sect known as the Family of Love that began in the 1550s and were persecuted by the authorities and driven into obscurity by 1581. Ron pointed out many parallels between the teachings of this sect and the plays of Shakespeare, particularly *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*. He

believes these two plays must have been substantially written before 1581. There are also some parallels with letters written by Oxford. John Dee, an influence on Shakespeare — and known to Oxford — was also familiar with members of the Family of Love.

The next presentation was by Ebru Gokdag who traveled from Turkey to attend the conference. Entitled "Easing Elizabeth's Turkophobia Through *Othello*," her presentation gave much detail on the relations between the



Felicia Loundre and Katherine Sharpe



Keir Cutler



Ebru Gokdag

Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and England during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, detailing how relations seemed better under Elizabeth. Although the Turks were universally feared for their military prowess they were generally trusted by Elizabeth, not so by James. Ebru pointed out some of the historic background to the play *Othello*, with the possible intention of showing how a court-insider like Oxford would have some advantage when writing the play. Although *Othello* is de-

scribed in the play as being baptized there is no specific mention of what his religion was before his baptism. Ebru argues that Othello was a former Islamic Turk who converted to Christianity and was thus a proper hero for Elizabethan audiences. During the question and answer period Ebru was asked for her views on the fact that Elizabeth was known to refer to Oxford as "my Turk". Ebru was not sure of the significance of this, but it does make one think, doesn't it? Again — although this observation was not part of Ebru's presentation — the facts seem to support an earlier date of composition of the play *Othello* than is generally given by orthodox scholars.

The presentations concluded on Thursday with a panel discussion of Felicia Londre, Robin Fox, and John Shahan. Much of the discussion centered around the recent anti-Oxfordian article in *Scientific American* by Michael Shermer of the Skeptic Society. The general feeling was that Shermer had not done his homework. Also panelists thought that even though the article was negative for Oxford, the publicity surrounding it and the obviously ill-thought-out arguments against Oxford might actually work in our favor in the long run. Robin Fox pointed out again that Oxfordians have to be careful when disparaging the Stratford Grammar School — which actually did provide a good education — and claiming that Edward de Vere had a university education — his MA degrees were honorary, according to Fox. For elucidation, see Fox's article in the *The Oxfordian*/11. But we can point out that Oxford attended the Inns of Court.

Felicia Londre shared some of her methods of introducing new audiences to the Shakespeare Authorship Question and Edward de Vere in her frequent lectures. She says the arguments have to be simplified so as not to bore audiences with too many historical names and facts.

Friday morning began with the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Fellowship. Following this the presentations started with Roger Stritmatter and Gary Goldstein introducing the new online journal *Brief Chronicles*. This new venture seems like a perfect opportunity to spread the word of Oxfordianism to further audiences due to its immediate availability free on the internet. The line-up of articles in the first issue is outstanding. Be sure to check it out at www.BriefChronicles.com

The next presentation, "Music and Songs in Shakespeare's Plays: *Othello*", was given by Ren Draya. After talking briefly about her experiences being the editor of the soon-to-be released Oxfordian edition of *Othello*, Ren talked about the widespread use of music and songs in the plays of Shakespeare with specific reference to *Othello*. (This play seems to be a frequent topic in this year's conference.)

Ren pointed out that before Shakespeare, music was more of an adjunct to theater. Shakespeare takes music and songs and makes them a part of the theater, using them to dramatic and comedic purposes. In the case of *Othello*, the drinking song — actually parts of two different songs — sung by Iago serves to show how he is in total control of the situation. The "Willow Song" sung by

Desdemona also serves a dramatic purpose, as she seems to purposely leave out the final line of one of the stanzas — "she was born fair, aye to die for his love" — that the audience at the time would have known well. Ren points out how Oxford was trained in music and that many books containing or about music were dedicated to him. Ren's full article is apparently going to be included in an appendix to her upcoming edition of *Othello*.

John Hamill's presentation, "A Spaniard in the Elizabethan Court: Don Antonio Perez" introduced most of the audience to this flamboyant and sinister figure who was Secretary of State for Phillip II of Spain and frequently at the court of Elizabeth. In going over some of the details of Perez's career, John shows how Perez can easily be seen as being parodied as Don Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost*. Details of his life also seem to have influenced dramatic details in *Othello* (Yes, there's that play again!) with Perez serving as a model for Iago. It is obvious that Shakespeare knew Perez well and disliked him. This fact, incidentally, makes the case for Bacon as Shakespeare more unlikely because Bacon and Perez were known to have been lovers.

John also presented new evidence that Antonio Perez was one of the suitors in "Willobie His Avisa." Perez was the most notorious Spaniard in England in 1594, when Avisa was published, and the description fits him perfectly. Perez seems to have been the Spaniard, Cavele-rio, who pursued Avisa, and who would have been known at the time to have been Elizabeth Trentham, the wife of Edward de Vere.

(Houston cont.)

After a well-deserved lunch break, the conference reconvened with a presentation by Ron Hess, entitled “All the World’s a Stage: Did Shakespeare Kill Don Juan?” Ron began by pointing out that Edward de Vere is the only Shakespeare candidate who can be definitely placed in Milan and other parts of Italy as well as other locations that are important in the plays of Shakespeare. Ron went on to explain that Don Juan of Austria was famous as the hero of the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 against the Turks. In 1573 the Pope married Don Juan to Mary Queen of Scots by proxy while she was a prisoner in England. He tasked Don Juan with sending a fleet to England in order to free Mary and put her on the English throne. In 1574, however, the Turks recovered Tunis creating the question of where Don Juan would take his fleet — to battle the Turks again or to invade England.

Ron Hess discussed the possibility that Edward de Vere’s well-known trip to the Continent in 1575-6 was not just for pleasure but was part of a mission to meet with Don Juan and assess the situation, potentially eliminating Juan as a threat to England, something finally accomplished in 1578. Ron also offered some thoughts on how the pseudonym “Shakespeare” or “Shake-Spear” came about.

The next presentation, entitled “By Death Departed: Marking the 400th Anniversary of Shakespeare’s Posthumously Published Sonnets” was written by Matthew Cossolotto. Since Matthew was unable to attend the conference at the last moment, the task of delivering his paper fell to your humble narra-

tor — Richard Joyrich. Although not possessed of the stentorian voice of Matthew, I nevertheless delivered his thoughts on how we Oxfordians should strive to make the case that the sonnets were published posthumously in 1609. A proof of this would eliminate all the candidates for the authorship of Shakespeare except Edward de Vere (and perhaps Christopher Marlowe) including the incumbent Will of Stratford. Matthew has put together a group of people to participate in a “Posthumous Sonnets Project” (see the blog at www.ShakespearesSonnets1609.wordpress.com) and invites anyone else to join in on the discussion with an eye toward publishing a monograph or other work on the subject in the near future.

Some of the arguments already being put forward for the conclusion that the sonnets were posthumous in 1609 are: the absence of a dedication by the poet, the title (Shakespeare’s Sonnets) which suggests that this is the complete set of sonnets and that no more will be forthcoming, the silence of the poet after the publication (no complaints of it being a pirated edition), references to the advanced age and impending death of the poet in several sonnets, and especially the phrase “our ever-living poet” — a phrase (despite attempts of Stratfordian arguments) which always refers to someone who is deceased.

Michael Egan then took the podium for what was supposed to be a discussion on *The Oxfordian*, the newest issue, number 11, having just been published with Michael Egan as editor. The discussion, however, quickly became a very animated complaint

session over where *The Oxfordian* was heading despite some calls for peace and patience until people had a chance to actually read the issue (which had only been put out for perusal earlier in the day). We will have to see what the final verdict is on *The Oxfordian* under its new editor.

After everyone calmed down at a opportunely scheduled break, Roger Stritmatter gave his presentation, “The de Vere Geneva Bible: A Rosetta Stone in the Shakespeare Question,” in which Roger informed us that he was now ready to reengage in continuing research on this important topic. He reminded the audience about his initial PhD dissertation on the subject and reviewed some of the negative reaction that was generated by traditional scholars including some more recent criticisms. Everyone in the audience expressed the hope that Roger will be able to continue his outstanding work on this potential smoking gun of Oxfordianism.

This second day of the conference got a terrific send-off by the American premiere of Keir Cutler’s one man show *Is Shakespeare Dead?* — previously only performed in many places in Canada. Keir Cutler presented a dramatic and side-splitting adaptation of Mark Twain’s famous 1909 book in which he debunked the myth the man from Stratford was the writer of the plays by William Shakespeare. Basing his presentation on some of the best parts of Twain’s work — and only updating things a little to include some candidates for Shakespeare who were unknown to Twain, particularly Edward de Vere — Keir kept his audience mesmerized — truly a treat!

Saturday morning began with the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. After the meeting we heard from Daniel Wright and Bill Boyle about the inauguration of the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre (SARC) at Concordia College in Portland, Oregon. We should all be encouraged to join this organization. Members will have access (through Concordia College) to many otherwise closed databases including JSTOR, an invaluable resource for investigators. Bill Boyle explained about his online library, SOAR (Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources), at www.shakespeareoxfordlibrary.org which will soon be interconnected with the SARC so that users of this library will also have access to important databases.

The next presentation, by Richard Whalen, was entitled "The Influence of *Commedia dell'Arte* in Shakespeare: Italian Theater Unknown in England but Known to Oxford". The title sums up the situation very well. The *commedia* was the principal form of theater in Italy, and was at its height in the 1570s in Venice when Edward de Vere was there. This type of theater had stock characters and plots, but was largely improvisational, and performances were tailored to the audience and topical events of the time. Oxford himself appears in a recorded performance as a fictional character; this is good evidence that he was actually in the audience. There were some *commedia* performances in England in the early 1570s (in Oxford's youth), but then nothing for a century — except possibly one court performance in 1602 which might have been just "tumbling".

Scholars have noted the use of *commedia* or its stock character-

types in many Shakespeare comedies (such as *The Tempest*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *As You Like It*), but have largely been at a loss to explain how this kind of influence on Shakespeare came about. Richard went on to detail how *commedia* was used by Shakespeare in his tragedies, taking Othello (yet again) as a prime example. The play can be seen as a tragedy built on a comic structure. Richard's article on this is apparently going to be included as an appendix in the upcoming Oxfordian edition of *Othello*, edited by Ren Draya and Richard Whalen.

We next heard from John Shahan on "Declaration of Reasonable Doubt: Strategy Implications for Oxfordians". John first updated us on how the Declaration is going with more and more signatories added all the time — although the online list for the public is only updated twice a year "to maintain suspense" as John puts it. The updated list was posted on November 16 — after the conference was over — and now has 1665 signatories including Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and John Paul Stevens.

John outlined the strategy of the declaration as an attempt to precipitate a crisis in the Stratfordian paradigm by legitimizing the issue, but not promoting any particular candidate. The goal is to score more high-profile victories before the important date (for Stratfordians) of April 23, 2016 — the 400th anniversary of the death of William of Stratford.

Shahan spoke about some of the opportunities we have before this date. These include a response to the upcoming book

by James Shapiro, and public events in 2012 — when the Olympics will be held in London and when a "celebration of English literature and culture" is being planned. By 2014 John would like to have a "Declaration of the Resolution of the Authorship Question" favoring Oxford. At that time a level playing field could be created by asking all the various authorship camps — including the Stratfordians — to produce their own Declarations. If they won't or can't do so it can be used as negative evidence against their candidate. Then we will see what happens.

We then moved into a banquet room for a wonderful lunch buffet. At the conclusion of lunch we were treated to a reading by Scott Evans of a chapter of his upcoming mystery novel, *First Folio*, which will address the authorship question. Scott asked for comments on what he had done; a few minor corrections and suggestions were made by those in attendance. The novel seems like it will be a great success and I, for one, can't wait to read it when it is finished.

Saturday afternoon was intended to provide an introductory atmosphere to the authorship question, and we had several newcomers to the issue attend from the local area. The conference organizers had arranged for discounted registrations to teachers and students for this portion of the conference.

We began the afternoon with another performance by the wonderful Keir Cutler. This time it was *Teaching Shakespeare*, a one-man show about an English professor, who is in Keir's words, "a frustrated actor turned frustrated professor".

(Houston cont.)

The way that the professor is teaching the class with all of his distractions, going on tangents and attempts to breathe life into whatever play he is discussing — never made clear — was immensely funny, and at the same time thought provoking. This was another fine theatrical event.

We then heard from Frank Davis on “A Comparison of Contemporary Signatures with those of William Shakespeare”. This was an outgrowth of Frank’s work on Henslowe’s Diary which had been previously presented at prior conferences and in publications. Frank talked about the various “hands” in use at the time of Shakespeare, including the “secretary hand” and the “italic hand” — the one we now use.

In his research Frank found that most educated men at the time wrote letters and such mainly in secretary hand, but almost invariably used the italic hand for their signature, and that even when they did sign in secretary hand the letters were very well formed. Of course this puts the Stratfordian position — that the six signatures we have of William of Stratford are so hard to read and look so terrible to us because they are in secretary hand — in some doubt. Using Henslowe’s diary and other sources for contemporary signatures, Frank was able to show how different these six signatures are from those of playwrights and actors of the time.

After a break Alex McNeil presented to us on “Is Shakespeare in Jeopardy?” Although we were disappointed not to have another round of “Oxfordian

Jeopardy” that we have come to love in previous conferences, Alex’s presentation was very well received and considered quite important. Alex basically showed us the kind of lecture he gives to audiences as an introduction to the authorship question, showing many reasons to doubt the traditional attribution of the works to William of Stratford — even though “his name is on the cover” — and why Edward de Vere is a better fit for the role of author.

The arguments Alex uses are quite familiar to most of us, but the way in which Alex set them out was very instructive. One comment I especially liked, not having heard it before, was how Dr. Hall — the son-in-law of William of Stratford — mentioned that he had treated “that excellent poet” Michael Drayton, but doesn’t mention his own father-in-law. Alex pointed out some major themes in the plays of Shakespeare — such as royal succession, concealment of identity, and knowledge of law — that favor Edward de Vere as the real author. I’m sure that the students and other newcomers in the audience were especially fascinated with Alex’s exposition of the issues.

After another break we were treated to another one-man show, this time *Shakespeare’s Treason* with Hank Whittemore. This show, based on Hank’s prior work on the sonnets, was very well presented and received by the audience — even by those, like me, who had seen it before. Hank is able to take this complex story and issue and make it quite accessible to anyone. It was a great way to end the third day of the conference.

We reconvened Sunday morning for the last day of the conference. (Well, good things can’t last forever.) We started out with Marty Hyatt on “Heaven’s Sweetest Air”. Marty talked about the uses of birds and bird imagery in the plays, but particularly the sonnets of Shakespeare. The title of the talk is from Sonnet 70: “The ornament of beauty is suspect, A Crow that flies in heaven’s sweetest air.” Marty detailed how this use of birds in the works shows yet another layer of meaning which might have implications for the authorship question.

Next up was Earl Showerman with “*Troilus and Cressida: Shakespeare’s Early Homeric Political Allegory*”. This is another in a line of eye-opening presentations on how much Shakespeare was indebted to Greek sources (many of which were untranslated at the time) in the writing of the plays. This is an aspect of the plays that traditional scholars have a hard time explaining, and so usually ignore it.

Earl compares *Troilus and Cressida* to *Timon of Athens*, noting their apparent lack of contemporary performances, apparent early dating (notwithstanding the mistakes made by Stratfordians), and anomalous placement in the First Folio as well as their uses of Greek source material. Earl detailed how this play can be seen as an allegory of the political climate in England in the mid 1580s, with the major characters standing for various nobles and persons about the court including people related to or influential on Edward de Vere.

The next presentation, by Paul Altocchi, was “Searching for Shakespeare’s Earliest Published

Works" in which Paul examined the cases for attribution of some possible early works to "Shakespeare" and, by extension, to Edward de Vere (all suggested by certain Oxfordians). Paul finds good evidence that *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (purportedly by Arthur Brooke) and Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were in fact not written by the presumed authors, but show stylistic indications as being by Shakespeare.

On the other hand, Paul's examination of other works by Golding: a translation of Leonard Aretine's history of the wars between Rome and the Goths, a translation of Justine's abridgement of Trogus Pompeius' history of Greece, and a translation of Caesar's history of his Gallic wars; and a work by Thomas Phaer, a translation of the first seven books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, shows that these four works emphatically do show evidence that they were written by their purported authors and not by Shakespeare (Edward de Vere), contrary to what some Oxfordians think.

The last presentation was by Thomas Regnier on "Legal Imagery in Shakespeare's Sonnets". After a brief review of some of the things he has pointed out before in the plays of Shakespeare which show the extensive legal knowledge of the author — and that Tom used while teaching a course on Shakespeare and the Law at the University of Miami Law School — Tom proceeded to highlight several more uses of legal terms and imagery in the sonnets. Of course the sonnets can be read as love poetry without understanding these legal terms, but this kind of thing shows the multiple lay-

ers of meaning one can find in the works of Shakespeare and that may be an indication of his experiences, and how his mind worked.

We then moved to another room to partake in a wonderful lunch banquet. The food was very good and the conversation even better. After our stomachs were satisfied, several awards were given out. The Oxfordian of the Year Award went to Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. Since Justice Stevens could not be in attendance at the conference, the award was actually given to him in person by a four-person deputation from both the Shakespeare Fellowship and Shakespeare Oxford Society on November 12, after the conference.

Bonner Cutting received an award for her amazing work on planning and running the Houston conference, and a Special Recognition Award went to Virginia Renner for her many contributions in the past.

With that, the Houston conference wrapped up. Overall it was a great conference, showing how impressive the scholarship of Oxfordians can be. I know I will never look at the play *Othello* in the same way again and I am now armed with even more ammunition to go out and explain our position to new audiences.

The sun shone brightly throughout the entire conference, something Bonner tells me is unusual for this time of year, and clouds only began to appear as the attendees were leaving. I prefer to think of these clouds as descending over the dying arguments of the Stratfordians. Time will tell. See you in Ashland next year!

SARC Seminar 2010

Prof Daniel Wright, Ph.D announced the date and topic of the 2010 eleventh annual Shakespeare Authorship Studies Seminar at Concordia University in the new Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre. Mark your calendars now for August 15 - 20, 2010. The seminar topic will be "Did He or Didn't He? Shakespeare's Apocrypha: Arden of Faversham, Edmund Ironside, Locrine, Fair Em, Cardenio, Etc". Wright said participants can register early at: <http://www.authorshipstudies.org>

Reports on conference – “Shakespeare: from Rowe to Shapiro” The Globe/London: 28 November 2009

Reported by De Vere Society members Richard Malim and Kevin Gilvary, and Julia Cleave

Report on “Shakespeare: From Rowe to Shapiro” – a one day symposium on the function and critical value of Shakespeare biographies to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the first biography of William Shakespeare by Nicholas Rowe:

Shakespeare’s Globe are to be applauded for organising a conference drawing together many academics who have published on the life of Shakespeare. Among those present were various Oxfordians, Dr. William Leahy, and Mark Ry-lance, who has done so much to bring the authorship question to the fore. The conference was not particularly well attended, with about 60 present including a number of students and there were eleven speakers.

The content of some of these papers was very mixed: some must be passed over in the silence of anonymity as even the academic applause was moderate. For example, one speaker contended that the eleven year old William Shakespeare might have been entranced by his un-evidenced sighting of the Queen at Kenilworth (some eleven miles from Stratford), and thus inspired — but I am left un-inspired, and amazed that anything so remote from possibility may be thought to have some claim to scholastic recognition.

Two speakers spoke at length on how current biographies affect the writing of historical novels – nothing to do with the history and development of Shakespeare’s biography, but interesting nonetheless to il-

lustrate the cross-over between fact and fiction in Shakespeare biographies.

Graham Holderness confirmed that there two sources for the deer-poaching tradition, which makes it more likely that it is correct: whether it is relevant to the biography as it impinges on the Works was not explained. It is mainly used to explain why the young man left his native country for the uncertainty of city life. Rene Weis thought that more research should be devoted to Shakespeare’s descendants in the hope that evidence of Shakespeare’s library might yet be discovered.

Brian Cummings

On a more positive note, Brian Cummings emphasised that modern reconstructions or replacements such as St. Paul’s Cathedral, Shakespeare’s Birth-place and the Cottage Garden reflect the taste of the age of the redeveloper. Extrapolating that thesis to scholarship in regard to the canon, such endeavours may invite ridicule today. The Wallaces’ discovery of the Bellott-Mountjoy deposition was a desperate disappointment to them, but with the luxury of hindsight we Oxfordians can inquire what else they could have expected. When the quotation from Coleridge was put to him that he (Coleridge) preferred the internal evidence from the plays to the documentary research of Malone on his (Malone’s) play dating scheme, Professor Cummings answered that he preferred Coleridge’s approach.

Stanley Wells & Paul Edmondson

Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson launched an attack on the William-Shakespeare-autobiographical thesis for the sonnets. They made some good points particularly about the Dark Lady sonnets 127ff; noting that only three are actually addressed to a woman (139,141 and 145), although others reflect on her dark/black appearance and behaviour. These last group of sonnets smack also of exercise-like material rather than strict autobiography.

They were very effective when they denounced the desire of biographers to find William-Shakespeare-autobiographical references, i.e. the connections between “the lovely boy” and William Shakespeare: in doing so they kicked away the ladder whereby any connection between the irrelevant life and the canon can be invented – a valuable exercise for Oxfordians, who can demonstrate over and over again the biographical connections between Oxford and Southampton in their biographies as they reappear in the Sonnets’ references.

Shapiro

The highlight was the appearance of James Shapiro, whose talk was on the effect of Malone’s conversion of Shakespeare into an autobiographical writer.

Notes on Shapiro’s talk:

Almost nothing we know shines light on his (Shakespeare’s) personality. There are no personal essays and no diaries; we

have to admit there is now any chance of further illumination of his inner life is irrevocably lost; and in Malone's chronological listing there is nothing likewise to be learnt. The temptation for biographers is to line up the life with the works. The loss of his only son in 1596 cannot be said to have inspired the speeches of Constance in King John, as Malone suggests. Likewise there is no evidence that Ann Hathaway was unfaithful to William: Sonnet 93 ("...like a deceived husband") does not properly connect with the bequest in the will of the second best bed; or that the jealous husband of Othello is a reflection of that surmise.

Furthermore there is no evidence of what William did during the "missing" years 1586-1590 – all that stuff about being a school-master, a lawyer's clerk, a soldier *etc.* is unprovable rubbish. There is as a result a temptation for biographers to be ingenious (and here Shapiro confessed he had done it himself), to which they almost all succumb. Wordsworth's opinion of the Sonnets: "With this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart", and Coleridge's view that the plays reflected Shakespeare's psychological development in the canon are both valueless. The problem is that so much modern writing is autobiographical, modern biographers assume Shakespeare's writings are the same.

Of course there must be some shards of his life in the works, but we do not know where or why they are included, and Shapiro has no confidence in even the ones suggested by Wells or Weiss. He would dispute Michael Wood's assertion, that Prospero in *The Tempest* is

an autobiographical portrait, and Greenblatt's surmises about Shakespeare's marriage. Both Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians are at fault when they seek to couple the life and the works and include in apparent topicalities.

These errors are not just an aberration, as the whole approach can be traced back to Malone and his original mistaken view. It diminishes the power of Shakespeare's imagination: all his characters are within that imagination.

Shapiro's approach represented a shift (which he actually denied in reply to a question) from what he wrote in his recent book, 1599 A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare, when he wrote:

We know too little because we don't know very much about what kind of friend or lover or person Shakespeare was... Even if we don't know about his personality, we know a great deal about his career as a writer (more than enough to persuade a reasonable sceptic that he wrote the plays himself).

Now he has destroyed the personality nexus almost completely, diminishing what we (think we) know about his career as a writer.

Comment

It was certainly gratifying that there were none of the usual snide anti-antiStratfordian comments or humour. It is just possible that there is a degree of academic acceptability on the horizon for Oxfordians. The more distinguished speakers were very much against any clear link between particular parts of, or incidents in, William Shakespeare's life and the works. By

discarding what might have been the stronger argument for Stratfordians, and having to fall back on the chronology scheme as revised by Dowden and Chambers, and only subsequently qualified in minor ways means this makes the De Vere Society's dating project even more germane.

Soon William's case therefore will patently be totally shattered: whether academia will recognize the true extent of the wreck is another matter. First the Oxford biographical connections to the works need to be taken on board, and the criticisms of the conference speakers' attempts to do that for William will not work on the Oxford connections because of the sheer volume and exactitude of them; and secondly the topicalities. (These were totally ignored by the conference – of course, because there are none such, if the present chronology is used.) Finally the De Vere Society dating project will draw these strands together.

Perhaps the reality of the acceptance of Oxford as the author is an inch or two closer.

Julia Cleve selective report

About 100 people attended the symposium, including, to my knowledge, at least a dozen anti-Stratfordians – though Patrick Spottiswoode, Director of Globe Education, later claimed in an interview on the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Today' that 99.9% of those present were 'non-dissenters'!

My own impression of the day was that all eleven speakers, to varying degrees, were haunted by the elephant in the room – given the paucity of evidence for a 'life' which matches the 'works' – the spectre of an alternative authorship. Three speakers, in particular, appeared to be

(Globe Conference cont.)

re-positioning themselves, post New Historicism, in anticipation of a paradigm shift on the whole issue. Speaking from the heart of the academic establishment, the concessions they made, both implicit and explicit, to the case for 'Reasonable Doubt' were both refreshing and, I would suggest, unprecedented!

Brian Cummings

Brian Cummings, Professor of English at the University of Sussex, spoke in sub-texts. Responding to a question put to all the speakers about extrapolating the life from the works, he came out with a stream of observations, requiring much reading-between-the-lines. These are, presumably, points he will be expanding on in his forthcoming

book – a debate on literary biography and Shakespeare entitled: *Shakespeare in the Underworld*.

- "In contemporary publishing it is much easier to write / publish / sell books of biography than any other kind of writing about writing. (He cited Homer as a counter example of impersonal authorship).
- People react to changes in chronology!
- What is Thomas Nashe doing with his mischievous references? - provides a terminus ad/ante quem to various of Shakespeare's plays.
- There is a chronological time-bomb under Shakespeare!
- How much difference does it make to say a play written in 1603 / 05 / 08?
- The historiography we use to

explain works of literature links with biography.

- The Tempest is placed at the front of the First Folio – Why?
- Has to have been a very late work?
- Issue of chronology is problematic because the 'new Shakespeareans' in the nineteenth century were eccentric and wrong-headed.
- Twelfth Night and Winter's Tale created back-to-back?
- It wouldn't be impossible to find a document which proves Malone right. Terminus ad and ante quem – still not accuracy – more than a year or two either side.
- Shifting of ground methodologically is happening anyway – Re-examining historicism – When is a fact a fact?

Cummings talk had the 'playful' title: Anti-Biography

- "I'm going to voice the secret doubts we all share about the 'life' which has been problematic since before Rowe."
- All Shakespeare biographers know what is missing!
- We cannot precisely date any play.
- We have created a 'life' because a modern author is somehow incomplete without a life.
- Shakespeare's life especially impossible to tell because of the paucity of the evidence and the gaps in between.
- Conclusion: "Maybe we should write more openly about the nature of the problem."

James Shapiro

James Shapiro – his forthcoming book on the Authorship Question: *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* due out next year – gave the final paper of the day: 'When Shakespeare turned Autobiographical'. He sought to defuse the authorship issue

The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised

Peter Moore's Oxfordian research compendium was edited
by Gary Goldstein
and published by
Uwe Laugwitz, PhD
of Verlag Laugwitz in Germany.

Readers may order

The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised

by Peter Moore from the
Shakespeare Oxford Society
for \$25 plus \$4.95 shipping,
contact the SOS at
P.O. Box 808 Yorktown Heights, NY 10598,
or call 914-962-1717S,
or email sosoffice@optonline.net

by arguing that all attempts at cradle to grave biographies are essentially misconceived:

- "I'm here to look at How, When and Why Shakespeare was transformed into an autobiographical author."
- It's time to abandon any hope of learning about Shakespeare's inner life – irrevocably lost to us!
- The anti-Stratfordian movement is a bi-product of a mainstream scholarly tradition.
- In a few months, in 2012, Emmerich's film 'Anonymous' will come out – arguing that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare.
- I have studied this more intensely than any other Stratfordian.
- Minds are not really going to be changed on this subject.
- Debate on both sides is circular and self-serving.
- There is a history to how we think what we think.
- "These debates are not going to be easily resolved."

Graham Holderness

From an Oxfordian point of view, most startling of all was the declaration made by Professor Graham Holderness, University of Herefordshire. In the middle of a discussion re the questionable facticity of tales of deer-poaching, calf-killing and horse-holding, he stated baldly – without further comment:

If you were to construct a biography which ticked all the boxes – if you were to read Shakespeare's plays and infer a biography from it – it wouldn't be Rowe's, it would actually be the Earl of Oxford's.



*Shakespearean Authorship Trust
Trustee Julia Cleave gave SOS
permission to reprint her report*

on the conference: "Shakespeare: from Rowe to Shapiro" held Nov. 28, 2009 at The Globe in London. This report appeared initially in Nina Green's email list, Phaeton on December 3.

Speakers/Topics at "Shakespeare from Rowe to Shapiro" conference

The Globe/London: November 28, 2009

Michael Caine: Can you trust Nicholas Rowe?

Rene Weis: From John Hall to Nicholas Rowe

Andrew Murphy: Chronology meets Biography: Edward Dowden's Shakespeare

Brian Cummings: Anti-Biography

Graham Holderness: Fact and Tradition in Shakespeare Biography

Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson: The Plurality of Shakespeare's Sonnets

Andrew Dickson: Starring Shakespeare as Himself: snapshots of the author on stage, page and screen

Helen Hackett: Was Queen Elizabeth 1 Shakespeare's muse? Theories about young William at Kenilworth in 1575

Richard Wilson – Welsh Roots: The Bard and the Brits

James Shapiro: When Shakespeare Turned Autobiographical

The Hunter's Arrow

Who rode wood and field when Sun was new
To loose his arrow's arcing flight?
Ever plumbing time and language—who?
Before the coming Night

A child and youth of sorrow
Later lancet of the true
His vanished time still tomorrow
Extinguished ink read anew

His heart-song returns as rote
Recital, aphorism, anecdote
Wisdom sprung from bloody marrow
The archer flew beyond his arrow

from "Three Tributes for de Vere" by WJ Ray
www.wjray.net

Rowe's Shakespeare biography: *Some Account of the Life &c. of Mr. William Shakespear*

Frank Davis

This year is the 300th anniversary of the first biography of Shakespeare published in 1709 by Nicholas Rowe. The biographical material was part of Nicholas Rowe's collection of Shakespeare's plays based on the corrupt Fourth Folio of 1685. Thus Rowe became the first editor of Shakespeare's works and biographer of William Shakspeare. Furthermore, Rowe's short biography set the stage for several biographical traditions concerning Shakspeare, and formed future attitudes toward the poet/playwright as well.

Rowe begins his work by explaining why delivering some account of the lives of famous men as well as their works is important in giving the respect that is due them. Rowe ends the first paragraph with this comment:

... the knowledge of an Author may sometimes conduce to the better understanding his Book: And tho' the Works of Mr. Shakespear may seem to many not to want a Comment, yet If fancy some little Account of the Man himself may not be thought improper to go along with them.

It is interesting that Rowe recognized the importance of knowing the life of the author relative to interpreting the author's works — something often missing in modern discussions of Shakespeare. How often do we hear 'the play's the thing' and that the author is not important when authorship is being debated?

Rowe follows with the life of Shakspeare, commenting that

Shakspeare's father, John, and family were of 'good Figure and Fashion' in Warwickshire, and his father was a considerable dealer in wool. He erroneously says William was the eldest of 10 children — William was the eldest of six surviving children, the first two having died in infancy for a total of eight, not ten.

Rowe states that John could "give him no better education than his own employment" although he spent some time at a "Free-school where 'tis probable he acquired that little Latin he was Master of: But because of the narrowness of his Circumstances and want of his assistance at home, forc'd his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his proficiency in that Language."

Rowe also makes the remarkable statement: "It is without Controversie, that he had no knowledge of the Writings of the Antient Poets, not only from this reason, but from his Works themselves."

Rowe believed that Shakespeare's great genius allowed him to be better than the ancient poets, and by not having learned about them, his work wasn't contaminated by imitating them! Rowe did agree that "some Latin he did know" citing Latin quotes from Mantuan in *Loves Labor's Lost*, and from Horace in *Titus Andronicus*. But Rowe seemed more impressed with Shakespeare's knowledge of French — noting French "words and sentences scattered



Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718)

up and down his plays", especially in *Henry V*.

Rowe then reports that William "thought fit" to marry while very young, failing to mention that the bride was three months pregnant. Rowe explains that William had to leave Stratford because of an "Extravagance that he was guilty of" having fallen into ill company that made a frequent practice of Deer-stealing. He was prosecuted by Sir Thomas Lucy of Cherlecot, which led to William's making a ballad upon him.

Although the ballad was lost, it was said to have been very bitter, causing the prosecution to be "redoubled". This obliged William to leave his business and family in Warwickshire to shelter himself in London.

Rowe tells us that the biographical information from Warwickshire was taken from Rowe's friend and fellow actor, Thomas Betterton (1635-1710). So the only source we have concerning the biographical information is what Betterton reported to

Rowe. For the past three hundred years, orthodoxy has relied on this information regarding William's interrupted presence in grammar school, an explanation for his lack of knowledge of the ancient poets and little Latin, and the deer-poaching story to explain his exodus to London.

I will point out that there is another documentation regarding the deer poaching: S. Schoenbaum reports about a memorandum by an obscure clergyman named Richard Davies that was written in the late 1600's repeating the story. Davies died in 1708. According to Shoenbaum it is unlikely Rowe or Betterton had knowledge of his missive (98-9).

When in London, Rowe reports that William was accepted into an acting company as an actor, then later as a writer. Rowe was unable to find any particular parts that William played other than the ghost in "his own Hamlet". He was unable to find out which play Shakespeare wrote first. He mentions that Dryden thought *Pericles* was the first, but Rowe was not convinced. Rowe believed he could date *Henry V* to the time Essex was Lord General in Ireland, and that *Henry VIII* was written just after the Accession of King James I.

Rowe tells us that Queen Elizabeth was so well pleased with the character of Falstaff that she commanded him to continue it for one more play to show him in love. Hence we have the source of this legend for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Rowe does give an accurate account regarding the name, Falstaff, and that the name was at first Sir John Oldcastle. He follows

up with the statement that William had "the honor to meet many great" men, especially Southampton who at one time gave him 1000£ to purchase something "he had a mind to".

Rowe goes on to instill the notion of William's "exceeding candor" and "good nature" so that men with a "taste of merit" had a "just Value and Esteem for him". Rowe refers to Spenser's *Tears of Muses* and tries to justify the reference to "Willy" as referring to William of Stratford. Then comes Rowe's belief in Ben Jonson's jealousy of William, stating that Jonson had the advantage of education, but that what Nature gave William was more than "a Balance" of what books gave Jonson.

The next section of Rowe's work deviates from biography and constitutes a critique of a number of Shakespeare's plays.

Near the end of his book, Rowe resumes his biographical assertions, commenting on Shakspeare's relationship with John Combe who Rowe says asked Shakspeare to write an epitaph. The four verses of satire "... stung the Man so severely, that he never forgave it."

Rowe then reports that Shakspeare:

... died in the 53rd Year of his Age, and was bury'd on the North side of the Chancel, in the Great Church of Stratford, where a Monument, as engrav'd in the Plate, is plac'd in the wall. On his Grave-Stone underneath is,

*'Good Friend, for Jesus sake,
forbear
To dig the Dust inclosed
here.
Blest be the Man that spares*

*these Stones,
And Curst be he that moves
my Bones.'*

Rowe's last biographical entry states the Shakspeare had "three daughters of which two liv'd to be marry'd." Obviously this was an error as we know the twins consisted of a boy and a girl, Hamnet dying at age nine. He also erroneously says Judith was the elder, who married Thomas Quiney "by whom she had three sons, who all dy'd without Children."

Susannah, (actually the eldest) Rowe said was Shakespeare's favorite, who married Dr. John Hall. She left one daughter married first to Thomas Nashe and afterwards to Sir John Bernard of Abbington, and was also without issue.

After quoting Ben Jonson's essay in which Jonson remarks "would he had blotted a thousand" lines, Rowe follows with a quote from Horace in Latin which translates: "... being gifted in spirit and vigor, for he has some tragic inspiration, and is happy in his ventures, but in ignorance, deeming it disgraceful, hesitates to blot."

Rowe's final comment concerns a book of poems, published in 1640 under the name of William Shakespeare, that Rowe had recently seen but had no opportunity to make a judgment regarding whether the book was authored by Shakespeare. We can presume this was in reference to John Benson's 1640 publication.

Given the customs of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, we can overlook Rowe's undocumented efforts regarding the biography of Shakspeare. But

(Rowe cont.)

what is unforgiveable is that subsequent — even modern — biographers have continued to promote many of Rowe’s rumors or traditions as fact. As Oxfordians we must avoid falling into that morass.

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The Two Shake-speares

The Commoner or the Aristocrat – The Monument vs. the Engraving

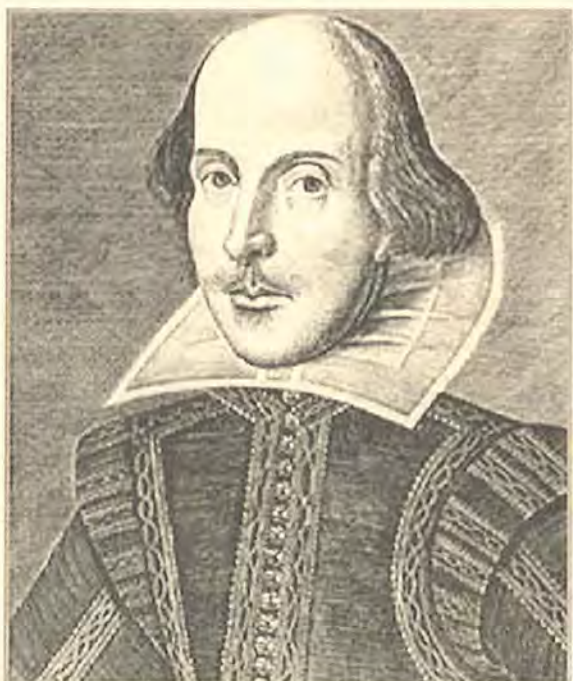
John Hamill

Does the First Folio engraving of Shakespeare present the image of an author who is a commoner or an aristocrat? The only two accepted images of William Shakespeare — in the First Folio and the monument in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon — are contradictory. Both seem to date from the early 1620s, during the reign of James I. Both of these images should clearly support Shakespeare’s representation as a commoner, as the man from Stratford was, and as custom and the law required.

The monument in Holy Trinity Church clearly depicts Shakespeare in the attire of a commoner. The prefatory material in the First Folio describes him in the same way. But the Droeshout engraving in the folio seems to present the image of a nobleman. I present evidence that confirms this interpretation. The First Folio presents a commoner portrayed as an aristocrat. What is the reason for this disparity? If Shakespeare were a nobleman in London using the alias of a commoner from Strat-

ford, this would explain the ambiguity and reconcile the different portrayals. This is an issue because it raises the challenge that a nobleman is the author.

claimed that he was a man of genius, that he obtained his extensive knowledge of literature, languages, law, history, and travel, and acquired his remarkable writing skill through natural aptitude. He did not need more than a grammar school education. Ben Jonson’s 1623 edition of the first collection of Shakespeare’s plays, the First Folio, seems to support this claim: William Shakespeare



ford, this would explain the ambiguity and reconcile the different portrayals. This is an issue because it raises the challenge that a nobleman is the author.

It is well-known that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon came from a common and illiterate family. It is routinely



of Stratford-upon-Avon was a commoner, and that notion has survived to this day. Because Shakespeare did not come from a wealthy or noble background, no portraits of him or any member of his family are known to exist. Nor is there any record that Shakespeare commissioned his own portrait when he became a wealthy man. There is no evidence that a portrait was ever painted of him while he was living, nor is there any written description of his physical appearance.

Clothes define the man

In Elizabethan and Jacobean England, strict dress codes known as Sumptuary laws were well known by all the people. The penalties for violating sumptuary laws could be harsh. Heavy fines could be imposed for dressing out of one's class. The Renaissance culture required that every person dress according to their status. Clothing provided an immediate way of distinguishing commoners from nobility. According to Tarnya Cooper, curator of sixteenth-century portraits at the National Portrait Gallery in London, the clothing a person wore was seen as a true reflection of his social status.

Queen Elizabeth I continued to enforce the sumptuary laws, just as her father Henry VIII and sister Mary I had done before her. On June 15, 1574 Queen Elizabeth I issued new sumptuary laws called the Statutes of Apparel. The reasons were to limit the expenditure on clothes — and, of course, to maintain the social structure of the Elizabethan class system (Web Elizabethan Era). While sumptuary laws were mostly repealed by the end of the reign of James I in 1625, the king issued the last

Statutes of Apparel in Scotland in 1621 (Web 1911 Encyclopedia).

The Statutes of Apparel were quite specific. The rank and position of Elizabethan men could be immediately recognized by the color and material of their clothes. The Statutes of Apparel described an extremely long list of items, specifying color, materials, and sometimes place of manufacture (imported goods being much more tightly restricted) that were to be followed for each sex, with equally specific exceptions by rank of nobility or position held. While, for the most part, these laws were poorly enforced, very few people would ignore them, since it was also part of the social tradition. In addition, even less would have a portrait done dressed outside their class, since that would certainly subject them to social ridicule and legal sanctions. My review of portraits below seems to confirm this expectation.

For the modern reader these Statutes of Apparel were surprisingly detailed in that they described what each class could wear: Noblemen were allowed to wear shirts made from linen with a ruff, and over the shirt they could wear a doublet of embroidered cloth that had sleeves that were separate and tied to the shoulder. Another layer over that was a leather jerkin that was sleeveless and resembled a vest. Only men above the rank of gentlemen could wear a cape over their clothing (Cooper 114).

The working class, however wealthy, could not legally wear a fancy doublet, nor a cape over their clothing. The commoner wore a shirt with a loosely fit-

ting coat over the shirt that was belted, usually with a cord. This was a far cry from the elaborate fashions and material worn by the nobility. The Statutes of Apparel, however, did not prohibit a commoner from wearing a ruff, but because ruffs were so expensive, few wore them.

The monument effigy

Even though the Stratford monument has been altered several times, each representation portrays a commoner holding a sack, or a pillow (Whalen 7-9). In addition, Richard Kennedy has made a strong argument that this is a bust of John Shakespeare that was later altered to make it appear to be his son, William — the alleged writer. George Vertue's engraving of the monument in 1723 shows a writer with a pillow, not a sack holder as did the 1634 sketch by William Dugdale. While Vertue's engraving might be the source of the current effigy at Stratford, it still depicts a commoner.

Interestingly, "Vertue's engraving of a writer in the monument is one of two, full-page illustrations of 'Shakespeare' that he provided for Pope's edition of Shakespeare's works.

The other illustration is the frontispiece; it is a portrait of a man under a banner proclaiming that he is 'William Shakespeare'. His beard is neatly trimmed. He wears an earring, and around his neck is a large, stiff, white ruff more typical of a nobleman's attire than a commoner's" (Whalen 15).

What is strange about this portrait is not just the ruff, but the aristocratic doublet that the man is wearing. This is definitely the portrait of an aristocrat, not a commoner. Some even think

(Two Shake-speares cont.)

that since the man is portrayed so elaborately, this could be an engraving of King James, even though the caption says it is Shakespeare. Why would Vertue portray Shakespeare both as a commoner and an aristocrat in the same book? It seems that Vertue is presenting his interpretation of both images; it confirms that he viewed him as a commoner in the monument and as an aristocrat in the First Folio.

The clothing in the early engravings and the current Shakespeare monument at Stratford conform with the Statutes of Apparel' for commoners. In the engravings and paintings of the commoners who are Shakespeare's contemporaries, some of whom were as wealthy as Shakespeare: Edmund Spenser, Philip Massinger, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, John Donne, Samuel Daniel and George Chapman, all of them are clearly dressed as commoners. There are engravings of Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe that are not authenticated, but they still show them as commoners. I could find no images of John Marston, Thomas Heywood, John Webster, Anthony Munday, John Lyly, Barnabe Riche, Richard Barnfield, or William Rowley. The one portrait we have of Christopher Marlowe is too ostentatious to be that of a commoner, and mainly for that reason it has been determined it cannot be Marlowe (Cooper 94).

A few commoners are depicted wearing ruffs, but these are very wealthy and connected men. Portraits of wealthy commoners wearing a ruff show them dressed in expensive black cloth, and not fancy doublets. Some

of the few wealthy commoners wearing a ruff and expensive black attire can be seen in the portraits of Edward Alleyn, Michael Drayton, and John Fletcher. Notable exceptions are William Brodrick and John Florio. Brodrick, the King's embroiderer, had his portrait done with a ruff and a colorful doublet, reflecting his trade. Florio's engraving also shows him with a fancy ruff and doublet. King James named Florio French and Italian tutor to Prince Henry, the King's son, and afterwards was appointed by the King as a "groom of the privy chamber," and reader in Italian to Queen Anne. Both of these men had a personal connection with the King and this may be the reason for the exception.

The Cobbe portrait

The controversy about an alleged newly identified painting of William Shakespeare that was claimed by the Cobbe family in 2009 (now known as the Cobbe painting) makes us take a second look at Elizabethan dress requirements. Some claim that this painting is of Sir Thomas Overbury, an aristocrat. One of the reasons that this painting is claimed to be Shakespeare's is that it may have come from the estate of Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton. Since Southampton was the only apparent patron of Shakespeare, it is likely that he would have wanted to have a painting of him. In addition, Stanley Wells claims that the Cobbe painting looks like the First Folio engraving. Wells states that the Cobbe painting is the original source for other existing copies and the posthumous First Folio engraving (*New York Times* March 9, 2009). How does it look like the Folio engraving? The man is wearing a similar doublet and

his face and the arms are in the same position as those in the First Folio.

An objection is that "not all Shakespeare scholars are convinced the Cobbe portrait is an authentic likeness, or even that it is of Shakespeare at all, given the aristocratic dress of the man in the portrait . . . He is dressed in elaborate white lace ruff and a gold-trimmed blue doublet of a kind worn only by the wealthy and successful men of his age." (*New York Times* March 10, 2009).

Katherine Duncan-Jones, in her rejection of the Cobbe painting as Shakespeare, further elaborates in reference to sumptuary laws:

But the man portrayed, with his elaborate lace collar and gold embroidered doublet, appears far too grand and courtier-like to be Shakespeare. Though a leading "King's Man", Shakespeare was no nobleman and even his status as a "gentleman" was repeatedly called in question by some of the heralds. When players dressed above their rank offstage, it tended to get them into trouble. It is hard to believe the Shakespeare would have been rash enough to permit himself to be portrayed in such a grand array." (Duncan-Jones)

So a major objection is that the Cobbe painting is of an aristocrat? And therefore, it cannot be Shakespeare? How about the Droeshout engraving of Shakespeare in the First Folio? We are aware that we are probably looking at a nobleman. Shakespeare's "doublet... is decorated with rows of silk and/or metal lace. . ." (Cooper 48). The doublet is one that according to Cooper, shows the embroidery

to be quite elaborate (50), which is typical of a nobleman, yet curiously, she never addresses this issue.

The Droeshout engraving

The folio engraving was done by Martin Droeshout, who probably had never met Shakespeare. Droeshout dressed Shakespeare in a doublet generally associated with a "gentleman of the 'better sort'" (Price 177). In trying to explain the aristocratic clothing in the engraving, Kingman guesses that Shakespeare's "costume is evidently some theatrical display put on for the occasion" (15). In addition, "Jonson in the Folio coined the epithet 'gentle Shakespeare' . . . but Jonson was more likely alluding to a Shakespeare who was indeed gently born. Back then, a 'gentle' person not specifically engaged in gentle behavior was someone of aristocratic birth" (Price 177).

In addition, the 1640 edition of *Poems: Written by Wil. Shakespeare. Gent.*, edited by John Benson, has as its frontispiece the reversed image of the Droeshout Shakespeare in the Folio. What also makes it different is that the engraving portrays Shakespeare wearing a fancy cape over his clothing. This form of dressing was reserved for gentle nobility. Is Benson emphasizing that Shakespeare is a nobleman? Benson has additional ambiguous satiric material that makes fun of the claims of the First Folio.

The man in the folio engraving seems to be wearing the doublet of an aristocrat and, while he is not wearing the same collar as Sir Thomas Overbury, he is wearing a very unusual collar, one that is worn by the aristocracy.

Derran Charlton, in his article "The Droeshout Collar,"

demonstrates that the c.1610 portrait depicting the young Lord Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Strafford, and Knight of the Garter, shows him wearing a collar that is identical to the one worn by William Shakespeare in the First Folio. "I suggest that it would have been most inappropriate for William Shakespeare to have legally worn this type of nobleman-collar" (Charlton 27).

Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641) was the son of Sir William Wentworth, a member of an old Yorkshire family, and of Anne, the daughter of Sir Robert Atkins of Stowell, Gloucestershire. Thomas Wentworth married Lady Margaret Clifford, daughter of the Earl of Cumberland, in October 1611 and was knighted by King James I in December 1611 at the age of 18. He inherited a baronetcy on the death of his father in 1614 (Asch 527). So, the portrait of the young Thomas Wentworth could have been meant to commemorate his becoming a knight in 1611 or becoming a baron in 1614. Wentworth was an aristocrat in the painting. Charlton also presents other noblemen wearing a similar collar, including King James I.

A very wealthy commoner, however, is also shown wearing the same collar as Shakespeare — Captain Phineas Pett (Cooper 50). Pett also wears a fancy doublet in his portrait. He was not only a very well connected and wealthy man, he once hosted King James I at his house. Since he was a favorite of the homosexual king, his military rank and personal connection with the king could be the reason for the exception to the dress code.

The sumptuary laws allowed anyone with a license from the

king to be exempt. It should be noted that Baron Buckhurst, Lord Treasurer under Queen Elizabeth and King James, was an advocate of stronger enforcement of the sumptuary laws. Specifically, he dictated that only soldiers holding the rank of colonel or above should be permitted to wear silk and velvet, and that captains and all ranks below should "make do with fustian and spend the remaining money on their arms" (Gravett 1). It seems that some captains were wearing silk and velvet. The sumptuary laws did not address the issue of what officers could wear.

Two Shakespeares

There are two distinct depictions of Shakespeare, one as a commoner in the Stratford Monument, and one that can be interpreted as an aristocrat in the First Folio. What are we to make of this? My guess is that Kennedy is correct, and the monument in Stratford is of John Shakespeare, a commoner, which was later altered to make it look like his son William Shakespeare, another commoner. The people in Stratford knew that Shakespeare was not a nobleman, and would expect his attire in the monument to reflect his status as a commoner.

By contrast, the First Folio was purposely ambiguous. Those who knew that "Shakespeare" was a nobleman would be satisfied that he was portrayed as such, even under an alias. Those who did not know, had no idea who he was, anyway. There was no biography included in the First Folio, so they would not know that he was not supposed to be a nobleman. The engraving in the First Folio does not portray William Shakespeare as a commoner, even though it

is insinuated in the dedications that he is one. There are very few depictions of commoners in the Jacobean period that appear to be dressed as aristocrats. These commoners seem to have a personal connection with the King. There is no known personal connection between Shakespeare and James I.

Remember, a major objection that the Cobbe portrait cannot be Shakespeare is because the painting portrays an aristocrat. I know of no depictions of actors or playwrights portrayed as aristocrats, except Shakespeare. Even the simple issue of *clothing* stands out as one more oddity in the Shakespeare story alongside many other contradictions in which Shakespeare shines as a peculiar anomaly.

A few such contradictions are:

- no known formal education or ownership of books *vs.* detailed knowledge of a vast array of texts,
- no foreign travel *vs.* many specific foreign anecdotes,
- no training in law *vs.* many correct legal usages,

- and illiterate daughters *vs.* great literate women in his plays.

Along with these many contradictions, the portrayals of the engraving of William Shakespeare in the First Folio and the monument in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, support the view that this was a purposeful ambiguity to cover the fact that "Shake-speare" was the alias of a nobleman. Even though, or maybe because, the engraving in the First Folio was done at the end of the Sumptuary Law period, this is the most reasonable explanation for portraying a Stratford commoner as a London aristocrat.

Then the English civil war came, the theaters were closed for 20 years, and the next generation forgot all about it. Still today, most refuse to take note of this discrepancy because they cannot accept that the First Folio portrays an aristocrat, since the man from Stratford was clearly a commoner.

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Society from 2006 -2009. He has written several articles for the Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter and for the Oxfordian.

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Book Review

Review of a review: For Harvard's Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespeare biographies must be boldly imaginary.

Richard F. Whalen

Since Shakespeare biographies must necessarily be mostly imaginary, they should be written without anxiety, inhibitions or fear, argues Harvard's Stephen Greenblatt, a leading Shakespeare scholar and author of his own imaginary biography of the Stratford man as Shakespeare.

In a long review of Jonathan Bate's *Soul of the Age* (2008), Greenblatt contends that Bate's biography, although also mostly imaginary, falls short of his standard of uninhibited, anxiety-free, fearless confidence. "Do it with local color," Greenblatt commands. "Work in all you know. Make them [your readers] accomplices."

"Given the paucity of evidence," Greenblatt says, "that enterprise demands speculation, imaginative daring and narrative cunning." In effect, if there are not enough biographical facts, dare to trick the reader by cleverly making them up. If Greenblatt prevails, future Shakespeare biographies will have to be shelved in the section for fiction.

Greenblatt's stinging and provocative critique of Bate's biography for being insufficiently imaginary appeared in the December 17, 2009 issue of *The New York Review of Books* (56:20) as "Shakespeare in No-Man's-Land." Greenblatt's own imaginary biography, *Will in the World* (1997), follows his prescriptions for a Shakespeare biography. It opens boldly and unapologetically with the words in capital letters, "LET US IMAGINE".

In Greenblatt's opinion, Bate's imaginary Shakespeare biography is too timid: "The spectacle of anxiety in Bate's book goes well beyond the ordinary signals of caution."

Greenblatt notes correctly that the usual qualifiers such as "could have" and "may well have" are the "stock-in-trade of Shakespeare biographies." He adds that biographers are subject to "professional policing" by scholars intent on catching mistakes and "shaming those guilty of carelessness, rashness, or ignorance." This threat, Greenblatt says, "can produce a painful aura of fear and inhibition, especially among those whose very gifts make them most sensitive to criticism." That is to say, Jonathan Bate.

In this belated review of Bate's 2008 book, Greenblatt complains about Bate's "skittishness" and his "uneasiness about his own project." He says Bate's "nervous" shifting of tenses from dramatic present to historical past "suggests a writer uncomfortable with what he is doing." Bate tries to use "action prose" of sentence fragments "but his heart is clearly not in them."

"Where does this leave the beleaguered biographer?" asks Greenblatt. He answers: "In a no-man's-land of swirling hypotheticals and self-canceling speculations; stillborn claims that expire at the moment they draw their first breath."

Greenblatt gives what he calls a brief sampling from Bate's book:

It is not outrageous to imagine...

Could it have been at the same age...?

Could he be the voice not only of Guy but also of William...?

Could he have been Shakespeare's apprentice in the acting company?

It seems more than fortuitous that...

It is unlikely to be a coincidence that...

Guesswork of course, but I have a hunch that...

I have an instinctive sense that...

It is hard not to notice...

We cannot rule out the possibility that...

Could it then be that...?

One of the two could easily have been...

He may well have been there...

The players may well have been...

This could have been the occasion...

It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that...

...requires us to countenance the possibility that...

It is not very clear, however, how Bate's alleged anxiety, inhibition and fear as demonstrated above differs that much from Greenblatt's own style of imagining and hedging. Here is a brief sampling of the way Greenblatt wrote his *Will in the World* (2004), with emphasis added:

In the summer of 1585, William of Stratford "may have been

working in the glover's shop, perhaps, or making a bit of money as a teacher's or a lawyer's assistant. In his spare time he must have continued to write poetry, practice the lute, hone his skills as a fencer – that is, work on his ability to impersonate the lifestyle of a gentleman. His northern sojourn, assuming he had one, was behind him. If in Lancashire he had begun a career as a professional player, he must, for the moment at least, have put it aside. And if he had a brush with the dark world of Catholic conspiracy, sainthood, and martyrdom—the world that took Campion to the scaffold – he must still more decisively have turned away from it with a shudder.

As it happens, Greenblatt and Bate, both leading establishment Shakespeare scholars, are head-to-head competitors in academic publishing. Greenblatt is a chaired professor of humanities at Harvard University. Bate is a professor at the University of Warwick. Each is general editor of a complete, annotated works of Shakespeare: Greenblatt's from Norton in 1997 and Bate's more recently from Random House, in 2007. Shortly after its publication, the queen awarded Bate the honorary title of Commander of the British Empire (CBE).

In his own Shakespeare biography, Greenblatt laid claim to frankly imaginary biography that for all its speculations is

uninhibited and anxiety-free. "It is important," he wrote in the preface to that book, "to use our own imagination" since "nothing provides a clear link" between Shakespeare's works and the life of William of Stratford. (See my review of his book in the winter 2005 issue of *Shakespeare Matters*.)

Greenblatt repeats that theme in his review of Bate's book:

. . . despite feverish attempts to comb the archives and find further documentary records of Shakespeare's life, very little has turned up in the last century. . . . The paucity of new discoveries has not inhibited the constant writing of new biographies. (I am guilty of one of them.) The lure is almost irresistible, and with good reason.

The irresistible lure of course is the enduring cultural importance and the aesthetic power and intensity of the Shakespeare plays and poems. Everyone wants to know more about the poet-dramatist.

Greenblatt says:

Never mind that he left so few traces of himself. Never mind that that none of his personal letters or notes or drafts survive; that no books with his marginal annotations have turned up; that no police spy was ordered to ferret out his secrets; that no contemporary person thought to jot down

his table talk or solicit his views on life or art. Never mind that Shakespeare—son of a middle-class provincial glover—flew below the radar of ordinary Elizabethan and Jacobean social curiosity. The longing to encounter him and know him endures.

"Given the paucity of the evidence," Greenblatt asserts that writing a Shakespeare biography "*demand*s" (emphasis added) speculation, imaginative daring and narrative cunning, but these are all qualities that arouse the scholar's suspicion and anxiety. Bate's attempts to enter the life-world of his subject are underwhelming."

As a committed Stratfordian (so far), Greenblatt never questions whether "the paucity of evidence" might suggest that Will Shakspeare of Stratford was not the great poet-dramatist and that someone else must have been. He never raises the issue of William Shakespeare's identity, an issue of which he is fully aware. In this 3,300-word review of Bate's book, he argues from his position of authority at Harvard that biographies of the Stratford man as the great poet-dramatist can only be imaginary. Oxfordians can certainly agree with that.

The Greenblatt review may be purchased for \$3 or by subscription at: http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=23499

Letters to the editor

Richard Whalen writes

Two articles in the June 2009 issue call for further consideration for perspective and balance. One of them includes a brief mention about the spelling of Will Shakspeare's name; the other concerns the supposed influence of Antonio Perez on *Othello*.

In his excellent article on the relevance of Shakspeare's signatures, Dr. Frank Davis says in a one-sentence aside, "I respectfully disagree with the effort to attach authorship importance to the spelling of Shakspeare's name." (11) There are, however, two good reasons to recognize the important distinction between Shakspeare and Shakespeare in the authorship debate.

First, the facts: In Stratford, all eight official church records from his baptism to his death spelled it Shakspeare, Shaxpere or Shagspere or some other variation without the medial "e," including the Stratford monument. So did the "signatures," although probably not by him, including those on his will. So did his paternal ancestors. As Dr. Davis correctly notes, spelling was phonetic and "many proper names were spelled in very different ways." That was the case for Shakspeare, whose name was spelled a dozen different ways but as it was probably pronounced, with a flat "a" as in "shack."

In dramatic contrast, in London the name on the great poems and plays was uniformly Shakespeare, probably pronounced with a long "a" as in "shake." (Sometimes it was hyphenated, which often denoted a made-up name, such as a pseudonym.) This was the uniform spelling

on all the poetry and the quartos as well as on the posthumous First Folio. The publishers and typesetters spelled it Shakespeare, and presumably that was the spelling they saw on the manuscripts. It was almost as if someone had mandated the uniform spelling at a time of wildly irregular spelling, even of proper names.

There were two interesting exceptions to this uniform spelling for Shakespeare, and both may be seen as proving the rule. The quarto of *Love's Labor's Lost*, the first published play to bear the author's pen name, spelled it Shakespere, omitting the final "a" but retaining the medial "e" and the "shake" pronunciation that would designate the London dramatist. The first quarto of *King Lear* published in 1608 spelled it Shak-speare. Very significantly, however, in 1619 the play was reprinted with a false date of 1608; and the only change was to the title page, which changed (corrected?) the spelling to Shake-speare. (Note 1)

This uniform spelling of Shakespeare as the dramatist in London is quite extraordinary for Elizabethan-Jacobean times when spelling was chaotic. The Shakspeare, Shaxpere, Shagspere spelling in Stratford was quite typical of the times. The two different spellings suggest that they designated two different men. Tellingly, Oxfordians and other non-Stratfordian scholars do not use the "Shakespeare" spelling to designate the man from Stratford.

The second reason to distinguish between the two spellings is the importance in public and scholarly debate. It's important

to be able to counter the contention, so easy for Stratfordians to make, that "Shakespeare was born and raised in Stratford where he died and has a monument; Shakespeare is the name on the poems and plays; therefore Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the poems and plays." Case closed. To concede that there is no significant difference is to concede unnecessarily an important point in the debate.

More serious Stratfordian scholars who go beyond the easy "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare" contention can argue that contemporaries who wrote about the poet-dramatist in London spelled his name Shakspeare or a variant. But it's not that simple. Three non-Stratfordian scholars have independently analyzed these "secondary" spellings by contemporaries. The analyses agree that around 85-percent of about thirty-five *literary* references to the poet-dramatist spell it Shakespeare, while around 65 per cent of about sixty-five *non-literary* records in London spelled it Shakspeare or a variant. (The calculations yield approximations because of differences in how mentions are counted, e.g. multiples in the same record.)

The pattern is clear. In a time of chaotic spelling and when there may have been some confusion in London about the appropriate spelling, nearly all of the literary records spelled it Shakespeare, while well over half the non-literary records spelled it Shakspeare. The pattern supports the main contention: Shakspeare was the businessman and theater investor from Stratford; Shakespeare was the poet-dramatist in London.

Hamill's Antonio Perez

Also calling for comment is Hamill's comprehensive article on the notorious Antonio Perez, secretary to Philip II of Spain. Perez was notorious for his false slander that the king murdered his wife in her bed with his hands out of jealousy. She died in childbirth in 1568.

In his opening paragraph, he says that Perez's "reports of intrigues in the Spanish court were clearly the source of several dramatic details in the plot of *Othello*," that is, dramatic details about the murder of Desdemona not in Cinthio's story (1565). This may be pushing Perez's reports too far as a significant source for *Othello*. All of the dramatic details in the play can be traced to earlier and more likely sources besides Cinthio. In *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (2002) Naseeb Shaheen says Shakespeare drew on a story in Matteo Bandello's *Novelle* (1554, 1573) for the murder of Desdemona, citing half a dozen close parallels.

In his final paragraphs, Hamill concludes that "it is undeniable that Perez had an impact on *Othello*." (21) This "undeniable" claim also probably goes too far, absent any further evidence. Regarding the "several dramatic details" retailed by Perez in the 1590s, Hamill says that "these changes to *Othello*, if accepted, allow us to ascribe the revision [of it] to at least 1597." But these supposed changes need not be "accepted." All the details in the play-text dialogue during and immediately after Desdemona's murder were in Cinthio and Bandello, thus allowing a more likely date of composition in the late 1570s after Oxford returned from Italy and in the 1580s, when he was probably revising

the play, as Ren Draya and I argue in our Oxfordian edition of the play.

Until now, Perez's supposed influence on Oxford has not been taken seriously by Oxfordian scholars, with one exception. Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn devoted a chapter to Perez in *This Star of England*, published in 1952. They are Hamill's principal source, along with the Stratfordian Lilian Winstanley's "*Othello*" as the *Tragedy of Italy*, an overheated and under-documented booklet published in 1924. The Ogburns said they relied mainly on Winstanley. It may be significant that, for whatever reason, the notorious Antonio Perez is not in Eva Turner Clark (1930), nor is he in Ruth Loyd Miller's two volumes (1975) that include a wealth of earlier research by many Oxfordians. Charlton Ogburn, despite the chapter on Perez in his parent's book, omitted him from his 1984 book. Nor is Perez mentioned in Ron Hess's two volumes (2002-03) or Mark Anderson's 580-page book (2005).

That said, Hamill's article may bring Perez back into the mainstream of Oxfordian research. Perez was secretary to Philip II of Spain and a major, and controversial, figure in the courts of Spain, London and Paris. More research may reveal how his life story might have influenced the composition in the 1570s and 1580s of *Othello*. Hamill is fluent in Spanish, has mined a number of sources in Spanish and is well qualified to carry forward this research.

Finally, a note at the end of the bibliography says, "Richard Whalen recommends *Antonio Perez, Spanish Traitor*, by Gregorio Maranon, translated by Charles David Ley." (1954)

It's a gracious mention, but it implies that I read the book and perhaps endorse it and Hamill's article in its entirety, but I have not seen the book. I only suggested in an email that it might be an additional source for him. (Note 2)

Richard F. Whalen
Truro, Massachusetts

Note 1: Since Q2 is the same as Q1, it gets very little notice and even less notice about its having been backdated. *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* edited by Campbell and Quinn reproduces the title pages of both quartos and notes, "The Second Quarto, issued by Isaac Jaggard in 1619, but fraudulently dated 1608, is a reprint of Q1." (428; see also 394-5 re Pavier-Jaggard) The title pages differ in several respects.

Note 2: The error reported in Whalen's final paragraph was editorial, not authorial. LT

Frank Davis' response to Richard Whalen's letter:

It is a privilege to have had my article concerning the relevance of the six Shakspere signatures critiqued by Richard Whalen but I must answer the "two good reasons" which Richard raises regarding the names, Shakspere and Shakespeare.

For the first reason he gives, I do not question "the facts" that Richard mentioned about the different spellings of William of Stratford's names as recorded. But through my recent years of study of Henslowe's Diary and Papers along with many other manuscripts, I respectfully disagree that we of the modern era can discern whether the presence or absence of a "medial e" will cause the "a" to be pronounced long or short, and furthermore by that means be able to distinguish one man from another.

Orthography was so relatively crude during this time that phonetic spelling was extremely erratic. Also, different dialects undoubtedly caused problems in transcription. Here are just a few examples:

- Henslowe's name in his diary is spelled numerous different ways including Henslow, Hinchlie, henslye, Hynsley, Henslowe, Henchley, Henschlowe, Hinchloe, etc. (and there are many more such examples concerning his name and others). Henslowe even spelled his own name differently at times.
- Another example is in the spelling of Thomas Dekker's name. Dekker always spelled his name thusly (as far as I have been able to determine), but in the diary his name on several occasions was written as "Dickers" - which is difficult for us to understand today how this could have been reached phonetically.
- There are numerous more examples, some of which I will be addressing in my talk in Houston.

For the second criticism, I certainly agree that our using "Shakspere" (or "Shaksper") to differentiate William of Stratford from the author, Shakespeare, can be helpful. Stratfordians don't like it, but it serves a purpose in aiding our discussions. Although I didn't note this in my article, I did stress it in my talk in White Plains. As for Richard's comment about the hyphen, he failed to mention that I said in the article (last sentence of the paragraph involved) that the use of the hyphen in Shake-speare "is a different matter and may be quite relevant."

I still maintain that claiming the difference in the spelling of Shakspere's name is evidence

that he wasn't Shakespeare is too weak to gain credibility, given the status of orthography during this period. However, how Shakspere wrote his own name brings in much more fertile grounds to pursue. I plan more on this in the future.

John Hamill's response to Richard Whalen's letter:

To the Editor

Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

September 2009

I think Richard Whalen raised some very good concerns about my article *A Spaniard in the Elizabethan Court: Antonio Pérez* that need to be addressed. My responses are based on the biographies I have read concerning Antonio Perez, Elizabeth Valois, and Philip II which I mentioned in the bibliography of the article.

I stated that "claims that Philip II murdered his wife was told all over Europe by Prince William of Orange in his *Apology* of 1580, and by Antonio Pérez in his letters of the 1590s. William's *Apology*, however, did not mention the handkerchief or other details of the story — only Pérez's letters mentioned these." According to Winstanley, this information was found by Henri Forneron and A.T. du Prat in their research of the Pérez files in Paris (94-98)." In addition, Martha Freer, Frederick Von Raumer, and Ludovie Lalanne, cite a letter by Pérez to Guillaume du Vair during his stay in England that mentions the handkerchief and the poison details, also in Cinthio, that were added to the story by Pérez. This history as related by Antonio Perez, even during the lifetime of Philip II, spread throughout Europe (Freer 356-

360)." Winstanley is only one of many sources.

Whalen states that "Perez was notorious for his false slander that the king murdered his wife in her bed with his hands out of jealousy. She died in childbirth in 1568." However, according to the biographies I have read of Pérez, Elizabeth Valois, and Philip II, he did not did not accuse the King of the murder of his wife until after he escaped from prison in 1590, not after 1568, when Philip's wife died in childbirth. Pérez would not have spread this rumor (nor do we have any information that he did) while he was the Secretary of State of Philip II. Later when he was arrested in 1579 for the murder of Escovedo, he had no opportunity (or would have dared) to spread these slanders while he was a prisoner of the King of Spain. As far as I can tell, the story that Philip murdered his wife was first told by William of Orange in 1580, not sooner. But William provided no details of the murder - only Pérez did, in the 1590's. Pérez would have made the subject topical again at the court in England, which Oxford could have added to the play, if he did not have them already from Cinthio or Bandello. For instance, one change that Oxford has that came from Pérez is that he does not have the room collapse on Desdemona as does Cinthio. The other source that Richard states, Bandello's *Novelle* (1573), does relate details that are not told by Pérez.

I agree with Whalen that the probable date of the original composition was "in the late 1570s after Oxford returned from Italy." We don't know how many times Oxford revised the play. But, because details of the

murder which were already provided by Cinthio or Banchello, and made topical again by Pérez in the 1590's, is the reason why I claim that "these changes to *Othello* if accepted, allow us to ascribe the revision of [this] play to at least 1597," after Pérez returned to France, and it would have been safe to do. If Pérez was a source, Oxford could have revised *Othello* in 1597 or later, because of Pérez's presence in London, to put into his play the details about the murder of Desdemona or Pérez's Iago-like evil machinations that match events at the court in Spain. This is the same reason why I claim that *Love's Labour's Lost*, an early play, must have also been updated after 1597, in which Oxford portrayed Pérez as Armaado. Seeing that Pérez was such a dramatic figure in England in the 1590's and that Oxford parodied him in *LLL*, I think that it is a good chance that he was also used as a source and Oxford gave the villain a Spanish name, Iago, and parodied Pérez in *Othello*. Pérez is the one that made these accusations well known to the audience.

John Hamill

Tom Hunter writes

In a brief typed letter, United States Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens has corrected a statement made in my article "Oxford Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" in the June 2009 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* about Stevens' finding for Edward de Vere as the true author of the

works attributed to William Shakespeare being beyond a reasonable doubt.

The finding which Justice Stevens made "beyond a reasonable doubt" was that

William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was not the true author. Justice Stevens' statement quoted in the April 18, 2009 *Wall Street Journal* upon which the article relied referred to the incumbent bard, "I think the evidence that he (the Stratford man) was not the author is beyond a reasonable doubt."

His finding for Oxford, however, is a different matter. In his letter dated October 22, Justice Stevens said, "I certainly am not convinced 'beyond a reasonable doubt' that Oxford was the author of the Shakespeare canon." Stevens cited recent work by non-Oxfordians that has "reinforced" his "judgment" that "the man from Stratford named 'Shaksper' was not the true author."

Stevens concluded, "But the evidence supporting Oxford, while persuasive, surely does not eliminate significant doubt. The issue is one that clearly merits further study."

I would like to apologize to the readers of this newsletter for any confusion my article might have caused. I am grateful to Justice Stevens for clarifying the matter.

Tom Hunter

Carl Sterling

In Robert Prechter's fine "Somebody" essay in the last newsletter, he says, "the play ('Nobody and Somebody') is not divided into acts and scenes" and suggests one might think that evidence it doesn't belong in the Shakespeare canon. But the first ("bad") and second ("good") quartos of *Hamlet* don't have explicitly numbered acts and scenes. Prechter is certainly right that the absence of the traditional divisions doesn't necessarily exclude "Nobody" from the canon because we sure as heck wouldn't exclude *Hamlet*.

Prechter makes another important point that I missed when I was writing about the first two editions of *Hamlet*. ("Hamlet in Time and Place," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2005, and "Hamlet in 1603: A Quick and Dirty Quarto," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Winter 2008) To wit, with emphasis on "true": "The title of this play [Nobody] contains the phrase 'With the true Chronicle,' and the title page promises to present 'The true copy thereof.'" I argued that it simply referred to the author's manuscript, which it does, but of course "true" also can be decoded as "Vere."

Carleton W. Sterling

(Oxfordian Update cont'd from p. 6)

As editor of the Society's flagship annual journal, Dr. Egan believes the Shakespeare authorship issue is a "legitimate and important area for investigation" and that "there are enough doubts to continue serious academic research"

Professor Egan (PhD Cambridge) is winner of the Adele Mellen Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship for his four-volume study, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second, Part One: A Newly Authenticated Play by William Shakespeare*, Edited, Introduced and With Variorum Notes (2006). A one-volume college edition is in active preparation

YORKTOWN HEIGHTS, NY – November 30, 2009 — The Shakespeare Oxford Society announced the publication of this year's *The Oxfordian* (Volume 11), the first volume edited by recently appointed editor Michael Egan (PhD), an award-winning Shakespeare scholar who is open-minded on the Shakespeare authorship question.

Commenting on his appointment, Professor Egan stated: "I believe the Shakespeare authorship mystery is a legitimate and important area for investigation and that there are enough doubts or unexplored areas to continue serious academic research."

New York-based Shakespeare Oxford Society is an educational organization dedicated to exploring the Shakespeare authorship question and researching the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604) is the true author of the poems and plays of "William Shakespeare." The Society has called for the cre-

ation of an impartial blue-ribbon commission of multi-disciplinary experts to explore the authorship question in detail.

John Hamill, recently elected president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, said: "We're delighted that a Shakespeare scholar of Professor Egan's stature agreed to join us as the editor of our flagship annual publication. We invite other Shakespeare scholars and Bard lovers worldwide to take a look at this year's edition of *The Oxfordian* and to approach the authorship issue with an open mind. It's a fascinating topic that deserves the serious attention of scholars and the media."

The BBC recently published a story (November 27, 2009) about the case for Edward de Vere as the real Shakespeare. (See BBC News: The Earl of Oxford's Big Secret. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/0/local/oxford/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8380000/8380564.stm.)

In this BBC article, Dr. Egan is quoted as follows:

"One of the most disturbing aspects of the whole debate is the way the anti-Stratfordians are silenced. There isn't any real attempt to confront the arguments. There's just a general mocking and ridiculing strategy — what I call arguing by adjective... 'ridiculous, absurd' and so on... whereas in fact there's some very suggestive and interesting pieces of information that need to be factored in there. It's a little like the Copernican theory of the universe. What seems obvious at first turns out to be not so when you

try to reconcile the obvious with the anomalies and the anomalies are great."

The 2009 edition of *The Oxfordian* features an Open Forum section with articles supporting five different authorship candidates: David Kathman on William of Stratford-upon-Avon; Peter Farey on Christopher Marlowe; John Hudson on Amelia Bassano Lanier; John Raithel on William Stanley, and Ramon Jimenez on Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Volume 11 of *The Oxfordian* includes these other articles:

- Stephanie Hopkins Hughes: An Oxfordian Response;
- Robin Fox: Shakespeare, Oxford and the Grammar School Question;
- Earl Showerman: *Timon of Athens*: Shakespeare's Sophoclean;
- Frank Davis: Greene's *Groatsworth of Witte*: Shakespeare's Biography?
- Michael Egan: Slurs, Nasal Rhymes and Amputations: A Reply to MacDonald P. Jackson;
- John Shahan and Richard Whalen: Auditing the Stylometricians: Elliott, Valenza and the Claremont Shakespeare Authorship Clinic.

Professor Egan added: "If the traditional 'Shakespeare' did not write the plays ascribed to him, who did? On this matter I am not settled. I have a lot of sympathy for the Oxfordian response, but frankly my mind remains open. I believe all scholars worthy of the name should allow the research to take us wherever it leads, and that's exactly how I intend to operate as editor of *The Oxfordian*."

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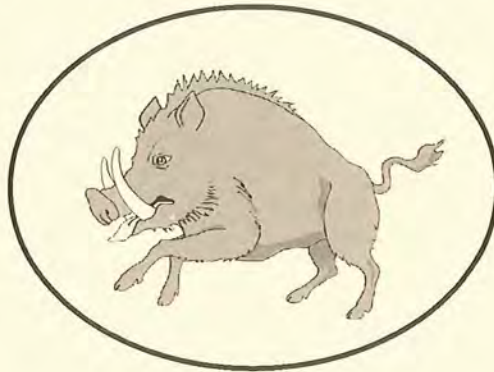
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