

...the evidence identifying Crane as the scribe responsible for five Folio comedies consists mainly of accidentals—'marks of elision, parentheses, hyphens and the like.' My list of 'Crane' spellings supports this identification of Crane as a Folio scribe and also depends on accidentals... Howard-Hill concentrated on Crane's usual or favored spellings, whereas most of my 'Crane' spellings, etc., are best described as occasional, rather than usual, in his work.

Oxford Redux

Alias Shakespeare
by Joseph Sobran
(The Free Press, 1997)

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In the commonality among the mass of material available on Shakespeare's authorship, there is a necessity to cover the same ground to introduce readers to the contention. After reading dozens of such books, one comes to regard them as a kind of familiar tapestry, some with one design brought forward, and others with items subdued or omitted. As the threads are drawn out one by one, the reader may with some pleasure appreciate the skill which the author has selected his patterns and arranged his loom. In his long promised book, *Alias Shakespeare*, Joseph Sobran has succeeded in creating a most attractive arras, through which we are invited to run our rapier and skewer the persistent man from Stratford whom traditionalist conflate with William Shakespeare.

On the author's own terms the book is persuasive: those who read this as their first introduction to the authorship question are likely to find it absorbing and thorough. As a mainstream book brought out by a major publisher, it begs to be taken seriously, and will doubtless be mightily pounced upon by academia for that presumption.

Although Sobran himself regards traditional Shakespearean biographies to be "comically formulaic," his case for Oxford follows many others in the attempt to first compromise the position of the Stratford Man (or, "Mr. Shakspeare," as Sobran so disingenuously insists on putting it), then build up Oxford through parallels in his life with the Shakespeare works.

The new twist is that so many of the obstacles with which Oxfordians have grappled—one might almost say been bloodied over—Sobran ignores, or casts aside, leaving himself a very clear path of polished touchstones which he uses to smoothly present his case. His introduction is coy: "I have not tried to