

# Letters to the Editor

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## Final Thoughts on Dering's Manuscript of Henry IV

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Francis Edwards for taking the time to read and reflect on my essay dealing with the manuscript version of *Henry IV* (see *ER*, Letters, 5:1). I am well aware that we have no way to compare its hands to "Shakespeare's"; this was why the monograph was so lengthy. The proof of the manuscript's authenticity lies in its literary and paleographic characteristics, not in the identity of its hands. Though it remains important to observe it was not in the hand of the man Dering paid to "copy out" *Henry IV*, Samuel Carington. D, therefore, cannot be a simple condensation of a written text as maintained by dependency proponents such as Evans and Downs. Let the reader attempt seamless cutting and editing if they doubt it.

Edwards makes his point regarding handwriting analysis, in which he says the Monteagle letter "was almost certainly written by the Earl of Salisbury," and cites his books on the Gunpowder Plot as proof. My source on the plot has been Mark Nicholls's excellent study, *Investigating the Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester University Press, 1991). Nicholls suspects that Thomas Percy wrote the letter and says later, "There is no need to accuse Salisbury of hypocrisy in these letters" (175). So I am not

alone in thinking that "almost certainly" does not mean "certainly."

Handwriting analysis is an art, not a science. It is not used forensically in the identification of persons, as are fingerprints. It changes through time, has familiar or family similarities and can be forged. Of course, when we are dealing with a few hands, even a novice can pick out similar ones, which is why I can easily say Hand B wasn't Samuel Carington's hand. However, if one has to deal with all the hands in Elizabethan England, the proposition of establishing identity quickly evaporates. I therefore try to avoid relying upon such exercises.

Lastly, Edwards asks for some references to what fair copies might have looked like. I thought I cited some, but I would direct him to Crane's transcript of *Demetrius and Enantine*, Brogyntyn MS.; Knight's transcript of *Bonduca*, B.M. MSAdd. 36758, transcribed from Fletcher's foul papers; Crane's Promptbook of *Barnavel*, B.M. MSAdd. 18653, and to the lesser known but cited in my monograph, manuscripts of *Arden* and *Love's Victories*, which are both at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. To this I would add the manuscripts of *Timon* and *Woodstock*, which I also cited, and which appear to be fair copies of authorial papers, likely Marlowe's, since the author of *Timon* claims to be a Kentish cobbler's son, at the

university in 1580 and to have translated the *Elegies*, a translation he predicts will someday cost him his life. Lastly, *Cardenio*, B.M. MS. Lansdowne 807, said fair copy of "Shakespeare's" play by Charles Hamilton and I. The manuscript D looks to all cases more like these than it does like a presentation copy of a printed book.

John Baker  
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*Postscript:* Gerald Downs has, in a longer private essay and in personal discussions, proven to me that there are numerous agreements between D and Q5 which cannot be explained by the two texts being independent. He has also shown that these similarities extend to the Folio's version, which didn't appear until well after *Dering's* order for a "copying out *Henry IV.*"

The Folger editors did not focus on these parallel readings and I did not discuss them at length. I should have. They strongly suggest that the printers relied upon D as copy for each subsequent edition, likely because the rewrite which resulted in the first printed edition, i.e., *1 Henry IV*, had been lost. It was, as I suggested, not much to the author's liking. D, on the other hand, was, and remained available for cross-checking and collation. It was by this means that the various quartos crept into agreement with D. I had already suggested that the Folio editors considered D for inclusion, so it is

by no means curious that readings in D wound up in the Folio, whereas if D was transcribed at the time of *Dering's* order, this cannot be the case, since the Folio had not yet been printed.

This is to say that if Downs believes these parallel readings prove dependency, then he must believe that D was transcribed from the Folio, not from Q5. I do not. I believe D remains in all particulars the earlier version of the printed texts. In some cases, D's readings may actually be *inferior* to Q1's readings, and this would be expected if Q1 represented the author's expansion of D. The overall evidence, however, proves D to be the Ur version of *Henry IV*. (See ER on the Web, which includes the complete exchange between Downs and Baker on D.)

**The Oxfordian Case Defended**  
To the Editor:

David Kathman raises some legitimate questions in "Why I'm Not an Oxfordian" (*ER*, 5:1), but unfortunately much of his argument is flawed by the same errors in logic that he imputes to Oxfordians.

"Double standard" is the principal allegation, i.e., Oxfordians set higher standards of evidence for the Stratford man as the author than for the 17th Earl of Oxford. The third paragraph, however, summarizes the case for the Stratford man simply by asserting his credentials, some of them very dubious, which are then described as "perfectly standard evidence of

the type used by literary historians." For example, Kathman says "there was no other William Shakespeare living in London at the time." But there is no "perfectly standard" evidence, or any kind of evidence, to support that assertion. Even more egregious is the assertion that "there were abundant resources in Elizabethan London for such a man (from Stratford) to absorb the knowledge displayed in the plays." But no historical evidence has ever been offered to demonstrate that the Stratford man made use of those resources or could have done so to the extent required. It is simply conjecture.

In contrast, Charlton Ogburn and other Oxfordians, both before him and after him, have demonstrated in detail how Oxford's education and career are reflected extensively and specifically in the plays and poems of Shakespeare. Nothing remotely comparable exists for the Stratford man.

Kathman goes on to allege that "a large part of the 'evidence' used by Oxfordians... (is) reconstruction of what the author 'must have thought' and what his background must have been like." Not so. Most of the Oxfordian evidence is documented facts. It is the Stratfordians who maintain that their man *must have* gone to school in Stratford, *must have* gone to London and become an actor, and *must have* become the poet and playwright by age twenty-five. In fact, nothing is known about his education or career until at least age twenty-eight.

Even then his documented career is only that of a businessman/investor and perhaps a bit-part actor, if indeed he was the only Shakspere (in whatever spelling) in the London records.

Many eminent thinkers have been persuaded by the case for Oxford. They include three U.S. Supreme Court justices, authors such as David McCullough and Clifton Fadiman, and theater people such as Tyrone Guthrie and John Gielgud. The case for Oxford demands to be examined carefully and impartially.

Richard F. Whalen  
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To the Editor:

I read with great interest Dr. David Kathman's article, "Why I Am Not an Oxfordian." Those of us who are or incline to be Oxfordians should always be interested in the observations and comments of informed holders of another view like Dr. Kathman. They remind us that the arguments and evidence put forward by Oxfordians or whoever else need to be sifted carefully and their acceptance cannot be taken for granted. He admits that Oxfordian theories "have generally been ignored by the mainstream" and brushed aside in a manner "dismissive and condescending." He himself, however, is only prepared to admit that even the abler critics of the Stratfordian doctrine are not

more than "quite intelligent." Perhaps we have all suffered from excessive condescension all round. I like his last sentence. "The only thing which unites Oxfordians and orthodox Shakespeareans is a love for Shakespeare's works, and even if we disagree about some very basic issues, we can agree that it does matter who wrote those works." We should also be able to agree by this time that there is a genuine authorship problem whatever our preferred solution.

It is true that "all the external evidence says the plays and poems were written by William Shakespeare," but the external evidence is largely printed matter, apart from entries in the Stationers' Register and the very controversial evidence of the play of Sir Thomas More. The 1623 First Folio leaves us with the problem intact. What has to be admitted by all sides is that William of Stratford as the author of the plays and poems is an extremely unlikely candidate. To explain his achievement as an example of the age-old miracle of genius is too mystical—unless we believe in innate ideas, but most of us, even if we are Aristotelian or Thomist, will accept the principle, *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu, nisi ipse intellectus*. In a word, knowledge is only acquired through experience, and certainly the kind of knowledge needed to write Shakespeare's plays. Where could William of Stratford have acquired it?

We need not cavil over the impossibility of proving that

young William went to the local grammar school. Since his father John was elected a burgess in 1559, he had the right to send his son there for a free education and as a man of normal ambition for himself and his we can suppose he used the privilege. What William actually learned there is controversial. William Lyly's Latin grammar was printed at the rate of 10,000 copies a year at least, so he had on offer the rudiments of Latin. What else was taught there we can only guess. Saffron Walden, another of the 300 or so schools like Stratford's in this period is the only school which has left a record of its curriculum. It was ambitious: Ovid, Sallust, Virgil, Cicero, Terence, Horace and Erasmus. But we do not know how much of this was taken up by Stratford. What is more, we have no idea to what extent young William availed himself of the fare provided. To say, as has been said, that he was as well equipped as any of the other playwrights of his time is simply not true since all those who were significant had been to the university: Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson. Certainly, there is no difficulty in accounting for Edward de Vere's background: the two universities and the inns of court.

It is unnecessary in this limited context to go over once again the evidence of wide knowledge and experience of many skills shown in the plays. In this point Dr. Kathman admits a weakness in the Stratfordian case and the

strength of the Oxfordian. Small wonder the "literary historians" fight shy of internal evidence since there is nothing to help them in what is to be found inside the plays themselves, where there are many allusions in the plays, and sometimes and especially in the sonnets, which could be taken to indicate experiences in the life of the 17th Earl. Dr. Kathman has a good point in rejecting, where the sonnets are concerned, overmuch insistence on the hyphenated name as an indication of concealed authorship. Nevertheless, it is not without significance that the device of the earl as Viscount Bulbeck was a hand shaking a broken spear. The real difficulty is the dedication to "our ever-living poet" in the edition of 1609. Does Dr. Kathman know any examples of this appellation being applied to authors still alive? Nor need we raise objections to William of Stratford as an actor, and that he was the holder of shares in the Globe in which he acted. However, there were probably a number of William Shakespeares around at the time, and we could not be sure that "our William Shakespeare" was the only one who migrated to London. Shakespeare was a common name in Warwickshire and William was a common name everywhere. W.J. Thomas, the antiquary, concluded from the presence of the name William Shakespeare in a muster roll of hired soldiers within the Barlichway Hundred in the village of Rowington for 1605 that

"the bard" did military service at one point. Professor Samuel Schoenbaum justly observed, "Thomas has of course confused the poet with some namesake" (*Documentary Life*, 88, n. 1). A great difficulty resides in the fact that there is no continuity in the record of William of Stratford's life.

The great problem for Oxfordians is to know what was the relationship between William of Stratford and the 17th Earl of Oxford. There must have been one, and probably one of some intimacy. It is not conceivable that an actor by the name William Shakespeare should not have known or even been intimate with the man who could be taken as the true author of the plays and poems known and published in the name of the man from Stratford. Some of the reasons for anonymity on the part of the earl, and why he might have been content to let it appear among those who were not in the know that it was another who produced his canon, has been discussed in a previous article in these pages (see *ER* 2:2) and need not be repeated. Certainly, there is nothing absurd in the idea of the earl and William becoming closely acquainted. The earl was of course the patron of a company of players. The theater, so to speak, ran in his family. The earls of Oxford had their players as far back as 1492. We remember a famous or notorious occasion when the 16th earl's company—Edward's father—caused a scandal by playing in Southwark when a dirge was be-

ing sung in St. Saviour's for Henry VIII on February 6, 1547. The company played in various places from 1555 to 1563, if not at court. Young Edward de Vere, whom Francis Meres was later to designate as the best for comedy, must have taken a keen interest in these dramatic proceedings.

A number of theatrical troupes and companies visited Stratford in the late 1580s. It was the custom for leading London companies to tour the provinces during the summer. In the 1583-4 season, three troupes performed in the Stratford Guildhall, those of the Earls of Worcester, Essex, and probably very significantly, Oxford. Was this when young William, not very studiously inclined, and very willing to escape into the more exciting life of a travelling company, decided to leave Stratford, not necessarily forever, to see something of the larger world? This was when he found a place in Oxford's and began a lifelong association with the earl. But if this seems too early for his removal to London, the busiest year for plays in Stratford ran from December 1586 to December 1587. Five companies, the Queen's, Essex's, Leicester's, Stafford's and a fifth unidentified—was this Oxford's?—played this year so that William had quite a choice. Even if he joined one of the others, he could still have ended up or continued in Oxford's since allegiances were lightly borne and changes easily made. E.K. Chambers quotes Wright and Haliwell's *Reliquae*

*Antiquae* referring to to 1580, "The Duttons [John and Laurence] and their fellow players forsaking the earle of Warwycke their master became followers of the Erle of Oxford and wrot themselves his Comoedians, which certain genetlemen altered and made Camoelians" (*Elizabethan Stage*, II, 98). One could see William of Stratford as Autolycus or Touchstone, streetwise rather than wise, perhaps, a man with a sense of money and an eye even for small sums as is evident in the curious documents which survive to prove his determination to lose nothing to an owing neighbor. A man very different from his earl his patron who, nevertheless, no doubt found a certain fascination in his company, used his name—and paid him for it. Admittedly, there is much speculation here, but without "must have beens" there can be no history.

The difficulty with history, as E.L. Woodward pointed out, is that, sooner than in any other subject which tries to be scientific, one comes to the limit of the evidence. One can give up or attempt to extrapolate. As Dr. Kathman would be the first to agree, the subject in hand demands a great deal of patience and forbearance toward those with whom one disagrees. This is not impossible.

Indeed, greater than I or most of us have seen the difficulty of the Authorship Issue. One remembers Henry James's dictum (*The Letters of...*, NY 1920, I, 424).

"I am a 'sort of' haunted by a

conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practised on a patient world... The more I turn him round, the more he so affects me. But that is all—I am not pretending to treat the question or to carry it any further. He bristles with difficulties, and I can only express my general sense by saying that I find it almost as impossible to conceive that Bacon wrote the plays as to conceive that the man from Stratford, as we know the man from Stratford, did."

He bristles with difficulties. Indeed, he does.

Francis Edwards,  
S.J., F.S.A., F. Hist. Soc.

*David Kathman responds to Messrs. Whalen and Edwards:* Francis Edwards' letter contains much that is reasonable, but I am forced to disagree with much of what he says, particularly his statement that "[w]hat has to be admitted by all sides is that William of Stratford as the author of the plays is an extremely unlikely candidate." Contrary to Mr. Edwards' statement that "all those [playwrights] who were significant had been to the university", many other important playwrights and poets besides Shakespeare lacked a university education: Ben Jonson, George Chapman, John Webster, Thomas Kyd, Michael Drayton, Henry Chettle, and Thomas Dekker are only among the most notable. As to where Shakespeare and these other writers gained the

knowledge displayed in their works, there were abundant resources in Elizabethan London for an intelligent and enterprising person to learn about virtually anything under the sun: books were plentiful and relatively cheap, and travellers from around the world could be found throughout the city. In fact, Shakespeare of Stratford had an outstanding resource available in his fellow Stratfordian contemporary, the printer Richard Field. Field printed or held the copyright to many of the most important sources used by Shakespeare, including the 1587 *Holinshed's Chronicles*, North's translation of Plutarch, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and many books on learning French and Italian. Oxfordians often scoff at the idea that Shakespeare could have learned so much by reading and talking to people, but if Ben Jonson could become the greatest classical scholar in England while working as a bricklayer's apprentice, soldier, and actor, Shakespeare's achievement does not seem particularly remarkable. To the extent that orthodox scholars invoke "genius" as an explanation for Shakespeare's achievement, they do so not as the *deus ex machina* so often depicted by Oxfordians; rather, we say that Shakespeare's genius allowed him to make better, richer use than his contemporaries did of the abundant resources available to them all.

Richard Whalen and I obviously have some fundamental dif-

ferences of opinion over what counts as "conjecture" and "documented fact." I find it hard to credit his claim that "most of the Oxfordian evidence is documented facts," or his assertion that my description of the Oxfordian case actually applies to the Stratfordian one. While we certainly know many facts about Oxford, none of these facts directly connects him with Shakespeare's plays; it is only through conjecture, most of it extremely tenuous and/or misguided, that Oxfordians are able to make any connection at all. In contrast, the evidence connecting William Shakespeare to the plays is direct, straightforward, and abundant compared to most of his contemporaries: his name on the published quartos and in the Revels Accounts, his membership in the acting company which put on the plays, his friendship with the men (Heminges and Condell) who compiled the First Folio, and their explicit statement that their "friend and fellow" Shakespeare was the author. Oxfordians attempt to discredit all this evidence, when they are not based on the double standards I wrote about in my article, generally boil down to allegations that the evidence is forged, and thus become unfalsifiable. Furthermore, Mr. Whalen's claim that "Oxford's education and career are reflected extensively and specifically in the plays and poems of Shakespeare" is equally true of many other noblemen of the period, and I would argue that some

of these others (such as the Earls of Derby and Essex) are actually a better match for "Shakespeare" by Oxfordian standards than Oxford is. I agree with Mr. Whalen that "the case for Oxford demands to be examined carefully and impartially", though obviously we have some serious differences over how to go about this.

To the editor:

Dr. David Kathman's article is worth close attention because he takes the Oxfordian case seriously and attacks several points of perceived weakness in our case, which we would do well to rebut if he is mistaken or, if he is justified, to accept and decide how to deal with them. We should not waste time defending the indefensible. Third, he exposes several weaknesses in his own Stratfordian case, which we should examine carefully.

I intend to concentrate on replying to two general reasons he gives for not being an Oxfordian.

The first is that "Oxfordians have built up a picture of who the author must have been from reading the plays themselves.... A large part of the 'evidence' used by Oxfordians is internal to the works themselves." Beyond commenting that "literary scholars have always treated such internal evidence with the utmost caution," he does not, perhaps wisely, take this line of argument much further, but moves on to his second main point.

This is the application by Oxfordians of a "double-standard" when evaluating evidence for

Shakspere and for Oxford, and some manipulation of evidence to suit their own case. He uses Charlton Ogburn as his example because "...his book is generally accepted as the most thorough and detailed exposition of the Oxfordian position..." He concludes by saying "I have tried... to explain the major ways in which Oxfordian methods differ from those used by literary scholars, using Ogburn's book as a case study. Oxfordians typically ignore or rationalize away the external evidence..." and so on. Kathman is here using the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general—some of Ogburn's evidence and methods are suspect, therefore all of them are, therefore, because Ogburn is the doyen of Oxfordians, the whole case fails.

If Kathman cannot accept the Oxfordian case on these grounds, he should not be a Stratfordian either since, for generations, Stratfordian "literary scholars" and others have used precisely the same methods to argue their case.

Turning to his first objection, we should note Kathman's further comment on the use of internal evidence, that: "interpretations are notoriously subjective, and whenever possible should be backed with external evidence." To see Stratfordians at work on such internal evidence, I shall look at their treatment of Shakspere's education, and the so-called Lost Years, when Shakspere disappears altogether from the records. I do not argue that all Stratfordians

behave in the same way, or that because some do, all do, but the examples I am going to give come from a wide range of people and times.

All the Stratfordian biographers I have read assume that he went to the Royal Grammar school, first mentioned by Rowe in 1709. Some acknowledge that we do not have any record showing that he did so, but make the assumption just the same: "We need not doubt that Shakespeare received a grammar school education" (Schoenbaum 1987). Others do not even bother to make any caveat on the matter. This assumption does not rely on evidence of any literary or intellectual activity in which he is known to have engaged during his life (external evidence), but on what can be inferred from the plays and poems (internal evidence). That his father had the right to send him to the school free, that some of his contemporaries, such as Richard Field, showed in their lives evidence of being educated men, or that the curriculum at Stratford (inferred from other schools) was excellent, while true, is not evidence that Shakspere went to the school. In the absence of external evidence apart from the plays that he was a man of any education, we have good reason at least to question whether he did. To Kathman it seems acceptable for Stratfordians to make inferences from the plays without external evidence, but not for Oxfordians. But of course Oxfordians do have external evi-

dence to support their inferences—the known facts of Oxford's life.

In dealing with the Lost Years, many biographers over the centuries have suggested a wide variety of activities which the young man could have, might have, engaged in. The more pretigious scholars tend to play these suggestions down ("No use guessing"—Chambers 1923). Others are not above indulging in them ("About this [his reading habits] we can infer a good deal, by rending back from what appears in his works"—Rowse 1963). The list includes:

Country-schoolmaster—Aubrey/J.Q. Adams, 1923; Soldier in the Low Countries—W.J. Thoms, 1859/Duff Cooper, 1949; Sailor—Falconer, 1964; Apothecary or physician—Royal Institution, 1829; Gardener—Gardener's Chronicle, 1841; Printer—Blades, 1872 (possibly ironical); Lawyer's clerk—Malone, ca 1780/Rushton, 1858; Page or tutor to Sir Henry Goodere—Gray, 1926; World voyager with Sir Francis Drake—Bliss, 1947; Scrivener—Everitt, 1954; Apprentice with Leicester's Men—Baldwin, 1929; Identified as William Shakeshafte, player—Baker, 1937; Tutor in Southampton's catholic household—Yates, 1936; Naturalist and country sportsman—Harting, 1864; Associate of Richard Field, printer—Rowse, 1963.

This use of inferences drawn from the works is still going on. The newly-published Arden edition of *The Sonnets* has an Introduction by Dr. Duncan-Jones, in

which she argues that Shakespeare was homo- or bi-sexual. There is, of course, no external evidence in the life of the Stratford man to support this theory. She has derived it entirely from her reading of the poems themselves and has, predictably enough, incurred the wrath of, among others, Stanley Wells. One of the arguments advanced against her is that Shakespeare was married with children, which is no reliable indicator of sexual orientation.

As Schoenbaum and others have pointed out, much of this speculation is projection of the biographer's own tastes and predilections. There is no external evidence in support of it anywhere, but the urgency with which an excellent grammar-school education is wished upon Shakspeare and the variety of the proposed experiences during the Lost Years, all unsupported by any external evidence, demonstrate an intuitive response on the part of Stratfordians to what is written in the plays as being a guide to those parts of Shakspeare's life which are unrecorded. In this, according to Kathman, they are not behaving in the way literary scholars should.

It is revealing to look at the methods adopted by the two schools; Looney dervied his list of characteristics and experiences from the plays and then searched for somebody who fitted the list. In contrast, Stratfordians hold the evidence of the plays in one hand and the recalcitrant facts of Shakespere's life in the other and

try to build a bridge of assumption and speculation between them.

They are in fact doing what Kathamn criticizes Looney for doing, but whereas they have no external evidence, Looney's case is supported in every way by what we know of the life and personality of the Earl of Oxford. If it had not been, he would have looked for someone else. Oxfordians, and many Stratfordians, accept the common observation that authors generally reflect their own personality, experiences, prejudices in their work. Kathman evidently does not. He believes this to be an unscholarly procedure on the part of Oxfordians, but accepts it when it is used by Stratfordians. He is using a double-standard.

Which brings me to Kathman's second major objection—the application by Oxfordians of double-standards and their habit of rationalizing away awkward external evidence which counters their case. He summarizes the external evidence for Shakespeare as the author, mentioning specifically the introductory material to the First Folio, and the monument in Stratford church. The problem which he cannot face is that the First Folio material, considered objectively, is not conclusive. It would convince only someone who already accepted the Stratford attribution as fact; the agnostic would say "Not Proven." It is ambiguous and incoherent in a context where it would have cost nobody any trouble to state quite clearly who the author was. Ano-

nymity was not required—quite the reverse—and, in a publishing enterprise of this cost and prestige, undertaken, say Heminge & Condell "only to keep the memory of so worthy a Friend and Fellow alive," the agnostic would expect that the identity of this worthy man would be clearly stated as a prime consideration. Instead, the identification is framed in scattered allusions. Heminge & Condell identify him as their fellow [actor], Jonson hails him as "Sweet swan of Avon" (which Avon among many?), and Digges refers to "thy Stratford monument."

This, despite the spelling, leads Stratfordians to the monument in Stratford-on-Avon church, as a crucial piece of their evidence. However, when the agnostic studies the inscriptions on the monument, he would surely conclude that they are masterpieces of ambiguity, and in the Latin, or irrelevance; and that they studiously avoid stating the obvious, namely that this monument is to the memory of William Shakespeare, gentleman, of Stratford and London, author of the plays and poems published under his name. And he or she would be entitled to ask—Why? To which Stratfordians have no answer.

However, in the orthography of the time, *moniment*, *monument* and *muniiment* were interchangeable spellings with two different meanings attached. A "muniiment" is a collection of papers and books. There is no record of any collection of papers and books re-

lating to Shakspeare the playwright in Stratford-on-Avon at that time, so the agnostic is entitled to ask if Digges was referring not to the unsatisfactory *monument* in Stratford, but to a *muniment* in another Stratford, the one in east London, for example? To which Stratfordians have no answer. To accept the evidence of the First Folio and the Stratford monument as conclusively showing that Shakspeare was the playwright, is to apply a double-standard or, to paraphrase Kathman, is to refuse "to apply any except the most trivial critical standards to [Stratfordian] arguments."

Stratfordians' habit of inferring Shakspeare's biography from the plays, and acceptance of the First Folio and monument as solid, convincing evidence of his authorship, are the same faults of scholarship as Kathman imputes to Oxfordianism. However, this is simply a "yah-boo" argument and I would like to consider briefly why those who love Shakespeare get embroiled in such disputes.

"It is the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates everything to itself as proper nourishment, and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by everything you see, hear, read, or understand."  
*Laurence Stern*

Supporters of *all* the protagonists in the authorship question will recognize, if they consider their views objectively, that this precisely describes their mental

processes. I stress *all* because the Stratfordian view is a hypothesis like all the rest. There is no solid evidence that anyone wrote the plays, apart from the fact that they exist. A major step forward in the debate will be when literary scholars of all persuasions and none recognize that all the cases are hypotheses and test them in the normal way—by considering the evidence for and against each one, and if the latter is the more convincing, discarding or modifying the hypothesis.

There is, however, a major obstacle to our reaching this Utopia: we are confronting a matter of belief, which operates when factual evidence is inconclusive:

La foi consiste a croire ce que la rasion ne croit pas... Il ne suffit pas qu'une chose soit possible pour la croire. [Faith consists in believing that which reason does not believe... It is not enough that a thing be possible for it to be believed.] *Voltaire*

Faith, or belief, and reason are antithetical, they do not operate in the same mental environment. Individuals believe, sometimes passionately, in one or other of the hypotheses—that Edward de Vere or others created the Plays of Shakespeare. They *believe*, not in the teeth of the evidence, but because reason finds the evidence incomplete, inconclusive and open to conflicting interpretations, as Kathman and I have shown. It is pointless to apply rational arguments against another's belief, but that is what all the protagonists in

the Authorship Debate are attempting to do, and becoming very frustrated in the process.

A rational position, in the face of the inconclusive evidence offered from all sides, would surely be agnostic. "We do not know, but we can bend our collective efforts to finding out, by applying the same intellectual rigor to *all* the hypotheses." I would invite David Kathman to join us in the search, recognizing that both the Oxfordian and Stratfordian hypotheses (and all the others) are simply that and no more—to be tested against the evidence, to destruction or confirmation—but that they all contain elements of truth which should be expanded by research, and weaknesses which should be purged.

Christopher Dams  
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*David Kathman responds:* I appreciate the civil tone of Christopher Dams' letter, but I have to disagree with the bulk of what he says. Mr. Dams accuses me of "the fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general" because I examined specific examples from a specific Oxfordian, namely Charlton Ogburn. I thought I had made it clear that my article was not intended as a comprehensive critique of Oxfordianism, but rather as an illustration of some of the major problems I and other Shakespeare scholars have with the way Oxfordians make their

arguments. I had to keep the number of examples reasonable due to space considerations (just as Mr. Dams did in his above letter), but I have written at length about virtually every aspect of the Oxfordian case on the Shakespeare Authorship web page or on the Shakespeare Usenet group.

Mr. Dams accuses me of inconsistency because I criticize Oxfordians for basing their case almost entirely on internal evidence from the plays, when orthodox scholars have often used evidence from the plays to speculate on such aspects of Shakespeare's life as the Lost Years. The difference—and it is a major one—is that orthodox scholars do not use such speculation as "evidence as to who wrote the plays"; rather, they use it to supplement the external evidence, all of which indicates that William Shakespeare of Stratford was the author. Oxfordians, on the other hand, treat such internal reconstructions as primary "evidence" (despite their inherent subjectivity), simply rationalizing away all the considerable external evidence when it does not agree with their impressions of who the author must have been.

For example, Mr. Dams asserts baldly that the First Folio and the Stratford monument are "not conclusive" as to who the author is, a conclusion which I find quite bizarre and at odds with all normal standards of historical scholarship. The Folio is entitled "Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies" (not "Mr.

Edward de Vere's..."), and Heminges and Condell specifically say that they have compiled the volume "to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive." William Shakespeare of Stratford was both a fellow actor and a friend of Heminges and Condell, as numerous documents attest, whereas the Earl of Oxford is not known to have had any connection with either man. The Stratford monument was recognized from the very beginning as being for the famous poet, William Shakespeare and Oxfordian claims that it was altered in the eighteenth century are without foundation.

The evidence for William Shakespeare's authorship of his plays is much more abundant than the comparable evidence for virtually any other contemporary playwright. Oxfordians try to cast doubt on this evidence by allegations of forgery, dark hints of hidden meanings, or simply declaring that the evidence is "doubtful" for no other reason than it conflicts with what Oxfordians wish to believe. For those of us who deal on a regular basis with the facts and documents of Elizabethan theater history, such attempts to substitute speculation and subjective interpretations for documentary evidence ring hollow indeed.

To the Editor:

Going through David Kathman's attack on *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* and its author, I was stunned into silence by what struck me as a demonstra-

tion that those with whom the decision rested at the *Review* were bent upon doing me in even at the cost of whatever commitment they might feel to the truth in the matter of the Shakespeare authorship. I saw no other interpretation to put upon the publication of Kathman's broadside. I wrote that perhaps I should have been forewarned by the studied disparagement of all the Ogburns' works in Warren Hope's bibliography of *The Shakespeare Controversy*.

In response, the *Review* editor observed that David Kathman had done what no other spokesman for the Stratfordian had ventured to do—engage Oxfordians in a debate on specifics in a journal of wide and elect distribution. What struck me in his reply was that no slighted hint of any such purpose was conveyed in the *Review*, which left its readers to suppose for six months that Kathman's onslaught was printed on the same basis as other contributions, as being sound and worthwhile. Yet the point the editor makes is surely a valid one. Kathman has given us the chance to show that the case for the Stratfordian consists of attempts at deflection from the facts and abusive treatment of those who would bring those facts to the fore.

Kathman sets the stage for his argument with a misstatement of fact. In his first sentence he declares that "William Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried in the same town on April 25, 1616." The man of whom he is

speaking was baptized and buried not as Shakespeare but as Shakspeare, and that rendering of the name in Stratford was "fairly uniform," according to Sir E.K. Chambers. William was married as Shaxpere on one document, Shagsper on the other, naturally without any exception to them being taken by the groom, who by every indication was illiterate. His father's name was spelled Shakspeyr by one town official, Shaxpeare by another. It was never Shakespeare, according to Chambers. In the Stratfordian's six purported attempts at a signature (in different hands, by the way), none can be read as "Shakespeare." Until we get to the will, it is, according to Chambers, "Shakspe," "Shakspe" and "Shakspe"—these on legal documents. Even on the monument in Trinity Church, the crowning masterpiece of ambivalence, it is Shakspeare, with a short "a" in the first syllable.

Let us come now to Kathman's specific charges against *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.

"Ogburn," he writes, "makes a similarly false claim (Sir Sidney Lee having backed up the fomer) when he insists that those who occasionally hyphenated Shakespeare's name in print can only have been showing that they recognized Shakespeare as a pseudonym." And so I say again. I was not speaking of names clearly of two parts, like Fitz-Geoffrey that Kathman feels compelled to bring in. The other instances of such hyphenation he cites simply re-

flect idiosyncracies on the part of an individual. If Allde occasionally rendered his name All-de, what of it? If "Henslowe's writers wrote a play about Sir John Oldcastle in response to the success of Falstaff" and rendered the name Sir John Old-Castle, it was because that was the name originally given Falstaff; "my old lad of the castle," the Prince calls Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*. I go into this because I see no concern in Kathman's strictures for arriving at the truth but only a slick lawyer's brief defending a dogma enshrined in academe by traducing those who, on the overwhelming strength of the evidence, changed their minds as to the identity of the writer.

In refuting Kathman on this issue, I return to what I originally wrote about the hyphenation of the name William Shakespeare.

"Of the 32 editions of Shakespeare's plays published before the First Folio of 1623 in which an author is named at all, the name was hyphenated in 15. It was hyphenated in the *Sonnets*, in *A Lover's Complaint* and in the collection of Shakespeare's poems published in 1640. It was hyphenated by John Davies of Hereford in his crucial poem addressing the dramatist as 'Our English Terence,' by Shakespeare's fellow dramatist, John Webster, in his appraisal of contemporary playwrights, in two of the four dedicatory poems in the First Folio and by the epigrammatist of 1639 who wrote "Shake-speare, we must be silent in our praise, /'Cause our encomi-

ums can but blast thy bays,"—and it would be interesting to hear Mr. Kathman's explanation why such caution should have had to be exercised in connection with a Stratfordian Shakespeare. We may add that Oxford's crest as Lord Bulbeck, as Sir Derek Jacobi recalls, was a lion brandishing a broken spear while the sobriquet of Pallas Athena, patron goddess of Athens, home of the theater, was *Hasti-vibrans*, the Spear-shaker.

Kathman quotes me as having stated that "apart from the entry in the burial register, Shakspeare's death (in 1616) as far as the record shows went entirely unremarked" and in an age "when the passing of noted poets called for copious elegies from their fellows." That is what I stated because it is the fact. To dispute it, Kathman cites John Taylor's listing of Shakespeare among the deceased poets in 1620, though what that has to do with it is difficult to see. Chiefly he relies on William Basse's "On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, he died in April 1616." There is, however, no evidence whatever that Basse's poem was written before Shakspeare had been dead six years. Clearly it was occasioned by the Oxford student's having come upon the monument to "Shakspeare" in the church at Stratford, on which the date of Shakspeare's death is given. (The point of Basse's poem is that Spencer, Chaucer and Beaumont should make room for Shakespeare in their "threefold tomb," which is to say in Westminster Abbey. Ben refers to the appalling proposal in

the First Folio and dismisses it on the curious grounds that Shakespeare is "a monument without a tomb.") The fact remains as stated in my book. In an age when the passing of outstanding poets elicited copious elegies from their fellows, the death of Will Shakspeare went, so far as the record shows, entirely unremarked except for the brief entry in the Stratford burial record. Ben Jonson, who loved Shake-speare "on this side idolatry" had not a word to say on Shakespeare's death. Interestingly, when Shakespeare's son-in-law died, the burial register read: "Johannes Hall medicus peritissimus." If Dr. Hall was memorialized as "most skillful physician," it would be interesting to have Kathman's explanation of why, if Will Shakspeare were Britain's triumph, as Ben Jonson would proclaim Shake-speare to be, "the Soul of the Age" who "was not of an age but for all time," he should merit in the burial register only "gent." At the same time, Kathman might explain how it is that, while William Shakespeare was to receive such praise as no other writer ever has from as distinguished a contemporary as Ben Jonson, no one of whom we have heard reported during the dramatist's lifetime ever having met, seen or had any communication with an author, poet or dramatist by that name. And the two or three who recalled him years later did so in a few words telling us nothing of him.

Indeed, much as Kathman

makes of Shakspeare's having been an actor, the fact remains that the only time we see a Shakespeare on a stage is in John Davies's poem addressed "To Our English Terence M(aste) Will Shakspeare" in which we read:

Some say (Good Will) which I,  
in sport do sing,  
Hast thou not played some  
Kingly parts in sport,  
Thou hadst been a companion  
for a King  
And been a King among the  
meaner sort.

What I wrote was that "This is the only reference by a contemporary that tells us anything whatever about 'Shake-speare' as an actor and what it tells us is that he 'played kingly parts in sport' and thus lost the chance to be 'a companion to a king.' This could not possibly have been the conventional Shakespeare, offspring of an impoverished home of illiterate parents in a provincial village who become a busy professional actor and theatrical manager. The playwright/actor of whom Davies wrote can hardly have been other than a nobleman who sacrificed his standing at court to his addiction to the theater, which led him to sneak off and take royal parts under his assumed name." Kathman's contortions to get around this explicit implication would try an eel's back, but the facts remain: the actor could not have been the Stratfordian.

Why was "Shake-speare" called "our English Terence"? Dr. Kathman could supply the answer

but might be coy in doing so. It is that "comedies bearing Terence's name," as Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor wrote, repeating "what is well known... were written by worthy Scipio and wise Laelius." In other words, Terence, born a slave in Carthage and adopted by a Roman Senator who freed him, served as front man for the authors of comedies in which, as Ascham declared, "doth sound in mine ear the pure fine talk of... the flower of the worthiest nobility that ever Rome bred." No parallel here, Dr. Kathman?

If the Stratfordian could not have been the actor, how do we explain the reference to Shakespeare by the actors Heminge and Condell as "so worthy a friend and fellow"? In the then current usage, "William Shakespeare" was indeed a fellow shareholder of Heminge's and Condell's, in the Globe Theater, we read in a record of 1635. This and the mortgage he acquired on the Blackfriars gatehouse in 1613 would surely have been his only connection with the theater.

Surely, no one familiar with his record as it has come down to us could see anything of the actor in Will Shakspeare, of whom we read in a recent publication by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust that "Here in Stratford he seems merely to have been a man of the world, buying up property, laying in ample stocks of barley and malt when others were starving, selling off his surpluses and pursuing debtors in court and conniving, as

it seems, in the Welcombe enclosures." For generations no citizen of Stratford of whom we have heard ever suggested that he was an actor, any more than that he was an author. In an account of his travels in Warwickshire, published in 1773, the Reverend Dr. Richard Graves reported that "All the idea which the country people have of that great genius"—William Shakespeare—"is that he excelled in smart repartee and selling of bargains." Shakespeare's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, wrote in 1709 that he was curious as to "what sort of part" his subject "used to play" but "tho' I have inquir'd I could never meet with any account of him in this way, than that the top of his performance was the Ghost in his own Hamlet"—and can we doubt that this was a witty tip-off to his having been the stand-in for the author—a shade—in his own village? To top it all, Shakspeare could not have read the parts assigned to him, being plainly illiterate. The records of an actor William Shakespeare arise from the disguised appearances on the stage of Edward de Vere, a literary genius unable to resist his passion for the theater, in dire conflict though it was with his noble forebears—precedent earls saluted in the historical dramas: "See, where Oxford comes." "Is not Oxford here another anchor?" and "brave Oxford, wondrous well-beloved!" The poet confesses in the Sonnets that he has made himself "a motley to the view" and, concerned by

the attraction the theater had for young Southampton, warns "For I am shamed by that which I bring forth, and so should you, to love things nothing worth."

Let me come to the central issue: the reason why doubts about Will Shakspeare's authorship of the works of Shakespeare began to be voiced not long after Stratford began to be honored as the poet-dramatist's birthplace. It is because Will Shakspeare, from what the record tells us of him, is about the last kind of man to have written the works of Shakespeare, from what these tell us of their author. "The man of letters is in truth ever writing his own biography," Anthony Trollope observed. As Jean de la Fontaine declared: "By the work one knows the workman." And Anatole France: "The artist either communicates his own life to his creations or else merely whittles out puppets and dresses up dolls." We have it on the novelist Samuel Butler's word that "Every man's work... is always a portrait of himself" and on the poet Wallace Stevens's that "A man's work is autobiographical in spite of every subterfuge." This is why to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who could not "marry" the reputed Shakespeare with his verse, considered the origin of the immortal works "the first of all literary problems" and why three outstanding literary figures of our past would have none of the Stratfordian—now joined in their disbelief by Vladimir Nabokov and Orson Welles, among others. Should it

be argued that many more established writers stand by Will Shakspeare, I warrant that nearly to a man they would change their minds if put into full possession of the known facts.

For the fact is that virtually all the poet-dramatist tells us of himself is in direct contravention of his having been Will Shakspeare of Stratford, and is consistent with his having been Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford—admired as a playwright in his own right, the poet of early verse entirely compatible with what we should imagine the young Shakespeare's to have been, the two being on the whole indistinguishable. "De Vere," Sir Derek Jacobi observes, "had all the qualifications." Michael York is convinced of Oxford's authorship, Sir John Gielgud nearly so, I think. Future students will hold that had the monument to "Shakespeare" not been erected in Trinity Church, Stratford, the official fiction of Shakespeare's authorship would never have taken hold and the clearly illiterate "malster and money-lender" (James Joyce) and "the lout from Stratford" (Henry James) never have been heard of by posterity.

Charlton Ogburn  
Beaufort, South Carolina

*David Kathman responds:*

I am sorry to see that Charlton Ogburn has chosen to reply to me by merely repeating his assertions rather than by actually addressing

the points I made in my article. Space does not permit me to properly address every one of his claims and allegations, but I would like to respond to the major ones.

Mr. Ogburn first charges me with propagating a "mistatement of fact" when I wrote that William Shakespeare was baptized in Stratford on April 26, 1564 and buried there on April 25, 1616; he insists that the man's name was actually "Shakspeare", and implicitly insists that this alleged difference is significant. In my article "The Spelling and Pronunciation of Shakespeare's Name" (cited in note 2 of the original article), I gathered together all surviving written mentions of Shakespeare's name between 1564 and 1616 and showed that there is no significant difference in spelling patterns between non-literary references (i.e. to the Stratford man) and literary references (i.e. to Shakespeare as an author). In both contexts, the most common spelling by far is "Shakespeare", and in both contexts "Shakespeare"-type spellings (with the first 'e') well outnumber "Shakspeare"-type spellings (without the first 'e'). Mr. Ogburn and other Oxfordians choose data selectively to support their preconceived notions on this issue, notions which are refuted when the data is looked at as a whole. Mr. Ogburn also simply repeats, parrot-like, his assertions about hyphenation. As I stated in the article, though, the idea that hyphenation has anything to do with pseudonyms is completely un-

ported by the evidence and completely unknown outside the anti-Stratfordian literature; hyphenated real names far outnumber the occasional hyphenated pseudonym which can be found in the Elizabethan era. Shouting louder does not change these facts.

Mr. Ogburn recites the standard Oxfordian assertions about the author of the plays being the best-educated man of his day and intimately familiar with court life, when the best evidence (which Mr. Ogburn consistently ignores) indicates otherwise. Nobody during Shakespeare's lifetime or for a century afterward ever accused him of being well-educated; on the contrary, they consistently portrayed him as an unlearned, natural wit, as in Milton's famous comment that Shakespeare "warble[d] his native wood-notes wild". The classical scholar J. A. K. Thomson in his book *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952) found that Shakespeare actually used remarkably few classical allusions for the time, and that those he did use were standard Elizabethan fare. Paul Clarkson and Clyde Warren, in an exhaustive study of legalisms in the work of seventeen Elizabethan playwrights (*The Law of Property in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*), found that Shakespeare was average at best in the number and accuracy of his legal allusions. Mr. Ogburn asserts that Shakespeare's "point of view was more consistently that of the nobility than that of any other writer of consequence, ever," but Tudor

social and court historian Muriel St. Clare Byrne came to a different conclusion: in her article on "The Social Background" in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* (1940), Byrne showed that Shakespeare was apparently unfamiliar with many rituals of court life, and that many of his allegedly "noble" households (such as the Capulets) much more closely resemble middle-class homes such as the one Shakespeare grew up in.

Mr. Ogburn goes on to recite the same tired claims about how William Shakespeare of Stratford could not have written the plays, quoting his "authorities" very selectively and using the same double standard I wrote about in my article to make Shakespeare look as bad as humanly possible. He dismisses my straightforward interpretation of the Davies poem as "contortions," ignoring my argument that Davies could not have been addressing Oxford; he continues to arbitrarily brush aside the documentary record of Shakespeare's stage career in order to repeat (even more vehemently) his fantastic assertion that Shakespeare of Stratford did not act on the public stage, but that Oxford did. He once again asserts baldly that Shakespeare's was "an age when the passing of outstanding poets elicited copious eulogies from their fellows," completely ignoring my deconstruction of his alleged examples and my demonstration that Shakespeare's death was actually the best-memorialized of any playwright's until Ben

Jonson twenty years later. Mr. Ogburn here resembles nothing more than a child with his hands clamped over his ears, singing loudly to avoid listening to something he does not want to hear. There is much room for dialogue between Oxfordians and mainstream Shakespeare scholars, but Mr. Ogburn's petulant repetition of his assertions without any attempt to address my counterarguments does nothing to further the discussion.

To the Editor:

Charlton Ogburn's sad letter shows his preference for the manufacture of melodramatic conjectures over the collection of mundane facts.

Thanks to the whims of the U.S. Postal Service, he read Dr. Kathman's piece, conjectured I might somehow be maliciously behind it, and wrote up his letter of complaint before I even became aware of the existence of the article. If I had been given the opportunity to comment on the article before its publication, I would have urged that it be retitled "Why I Am Not An Ogburnian." Dr. Kathman never even faces much less refutes the case for Oxford as Shakespeare. J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* was the first and remains the best statement of that case. Barring the discovery of documentary evidence that either confirms or topples Looney's compellingly constructed circumstantial case, that is the case that needs to be answered.

Worse, Dr. Kathman plays a kind of shell game with the categories of evidence that is unpleasant to look upon. He states that he and other "literary historians" rely on "external evidence," including such things as the printed front matter to the First Folio. Charlton Ogburn and other Oxfordians are said to rely on "internal evidence," including such things as Shakespeare's printed plays. All printed materials—the front matter of the First Folio and the plays—are *secondary sources*, for the very good reason that there have been hands other than the author's intervening between us and the author's words.

Dr. Kathman further confuses the issue by stating there is no "documentary evidence" to connect Oxford with Shakespeare's plays and poems. He calls here for a *primary source*—a document—knowing full well, we must imagine, that if such a source existed there would be no authorship question. We can reasonably expect that even Dr. Kathman, with all his confusion about the nature of evidence, would become an Oxfordian if there were documentary evidence proving that Oxford was Shakespeare. Failing that, he is content to say he is not an Oxfordian because he is a Stratfordian—all that his lengthy performance amounts to.

Warren Hope  
Havertown, Pennsylvania