

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY
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SHAKESPEARE REVEALED IN OXFORD'S LETTERS* by William Plumer Fowler

According to the acclaimed Stratfordian biographer, Dr. S. Schoenbaum, Charles and Hulda Wallace, after an exhaustive examination of over five million documents, "made the most important contribution in the 20th century (thus far [1970]) to our factual knowledge of Shakespeare." They came across the crudely written signature -- "Willn Shaksp" -- on a 1612 deposition affidavit in the case of *Belot v. Mountjoy*. The deposition revealed that "Willn Shaksp" sometime during 1604 had lived with one Mountjoy, a maker of women's headdresses, and in that same year he loaned money to an apothecary in Stratford in March and brought an action there in July to collect it. This is the last and one of only two probative verifications that during his lifetime the Stratford man had a domicile in London. The other was in Bishopgate in 1596 which is documented by an entry in 1597 in which collectors reported he was a tax-delinquent and could not be located.

In my opinion, the distinguished and venerable lawyer and poet, William Plumer Fowler, after an exhaustive examination of every word and phrase in all the plays, poems and sonnets ascribed to William Shakespeare and in 37 of the 17th Earl of Oxford's most significant letters from 1563 to 1603 has made one of the most important contributions to the Oxfordian attribution.

The inconsequential and discordant findings of the Wallaces and the substantive and harmonious findings of Mr. Fowler provide a typical example of the devastating contrast between the case for Shakespeare and the case for Oxford.

In his prodigious and superbly crafted "*Shakespeare Revealed In Oxford's Letters*," Mr. Fowler comprehensively documents the remarkable, myriad and patently not coincidental parallelisms of words, phrases and expressions in those letters and the plays, poems and sonnets. A number of those parallelisms do consist of rather commonplace words and expressions but when coupled with the many hundreds which are idiosyncratic, distinctively combined and uniquely employed create a cumulative impact which irrefutably corroborates Mr. Fowler's affirmation in the Epilogue:

Whether or not one agrees with all the circumstantial evidence pointing to Oxford's authorship of Shakespeare, the congruity of the Earl's phraseology in these letters to the vocabulary, phraseology and thought of Shakespeare cannot be ignored. It indicates the same mind as that of the writer of Shakespeare's plays and poems.

*872 pages. Peter E. Randall Publisher, P.O. Box 4726, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 03801, 1986. \$35.00 plus \$2.50 postage.

The following are a few examples (Mr. Fowler's italics) which I gleaned during the less than an hour in leafing through the book. There are undoubtedly a great many others which are as or more compelling.

Oxford's 4th Danvers Escheat Letter - January 1602:

"But I hope better, though I cast the worst, howsoever, for *finis coronat opus* [the end crowns the work], and then everything will be laid open."

Henry VI, Part II (V,2,28):

Clifford: "*La fin couronne les oeuvres* [the end crowns the work]."

All's Well That Ends Well (IV,4,35-36):

Helena: "ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. Still the *fine's* the crown. Whate'er the course, the *end* is the *renown*."

Troilus & Cressida (IV,5,224):

Hector: "The end crowns all."

From the same letter:

" . . . that as you began it for me with all kindness, so that you will continue in the same affection to *end* it . . . Neither will I conceive otherwise . . . now at the *end*, than I apprehended at the *beginning*."

Julius Caesar (V,3,24):

Cassius: "And where I did *begin*, there shall I *end*."

Antony & Cleopatra (IV,14,105):

Antony: " . . . O, make an *end*/of what I have *begun*."

The Winter's Tale (V,3,45):

Perita: "Dear Queen, that *ended* when I but *began*."

Henry IV, Part I (IV,2,79):

Falstaff: "To the latter *end* and of the *fray* and the *beginning* of a feast."

Coriolanus (III,1,337):

Senator: " . . . and the *end* of it/unknown to the *beginning*."

The Tempest (II,1,159):

Antonio: "The latter *end* of his commonwealth forgets the *beginning*."

From the same letter:

" . . . showing how out of *nothing* to her . . . if . . . I could of this *nothing* make *something*."

The Comedy of Errors (II,2,53-54):

Dromio: "Narry sir, for this *something*, that you gave me for *nothing*."

Antipholus: "I'll make you amends next, to give you *nothing* for *something*."

Richard II (II,2,34-37):

Bushy: "T is *nothing* but conceit my gracious lady."

Queen: "T is *nothing* less. Conceit is still deriv'd
From some forefather grief. Mine is not so,
For *nothing* hath begot my *something* grief
Or *something* hath the *nothing* that I grieve."

The Tempest (1,2,400-02):

Ariel: "Nothing of him doth fade
But suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange."

The Rape of Lucrece (154):

"The thing we have, and, all for want of wit,
Make something nothing by suggesting it."

Some word studies experts will point out that writers at that time frequently borrowed from others and, therefore, not a few words and phrases which appear in the works of Shakespeare have been found, and more could be found, in the writings of such as Marlowe and Bacon. The number of stunning, proliferating and bilingual and trilingual congruities, however, which Mr. Fowler has uncovered, not only in the words and phrases but also in their interplay and context, in the letters of Oxford and the works of Shakespeare will not, in my opinion, be found in the writings of any other author of that period. That there could have been such a phenomenal and multiple coincidence seems to me to be inconceivable.

The incisive summary at the end of Chapter I -- Oxford's French Letter of August 23, 1563, at age 13, to his Guardian, Sir William Cecil -- is typical of the excellent summaries which are provided for all 44 Chapters:

In conclusion, this letter is outstandingly significant in that it has over thirty unmistakable points of correspondence in thought and phraseology to 34 out of Shakespeare's 37 yet unwritten plays (including *Pericles* with the 36 in the *First Folio*) and to six of his yet-to-be-written sonnets. The letter is both remarkable and revealing, in showing, as it does, how many of the seeds of Shakespearean genius had been planted in the mind of this thirteen-year-old boy (already recognized as a prodigy by his tutors) as early as August 23, 1563, when Francis Bacon and William Stanley (later the Earl of Derby) were but two years old, and exactly eight months before William Shaksper of Stratford was to put in his first appearance upon this earthly scene. It seems a clear indication of identity of authorship.

The concise, informative and corroborating biography of Oxford in the Introduction immeasurably adds to the appeal Mr. Fowler's book will have for all Oxfordians.

Morse Johnson

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OXFORD MAKES IT TO PRIME TIME!

ABC's half-hour comedy program, *Head of the Class*, which is shown on Wednesdays at 8:30 p.m. E.S.T., centers upon a spirited, unconventional, informal teacher, Mr. Moore, and his class of idiosyncratic, outspoken, irreverent high school pupils. In the performance on November 15th, Mr. Moore is producing a version of *Hamlet* in a local theatre which, he tells the class, "breaks the barrier between Shakespeare and contemporary audiences." He would like the youngsters "to come see it and tell me how you feel about it." The following exchanges then ensue:

Girl: You mean we'd get to see a theatre?

Mr. Moore: Let me warn you. It's a somewhat experimental production.

Girl: Don't you think it's a little risky to mess with Shakespeare?

Mr. Moore: Why not? The guy's not sacred. I mean, I've even messed with the idea that the guy everybody *thought* was Shakespeare didn't actually write the plays.

Class: (Confused voices, some laughter.)

Girl: Mr. Moore, why do you always do this?

Mr. Moore: Do what?

Boy: Make us nervous.

Mr. Moore: Keep an open mind, okay? For example, there are a lot of very smart people, yours truly included, who think that the Earl of Oxford was the only writer of the Elizabethan era who had the necessary qualifications.

Girl: Mr. Moore, you're causing anxiety, okay?

Mr. Moore: It's just an idea. Nothing to be afraid of. I mean especially now that many scholars believe that Shakespeare's plays were written by the old Earl.

Boy: [Something unintelligible] my problem. That would mean that the old Earl wrote *Macbeth* two years after he died. Nobody's that talented!

Mr. Moore: Only if you accept the conventional dating of Shakespeare's plays!

Boy: I'm afraid he's [something unintelligible] of it.

Rich Eustis of Warner Brothers, the writer of the show, had telephoned me two days before the episode containing the foregoing was to be aired to let me know about it. He said he had read *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* and been convinced by it, as had two Stratfordians to whom he had given copies. The director of the show (as I understood it) had remarked scoffingly of the passage, "Oh, not that stuff!" or words to that effect, but she too had been brought around by the book. Mr. Eustis said that 35 million persons would see the performance, which I allowed was even more than had read the book.

Charlton Ogburn

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UNRAVELLING A BIT OF THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Although for some thirty odd years I have both dallied and labored in the Shakespearean gardens -- acting a bit, directing a bit, lecturing a bit and reading a great deal -- it wasn't until I read Charlton Ogburn's outstanding "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" that I decided to jump off my never-quite-comfortable perch and fly the Stratfordian coop forever. Finally completely convinced that my beloved Shakespeare was not the Shakspere of Stratford, I have joined the coterie of anti-Stratfordians -- without yet, however, fully embracing the ghost of the 17th Earl of Oxford (it may come, it may come!).

At last alerted to nuances, I decided to reread a paper "Shakespeare, Secret Intelligence and Statecraft," read by William F. Friedman (Shakespearean scholar and world famous cryptographer) before the SYMPOSIUM ON SHAKESPEARE AND THE MODERN WORLD on April 17, 1962.* Rereading it in an entirely new frame of mind, I found facts, which formerly I mightn't have recognized, leaping from the pages and I concluded that no dramatist not intimately familiar with the esoterica of court conduct would include that interesting but irrelevant bit concerning Lords Cambridge, Scroop and Grey in his HENRY V.

Mr. Friedman interpreted in considerable detail the lines of Bedford (Act II, Sc 2) who, in speaking of these Lords, states:

The King has note of all that they intend
By interception which they dream not of.

Showing that "interception" had the same meaning then as it does now, to wit, intelligence agents intercept correspondence in transit, either suppressing it or copying it and allowing it to continue in transit, he makes the case that correspondence involving these Lords in a conspiracy to kill the King had been intercepted, revealed to the King and allowed to go forward. That deduction, Friedman also found, had been corroborated by 16th century historians who -- without mentioning the use of interception -- reported that Henry V had been "credibly informed" of the conspiracy. Later in the scene, Shakespeare has the King use it in such an adroit way as to extract confessions from these conspiratorial Lords, who unwittingly reveal they neither knew of the technique of interception nor had any idea of how it was accomplished in their case.

Conceding that:

- a) the lurid penny-sheets of that day probably run much on spying, replete with inventive details, mainly unreal, thereby furnishing an imaginative playwright meat to feed on and

*Reprint in the "Proceedings of the Philosophical Society," October 1962.

b) the near success of the "Babington Plot" might have frightened Queen Elizabeth into asking a trusted playwright to include such a scene -- which is actually immaterial to the forward movement of the play -- in order to frighten off would-be conspirators by letting them know (or pretending) that the government had means "of interception which they dream not of."

I contend that only one "to the manner born" would have been able to absorb the subtleties of the situation, have the sensitivity necessary to handle the matter with such ironic delicacy and be trusted by a rightly nervous Elizabeth. Ergo, Mr. Friedman's paper seems yet another indication that Shakspeare of Stratford is an unlikely candidate to have written HENRY V and, I believe, has added another weapon to Ogburn's rather formidable arsenal of slings and arrows to hurl at the Stratfordians.

In the three parapet scenes in "Hamlet" I find a personal pristine pebble for me to sling at the giant Stratfordian Myth. The relationship among Marcellus, Barnado, Horatio and Hamlet in these scenes indicates sound knowledge on the part of the writer of the structure and operation of a Palace Guard unit. The evolution of these units over the centuries strongly suggests that by the Elizabethan era the Guard assigned to the protection of the incumbent Monarch would have been made up from a hand-picked and well-screened nobility of gentry, probably with some royalty in key positions. One can assume that Hamlet and Horatio possibly had been officers of the Guard and that Barnado and Marcellus were no less than sons of very well-placed gentry.

Since overwhelming respect for Royalty and Nobility was in-bred among commoners, is it likely that if Barnado and Marcellus were not gentry they would have communicated with Hamlet and Horatio in such a spirit of camaraderie and equality? Would either of them, however, worthy their motives, have attempted to hinder a Prince from seeking to go to his father, ghost or no ghost? Would Marcellus have offered to strike at even the ghost of a King, "God's appointed deputy on Earth?" More importantly, is it conceivable that the playwright son of a country tradesman would dare write in this fashion about the Palace Guard? Or logical that the nobility and gentry sitting in the audience would have submitted passively to displays of Guard demeanor which could have been degrading -- or, at least, embarrassing -- to them if the facts were not accurate? Would any "country bumpkin" have risked jeopardizing his career by publicly presenting as facts matters that he did not know about and that were easily verifiable by an important portion of his audience? I doubt it.

Although the Mysterious Mr. Shakespeare remains mysterious, thanks to the efforts of Messrs. Ogburn and Friedman we are finding more strands to unravel still more of the mystery. Now, if only someone would do something about the two Young Princes in the Tower!

Arthur F. Neumann

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Excerpts from letters written to Lord Vere by Professor A. L. Rowse (10/31/86), the world's most knowledgeable Shakespeare authority (self-proclaimed) and by two persons whom he would assert "don't qualify to hold an opinion" on the Shakespeare authorship question.

Sorry to disappoint you. There is no reason whatever for thinking that Wm. Shakespre [sic] didn't write his own work. No one ever questioned it or thought such nonsense in his own age. A mere modern delusion, by people who don't qualify to hold an opinion -- most people don't. There are plenty of Veres we can admire without demeaning them by this bogus nonsense

So don't waste your time on this crackpot nonsense started by the (American, I think) Dr. Luny [sic], suitably named.

The renowned authoress, Daphne DuMaurier, in a letter (4/7/52) to Charlton Ogburn's mother:

Your letter and book [*This Star of England*] arrived here soon after I got home. Thank you so much for both. I had long heard of the Oxford theory, as opposed to the Bacon theory, but had never had the opportunity to read anything about it. I am so glad to have done so.

Certainly he has a very strong case, but as he died so early (and hating to let go of my Bacon) I am wondering if there could not have been some measure of collaberation between the two

It is incredible to me how obstinate are the Stratford supporters, in face of so much evidence, and many, in fact all of them, are learned and intelligent men. What about *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Loves Labor Lost* -- won't you grant them to my Bacon, with that first performance in Gray's Inn, and L.L.L. after his visit to Navarre?! But never mind, we know he wasn't poor Will.

Richard Levy, a Shakespeare Oxford Society member, called our attention to a passage in a letter (8/13/42) to Ernest Hemingway from Scribner's Maxwell E. Perkins, the most esteemed literary editor of his time:

I am trying to read proofs on Alden's Book¹ and it is most interesting. It is certain, to my mind, that the man Shakespeare was not the author of what we consider Shakespeare's works.²

1. Alden Brooks, *Will Shakspeare & the Dyer's Hand*, Scribner 1943.
2. Quoted from *Editor to Author*, *The Letters of Maxwell E. Perkins*, Grosset & Dunlap 1950.

WAS THERE A LIKENESS USED FOR THE FIRST FOLIO PORTRAIT?
A RECENT CONVERT TO OXFORD SUGGESTS THERE WAS

Dear Mr. Ogburn:

I found *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in Scribner's bookstore in Williamsburg about a year ago. To say it opened new worlds for me would be putting the case mildly . . . I've been (a playwright) for eighteen years now, but my real birth as such came when I wrote *The Silver Thistle*, an Elizabethan-style period piece . . . I didn't realize, until that script, just how much of the personality of a playwright goes into their work, or how a play can be your heart and your child.

I was ready to hate your book (and) ready to go to war with anyone claiming Shakespeare didn't write the plays . . . What first impressed me with the book, and got me to buy it, was the time line in the back . . . I took it home -- not prepared to accept anything it might say, you understand, just intrigued.

The rest came pretty naturally, and I'm sure you've heard it all before. You made sense. You raised questions. Your case was air-tight, and you didn't miss a trick. Every time I thought, "yeah but what about --" I'd find you answering the thought on the next page. Whether you were right or wrong, I decided it was a valid work addressing issues needing answers; issues I had been led to believe were settled long ago, except, of course, they left the author, as a living man, out of the question completely . . . When I read about deVere all sorts of signals checked into place. It was as if I was at last meeting the author as another playwright, and finally could see clearly why he wrote as he did . . . I've spent the last year reading everything I could find on any alternative theories of authorship. I wanted to know what other scholars had to say. I was unimpressed. It comes back to something simple, Oxford fits.

A few months ago, I was preparing a student syllabus on theatre history when, riffling the pages in a book on the subject, I received the odd impression that the publisher had printed the same picture in two places several pages apart. When I turned back I found one of the pictures was a painting of Richard Burbage, while the other was the earring portrait of Shakespeare [the Chandos portrait]. The paintings looked so much alike I asked an artist friend to check the proportions for me. He constructed a proportional grid for both portraits and looked at each square individually. After some study, it was his opinion (allowing for modified hair styles) the two paintings were very nearly identical, even down to the placement of a small scratch on the lobe of Burbage's ear which could have easily been translated into the shine appearing on "Shakespeare's" earring. The rising forehead and lidded eyes were the same, the peculiar curve of the mouth unmistakable. He estimated this might happen in one out of a billion portraits, if they were not purposeful copies of each other.

I did some elementary research at the Richmond Public Library and in the Cabell Library at Virginia Commonwealth University, and discovered the portrait of Burbage is thought to have been painted by his own hand; Burbage was an amateur painter. It was painted during his last few years and hung in his home until the time of his death, three years after the man from Stratford. The portrait was willed to Ben Jonson. Thus, it bears a face the public was used to seeing on the stage, but the portrait itself was virtually unknown.

I couldn't find any mention of such a hypothesis in any of the Ogburn works I have been able to read to date . . . Is it possible the mask-like wood cut currently accepted as a likeness of Shakespeare could actually have come from the portrait of Burbage? It seems significant to me that, by the time of the first folio, it may have belonged to Ben Jonson -- the editor of the folio and presumably in on the secret of the authorship. If I was looking for a face to be "William Shakespeare" and was prohibited from using the real author's face, I might very well choose to employ a face that audiences had seen and would remember, without necessarily remembering the name attached to it. I don't mean this as a slur to Burbage, but a resemblance between the wood cut and the actor might have convinced people of the time that they had seen "Shakespeare" act. In light of the fact that programs weren't distributed then, they might not be able to be sure.

I have seen perhaps eight other portraits of Shakespeare since my first inquiry into this matter, not an exhaustive number to be sure, but all of the representations turned in the same direction as the wood cut match the proportion grid of the Burbage portrait almost exactly. The Shakespeare painting and wood cut do indeed seem to be copies of each other, and the portrait of Burbage. Could this be coincidence? My artist says no. Is it possible a number of "Shakespeare" portraits proliferated from that painting of Burbage, and could it have been pressed into service to provide a face for the faceless, nameless poet-dramatist? If so, could Jonson have provided it, on purpose, in the hope that others who knew Burbage would eventually notice the resemblance and see through the deception? Or could he have simply been in need of a serviceable face?

Leslie Anne Dressler

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January 16, 1987

To the London Review of Books, Ltd.:

In the first paragraph of her erudite and meticulously analytical review of John Kerrigan's "William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and 'A Lover's Complaint'" (12/18/86), Barbara Everett quoted a passage in Aubrey's "Brief Lives" (1681) reporting hearsay he had picked up that William Shakespeare:

" . . . was not a company keeper, lived in Shoreditch, wouldn't be debauched, and if invited to, writ: he was in pain."

This line led Ms. Everett to propose that, "This sounds true in more than one way; perhaps Shakespeare did suffer from headaches as well as high principles and good manners." To reach that deduction, however, she had to insert a comma (following the words "invited to") which is not in Aubrey's original manuscript. It reads:

" . . . was not a company keeper, lived in Shoreditch, wouldn't be debauched, and if invited to writ: he was in pain."

Her bungle probably resulted from not going back to the original and relying on the works of traditional Shakespearean scholars who have, for transparent reasons, persisted in adding the comma without putting it in brackets. Such qualities as those Ms. Everett suggests that quotation reflected, particularly "high principles and good manners," constitute a much more acceptable depiction of the person of William Shakespeare than would be of a person with the handicap of suffering pain when called upon to write, which is certainly the information Aubrey intended to impart.

It is odd, moreover, that such a perceptive, exacting and well-informed literary detective as Ms. Everett failed to note how singular Aubrey's discovery would have been were the comma she has supplied to accurately delineate the hearsay he was reporting. If so, she and her fellow Shakespearean biographers who have used this interpretation in their depiction of the incomparable dramatist and poet must live with an exceedingly bizarre biographical fact: The only evidence that William Shakespeare ever wrote a personal communication of any kind came 65 years after he died and is comprised solely of his repeated written declinations to be debauched.

Morse Johnson

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"As every man knoweth, the little Citie of Urbin is situated upon the side of the Appennine (in a manner) in the middes of Italy, towards the Goulfe of Venice . . . But among the greatest felicities that man can reckon to have, I count this the chiefe, that now a long time it hath alwaies bene governed with very good princes. . . ."¹

I wish to invite comment on the possibility that, during his tour of Italy in 1575-1576, the itinerary of Edward De Vere included the court of Francesco Maria II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. Record of such a visit would furnish, I hope to show, the strongest yet of links connecting Urbino, Oxford and the most famous of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet*.

Renowned from the latter fifteenth century as a center of culture, Urbino was with good reason celebrated by Baldassare Castiglione in *II Libro del Cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*). Published in 1528 but set in 1507 at the court of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro and his duchess, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Castiglione's work portrayed the ideal qualities of the courtier that, it is commonly recognized, became embodied in the character of Hamlet. Of that ideal "Hamlet is the high exemplar of it in our literature," wrote W. H. D. Rouse²; a shattered Ophelia had known those traits all too well:

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The' observ'd of all observers. . . (III,1,153-156)*

Edward De Vere, having published in 1571 with his own preface under his own name and full titles Bartholomew Clerke's Latin translation of *The Courtier*, knew its principals well, nor would he have forgotten them at the time of his trip to the continent. One participant in those dialogues in 1507 was the seventeen-year-old nephew and heir to Duke Guidobaldo (the latter absent, it seems, because of chronic illness), Francesco Maria della Rovere. Betrothed in 1505 to Leonora (or Eleonora) Gonzaga of Mantua, daughter of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga (the brother of Elisabetta, making Francesco Maria and Leonora unrelated nephew and niece, respectively, of Guidobaldo and Elisabetta), the "Lord Generall," as he was dubbed in Hoby's translations would in April 1508, succeed his uncle as Duke of Urbino and at Christmas of that year would fete his treasured bride, aged fourteen.³

In 1935 a young scholar -- who had studied in Italy -- by the name of Geoffrey Bullough, spurred by the sketchy notes on the question over the years, published an article entitled, "The Murder of Gonzago: A Probable Source for *Hamlet*"⁴, in which he elaborated the parallels between the death of King Hamlet -- which Hamlet has the players re-enact in the play-within-the-play, called *The Murder of Gonzago* or *The Mousetrap* -- and the death in October 1538, at age 48 of that same Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. Francesco Maria's untimely demise -- allegedly by poisoning through the ears by his barber/surgeon-- sparked a scandal

*New Arden *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins, editor (Methuen, 1982)

that smoldered for years in Italy's highest circles. Not only does Bullough connect the circumstances of the two deaths: the family name Gonzago/a the deaths after thirty years of marriage, (The real Duke, 48, and Duchess, 44, had been married thirty years at his death. Both the Player King and Queen, III,2,150-155, and King Hamlet and Gertrude. V,1,138-157, likewise had been married thirty years. Though unspecified, the ages of King Hamlet and Gertrude are consistent with the Duke's and Duchess's.) the poisoning through the ears, avenging, artistic sons; more importantly, I think, he shows that the very physical appearance of King Hamlet's ghost, related by Horatio in Act I, Scene 2, bears a striking resemblance to the fine portrait of the Duke by Titian, finished in 1538 just months before the former's death.⁵ "Here, writes Bullough, "is the martial hero, with 'Hyperion's curls', and beard 'a sable slivered'; here is the armour which so impressed Horatio; here even is the field-marshal's 'truncheon'."⁶ The Duke, incidentally, after lending the suit to Titian for completion of the portrait, was buried in that armor⁷, accounting for the ghost appearing "Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pie" (1,2,200), that is, dressed in full armor, head to foot.

To the world's edification, (the now late) Sir Geoffrey Bullough, with justifiable immodesty, gave to it, after 38 years, the prominence his 1935 essay deserved in his encyclopedic *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*.⁸ Here he extends his earlier work by surmising that the description of King Hamlet came from an engraving of the Duke's portrait made for the Latin edition of Paolo Giovio's *Elogia Virorum Bellica Virtute Illustrium, Eulogies of Men Famous for Warlike Skill* (Basel, 1551 and after).⁹ However, he notes that no Italian versions he has seen contain the engraving¹⁰ -- and recall that the antic Hamlet had said of Gonzago's murder "The story is extant, and written in very choice Italian" (III,2,256-257). If, then, Shakespeare knew Titian's work, as Sir Geoffrey argues that he did, either he had seen the Latin edition (not an impossibility) or -- an alternative of course not raised by Bullough -- he knew Titian's painting in person, firsthand. And I must say I do not find the engraving nearly as impressive as the painting.

Where was that painting in Shakespeare's day? The art historians tell us it hung at Pesaro (the coastal site of Leonora's lavish villa) in 1538, then at Urbino, until going with Vittoria della Rovere in 1631 to Florence, where it is today.¹¹ That is, for the lifetime of any Shakespeare, it was at Urbino or nearby Pesaro.

Now, such a detail alone suffices to raise suspicions that *Hamlet's* author had visited Urbino, yet there are two more tantalizing clues pointing to such a visit, especially by Oxford. The first is another painting by Titian, from the 1540s, which, too, had been displayed at Urbino/Pesaro until the 1631 move to Florence. "Long known as the *Young Englishman* and sometimes as the *Duke of Norfolk*,"¹² says the art historian, it depicts, in Bullough's words, "that pale thoughtful face with the lofty brow, that severely simple robe, its only ornament a gold chain round the shoulders, that fine hand holding a glove -- so might Hamlet have looked."¹³

The true identity of the man in the portrait remains, to my knowledge, unknown, but surely, echoing Bullough and Rouse, the painting forms the perfect pictorial bridge from Castiglione's courtier to Shakespeare's prince. And why not? What could have been more natural for Titian, who, having known him, to have done Castiglione's portrait in 1523, than to have saluted the courtier with the garb -- "me thinks a blacke colour hath a better grace in garments than any other"¹⁴ -- and demeanor of his later subject? Yet how did the work become known as of an Englishman, much less as of the Duke of Norfolk, the third of whom in the 1540s was too old (1473-1554), the fourth too young (1536-1572), to fit the age of its subject? Could Henry Howard (1517-1547), heir to the third Duke in the 1540s, be another candidate? Comes the second clue.

In 1574 Francesco Maria II della Rovere (1549-1631), grandson of Francesco Maria I, succeeded his father, Guidobaldo II, as Duke of Urbino. Just one year older than Edward De Vere, Francesco had received the finest education of the day at Verona and Venice; had stayed at the royal courts of Spain and France; had fought in the Lepantine War and had married -- reluctantly -- in 1571 (only to become estranged within two years); and in the family tradition was a great patron of the arts.¹⁵ In their mid-twenties Francesco Maria II della Rovere and Edward De Vere stood, down to their very surnames, as virtual mirror-images.

I think it entirely plausible that Oxford would have desired to meet Francesco Maria II, especially to visit Urbino and Pessaro, and that, conversely, the Duke would have wanted to entertain his English contemporary and counterpart. I can see Francesco Maria II personally showing the family portraits by the Venetian master then in his ninety-ninth year but fatally stricken by the plague. Perhaps the Duke read Giovio's eulogy to his guest in front of his grandfather's portrait; perhaps they staged or even took part in a courtly drama of the strange death of Francesco Maria I, the original *Murder of Gonzago*; and perhaps Oxford, gazing at a painting of a young gentleman "in abito all antica" ("in dress all antique"), mused that the man's troubled look evoked the too-fresh memory of his cousin Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, executed in 1572 at age 36.

Are the foregoing speculations too wild? Other explanations may of course exist for all of them. Until, nevertheless, a visit by Oxford to Urbino is confirmed or disproven, I feel that a search is in order of or for records during the period in question. Would it not be astonishingly beyond coincidence if, for example, among the collection in the Vatican, where the Roveres' magnificent library was taken in the mid-seventeenth century, there rests a copy of Clerke's translation of *The Courtier*, inscribed by Oxford to Francesco Maria?

Nicholas De Moret

* * * * *

1. Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, Introduction by J. H. Whitfield, J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1975 (p. 17).

2. Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, Introduction by W. H. D. Rouse. Dutton (Everyman's Library), New York 1928 (p. xiv).
3. Dennistoun, James, *Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino*, edited by E. Hutton. Bodley Head, London, 1909.
4. Bullough, Geoffrey, "The Murder of Gonzago: A Probable Source for *Hamlet*" *Modern Language Review*, Vol. XXX (4): 433-444 Oct. 1935.
5. Wethey, Harold E., editor. *The Paintings of Titian*, Complete Edition. Phaidon, London, 1971 (Vol. II, *The Portraits*, p. 135).
6. Bullough, (MLR, p. 441).
7. Bullough, (MLR, p. 435; and N&DS, p. 32) Dennistoun, however, has the armor being removed just before burial (*Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 73).
8. Bullough, Sir Geoffrey, editor. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, (Vol. VII, 1973).
9. Bullough, (N&DS, VII, p. 33).
10. Bullough, (N&DS, VII, p. 33).
11. Wethey, (*Titian*, II, p. 135).
12. Wethey, (*Titian*, II, p. 145).
13. Bullough, (MLR p. 442).
14. Castiglione, (Hoby; Whitfield, p. 116).
15. Dennistoun, (*Memoirs*, III, pp. 130-153).

* * * * *

In his *The Book Known as Q*, Robert Giroux writes that "In our poet's words [Sonnet 107], 1603 was the year in which

Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now within the drops of this balmy time
My loves looks fresh . . ."

and adds ". . . other historical allusions in this sonnet place the poem solidly in 1603" and had to be written sometime after the coronation of James I on July 25, 1603. The phrase omitted by Mr. Giroux (he sets out the complete sonnet elsewhere) is underlined:

"My love looks fresh, and Death to me sub-
scribed."

Less than a year later Edward De Vere at age 54 died on June 24, 1604. According to Stratfordians, Will Shakspeare at age 39 was in full health and still at the peak of his productivity. He did not die until April 24, 1616, almost 13 years after he professed impending death.

* * * * *

Morse Johnson, Editor
105 West 4th Street, Suite #819, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202



EMERSON, DELIA BACON AND THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM

A letter by Ralph Waldo Emerson to George P. Putnam, the publisher, concerning Delia S. Bacon's inquiries into the authorship of Shakespeare's works and throwing added light on Emerson's interest in those inquiries has only recently turned up, although long known to have existed. The letter, of 23 March 1853, is reproduced in the April 1986 issue of the quarterly journal of the Essex (Massachusetts) Institute Historical Collections (Essex Street, Salem, Massachusetts 01970) in an article by Helen R. Deese, associate professor of English at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. Professor Deese, to provide the context of the letter, reviews the relationship of Emerson with Miss Bacon during the four years of its continuation, beginning in 1852, and it becomes clear from her article that Emerson's belief in Miss Bacon, the first to mount a serious assault on the attribution of Shakespeare's plays to the Stratfordian, and his efforts to advance her undertaking were much greater than is probably generally supposed. For the duration of their association he acted as nothing less than her literary agent, commended her to Thomas and Jane Carlyle, who lent her moral support, and to Nathaniel Hawthorne (then United States Consul in Liverpool) and enabled her on the strength of his endorsement to gain the financial backing she required to pursue her studies in England. (A successful lecturer on historical subjects to intellectual women's audiences at home, she skirted dire want abroad.)

In the newly discovered letter, Emerson expresses his pleasure that Putnam is "treating with Miss Bacon for her papers on Shakespeare." He goes on to say:

"I am only in part made acquainted with Miss Bacon's results. I by no means accepted her conclusion, which was a paradox so bold that it went to shake all one's literary faith about his ears. Yet my respect was surprised and commanded by her thorough knowledge of her subject and her mastery of all her weapons. Two mss only she sent me, and both these quite preliminary, but I have seen nothing in America in the way of literary criticism, which I thought so good. The whole treatment inspired a confidence that the writer had something worth knowing to communicate." Farther along in the letter, he states that "If her papers have the general ability that marked those which I saw, and if her conclusion is fortified in any manner adequate to the ability she exhibited, you would, I am sure, be amply justified in any preliminary expenses the piece required. Her discovery, if it really be one, is of the first import not only in English, but for all literature."

Emerson also approved of Miss Bacon's plan to seek publication of an article in Putnam's *Monthly* and wrote that he knew of "nothing that could give such eclat to a magazine as this brilliant paradox."

As Professor Deese observes, however, in spite of Emerson's "best intentions, everything went awry." Against his advice, Miss Bacon elected to have her book published serially in Putnam's and turned down a generous offer from a book publisher. After bringing out a single installment, paying a fee Emerson thought "totally inadequate," Putnam's declined to publish more, holding that the first and subsequent chapters should come out as a book -- by which time, as Emerson told Miss Bacon, her chances at the interested book publisher's had been spoiled. On top of that, the chapters held by Putnam's were lost in transit, so that there no longer, for the present, was a book. Emerson, moreover, as Professor Dreese observes, "objected to her method of stating her startling conclusions over and over and never coming out with her proofs."

Miss Bacon cannot have been easy to deal with. Like most driven persons, she was probably as hard on others as on herself. When the opportunity arose, Emerson was surely relieved to pass her on to Hawthorne, who, though "an utter disbeliever in Miss Bacon's theory," was to pay for the publication of her reconstituted book, *The Philosophy of Shakespeare's Plays Unfolded*. While vowing it would be "the last of my benevolent follies," four years after her death (in an insane asylum) he spoke of her as a "Gifted Woman" in his "Recollections." And, Professor Dreese recalls, "Not long after the publication of Bacon's book Emerson ranked her with Whitman as one of America's original geniuses: 'Our wild Whitman, with real inspiration but choked by Titanic abdomen, and Delia Bacon, with genius but mad, and clinging like a tortoise to English soil are the sole producers that America has yielded in ten years.'"

Emerson and Hawthorne could not, of course, accept Miss Bacon's ascription of the plays to a group comprising Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser and some other poets and playwrights. Yet Hawthorne wrote, "In the worst event, if she has failed, her failure will be more honorable than most people's triumphs." And so it was to prove; after Delia Bacon, the Stratfordian's laurels were never again to be secure. Emerson, to a wider and more receptive audience, all but pronounced their doom when, as we remember, commenting on the "verdict" that Shakespeare "was a jovial actor and manager," wrote, "I cannot marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought; but this man, in wide contrast." (See Appendix)

It is almost impossible to doubt that, given a plausible alternative, Emerson would not have discarded Shakespearean orthodoxy. Clearly, he was uneasy and unhappy with the assignment of the immortal dramas to such a one as Shakspeare of Stratford; he must, in a word, have smelled a rat. That comes out when he went to the heart of the matter in a letter to Miss Bacon, writing that "you cannot maintain any side without shedding light on the first of all literary problems."

The first of all literary problems. With that characterization of the subject of her inquiries, Emerson opened an unbridgeable gulf between himself and academe. Traditional authorities have always recognized that any acknowledgement that the authorship of the works of Shakespeare presents

the least bit of a problem would result in an inevitable progressive and speedy undermining of the entire fortress of orthodoxy and the end of the Stratfordian "Shakespeare." Anyone else who made a statement like Emerson's would invite the professoriat's standard obloquy. However, the academics are not eager to have their stature measured against that of the greatest literary intellect of his time in America and perhaps of any other.

A piece of advice Emerson gave Miss Bacon, as he reports it in the letter to George Putnam recently come to light, gives grounds for an amazing reflection. "I wrote," he says, "to urge on her the propriety of writing out a summary of her results, and confiding them in a dated and sealed envelope to some safe trustee, to secure the discovery, and her title to it, from accident." It was because he followed exactly the procedure urged by Emerson that poor J. Thomas Looney brought down on his head the sneering ridicule of Professor Samuel Schoenbaum. "Covetous of priority," says the distinguished Professor of Renaissance Literature at the University of Maryland, "he resorted to the device of the sealed letter with its overtones of mysterious significance so congenial to the anti-Stratfordian mentality." Professor Schoenbaum does not approve of Mr. Looney's name, either.

Charlton Ogburn

Appendix

1. The DeVere Society at Oxford University issued a report on its past activities and future plans. The first two paragraphs under the heading "A More Long-Term Perspective" read:

There is no doubt that the process of bringing the mysterious figure of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, before the public is a slow one and one requiring patience, skill and persistence. However, these last two terms have convinced us in the de Vere Society that ultimate success is possible sooner rather than later. Nevertheless, there are a number of intermediate stages which must be negotiated.

Firstly, the whole issue of the relationship between an artist's life and work should, with profit, be tossed into the debating arena. Like the great debate over objective/subjective literary criticism at Cambridge in the 1970's it is just the sort of thing that professors of all complexions will take up with cudgels raised and shields askew, the scent of blood wreathed about their dilated nostrils. Using this stepping stone, one can then move into the specific question of Shakespeare. And all those who believe

that an artist's life is inseparable from his work, and that his work constitutes a constant reworking of both himself and his life, they will be unable to side with William Shaksper. They will be forced to revise their attitudes towards the authorship problem.

2. The first paragraph in the New York Times (1/18/87) Column "Music View" by Donal Henahan reads:

That was a fascinating story in this newspaper the other day about the retarded child who, without musical training, could sit down at a piano, reproduce a melody and immediately improvise four-part harmony to it. Such "idiot savant," as the French call these mysterious gifted persons, turn up in music now and then, to the astonishment of us all. However, if there is a case in the psychological annals of an idiot savant writer, I have missed it. Such a biological sport would be able to sit down at a word processor and say what he had to say so clearly and unequivocally that the literary world would fall dumb in amazement. (All but Stratfordians!)

3. Professor Louis B. Benezet observed:

The wills of Heminge (actor in Lord Chamberlain's Company), who died in 1630, aged 75, and of Condell (actor in Lord Chamberlain's Company) who was deceased in 1627, in literary style and clearness are so far above the rambling, unpunctuated scrawl that is today worshipped as the final literary composition of the world's greatest author-genius as to suggest that they belonged to a monde at least two strata above him. Heminge speaks of his books, specifies that five pounds shall be spent in purchasing volumes for the education of his grandchild and writes again and again of his income from the Globe and Blackfriars playhouses and its disposal. Condell wills to his son his yearly dividend from the "Blackfriars" and the "Bankside." [Traditional scholars claim that Will Shakspeare held shares in the Globe and Blackfriars Theaters. There is no reference in his will to any such shares or to any books.]

* * * * *

"IT IS PROBABLE..."

To the Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.:

November 13, 1980

The respective works of the immortal authors...included in GREAT BOOKS OF THE WESTERN WORLD are in each instance preceded by a biography. Although brief, these biographies must be assumed to represent the best scholarship then available ("published with the editorial advice of the faculties of the University of Chicago") to the distinguished editors of that prestigious collection and that only the most useful and important biographical materials would be included...unlike respective biographies of a number of "greats" who lived and died long before Shakespeare wrote (such as Dante and Chaucer) and others who were his contemporaries (such as Montaigne and Cervantes) the biography accepted and provided for "William Shakespeare, 1564-1616" is almost entirely (excluding such commonplace statistics as birth, death, marriage, parents, children, real estate acquisitions) conjectures (and contains in only) 40 sentences...the following 21 qualifying phrases:

"it is probable"	"seems to have been"
"seems to have been"	"there are stories"
"appears to have dealt"	"said to owe"
"may have combined"	"said to have"
"presumably obtained"	"appears to have been"
"it seems likely"	"apparently"
"according to one story"	"seems to have returned"
"seems to have come"	"did not imply"
"one tradition asserts"	"may have been"
"according to stage tradition"	"it is likely"
"seems to have written"	

Sincerely,

Morse Johnson

...

Dear Mr. Johnson:

January 19, 1981

We do not think it unscholarly to use qualifying or tentative phrasing if the topic merits tentativeness, and we have no reason to assume that readers have found such a presentation troubling. As noted in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (volume 5, page 166):

"No biography of Shakespeare, therefore, which deserves any confidence, has ever been constructed without a large infusion of the tell-tale words 'apparently,' 'probably,' 'there can

be little doubt'; and no small infusion of the still more tell-tale 'perhaps,' 'it would be natural,' 'according to what was usual at the time' and so forth."

Sincerely,

Lars Mahinske

Dear Mr. Mahinske:

January 26, 1981

. . . .

...(I) did not find fault with the multiple "tentative phrasing" but rather with the failure to give a sensible explanation for its unparalleled use...you will not find such a multiple use...in biographies of his...contemporaries...To me, the compelled and unique use of such phrases must have a significance which orthodox scholarship has not explored in depth. To borrow a phrase from a judicial opinion, "There are precautions so imperative that even their universal disregard will not excuse their omission."

It is both astonishing and revealing how little detail is known about Shakespeare and how much about his relatively insignificant contemporaries. As an example -- one of many in the book -- an excerpt from SHAKESPEARE, The Poet In His World, by M. S. Bradbrook pointing out the whereabouts of various theatrical personages during the plague:

"Edward Alleyn got as far as Newcastle and Bristol although his family stayed in town...Peele sank into illness, Lyly, his career ruined, went to his wife's people in the country; Thomas Lodge shipped off to sea with Cavendish...Marlowe went to Chislehurst, to the house of Sir Thomas Walsingham...Nashe found refuge with Sir George Carey's family in the Isle of Wight...Shakespeare could presumably have come back to Stratford but the happiest alternative would be some country house...The only evidence of where Shakespeare might have been is his two dedications to the Earl of Southhampton (underlining supplied)."

Sincerely,

Morse Johnson

* * * * *

BETTY SEARS REPORTS ON "CONVERTS" AND "PROBABLYS"

As head of the English Department at our school, I get much mail promoting textbooks. One company sent a brochure, advertising Shakespeare teaching aids -- video, tapes and books. Listed and recommended for "mature" students was Charlton's *Mysterious Shakespeare*! The accompanying "blurb" termed it "interesting, provocative and convincing." A step forward for the Oxford cause! Am hearing many secondary school teachers expressing doubt about Stratford myth -- and some are even convinced Oxfordians. My granddaughter, a freshman at Gov. Dummer Academy in Massachusetts, reports that her British English teacher introduced a Shakespeare Unit by stating that she believed the 17th E. of Ox. wrote Shakespeare! My students get the same statement from me -- but not until I've shown them conventional biog with dearth of data, and many perhaps and probablys and "it is thought", etc. Then they get the real story.

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY ADMIRAL J. C. WYLIE

(The Mysterious W. S.) is...the definitive case...No question in my mind that deVere/Oxford was the real poet and dramatist. Mr. Ogburn has, I think, missed only one piece of the evidence, circumstantial but powerful. I do not recall his stating that the practice of rewriting or slanting records and history to support a particular aim of a powerful government is completely in accord with the practice of...the Tudors. Oxford, as Shakespeare, was a Tudor supporter or he would have ended up dead or exiled. Hence that play, Richard III, must make a villain out of Richard III...The legend of the little princess in the Tower and...of the cruel and evil hunchback...were textbook...covert propaganda as contrasted with...overt propaganda...the notion that the peerage should not be sullied by having written for the base public...was very important at that time. Thus, the Cecil/Burghley actions on behalf of the crown to obliterate any trace of Oxford as a poet and dramatist were fully in the Tudor tradition of controlling the records and, thus, controlling history.

THE DEVERE SOCIETY

Rules of Entry for the Hunt Shakespeare Authorship Essay Prize

The prize is worth 500 pounds to the winner. Entries may be on any subject which touches upon the problem of the authorship of the Shakespeare canon, either literary or historical. Provisos:

1. The essay must be at least 7,500 words long.
2. Preference for a particular candidate for the authorship must either be stated or implied.
3. A full list of source books must be given at the end of the essay.
4. All entries must be typed and submitted by June 10, 1988.

There are no qualifications for entry, nor is there a limit to the amount of essays any one person may submit. Entries from abroad are most welcome.

A highly placed academic from outside Oxford University shall judge the prize, and the winner shall be announced on October 1, 1988.

All entrants should feel free to avail themselves of the deVere Society's Miller Shakespeare Library.

If you have any queries, please contact:

The DeVere Society
Hertford College
Oxford, OX1,3BW
ENGLAND

* * * * *

JOIN SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY AND RECEIVE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 16254

Baltimore, MD 21210

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The purpose of The Shakespeare Oxford Society is to document and establish Edward DeVere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1606) as the universally recognized author of the works of William Shakespeare. Each newsletter carries articles which impart a wide range of information and commentary which the editor at that time considers relevant to that purpose. Some

articles will inevitably contain opinions, deductions and evidence which some SOS Members believe to be invalid or inaccurate or irrelevant or irrational. The newsletter is always open to letters of dissent and correction.

* * * * *

MINOS AND RUTH MILLER ACQUIRE BARRELL ARCHIVE

S.O.S. Newsletter readers will recall that a communication from the Boston Book Annex prompted Executive Vice President, Gordon Cyr, and Newsletter editor, Morse Johnson, to visit the bookstore prior to the October 10-11 Annual Conference (Fall 1986, Vol. 22, No. 4). The Boston Book Annex had recently acquired an archive of materials from the collection of the late Charles Wisner Barrell, who headed the American branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship throughout the 1930's and 1940's, and edited the Fellowship Newsletter and Quarterly.

We had informed the Book Annex that the Society would not be in a position to buy the entire collection, and at first they were willing to consider the possibility that individual items could be purchased. The Shakespeare Oxford Society, however, understands the bookstore's later decision to keep the collection intact.

A happy ending to the dilemma has been provided by Judge Minos D. Miller and his wife, Ruth Loyd Miller, who have purchased the Barrell archive. Judge Miller has kindly offered to sell Xerox copies of materials at cost.

Judge Miller also has advice for Oxfordians who have been trying to purchase Ruth Miller's editions of Oxfordian books from Kennikat Press. The books are now available from Minos Publishing Company, Ole Evangeline Road, P.O. Bin 1309, Jennings, Louisiana 70546 (phone: (318) 824-4580 or 824-4564). The books are: J. T. Looney: *"Shakespeare" Identified*, 3rd ed., 2 vols., \$45.00; E. T. Clark: *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, \$35.00; B. M. Ward: *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers*, 2nd ed., \$25.00. Also available is a Xerox copy, for \$20.00, of B. M. Ward's *Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, for which Ruth owns the copyright.

* * * * *

**11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY
TO BE HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C. SEPTEMBER 25-26**

The Society's Annual Conference is being held September 25-26, 1987, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, D.C., after our having held the 10th Annual Conference in Boston last October. The date is being pushed back to late September this year because of a soon-to-be-revealed important event in the authorship issue taking place during Friday, September 25. Rooms are being held for the evening of the 24th pending negotiations for the Society's members' accommodations for this event, details of which will be announced in a separate mailing.

The conference proper will be held Friday evening, September 25, with all-day sessions on Saturday, September 26.

* * * * *

WHAT'S WRONG WITH WORD STUDIES?

"The public is inclined to be in awe of knowledge but to distrust intelligence." Words by a literary critic in another context, but ones to ponder today, when we measure public reaction to the recent outpouring of stylistical studies pertaining to the Shakespearean authorship matter. A number of computer-assisted research projects have boastfully pronounced in favor of Shakespeare. Also, on our side, at least three of the Shakespeare Oxford Society's members have published studies to bolster Oxfordian claims in the controversy. Yet much of the work on both sides of the question has been invalidated by errors in methodology. And, because few people know much about this field, the shortcomings are not immediately apparent.

Worst of all, no matter whose study is involved, anti-Stratfordians stand to lose. The public in general, and much of academe, will accept uncritically the new pro-Stratfordian, high-tech findings. (After all, it's science, is it not? And we all know who the author is anyway, don't we?) On the other hand, the tendency is to "ditch" our efforts in the field, not only because we do not have a comparable academic acceptance, but because we too have made mistakes. It is becoming increasingly important, then, for us to engage in a brief review of word study methods and their pitfalls.

Studies of Word Usage -- Simple to Complex

There are innumerable techniques available for exploring how an individual author uses words, some simple, others quite complex. As the volume of work in the field expands, the more elaborate, multi-faceted kinds

of investigation, combining varied and exacting tests, are proving to be the ones of statistical significance.

In the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, some of the earliest studies computed average sentence and word lengths to compare the writing styles of two or more authors. By the 1930's, Udney Ule was using sentence length and noun types to determine the author of *De Imitationi Christe* as Thomas a Kempis. In the same period, Alfred Hart went a step further when he used prefixes, suffixes and compound words, along with other techniques, as a measure of stylistic distinction.

Thomas Mendenhall, looking for a more sophisticated way to apply the word-length test, computed the distribution of words of different lengths in order to determine the "word spectrum" in the texts of a given author. His testing demonstrated that Bacon and Derby were two-letter men; Ben Jonson, a three-letter man, and Shakespeare and Marlowe (Oxford was not included in the test) were four-letter authors. Later L. S. Penrose, a British Oxfordian, applied Mendenhall's method to selected prose passages of Oxford and Shakespeare (Oxford's Bedingfield letter and Shakespeare's introductions to *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*). The results were very encouraging to the Oxford case.

Oxford's average sentence length was 29.4 words, Shakespeare's, 27.8. The typical number of letters per word came out as 4.14 for Oxford, 3.92 for Shakespeare. And very upsetting for the Marlovians was Penrose's discovery that Mendenhall's earlier findings were in error. Actually, Marlowe proved to be more of a three-letter writer. When Penrose considered both the prose and poetry of the three authors, his overall assessment showed that Shakespeare stood somewhere between Oxford and Marlowe. As this evidence makes clear, such techniques can produce interesting findings, but fall far short of the kind of discriminatory capability that is needed for drawing conclusions that will stick. A way must yet be found to define an individual author's stylistic profile more precisely.

Along the way, other word study efforts should be noted: A. W. Titherley's technique for measuring alliteration and rhyme, which resulted in Titherley's "repeat index"; and another, the time-honored practice of looking for similar word combinations, or "echoes," in the texts of two authors, usually an unauthenticated sample and one with a good provenance. This latter, the "echo" approach, also has its pitfalls. It is an imprecise instrument unless used carefully and with controls. Calvin Hoffman, the Marlovian, used this approach to buttress his case, as more recently, have William Fowler, Craig Huston and myself for the Oxfordian claim.

In the post-World-War-II era improved procedures of all kinds emerged. The development of computer technology, in particular, fostered increasingly sophisticated measurement of stylistic distinctions. Early in the 1960's Frederick Mosteller and David Wallace applied a variety of tests and successfully pinpointed the true author of *The Federalist* papers. Later in the same decade Warren Austin used an array of tests to compare stylistic

differences of Robert Greene and Henry Chettle to resolve the centuries-old debate over the authorship of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*. He found in favor of Chettle -- although some scholars, including Samuel Schoenbaum, still feel that Chettle edited, rather than composed, Greene's work. And in a computer-based study of their own, M. G. Kendall, Berners Lee and Jacob Bronowski explored the range of differences in style used by one author in comparison with the range between authors. Their findings raised serious questions about contextuality as a problem in stylistic discrimination.

The latest headliners in the research news are Morton, Merriam, Efron and Thisted. Rev. Andrew Morton of Scotland in the 1950's developed a method of his own which he called "stylometrics," by which an author's word use habits in one case are compared with an authenticated sample to determine authorship. Now in recent years, Morton has been investigating the authorship of various plays: for example, *Pericles*, and in a subsidiary study, some Marlowe works. The results have been challenged by fellow statisticians and some Shakespearean scholars as well. Thomas Merriam, an Englishman, using Morton's method, has likewise created a stir with his analysis of the anonymous play, *Sir Thomas More*, which he attributes entirely to Shakespeare.

Meanwhile, in the United States, two American statisticians, Bradley Efron and Ronald Thisted, came up with a novel method of predicting how many words never used before by Shakespeare would theoretically be found in a newly discovered Shakespeare poem -- another controversial effort. They analyzed Shakespeare's enormous writing vocabulary (many times that of any one well-educated person) and determined that he had a very low frequency rate for word use and tended to introduce new words to his working lexicon at a predictable rate. The Efron-Thisted formula, by the way, derived from a procedure developed for a biological field test to estimate the quantity of unknown species of butterflies existing in Malaysia. In their literary detection, Efron and Thisted think their work supports the latest claim by Gary Taylor for discovery of a yet unauthenticated poem by William Shakespeare.

Nevertheless, Oxfordians take heart. In the preparation of my Oxford concordance, I was able to establish that Oxford, too, is a rare-word man. The frequency rates for his vocabulary are very low. His literary preference was for the fresh, the new. And, if we were to discover heretofore-unknown writings of Oxford, we could expect to find additional words for the Oxfordian lexicon.

Something Askew

All research is threatened by the possibility of error, particularly in statistical activity. But in the case of Shakespearean authorship investigation, there are serious mistakes being made in basic matters, such as the selection and handling of text samples. These are matters of judgment and ignorance, and, because they are elemental to most work being done, they deserve to be discussed here in detail.

The first major problem is the one that blights almost every study -- the failure to take into account the unreliability of the Shakespeare canon. Anyone checking the provenance of individual works by "Shakespeare" would soon learn that the majority of plays stem, not from the author's manuscript, but from trimmed versions connected with theatrical performance, i.e., prompt-book copies, memorial reconstructions and the like. In fact, there may not be any unaltered Shakespearean texts in their original form available to us today. To add to the problem, many are bungled versions.

In each case, we must wonder who had a hand in bringing the play to its final form? The actors? Company staff? Some hired "rewrite" authors? Or sometimes the original author (in the case of the good version)? Because of the innumerable errors, omissions and garbled texts, we must wonder what is the author's and what is the bungler's. It is inconceivable that the original author hacked his own work. Also, what was in the material left on the "cutting room floor?"

Orthodox Stratfordians admit that there is much contamination that has occurred between the author's manuscript and "the appearance in print." Textual criticism abounds with comments such as: "as some distance from the playtext;" "lapses of quality as it left the author's hands;" "shows evidence of one or more revisions over a period of years;" and "but those (stage directions) given appear to be the work of a bookkeeper."

Oxfordians will greet with amusement the fact that the quarto title page bearing "newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere," or "newly corrected by W. Shakespeare" is an absolute guarantee of the opposite condition: little change from an earlier edition or else careless handling. (Our people should do more with this argument in public print.)

Obviously, then, "All that glitters is not gold." The body of Shakespeare's writings left to us is not in pure condition. Scholar and statistician beware!

Unfortunately, otherwise competent investigators do not beware, but run afoul of the Shakespeare provenance trap because they are not savvy about sixteenth century publishing practice and the specific problem connected with the Shakespeare corpus. A typical example in point involves a well-publicized computer study of recent vintage which used *Julius Caesar* as a control for a test comparing two doubtful plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Pericles*, because the researcher naively believed that "it is authenticated not only by Heminges and Condell but also by Ben Jonson and Leonard Digges; because the First Folio text is exceptionally free of corruption..." Well, I guess we could tell him a few things about Heminges, Condell, Jonson and Digges, could we not? Yet, we can understand how this scholar was persuaded to swallow what he has been told about the Stratford myth. But this researcher's statement also exposes the vulnerability of the new breed of scientists who dally with literary studies these days. It is not easy to ascertain from the evidence whether the First Folio *Julius Caesar* comes from an "acting script" or from a revision of some sort for dramatic expediency, even though it is classified as a "good" version. How can this play then offer the authentication needed as a control for anything, much less doubtful plays?

The problem as to the provenance of the Shakespeare canon also has implications for caution in the use of Shakespearean concordances. The reliability of frequency rates, word use totals and vocabulary lists is neutralized by the shaky texts on hand. But compilers have made matters worse by including as-yet-unauthenticated works, e.g., *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Sir Thomas More* and some dubious poetry.

Oil doesn't mix with water, and prose is not a very good match for poetry. A second serious lapse in Shakespearean stylistic investigation is the failure to apply sophisticated judgment in selecting appropriate textual samples for comparison. This "anything goes" approach does not allow for sensitivity to textual compatibility and contextuality.

Investigators intending to study the Oxfordian canon should be advised that the Oxford material presents special difficulties of its own because of small size and nature. Much of the Oxford prose is made up of business letters, highly contextual in nature, and the poetry sample is limited by size and the time period involved. Granted, some practices can be pinpointed despite the textual lacks. However, certain tantalizing areas of exploration, such as "Shakespeare's" high compound word frequency, cannot be initiated because there is no available Oxfordian writing of the kind that would have produced a good compound word sample.

The third common mistake is largely limited to the "echo" study in which parallelisms of word combinations are compared between two bodies of text. As was mentioned earlier, Calvin Hoffman used this technique some decades ago, and then, Craig Huston, and now most recently William Fowler, have made a stir with whole books devoted to the citing of similar phrases found in both Oxford and Shakespeare.

To stand as valid, the comparison of "echoes" must take into account everything that is known of sixteenth century word usage. Since no handy compendium for the period has ever been compiled, the only recourse for the researcher is to consult concordances and glossaries for authors contemporary to the period studied. Failure to do so leaves each study open to attack from scholars, who, while not perfect in their own doings, are certainly not going to miss an opportunity to impugn anti-Stratfordian efforts.

For example, I took a sampling of the word phrases put forward as Shakespeare-Oxford parallelisms in one of the books mentioned, and after checking in a library, was able to find these word combinations many times over in the works of other Elizabethans. Now this does not mean that there are no Shakespeare-Oxford comparisons that will stand up under examination. They do exist. And there are at least no other pro-Oxford research projects conducted in the past five years that have applied exacting procedures to test, in one case for rare words, and in the other, for parallel word combinations. Both efforts produced lexical evidence suggesting an Oxford-Shakespeare relationship of some statistical significance. And in consideration of the small size of the Oxford sample, the monumental scope of the Shakespeare corpus and the quantity of the evidence, the

findings could be considerably remarkable. Because of all the controls imposed, it can be said that the statistical probability of locating a similar relationship on the part of another author with Shakespeare is very, very low.

There is one last general failing to be discussed. It concerns the matter of research design and the writing of reports. The investigator is obliged to develop the best possible procedures and overall research plan possible based on what has come before. The project goals and the findings are, furthermore, expected to be expressed in terms appropriate to the scope of the study, not to the hopes and dreams of the investigator. In the stylometric field, there are no "proofs" as yet. It is a far-from-precise science. Therefore, you cannot produce the "smoking gun." For amateur researchers, especially, the requirements of scientific method can be unnerving. To practice restraint, to state conclusions in cautious terms ("the evidence suggests" or "it is likely that" or "attempts to explore the possibility"), when your natural inclination is to shout, "I proved it, I proved it," demands a heart of steel. However, the effort must be made.

As we have seen, the attempt to distinguish word use patterns of known authors in conjunction with the search for a possible author of an unknown work has produced some solid research, as in the case of *The Federalist*, and perhaps the Chettle-Greens-Groatsworth matter. But in the case of Shakespeare, or Shakespeare-Oxford, stylistic testing is trying to achieve what is difficult or may be the impossible. The waters are still murky.

Helen Cyr

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FROM THE LETTERS COLUMN IN THE WASHINGTON HOOK REVIEW (MAY 1987)

The title page of *The First Folio* (1623) -- Martin Droeshout's engraving of William Shakespeare -- appears on the cover of your March 1987 edition in connection with the review by Professor Gary Taylor of *William Shakespeare: His World, His Works, His Influence*, edited by John F. Andrews. This portrait was the first one printed of William Shakespeare and *The First Folio* was also the first printed mention of his death. The portrait has two bizarre features. In 1911, London's "Gentlemen's Tailor" reported that the tunic,

is so strangely illustrated that the right-hand side of the forepart is obviously the left-hand side of the back part and so gives a harlequin appearance to the figure which is not unnatural to suppose was intentional, and done with express object and purpose.

In other words, the figure was given two left arms. In addition, the *London Observer* (2/15/64) reported that Lord Brain, head of the Royal College of Physicians, pointed out that the portrait had also been given two right eyes -- the outside corner of the left eye should be its inside corner.

This outlandish presentation was authorized by Ben Jonson and the other notables who were responsible for the most significant, informative and authoritative contemporary post-mortem recognition of William Shakespeare's unparalleled contribution to English letters and also to the man, in Jonson's words, "To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe." These are only two hypotheses which would account for it:

1. The engraver was grossly careless but this is foreclosed by the meticulous accuracy with which he drew the left-hand side of the back part as the right-hand side of the forepart and by the detailed precision with which he drew the embroidery, buttons, ruff and hair;
2. Ben Jonson and those others intended to send a message but, for reasons left to scholarly deduction, that intention would only be later detected by assiduous and expert observation of the portrait.

I can confidently assume that not one of the sixty essayists in that compendium of 900 large double-columned pages brought this to the attention of the readers. No biography of William Shakespeare can be considered authentic and complete without addressing those distorted features and providing a supportable analysis of their purpost.

Morse Johnson

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Morse Johnson, Editor
105 West 4th St., Suite #819, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

U.S. SUPREME COURT JUDGES TO HEAR DEBATE
AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
ON AUTHORSHIP OF SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Three U.S. Supreme Court Justices will hear a debate on the authorship of William Shakespeare's works on September 25, at 10:00 a.m., at the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, at Nebraska and New Mexico Avenues, N.W., adjacent to The American University campus.

Supreme Court Associate Justices William J. Brennan, Jr., Harry A. Blackmun, and John Paul Stevens, will hear arguments in defense of William Shakespeare of Stratford's authorship and in support of Edward De Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford's authorship.

Two American University Washington College of Law professors will present the arguments. Peter A. Jaszi, an expert in contracts, English legal history, and copyright law, will argue for the De Vere authorship. James D. A. Boyle, an expert in jurisprudence, torts, and international law, will defend Shakespeare's authorship.

The moot court debate, under the auspices of The American University is sponsored by David Lloyd Kreeger, a member of the University's Board of Trustees and organizer of the event. Kreeger, honorary chairman of the board of Government Employees Companies, president of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and chairman of the board of the Washington Opera, has devoted much time to the arts. He donated the Kreeger Music Building on The American University campus, the Kreeger Theatre at the Arena Stage, and an auditorium bearing his name at the Jewish Community Center. He has been fascinated by the Shakespeare controversy, and has done research on the issue.

"The American University is privileged to have three distinguished justices come to our campus to hear this unique debate. We also thank David Lloyd Kreeger for making this event possible. This hearing provides our students, faculty, and the community with an exceptional educational opportunity, and is a pioneering example of the application of legal reasoning to an intriguing literary question," Dr. Richard Berendzen, President of The American University, said.

The authorship of the Stratford Shakespeare went unchallenged until disbelief was voiced in the 19th century by Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, and others. The works have been attributed to many Elizabethan writers, including Francis Bacon and Christopher Marlowe. However, De Vere is considered the leading candidate by the Encyclopedia Britannica. Proponents of this theory contend that De Vere, a nobleman, did not want to be publicly associated with the theater, and adopted the pseudonym, Shakespeare.

The hearing is free and open to the public. Seating is available on a first-come, first-seated basis.

* * * * *

ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETYSeptember 25 - 26, 1987

Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202-737-1234). Located within a few blocks of the Union Station and close to the Capitol and other landmarks. Telephone reservation requests to Hyatt Regency. (Special rates if attending SOS Conference. Single: \$85.00 per night; Double: \$95.00 per night.)

Conference Registration Fee \$20.00. Mail to SOS, P.O. Box 16254, Baltimore, Md. 21210.

Program

September 25, 10:00 A.M.

Debate between two American University Washington College of Law Professors on whether it was Will. Shakspere or Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford who wrote Shakespeare's works. Supreme Court Justices Brennan, Blackmun and Stevens will hear the arguments. Location: Metropolitan Methodist Church, Nebraska and Mexico Avenues N.W. (adjacent to American University), Admission Free.

First come- First seated

7:30-9:30 P.M. - Business Meeting at Hyatt Regency Hotel

September 26, 9:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.: Conference Meeting. Participants: Ruth Lloyd Miller, Charlton Ogburn, Lord Vere and others.

* * * * *

JOIN SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY AND RECEIVE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The purpose of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to document and establish Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604) as the universally recognized author of the works of William Shakespeare. Each Newsletter carries articles which impart a wide range of information and commentary which the editor considers relevant to that purpose. Some articles will inevitably contain opinions, deductions and evidence which some SOS members believe to be invalid, inaccurate, irrelevant or irrational. The Newsletter is always open to letters of dissent and correction.

Write to: Shakespeare Oxford Society
P. O. Box 16254
Baltimore, Md. 21210

	Tax Deductible Annual Dues	
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* * * * *

A LIGHT ON WIVENHOE

Barbara Westerfield
Agoura, California

Oxfordians and perhaps others have been curious about Wivenhoe in Essex, as mentioned by Edward De Vere in his 16th century correspondence.

My husband and I spent this past May auto-touring the British countryside. We rambled through Essex to fulfill a desire of mine to visit Wivenhoe, on the Colne Estuary not too far from Castle Hedingham.

The visit to Wivenhoe proved to be even more rewarding than I had envisioned. After lunch at the Colne Pub, we visited the Wivenhoe Parish Church. We examined the notable brasses, considered to be the finest in Essex (one of them is a former Countess of Oxford).

We then came upon a most surprising booklet which had been researched and printed "in aid of the Tower Roof and Cupola Relocation Appeal." This booklet was entitled in part, A Glimpse into Wivenhoe's Past. It indeed sheds light on Oxford's "country muses of Wivenhoe," where his letters tell us he was residing in at least some part(s) of 1572 and 1573.

In 1573, the Earl of Oxford prefaced with a cover letter Thomas Bedingfield's translation (from the Latin) of Cardanus' Comferte. He concluded his letter in part (with the casual and variable Elizabethan spelling), "From my countrye Muses at Wivenghole." We quote from the booklet:

By the middle of the 15th century, John De Vere, 12th Earl of Oxford, was Lord of the Manor at Wivenhoe...Wivenhoe was sold by Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, in 1586, 2 years before the Spanish Armada. He received 2,513 pounds for the Manors of Battleswick, wivenhoe and Great Bentley."

The booklet lists just what that consisted of. It also tells us that Wivenhoe Hall, the 13th Earl of Oxford's manor, was a large and elegant house, "having a noble gate-house with towers of great height that served as a sea mark." It was situated on the brow of the hill in parkland, part of which is now King George V Playing Fields. Present-day De Vere Lane is near there.

In the 18th century, Wivenhoe Hall was still lived in, although by that time the house was greatly changed, and the two tall towers had gone. (There is a sketch of this house.) The house was badly damaged by an earthquake on April 27, 1884. Perhaps that is why the Hall is not there today.

This interesting booklet made no mention of Shakespeare, of course. However, the description of the unusual gate posts with the tall sea-mark towers at Wivenhoe Hall was somewhat electrifying to me.

Although only a small point in the floods of Shakespeareana, Onion's Shakespeare Glossary confirms that Shakespeare used a "sea-mark" metaphor more than once. In Sonnet CXVI, we find:

"...it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken."

The Tragedy of Coriolanus contains a more graphic reference:

" With the consent of supreme Jove, inform
Thy thoughts with nobleness, that thou may prove
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' the wars
Like a great seamark, standing every flaw,¹
And saving those that eye thee."
-5.3.L.82

And from Othello:

"Here is my journey's end, here is my butt²
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail."
-5.2.L.268

A "sea-mark" was apparently very much in Edward DeVere's frame of reference. This, of itself, through the veils of history, may signify much or little. But it is an interesting fact, in the light of Oxfordians' much-researched belief that Edward DeVere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is the man behind the so-called "pseudonym" of "Shakespeare."

1. Flaw: squall or tempest
2. Butt: aim or goal

(Sea-mark: "beacon or other object marking the entrance to a harbor; hence destination, end."—Riverside Shakespeare. "A conspicuous object distinguishable at sea which serves to guide, or warn sailors in navigation."—Oxford English Dictionary.)

* * * * *

LORD VERE TO CHARLTON OGBURN

I made an amusing little discovery (though it's probably been discovered many times before) while reading "As You Like It" recently. Bearing in mind what you say in your book about Oxford doubling up as Jaques and Touchstone, I refer to Act V, Scene I*, where Touchstone is addressing William. You mention the significance of "Now you are not ipse: for I am he." What interested me was the "To have is to have" a few lines earlier. It certainly stands out as meaning nothing in particular except perhaps something to the effect of "truth is truth" or "what is possessed cannot be taken away." Being curious, I looked up "to have" in my Italian dictionary, which turns out to be AVERE. Thus, in one fell swoop, Oxford can say to Will. Shaksper:

- i. Your pretense of doing something that only a Vere can do is repulsive, and ultimately won't work.
- ii. It's also a condescending way of suggesting that W.S.'s pretensions are so overblown that he needs reminding what in fact his name is. "Then learn this of me. Avere is avere...."

Obviously, these things are peculiarly satisfying, but not to be overstated. Anyway, once again let me congratulate you on your marvelous book which I feel sure is a watershed in this tragic business.

*[Touchstone: You do love this maid?
 William. I do, sir.
 Touchstone. Give me your hand. Art thou learned?
 William. No sir.
 Touchstone. Then learn this of me: To have is to have, for it is a figure in rhetoric that drink being poured out of a cup into a glass, by filling one doth empty the other: for all your writers do consent that ipse is he; now, you are not ipse, for I am he.
 William. Which he, sir?
 Touchstone. He, sir, that must marry this woman...I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways, therefore tremble, and depart.]

* * * * *

"SHAKE_SPEARE, WE MUST BE SILENT IN OUR PRAISE,
 'CAUSE OUR ENCOMIONS WILL BUT BLAST THY BAYS"
 Anonymous, Wits Recreation, 1640

In my opinion, the all-enveloping silence at the time of the deaths of both Will. Shakspeare of Stratford, and the dramatist and poet William Shakespeare, and for years thereafter, convincingly confirms that the identity of the person of William Shakespeare was intentionally and effectively concealed during his lifetime. It is inconceivable that there could have been such a total and extended blackout had the person of William Shakespeare been publicly identified during his lifetime. The undisputed and fully integrated evidence delineated in the following Chronology has been consistently either circumvented or camouflaged by Stratfordians.

Chronology

1599: At the time of the death of Edmund Spenser, William Camden reported that contemporary poets thronged to his funeral and cast their elegies and the pens that wrote them into the tomb.

1616: At his death in March, Francis Beaumont was ceremonially honored and entombed in Westminster Abbey with accompanying elegies.

Entry in burial Registry of Stratford-upon-Avon Trinity Church that "Will. Shakspeare, gent." was buried there on April 25.

No other mention is known of any kind by anyone—no relative, friend, poet, playwright, playgoer, theatrical colleague, associate, commentator, admirer—anywhere, of the death of Will. Shakspeare, or of the dramatist and poet William Shakespeare, and no elegy.

- 1617 Five epitaphs—one of eighty-seven lines—at the time of death of the
to Shakespearean actor Richard Burbage (1619), and a comment by a
1620: contemporary poet that "in London is not one eye dry."
Shakespeare plays frequently performed, including seven for the first time.
Still no mention is known of any kind by anyone anywhere of the death of either Will. Shakspeare or William Shakespeare, and no eulogy.
- 1620 Publication of a poem by John Taylor which lauded William Shakespeare and the immortality of his works but was not an elegy and did not mention his death.
Still no mention is known of any kind by anyone anywhere of the death of either Will. Shakspeare or William Shakespeare, and no eulogy.
- 1621 Undated eulogy by William Basse, an obscure Oxford University student, written, but not published until the 1630's.
and
1622: Installation—exact date unknown—of The Stratford Monument. Its bizarre inscription states that "Shakspeare [as spelled] is plast with in this monument." No record of any ceremonies or of who arranged and paid for the monument.
No other mention is known of any kind by anyone, anywhere, of the death of either Will. Shakspeare or William Shakespeare, and no other eulogy.
- 1623: Publication in the First Folio of all but one of the Shakespeare plays. The Preface consists of two laudatory letters to their "friend, & fellow alive, as was our SHAKESPEARE," by two actors in the King's Company; a verse and a eulogy by Ben Jonson; eulogies by Leonard Digges, Hugh Holland, and "I.M.," and a list of "The Names of the Principal Actors in all these Plays." Except for memorializing Shakespeare's death (but with no vital statistics), the only biographical materials are:
 "Sweet Swan of Avon" (Jonson)
 "And time dissolves thy Stratford Monument..." (Digges)
 "William Shakespeare" heads the list of Actors. (There is no evidence of any kind, anywhere, that Shakespeare ever acted in any of "these Plays," except for generations-later posthumous hearsay.)
- 1626: Thirty-two elegies published at the time of the death of Francis Bacon.
- 1631: At the time of his death, Michael Drayton was mourned by a "funeral procession to Westminster escorted by gentlemen of the Inns of Court and others of note."
- 1632: A monument erected in memory of Michael Drayton; verses—one attributed to Ben Jonson—were contributed.
- 1637: Within six months after he died, Ben Jonson was accorded a volume of eulogies: The Memory of Ben Jonson by the Friends of the Muses.

Professor S. Schoenbaum's circuitous approach to this undisputed evidence is best illustrated in his Shakespeare's Lives (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1970) at pp. 56-57:

"His death evoked no great outpouring of homage. That was reserved for his rival, Jonson, who was accorded, six months after he expired, an entire volume of eulogy: Jonsonus Virbius: or, The Memory of Ben Jonson Revived by the Friends of the Muses. In the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's Poems, it is true, an anonymous versifier declared that '...every eye that rains a shower for thee,/Laments thy loss in a sad elegy¹. But the flow does not seem to have been so copious, for only a few noted his passing. William Basse urged 'Renowned' Spenser, 'learned' Chaucer, and 'rare' Beaumont to make room in Westminster Abbey 'For Shakespeare in your threefold, fourfold tomb'—a conceit at which Jonson was, by implication, to sneer in his own lines to Shakespeare's memory:

I...I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room:
Thou art a monument without a tomb.'

In 'The Praise of Hempseed, published in 1620, John Taylor the Water Poet—a Thames waterman who ferried passengers to the Southwark theatres—extolled Shakespeare (whom he may have known personally) as excelling in art and surviving immortally on paper, but he was not moved to write an elegy, as he later did for Jonson. The rest was silence, until in 1623 there appeared the noble volume of plays that his companions in the King's Men, Heminges and Condell, assembled 'without ambition either of self-profit or fame: only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive, as was our Shakespeare."

Since Professor Schoenbaum starts with: "His death evoked..." and ends with "The rest is silence, until 1623..." he has confined his summary of the evidence to the period from April 25, 1616 through 1622. He does note that in 1640 an anonymous versifier reported undated tributes which were "composed some years earlier" than Jonson's death in 1637. That Schoenbaum omitted Michael Drayton's 1627 elegy, which was his first and only known posthumous tribute to or mention of Shakespeare, corroborates that the period Schoenbaum covers ended in 1623. While his evasive tactics are easily detected, I will dissect some which might have been overlooked on a first reading.

* Professor Schoenbaum has shrewdly centered his readers' attention exclusively on homage, eulogies, and other formal tributes. As a consequence, they have not been informed that, except for the entry in the Stratford Burial Registry, there are no known informal mentions or notices either, in memos, letters, diaries, or other written communications from April 25, 1616, until the 1630's.

* "...no great outpouring of homage" is a textbook half-truth by connoting, at the outset, that there was an outpouring of homage, albeit not as great as rendered to Jonson, at the time of Shakespeare's death. Nor does Schoenbaum ever point out that while the published homage to Jonson came within six months after his death, the first homage to Shakespeare did not come until five or six years after his death and was not published until the 1630's.

1. That the 'Elegy' on the death of 'That Famous Writer and Actor, Master William Shakespeare' was composed some years earlier, is indicated by the author's reference to Jonson as still alive.

* The second sentence misleadingly implies ["...reserved (?) for his rival..."] that Ben Jonson was the only one of Shakespeare's literary contemporaries to be accorded a great outpouring of homage upon his death.

* In quoting the 1640 versifier, Professor Schoenbaum deceptively fills a void with multiple, unquoted, undated, anonymous, evanescent and otherwise undocumented lamentations.

* "...the flow [of elegies] does not seem [was or was not?—precautionary ambiguity] to have been so copious, for only a few noted his passing. William Basse urged..." Schoenbaum, if challenged, could claim that William Basse with his undated Westminster Abbey proposal, and the unknown persons who arranged and paid for The Stratford Monument—for some reasons overlooked by Schoenbaum—constitute all of the "few" who noted Shakespeare's passing before 1623. Schoenbaum has thus adroitly attempted to erect a defense to a charge of patent distortion. Both the Monument and the Basse proposal are known to have been on the scene shortly before 1623, but there is no extant evidence of any eulogy or any mention theretofore. No uniformed reader, therefore, would ever infer from Schoenbaum's summary that the evidence attests to a complete blackout for some six years.

* By using, in the last sentence, the phrase, "The rest is silence, until in 1623..." an uniformed reader would conclude that Professor Schoenbaum is referring to evidence he had not previously cited. Ben Jonson's response—his first mention of Shakespeare's death—to the Basse proposal, was not published until it was included in that 1623 volume of plays. Coincidentally, and tellingly, Anatole Broyard, in his review of Professor Schoenbaum's William Shakespeare, A Documentary Life (Oxford Press, 1975) in the New York Times (5/20/75) cited: "...Ben Jonson's eulogy on the occasion of Shakespeare's death."

I wrote (5/23/75) to Mr. Broyard, with a copy to Professor Schoenbaum. My letter ended with the following sentence:

"If (Professor Schoenbaum) has not already called your attention to the incorrect reference to the Jonson Eulogy (in a review of his book), it seems fair to point out that that is one of the ways the [Stratfordian] attribution and its accretions have flourished."

Neither Broyard nor Schoenbaum has ever replied. Both recognize that if Ben Jonson were known to have written an eulogy on the occasion of Shakespeare's [i.e., Shakspeare's] death, anti-Stratfordians could be dismissed as foolish fanatics. Both also recognize that since Ben Jonson who "lov'd [Shakespeare]...this side [of] idolatry..." remained mute for seven years after Shakespeare's death, anti-Stratfordians can rationally assert that this confirms their premise that the identity of the person of William Shakespeare was intentionally concealed.

* * * * *

MYRIAD-MINDED MAN OF THE RENAISSANCE

"Shakespeare's plays bear witness to a profound knowledge of contemporary physiology and psychology, and he has employed medical terms in a manner which would have been beyond the powers of any ordinary playwright or physician."

The Medical Mind of Shakespeare by Aubrey C. Kail, M.B.,B.S., M.R.C.P. (Edin) published Williams & Wilkins, ADIS Pty Limited, Australia in 1986.

"More evident throughout Shakespeare's writing is the avian typology. The Raven and the crow both are the type of blackness, while the dove and the swan symbolize whiteness. The Nightingale is the 'bird of eve' and the lark 'the bird of dawn.' The jay is a gaudily dressed person. The Cock is preeminently 'the bird of dawning.' The gull is a fool, and so, too, the woodcock. Some of these roles are surely classical heritages, although often the debt is colored by one or more intermediaries and by admixtures of other ideas. Shakespearean "sources" are generally elusive, for surely there was little that he touched that did not somehow leave an impression on his mind—an impression destined to bear rich fruit at some later date—some drab fact emerging in a burst of poetry. And naturally, the contributions to his well-springs are mingled beyond all separation.

Allusions to the Aesopic fable of the Jackdaw illustrate the problem. The Queen, for example, in 2 Henry VI (3.111.75-76) says, 'Seems he a dove? his feathers are but borrow'd. For he's disposed as the hateful Raven!.' The passage may ultimately reflect Aesop's Jackdaw in borrowed plumage, but probably the poet was also thinking about the Scriptural wolf in sheep's clothing, since the Queen herself next speaks of the lamb and the wolf. Now as T.W. Baldwin has shown,¹ the story would be known in the form cast into Renaissance Latin by Joachim Camerarius, who tells it as a fable about the Crow taking pride in borrowed feathers; therefore the Greek allusion has come through a Renaissance Latinist, whose Crow has been replaced by a Raven, while a biblical allusion has lent a new coloration. A more explicit reference to the story (although again with a new bird) appears in Timon of Athens (2.1.30-32) as the Senator says, 'When every feather sticks in his own wing, Lord Timon will be left a naked gull, Which flashes now a phoenix.'

Scriptural allusions present the same problem. The pious Adam, in As You Like It, (2.3.43-45) prays, '...He that doth the Raven feed, Yea, providently caters for the sparrow, Be comfort to my age.' This is a biblical reference, pure and simple. But observe how Shakespeare juxtaposes the word 'augury' with its classical association and an echo of Matthew 10.29 in Hamlet's words (5.2.214-215), '...we defy augury: there is a special providence in the fall of a

sparrow.' In similar fashion (3 Henry VI 5.2.11-14) 'the cedar...Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle, Under whose shade the ramping lion slept.' certainly takes the audience to the Holy Land where Biblical trees (or plants) 'shelter the fowls of the air,' even though the 'princely eagle' sounds rather classical. Then one finds that the cedar's 'top branch overpeer'd Joyes' spreading tree' (line 14), and he is transported back to Greece or Italy. Here indeed is a blending, and probably no single passage can confidently be cited as source for either strain of influence."

"Of Men and Birds," by Grundy Steiner, Ph.D., in his 1965 edition of The Birds of SHAKESPEARE, by James E. Harting (19th Century).

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THE SPEAR-SHAKER REVIEW

Stephanie Caruana, a dedicated, enterprising and creative Oxfordian, has announced her intention to begin publication of The Spear-Shaker Review (a Quarterly journal). The Review will be attractively printed, and will contain 28 to 36 pages per issue. The first issue will be in print around September 15. SOS members will undoubtedly find it informative and absorbing. Single copies: \$5.00; 1-year subscription (4 issues): \$16 USA, \$18 Foreign. Mail inquiries to: Stephanie Caruana, Editor, Box 913, RR1, Napanoch, N.Y. 12458.

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"WHO CARES WHO WROTE THEM?"

"Innocent of their own heresy, and now deprived by Charlton Ogburn's book [The Mysterious William Shakespeare] of any rhyme or reason for believing the man from Stratford wrote the "Shake-speare" plays Stratfordians will, very likely, take refuge in these disdainful questions: 'What does it matter? We have the plays. Who cares who wrote them?'

To this, there are answers. Let me offer two, under one heading: The possible importance to education:

1. Since the end of World War II, "Shake-speare" studies have been in steady decline. They are largely ignored in today's curriculum. To re-examine them in the light of Looney's discovery and Ogburn's masterpiece would be to see them for what they are: not merely dramatic poems of infinite interest, but also allegorical histories that comment on both the Elizabethan Age, and any period in which they are read and discussed. Such a reading would be a new experience for older teachers, and would place them on a more equal footing with their students. The result would be a learning experience for both.

2. Like Dante in Florence, and Homer in ancient Greece, "Shake-speare" created the language of his people; his is 'the King's English.' A growing awareness of who he is, and who he definitely is not, should lead to the serious restructuring of the courses required by the English departments of this country's colleges. In higher education today, it is possible to obtain a Doctorate, majoring in English Literature, without ever having had a course in "Shake-speare." To go into the academic world and profess to teach English language and literature, without being aware of Looney's discovery, and without the light of Charlton Ogburn's research, is to miss a man [Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford] who not only deserves recognition for his unique body of work, but who also happens to be among the world's greatest teachers.

But no one in possession of his wits would want to argue against a fact. And the actual "Shake-speare" manuscripts themselves are what are needed to end this controversy. Charlton Ogburn closes his work with the intriguing theory that "Shake-speare's" plays are safely lodged in the Trinity Church at Stratford. There are other theories. One of the wilder conjectures is that the manuscripts have been strangely protected in a subterranean mine, abandoned since late in the 16th Century, on an island off Nova Scotia. Those who hold this theory say the mine is both a mausoleum for Edward De Vere, and a repository for the relics and riches of England's ruling family, the Plantagenets.

All theories aside, it is also said that in a war, nobody wins. But any Stratfordian who has read through Ogburn's magnificent book, may now be willing to admit defeat.

Excerpts from "The Shakespearean Conspiracy," by D.J. Hanson, Director of the De Vere Foundation, in Ventura County Magazine.

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HOW DO YOU ANSWER?

I doubt that there are any Oxfordians, indeed any anti-Stratfordians, who have not had the challenging experience of being asked some such question as: "Why do you think Shakespeare didn't write the works of Shakespeare?" Usually, we are called upon to answer that question at some informal social gathering, which calls for an informative and convincing answer that takes up no more than five minutes.

In my opinion, members of the SOS would be interested in hearing how their colleagues respond at such times. Future Newsletters will carry a column entitled, "How do you answer?" Readers are encouraged to contribute to it—in approximately 300 words.

P.S.: Of course, when (!?) the Supreme Court Justices conclude that the argument for Oxford prevails, an impressive and succinct response will be on hand. Stratfordians may, however, counter with: "I trust Rowse (Schoenbaum, Marder, et al) as being more authoritative on this subject than Supreme Court Justices."

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"WHERE THE PROFESSORIAL IS DEEPLY BUT WRONGLY COMMITTED...
FACTUAL EVIDENCE OF AN INCONVENIENT KIND IS FREQUENTLY
HANDLED WITH TOTAL RUTHLESSNESS."

Joseph Alsop. (Quoted by Charlton Ogburn in
The Mysterious William Shakespeare.)

"Astronomer Halton C. Arp, described by colleagues as one of the world's best observers, was barred from major observatories when he came up with a radical theory about mysterious objects in space called quasars.

Thomas Gold, a distinguished astronomer who had a novel theory about pulsars and neutron stars, was denied the right to speak at an important scientific meeting.

Lynn Margulis, a biologist whose theories on how living cells evolved are now universally accepted, was turned down repeatedly for research funding, and told never to apply again.

These were not perpetrators of scientific fraud, nor were they scientists whose credentials, experience or capabilities were in question. Their only crime—for which they were sentenced to work without funding or facilities, or denied the opportunity to communicate with their peers—was that they disagreed with the prevailing scientific mainstream.

Sometimes looked upon as mavericks, gadflies, or heretics, they are scientists who challenge the orthodoxy of the day.

Historians and philosophers of science agree that much of the progress of science stems from such challenges. As University of Chicago paleontologist David M. Raup put it in a recent book, 'Perhaps the only thing that saves science from invalid conventional wisdom that becomes effectively permanent is the presence of mavericks in every generation—people who keep challenging convention...'"

Excerpt from a report in The Boston Globe (7/23/87) by David L. Chandler

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AN EXCERPT FROM "SOME ADO ABOUT WHO WAS, OR WHO WAS NOT,
SHAKE-SPEARE" BY J. D. REED IN
"The Smithsonian" (September, 1987.)

"...whether you accept his thesis or not, Ogburn's tome [The Mysterious William Shakespeare] is a marvelous transport to Shakespeare's world and what is – and isn't – known about his life...in arguing his case Ogburn brings to center stage a brilliant and flamboyant man most of us have never heard of, let alone thought about, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford...any reasonable lover of Shakespeare could profitably suspend his disbelief for an hour or two, to journey with Ogburn into the world of Oxford and Shakespeare. Ogburn raises questions about the authorship that perplex and tease. For him, the quest to establish the authorship is an unparalleled intellectual exercise..."

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The De Vere Society

Hertford College
Oxford OX1 3BW

TALKS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1987-1988

MICHAELMAS TERM:

1. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14:

Elizabeth Appleton

"Edward de Vere, Man of Mystery." New findings and their impact on the case for de Vere as Shakespeare. Mrs. Appleton, author of the book, "Edward de Vere and the War of Words." is coming from Ontario, Canada, to deliver this talk.

2. FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13:

Dr. D. W. Thomson Vessey

"Variant Shakespeares and Shakespearean Variants."

Dr. Vessey is Reader in Latin at King's College London, and a trustee of the Shakespearean Authorship Trust.

3. THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26:

John Harding

"The Vexed Question of Shakespeare's Relationship with Florio."

John Harding claims to be able to "show quickly and conclusively who Shakespeare was."

HILARY TERM:

4. WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27:

Lord Dacre of Glanton

Title: To be announced.

Lord Dacre was formerly Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, and more recently Master of Peterhouse Cambridge.

5. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25:

The Rt. Hon. Enoch Powell MBE

"Francis Meres and the Authorship Question."

Enoch Powell has led one of the most distinguished political careers of the post-war era in Britain. Prior to entering politics, he was Professor of Greek at Sydney University in Australia.

TRINITY TERM:

6. THURSDAY, MAY 5:

Verily Anderson

"The de Veres of Castle Hedingham."

Verily Anderson is a writer and broadcaster of distinction. She is at present just completing a history of the de Veres, and has long taken a keen interest in the authorship issue.

7. THURSDAY, MAY 26:

Father Francis Edwards, SJ

"Shakespeare in the Sources." With slides.

Father Francis Edwards is a most notable and controversial historian of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. He has, among other things, written books on the Ridolphi plot and the Gunpowder plot. His historical work has provided him with many revealing insights into the authorship question, and he has contributed a number of articles on the subject to The Bard.

8. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8:

Charles Vere

"A Farewell to Stratford."

Charles Vere is Chairman of The de Vere Society.

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Morse Johnson, Editor
105 West 4th St., Suite #819, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

"In Re William Shakespeare"

On September 25, 1987 in the Washington, D.C. United Methodist Church, three U.S. Supreme Court justices heard a debate between two law professors as to the authorship of the works of William Shakespeare. It had been organized by American University and sponsored by David Lloyd Kreeger. The church was jammed with some 1200 spectators and more than a dozen media outlets. The result, according to a typical headline, was: "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare."

The headlines disclosed the unfortunate fact that the opinions delivered seriatim by the three justices, coupled with the ambiguity of their respective informal observations thereafter, could only be misleadingly summarized. It is true that, with varying degrees of conviction, "they rejected for lack of 'clear and convincing evidence' a claim that Shakespeare's famous plays and poems were actually written by an Elizabethan nobleman, Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford" (A.P.) It is, however, also true that while the justices did not find that Shakespeare did not write the works, they also did not specifically find that he did.

"Asked whether it was a tough case, Justice Brennan smiled broadly, clapped a reporter on the shoulders and declared, 'This is absolutely an impossible one.' " (N.Y. Times)

"... (Justice Blackmun) said, Oxford is a more persuasive figure than any of the others who have been proposed. It was, said Blackmun, a matter for historians, rather than the courts, The case that is, is not closed." (L.A. Times).

" 'There is a lingering doubt,' (Justice Stevens) said, 'And if it was not Shakespeare who was the author, there is a high probability it was De Vere. ' (L.A. Times).

In "National Review" (11/6/87), Joseph Sobran put a discerning finger on the prodigious charge imposed by Justice Brennan on Professor Peter A. Jaszi, Counsel for De Vere:

"... Jaszi had a double burden, he had to refute the traditional belief and prove Oxford's authorship. Moreover, he had to meet the standard of 'clear and convincing evidence' ... That's a tall order for an hour's debate: annihilating and supplanting a cherished cultural myth."

The debate, also, underscored and highlighted the formidable and frustrating obstacle with which anti-Stradfordians are inescapably confronted. Each strand in the labyrinthine ball of yarn, which Ben Jonson, et al. and several centuries of tradition have fabricated, must be meticulously unraveled, analyzed and evaluated. Which are facts and which are assumptions? Which assumptions have been treated as facts? What hearsay has been elevated to probative evidence? Which inferences have been based on facts, which on assumptions and which even on inferences? What material evidence has been circumvented or camouflaged? What rational inferences based on probative evidence have been omitted? Which words and phrases in 16th and 17th century documents and inscriptions have been objectively interpreted and which subjectively? What is the nature of the evidence documented

as to the life, experience and activities of all the still-celebrated playwrights and poets of that period which is not documented as to the life, experience and activities of the Stratford man? An appellate court in our judicial system, moreover, would have had the record of the trial court proceedings in which all the evidence, including the testimony of expert witnesses, would have been tested by examination and cross-examination as to admissibility, competence, credibility and weight.

It is also self-evident that oral presentations plus briefs submitted by opposing counsel — each with less than 150 pages — could not and did not provide the justices with a definitive and comprehensive examination of even some of the most basic evidence. It took Oxfordian Charlton Ogburn approximately 900 pages to document his case and Stratfordian Professor S. Schoenbaum the same number to document his. Both are recognized Shakespearean scholars and biographers who have devoted years of research and analysis to the question.

As a result, the justices in some of their questions and opinions revealed inadequate knowledge of relevant evidence. For example, if the plays and poems conclusively reflect their author's comprehensive and intimate familiarity with law, legal proceedings and lawyers, on the basis of all extant evidence the Stratford man could not have been the author. De Vere spent three years studying law at the Inns of Court and was a lifetime member of two of the most important law committees in Parliament.

The evidence as to such legal expertise is in the plays and poems and therefore the subject of scrutiny not speculation. Justice Brennan introduced this pivotal issue by his, in effect rhetorical, question to counsel for the Stratford man:

"Well, there is some evidence isn't there that Shakespeare had several connections with law, actual transfers of title and property and that sort of thing, and aren't the allusions in the plays limited to that sort of thing?" (Underlining supplied).

In his reply, Professor James D.A. Boyle affirmed the justice's conclusion:

"The allusions in the plays are generally concerned with exactly the kind of issues that Shakespeare would have had a personal connection with, either in such things as the (Mountjoy) deposition, or in the various conveyances for his own properties, that is true." (Underlining supplied).

In 1589 while Shakespeare was living in London, he was named with his father in an action in Stratford to recover his mother's property in Wilmcote. At least three of his plays had been written by that time. The first such "transfers of title" and "conveyances for his own properties" documented for the Stratford man did not occur until 1597. Uncontested evidence demonstrates that at least 12 plays, Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, and most of the sonnets had been written by that time and that all of them display wide-ranging and profound legal lore and persistent use of legal maxims and phrases. When Justice Stevens questioned as to the "domestic relations law involved in Measure for Measure," Professor Boyle replied by attributing Shakespeare's knowledge thereof to his Mountjoy deposition. The latter took place in 1612 and Measure for Measure is known to have been written by 1604 in which year it was performed before the King.

The plays, poems and sonnets have been examined point by point by many knowledgeable and qualified jurists and lawyers. I will only quote two eminent 19th century English jurists and three outstanding English and American lawyers all of whom were also Shakespearean scholars. All the lawyers, moreover, were partisan advocates of the Stratfordian attribution.

Lord Chief Justice Campbell (Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements, 1859):

"Let a non-professional man, however acute, presume to talk law, or to draw

illustrations from legal science in discussing other subjects, and he will speedily fall into laughable absurdity. (Shakespeare had) a deep technical knowledge of the law," and an easy familiarity with "some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence . . . Whenever he indulges this propensity he uniformly lays down good law . . . If Lord Eldon [eminent 18th century English jurist] could be supposed to have written (Henry IV, Part 2), I do not see how he could be chargeable with having forgotten any of his law while writing it."

Sir James Plaisted Wilde, Q.C., Judge of the Court of Probate and Divorce (The Bacon-Shakespeare Controversy: A Judicial Summing-up, 1902)

"(Shakespeare had a) perfect familiarity with not only the principles, axioms, and maxims, but the technicalities of English law, a knowledge so perfect and intimate that he was never incorrect and never at fault . . . The mode in which this knowledge was pressed into service on all occasions to express his meaning and illustrate his thought, was quite unexampled. He seems to have had a special pleasure in his complete and ready mastership of it in all its branches. As manifested in the plays, this legal knowledge and learning had therefore a special character which places it on a wholly different footing from the rest of the multifarious knowledge which is exhibited in page after page of the plays. At every turn and point at which the author required a metaphor, simile, or illustration, his mind ever turned first to the law. He seems almost to have thought in legal phrases, the commonest of legal expressions were ever at the end of his pen in description or illustration. That he should have descended in lawyer language when he had a forensic subject in hand, such as Shylock's bond, was to be expected, but the knowledge of law in 'Shakespeare' was exhibited in a far different manner: it protruded itself on all occasions, appropriate or inappropriate, and mingled itself with strains of thought widely divergent from forensic subjects" (Underlining supplied).

Cushman K. Davis (The Law in Shakespeare, 1884—cites 312 passages):

"The abstrusest elements of the common law are impressed into a disciplined service. Over and over again, where such knowledge is unexampled in writers unlearned in the law, Shakespeare appears in perfect possession of it. In the law of real property, its rules of tenure and descents, its entails, its fines and recoveries, and their vouchers and double vouchers, in the procedure of the Courts, the method of bringing writs and arrests, the nature of actions, the rules of pleading, the law of escapes and of contempt of court, in the principles of evidence, both technical and philosophical, in the distinction between the temporal and spiritual tribunals, in the law of attainder and forfeiture, in the requisites of a valid marriage, in the presumption of legitimacy, in the learning of the law of prerogative, in the inalienable character of the Crown, this mastership appears with surprising authority."

Churton Collins (Studies in Shakespeare):

"It may, of course, be urged that Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine . . . is equally remarkable (and) that his acquaintance with the technicalities of other crafts and callings . . . was extraordinary . . . but this concession hardly furnishes an analogy. To these and all other subjects he recurs occasionally, and in season, but with reminiscences of the law his memory, as is abundantly clear, was simply saturated. In season and out of season, now in manifest, now in recondite application, he presses it into the service of expression and illustration. At least a third of his myriad metaphors are derived from it. It would indeed be difficult to find a single act in any of his dramas, nay, in some of them, a single scene, the diction and imagery of which is not coloured by it. . . . We quite agree with Mr. Castle that Shakespeare's legal knowledge is not what could have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance at the Court, at a Pleaders Chambers, and on circuit, or by associating

intimately with members of the Bench and Bar."

Richard Grant White (Memoirs of the Life of William Shakespeare, 1865):

"No dramatist of the time, not even Beaumont, who was the younger son of a judge of the Common Pleas, and who after studying in the Inns of Court abandoned law for the drama, used legal phrases with Shakespeare's readiness and exactness. And the significance of this fact is heightened by another, that it is only to the language of the law that he exhibits this inclination. The phrases peculiar to other occupations serve him on rare occasions by way of description, comparison or illustration, generally when something in the scene suggests them, but legal phrases flow from his pen as part of his vocabulary, and parcel of his thought. . . . It has been suggested that it was in attendance upon the courts in London that he picked up his legal vocabulary. But this supposition not only fails to account for Shakespeare's peculiar freedom and exactness in the use of that phraseology, it does not even place him in the way of learning those terms his use of which is most remarkable . . . And besides, Shakespeare uses his law just as freely in his first plays written in his first London years, as those produced at a later period. Just as exactly, too; for the correctness and propriety with which these terms are introduced have compelled the admiration of a Chief Justice and a Lord Chancellor" (Underlining supplied)

Had the justices been apprised of the foregoing attestations, of a certainty Justice Brennan would not have announced one of the findings on which he based his opinion:

"As for Shakespeare's supposed expertise in the law, Elizabethan legal experts point out that when he uses legal terms in the plays, they are in fact such terms as he would have encountered it would seem to me in his own basic dealings with deeds and titles to land and so forth . . . (underlining supplied)

Nor would Professor Boyle have avoided informed judicial probing as to his circumscribing characterization, in both his brief and oral argument, of the limits of Shakespeare's knowledge of law. Nor would he have been able to ascribe whatever legal knowledge was displayed in works as having been acquired by experiences occurring after those works had been written.

We are left with one very perplexing question. Why did Messrs. Davis, Collins, White and other lawyers who did not delude themselves by belittling Shakespeare's comprehension of the law or by claiming it was no more profound nor more frequently, accurately and variably used than shown and used in the works of many other contemporary playwrights and poets, still adhere to the Stratfordian attribution? One possible answer is that at the time these lawyers wrote their commentaries on Shakespeare's legal expertise, the only alternate candidates for the authorship were Bacon and Marlowe, neither of whom could hold up under scholarly investigation. The authorship of De Vere was first documented in 1920 by J. Thomas Looney in his "Shakespeare's" Identified. Two other possible answers have been proposed.

Sir George G. Greenwood in his The Shakespeare Problem Restated quotes Judge Webb as follows:

"Enthusiasts . . . have carried the theory of super-human genius into a theory of actual inspiration. Admitting (Shakespeare's) humble origin, his defective education, his mean employments, and his want of all opportunities of culture, they have venerated him as a miraculous birth of time, to whom the whole world of being was revealed by a sort of apocalyptic vision . . . When we venerate Shakespeare, we venerate him not as a miracle but as a man; and the ordinary laws of nature are not suspended in the case of extraordinary men."

Mark Twain in his Is Shakespeare Dead? from My Autobiography wrote:

"Am I trying to convince anyone that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare's Works? Ah, now, what do you take me for? . . . No-no, I am aware that when even the brightest

mind in our world has been trained up from childhood in a superstition of any kind, it will never be possible for that mind, in its maturity, to examine sincerely, dispassionately and conscientiously any evidence or any circumstances which will seem to cast doubt upon the validity of that superstition . . .

That the justices, when not fully informed, were undoubtedly confused by Professor Boyle is tellingly illustrated by an interchange he had with Justice Stevens about the bust on The Stratford Monument. A review, at the outset, of background facts will assist readers in spotlighting Professor Boyle's misrepresentations.

The Stratford Monument, which is indispensable to the Stratfordian attribution, was installed in the early 1620s in the Stratford Trinity Church. There is no documentation as to who arranged and paid for it nor as to any ceremonies at its installation. According to Professor Schoenbaum, the bust on the monument is the first of only two "authentic" portraits of Shakespeare. The first known depiction of this bust is an engraving in Sir William Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire (1656). The second known depiction is an engraving in Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's Works (1709) which is similar in all important respects to Dugdale's but not from the same block. Conclusive evidence shows that Rowe's engraver made his own observation of the bust. The third known depiction is an engraving in the "revised, corrected and expanded" second edition of Dugdale's Antiquities (1730) brought out by Dr. Thomas who lived near Stratford. This engraving is from the same block as used in Dugdale's first edition. These engravings depict a bust which is vastly different in every important feature from the now existing bust and represent a complete transformation and blatant travesty of it. There are no other known depictions during this period.

Some mistakes have been found in Dugdale's engravings but none so egregious, multiple and easily detectable. Such mistakes, moreover, only appear in engravings based on sketches by others and not on engravings based on Dugdale's own sketches, as is the one of the monument. A 19th century barrister reported that Dugdale's "scrupulous accuracy, united with his stubborn integrity" has elevated his Antiquities "to the rank of legal evidence."

The Trinity Church records report that the bust on the monument was repaired and restored around 1747. Such reconstruction of limestone sculpture requires the use of mortar which would be permanently discernible. Since there is no such evidence, that reconstruction connotes the fabrication of a new bust. All the evidence verifies the conclusion that the original bust was replaced by the existing one.

From the transcript (Editor's notes in brackets):

Stevens: — On the question of the monument, I noticed your opponent really doesn't make this argument but some of the supporters of the opposing position argue that there was a change in the monument from when he held a sack of wheat to when it turned into having a pen and pencil or a pen rather and paper about a century later. Do you think that has any relevance?

Boyle: — Yes indeed. I must admit that I don't think it has any relevance, although it shows the lengths to which people are willing to go in the interpretation of Shakespearean evidence. Here we have a rather dubiously executed monument in which Shakespeare's hand and pen are apparently resting on a cushion. However, those who believe he was illiterate [Must include Dugdale, Rowe and the editor of Dugdale's 2nd ed.] cannot of course have this, thus they make him into an illiterate [How shown?] merchant of bagged goods and the cushion becomes the sack of wheat.

Stevens: — There's illustrations [Rowe, 1709; Dugdale's 2nd, 1730] shortly after the seventeenth century, I think, that show the monument with the sack of wheat rather than the quill.

Boyle: — I would claim that the illustration as is the case with many (sic) of the illustrations from the same source [Professor Boyle apparently only accepts the evidence of one source,

viz. Dugdale's Antiquities, 1656. Otherwise, to him Rowe's 1709 engraving and the verification of Dugdale's by its reuse in 1730 are both simply non-existent] were basically post-hoc sketches made from memory [undocumented and unwarranted]. Many (sic) of the other illustrations in the same source demonstrate differences from the actual monuments, I think we can conclude nothing from this. In any event, even if it were true, it is not, it seems to me somewhat ambiguous and doesn't directly bear on the case.

The bizarre circumstances surrounding this monument — the first, publicly known, posthumous tribute to William Shakespeare — are duplicated by similar ones in the second, publicly known, posthumous tribute which carried his only other "authentic" portrait. Qualified and objective experts have pointed out that that portrait — the Droeshout engraving in The First Folio (1623) — was given two left arms and two right eyes. None of this evidence was introduced in the Sept. 25th proceedings. Beyond question — there could be no other explanation —, those who participated in arranging for and approving of these consanguineous artifices intended to send a message to posterity about the person of William Shakespeare. Traditional authorities have circumvented this tangible and provocative evidence by conveniently ignoring it.

There are a number of other such instances in which the justices revealed a lack of information or misinformation but the limitations of space preclude delineating them at this time.

Morse Johnson

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SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY HOLDS ELEVENTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOLLOWING HISTORIC MOOT COURT

A sunlit autumn day ushered in the truly historic debate on the authorship of Shakespeare's works, held Friday, September 25 in the beautiful setting of the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., across the street from American University, whose Washington School of Law provided two of its professors to argue the case of "Oxford vs. Shakespeare" before three justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, William Brennan, Harry Blackmun, and John Paul Stevens.

This "moot court" was attended by a wide spectrum of representatives of the media, of the Stratfordian camp (Louis Marder, Samuel Schoenbaum), of the Shakespeare Oxford Society (Gordon Cyr, Morse Johnson, Charlton Ogburn, Russell des Cognets, Ruth Loyd Miller, Judge Minos D. Miller, and many others), and of official custodians of Shakespeare studies and artifacts, such as the Folger Library (Director Werner Gundersheimer) and the Shakespeare Quarterly (Barbara Mowat and John Andrews). In addition, as Louis Marder writes (The Shakespeare Newsletter, Fall 1987, No. 195, p. 29), "over 1,000 curious individuals crowded the pews, aisles, balcony, choir loft, lobby, and outer steps [of the church] . . . Hundreds were turned away."

The Society's gratitude goes, in the greatest measure, to David Lloyd Kreeger, well-known philanthropist and patron of the arts in our nation's capital, for his stewardship, conception, and masterminding of this important event. Thanks to Mr. Kreeger's efforts (as well as those of President Richard Berendzen of the American University and Dean of the Washington Law School, Fred Anderson), the Moot Court received international coverage by press and TV (including advance spots on the NBC Today and ABC Good Morning, America shows), with front page stories the following day in The New York Times and Washington Post.

Friday evening, the Eleventh Annual National Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society opened at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill, with Gordon Cyr, Executive Vice-President presiding. This was devoted to a business meeting, in which events of the past year were discussed, including the publication of Helen W. Cyr's The Shakespeare Identity Crisis, the availability of the Smithsonian Magazine article on the Oxfordian theory in its September 1987 issue (write to Smithsonian, P.O. Box 55593, Boulder, CO 80322-5593), a

reminder of our microfilm copies for sale of the complete run of Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletters from June 30, 1965 — Spring of 1985 (\$8.50, including postage and handling). Order from Shakespeare Oxford Society, P.O. Box 16254, Baltimore, MD 21210), and a reminder of the Oxford T-Shirt, with the words "Edward de Vere, the real Shakespeare" — available at \$10.00 each, in sizes S, M, L, XL (order from Oxford the Earl, Box 20395, London Terrace Station, New York, NY 10011). Phillip Proulx, S.O.S. Treasurer, gave a financial report to the members present.

It was decided that the business meeting should be extended to Saturday morning, so that an election of officers could be held. At the morning meeting (as well as at another meeting for members only held at 12 noon), the following officers were reelected: Executive Vice-President, Gordon C. Cyr; Honorary President, Charlton Ogburn; Treasurer, Phillip Proulx; Secretary, Helen W. Cyr; Editor of the Newsletter, Morse Johnson. Also, a new post of Assistant Secretary was created, and Robert O'Brien was elected for this post. It was also moved and seconded to create an additional complement of directors, representative of the various regions of the U.S., who would constitute — along with the six elected officials mentioned — a Board of Directors who would meet annually. Nominated and elected were Barbara Crowley (West), John Price (Midwest), Irving Blatt, M.D. (South), Stephanie Caruana (New York), Elisabeth Sears and Charles Boyle (New England). In addition, the Executive Vice-President appointed two longtime members, Michael Steinbach, M.D. and Russell des Cognets, to represent the West and Midwest respectively. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously acclaimed to make our conference's guest, Lord Charles Vere of Hanworth, both an Honorary Member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and an Honorary Member of the Board of Directors. A short meeting of the new board was scheduled following the adjournment of the conference.

The first speaker of the morning session was Ruth Loyd Miller, editor of the new editions of J.T. Looney's Shakespeare Identified, E.T. Clark's Hidden Allusions, etc. Mrs. Miller's talk covered a variety of Oxfordian topics, including a critique of Prof. Steven W. May's position in a recent article, "The Tudor Aristocracy and the Mythical Stigma of Print." [Emphasis ours.] Mrs. Miller rebutted May's downplaying of the anti-Stratfordian argument that poets of the Elizabethtown nobility were effectively proscribed from publishing their verse by citing many commentators from the period, such as Puttenham (Lumley, if you will) and one Thomas Tynne, among others, who contradict May's inference. Mrs. Miller also discussed her interesting, if speculative, interpretation of the presence of St. Anthony's artifacts in the Basilica in Padua and their relationship to Shakespeare's motive for locating The Taming of the Shrew in that city.

Charlton Ogburn, author of The Mysterious William Shakespeare (which served as the principal source for Prof. Peter Jaszi's defense of the Oxford case at the Moot Court), was the next speaker during the morning session. He discussed briefly his "Afterthoughts on the Debate," but largely left the floor open for the conference attendees to give their own impressions. Mr. Ogburn first called upon David Cavers, Fessenden Professor Emeritus of the Harvard Law School, to discuss the debate from a legal perspective. Prof. Cavers felt that, judged as a debate, the proceeding favored Oxford, even though he understood the reasons for the legal ruling the justices rendered to the contrary. Another legal opinion was forthcoming from Morse Johnson, Newsletter editor, who felt that our side's attorney did not put the Stratfordian side on the defensive on the matter of the embarrassing silences among literary figures following Shakespeare's death. And Victor Crichton, a new member, said that the inadequacies of Justice Brennan's "ruling" could form the basis for an appeal. A more optimistic note was sounded by Joseph Sobran, a writer for National Review and a recent convert to the Oxfordian cause, who said that the positive effects of the debate far outweighed the ruling against Oxford made by the three justices. "There is no such thing as bad publicity," said Sobran, pointing out that the justices effectively dismissed the other candidates for Shakespearean honors from serious consideration.

Recognition was given to our other distinguished journalist-guests at the conference, including (in addition to Mr. Sobran) Jim Lardner of New Yorker, Charles Champlin of the Los Angeles Times, and Louis Marder of The Shakespeare Newsletter. Dr. Marder's longtime advocacy of the Stratfordian cause provided, in fact, some of the more lively moments at the

conference. After chiding Charlton Ogburn for the many "ifs," "should have been's" and "could have been's" in The Mysterious William Shakespeare, Mr. Ogburn queried, "And, of course, such a procedure is unknown among Stratfordian writers?" Later, Mr. Ogburn paid tribute to Dr. Marder's willingness to be "a lion in a den of Davids," to which the latter replied, "Or a David in a den of lions." There followed an adjournment for lunch.

In the afternoon session, Lord Charles Vere of Hanworth, our guest at the conference, discussed the De Vere Society which he had organized at Oxford University's Hertford College, in which Lord Vere is enrolled. A direct descendant, not of our 17th earl but of the latter's grandfather, the 15th earl of Oxford (John de Vere), Lord Vere has been promoting the 17th earl's candidacy for Shakespeare's authorship ever since the decline of the Shakespearean Authorship Trust a few years ago. He intends to make his De Vere Society the chief advocate for the Oxfordian theory in England, and he circulated an impressive list of guest speakers for his series of lectures currently going on. Lord Vere also had for sale several prints made by a local artist featuring the two principals in the Washington debate; proceeds from the sales were to benefit the De Vere Society.

Carole Sue Lipman was our next guest speaker. Ms. Lipman chairs southern California's Shakespearean Authorship Roundtable, and her discussion focused on the origins and activities of the Roundtable. She said that members of her group consist of adherents on every side of the authorship issue, including Dr. Louis Marder and Thad Taylor, a theatrical producer, from the Stratfordian side; the late Calvin Hoffman and Louis Ule representing the Marlovian theory; Elizabeth Wrigley, librarian of the Francis Bacon Library at Claremont College, but herself a "groupist," and George Eliot Sweet, promoter of Queen Elizabeth's candidacy. Ms. Lipman, who is a film maker by vocation, said that the largest single group of Roundtable members was composed of Oxfordians, and that many of these had come to the theory from reading Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare and, of course through the longtime enthusiastic advocacy of Oxford's cause by Ruth Loyd Miller and her husband, Judge Minos D. Miller.

Upon adjournment of the conference, the newly-elected Board of Directors held a short meeting to discuss plans for the Society next year. Through the generosity of Russel des Cognets, a reception was held in an adjoining room. The Shakespeare Oxford Society wishes to extend its gratitude and appreciation to Mr. des Cognets for this very pleasant postlude to a memorable conference.

Gordon C. Cyr

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From The Washington Post
October 24, 1987

NO ONE KNOWS IF SHAKESPEARE WROTE THE PLAYS

Constance Holden

I am glad Amy Schwartz [op-ed, Oct. 14] thought the Shakespeare Oxford debate was important enough to write a column about, but I'm sorry she didn't read Charlton Ogburn's book "The Mysterious William Shakespeare" before taking such a confident stance on a question that probably will never be satisfactorily resolved.

The reason so many people have been interested over the years in the "Shakespeare authorship question" is that there is no concrete evidence that Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays. Despite autobiographies crammed with speculation, almost nothing is known about the man's life. There are only six signatures attributed to him (most on his will) and he left no books or manuscripts. There is no information on his education, his travels, when and how long he was in London and what he did the last 10 years of his life in Stratford (where most agree he apparently wrote nothing). No public notice was taken of his death until years afterward — very odd for a man whose plays were much performed and admired during his

life. There are perhaps two contemporaneous references to him, but they might well have been to a pseudonymous Shakespeare. This almost total, and certainly mysterious, absence of information about him is why there has been all the speculation.

If someone else wrote the plays, there is abundant circumstantial evidence favoring Edward de Vere, earl of Oxford, a prominent figure in Queen Elizabeth's court, a poet and patron of the arts. He loved Italy, where many of the plays are based, and he was deeply read in classical works, knowledge of which is reflected in the plays. The works reflect intimate familiarity with the ways of the court, hunting, falconry, music, medicine, law and art, as well as the aristocratic attitudes and contempt for the mob that might be expected of a nobleman. Further, there are uncanny resemblances to events in his own life — much of "Hamlet," for example, could be autobiographical (de Vere's father died, his mother remarried promptly and his foster father, Lord Burghley, Elizabeth's right-hand man, is widely acknowledged to be the model for Polonius).

Granted, it is puzzling why he would keep his authorship secret. However, it was not de rigueur for a nobleman to publish under his own name, the stage was not respectable, and the queen might well have ordered secrecy because some of the plays served useful political purposes for her.

It seems to me that ultimately we are asked to choose between two improbable authors: to many people, Shakespeare of Stratford is even more improbable than the earl.

The charge of elitism is especially grating to Oxfordians. This has nothing to do with the argument. Although I can't see what this has to do with political beliefs, it does seem that liberals are more dogmatic in their support of Shakespeare of Stratford — for example Judge Brennan, said to be the most liberal member of the Supreme Court, dismissed Oxford out of hand (although he hadn't read the book).

The real issue has to do with whether a man's life has anything to do with what he writes. Liberals, it seems, cling to the romantic belief that true genius will express itself regardless of training or environment. This runs counter to modern research on genius and creativity, which discloses that proper nurturing is essential. (Mozart, for example, had the best musical training available from childhood, from his father.) The notion that genius substitutes for education and experience also runs against the conviction held by liberals that environment is far more powerful than heredity in determining character and achievements.

I think the authorship dilemma is an extraordinary demonstration of the obduracy and narrowmindedness of academics, many of whom have dismissed the Oxford hypothesis out of hand, and have even indulged in snide ad hominem attacks on author Ogburn (tenure, it seems, is more important than the search for truth). If scientists had the same standards of evidence and lack of curiosity as literature professors the Earth might still be flat!

I think it was probably a mistake to subject the debate to a legal model, if a scientific model had been used, the judges would have had to acknowledge that neither side had proven its case, and the question, contrary to Amy Schwartz's confident conclusions, would still be very much open.

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A COURTIER'S CAPE FOR THE STRATFORD MAN?

by Gordon C. Cyr

A curious Stratfordian argument surfaced briefly at the Eleventh Annual National Conference of the Society on September 26 (see elsewhere in this issue). Dr. Louis Marder, editor of The Shakespeare Newsletter, in responding to S.O.S. member Charles Boyle's observation that among the many inexplicable features of the Droeshout engraving, there

appeared to be two left arms, contended that this was to be explained by the presence of a courtier's cape (which, Marder said, was to be found in many portraits of "gentlemen of the period") causing such a distortion in the elevation of the shoulder.

This is puzzling, inasmuch as the Droeshout's subject is wearing no such cape. Indeed, the feature would not even be noticed if a cape were covering one of the arms. That aside, however, in Marshall's engraving prefaced to the 1640 edition of The Poems of Wil. Shake-speare, Gent., such a cape does appear, draped over the right shoulder.

It is a pity that the format of the conference did not allow time to ask Dr. Marder how he would account for Shakespeare's sporting of this garment in Marshall's redrawing of the original Droeshout portrait. Certainly, the Stratford man's hard-won "coat-of-arms" did not entitle him to this privilege, reserved for the nobility of which Shakespeare was not a member, pace the "Gent." he was legally allowed to append to his monicker. As Charles Wisner Barrell pointed out in his January 1940 article concerning his investigations of the "Ashbourne" portrait, a large number of alleged "Shakespeare portraits" show their subject bedecked in the habiliments of the Tudor aristocracy. Given the fact that dress codes were rigidly enforced distinguishing the social classes of that time, the circumstance noted by Barrell has not been satisfactorily explained to this day by the Stratfordian side.

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to document and establish Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604) as the universally recognized author of the works of William Shakespeare. Each Newsletter carries articles which impart a wide range of information and commentary which the editor considers relevant to that purpose. Some articles will inevitably contain opinions, deductions and evidence which some SOS members believe to be invalid, inaccurate, irrelevant or irrational. The Newsletter is always open to letters of dissent and correction.

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