



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY

NEWSLETTERS

1992

The Shakespeare Oxford Society

Cathedral Station, P.O. Box 0550, New York, N.Y. 10025-0550

NEWSLETTER
SPRING

VOLUME 23, NO. 2

Morse Johnson, Editor



Editor, SOS Newsletter

June 7, 1992

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Readers of your Newsletter may be interested to learn of the following circumstances relevant to the full disclosure of the historical evidence pertaining to the thesis first proposed by John Thomas Looney in 1920, and kept alive through the diligent efforts of many dedicated and capable members of this Society, that "Shakespeare" was a nom de plume for Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

This past January I was privileged to study the 1570 Geneva Bible originally owned by the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and now kept by the Shakespeare Folger Library in Washington, D.C.. Dr. Paul Nelson and Isabel Holden brought to my attention that this Bible, which was purchased by Henry Clay Folger in 1925, was in the possession of the Folger.

Although the Bible is presently on display along with the Folger's 1992 display of "Fine Bindings", its contents had not been examined by Folger staff prior to my recent study and it seems that Oxfordian researchers were not aware of its existence. Apparently the display of the Bible -- as if to hide a blazing candle under the bushel of four hundred years of a pax Ceciliana unrelieved by any vision of the historical alternative -- contains no mention of the Oxfordian thesis.

The Bible, which bears the heraldic devices of the Earls of Oxford, contains over a thousand marked passages and annotations, apparently in the handwriting of the original owner. These include underlining in at least three different colors of ink, a variety of small drawings, and a few sparse marginal comments.

For several months, as time permitted between other obligations, I have carefully studied these annotations in light of what is known about the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, the authorship controversy, and Shakespeare's knowledge and use of the Bible in its various published forms. The Bible is almost certainly the book which exhibits the most widely distributed and various influence on Shakespeare's literary imagination. While the Geneva Bible is not the only Bible used by Shakespeare, it appears to have been the most important. If, as Looney postulated, Oxford wrote under the nom de plume "Shakespeare", we might reasonably expect, or at least hope, to discover some indications affirming that fact in Oxford's Geneva Bible.

This expectation is more than fulfilled by Oxford's Geneva Bible. Data derived from Richmond Noble (1935) and Naseeb Shaheen (1989, 1990), the two most able scholars of Shakespeare's biblical knowledge, demonstrate a congruence between Oxford's marked Biblical passages, and those used by Shakespeare, which should arouse the fear and loathing of loyal Stratfordians across the world, and the curious attention of just about everyone else with an interest in history and literature. It is possible, of course, that this congruence may result from Oxford and "Shakespeare" sharing the same biblical culture of Elizabethan England, in which certain ideas and passages from the Bible were popular among all literate readers.

My study, however, goes on to trace the major idea and image clusters, both those marked by Oxford (which fall into a distinct pattern), and those which Shakespeare derives from the Bible (which fall into a larger and more complicated, but no less structured pattern) which impart an identity to the annotator. I can securely add a dozen or more important sources to those provided by Noble and Shaheen, for passages

in Hamlet, The Rape of Lucrece and other Shakespeare texts. In a few cases it is even possible to correct mistakes, by pointing to a parallel passage, scored by the Earl of Oxford, which matches Shakespeare's language more precisely than does the passage cited by prior researchers.

Cross-checking to determine the influence, if any, of these biblical passages in Shakespeare's contemporaries Spencer, Jonson, and Marlowe, should provide sufficient grounds to determine the specificity of Shakespeare's Bible interest and determine to what extent, if any, the congruence between Oxford's annotations and Shakespeare's literary interest in the Bible might be construed as a consequence of generic cultural influences. At present it appears that although some of the congruence between Shakespeare and Oxford can be explained away through such a critical method, other verses marked in Oxford's Bible are used only by Shakespeare.

My study throws into bold relief the present ironic circumstances of Shakespearean orthodoxy -- a body of discourse which, in its almost complete inability to comprehend the historical plausibility of the Oxfordian thesis, presently discovers itself fighting a counter-discourse which it does not understand and knows almost nothing about. As Warren Hope commented in a past issue of the Newsletter, there really is no need for new Oxfordian evidence until academic Shakespeareans begin to actually examine the evidence which is already on the table -- much of it since 1920.

The Earl of Oxford's Geneva Bible, however, contains a bonanza of new evidence. This evidence deserves to be weighed in its proper comparative and historical light. No less eminent a Shakespeare scholar than Terry Eagleton, in a critical review of a recent specimen of bardography, declares that we know about as much of the man from Stratford as we about... "the Yeti". This is a polite way of saying that everything that is known -- and judging by the size of Professor Schoenbaum's book, it is not really that little -- about the man from Stratford suggests the unlikelihood, if not the impossibility, that he can have been the author.

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens affirms this evidentiary lacunae in his "Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction" (1991). For Stevens, while there are ample grounds for suspecting the autobiographical character of Hamlet -- given the rather obvious implications of Shakespeare's jaundiced portrayal of William Cecil as Polonius -- the Stratfordian evidentiary basis is as compelling as a paper tiger. Where, asks Stevens, are Shakespeare's books? Well here, perhaps, is one of them: his Bible. Finis coronat opus -- let us savor the irony all the way to the end, the Folger Library owns it.

I anticipate that the results of this study will be forthcoming within a year -- preferably in a major academic journal. If any qualified writers are interested in collaborating on a more populist article, please contact me.

Roger Stritmatter
Teaching Assistant
Comparative Literature
Umass, Amherst

VIVE LA FRANCE

"My son recently spoke to a Frenchman about Oxford/Shakespeare and he replied that the case for Oxford is well known in France and he believes the plays are taught in some schools with the true author."

Marie Willis
(An English Member of S.O. Society)

"STARS OR SUNS"

by

Richard Desper

Since I became an Oxfordian, I find that, as I reread or again see a Shakespeare work, I experience it in a new light and now look forward to the new experience of first reading or seeing a play in the light of Oxfordian authorship. I expect to run across some obscure little passage or innocuous speech to leap from the scene and bring to my mind a single word: Oxford!

Such a thing happened to me recently when I saw the Kenneth Branagh film version of Henry V. A scene takes place in the French camp on the eve of the battle of Agincourt. French noblemen are in a conversation, and one of them asks the Constable of France, "The armour that I see in your tent tonight, are those stars or suns upon it?" [III,vii,74] Five years ago the whole exchange would have meant little to me; perhaps I would have asked myself, "What on earth is that all about?" This time, in light of what I have learned about the deVeres, the word came to mind: Oxford!

In light of what we know about the Earl of Oxford, I suggest that this little byplay about "Stars or Suns" is not about King Henry V or the battle of Agincourt at all. Instead, it is about a later king, and a battle which took place some fifty years later, and an Earl of Oxford. It is also an example of a clue which Edward deVere left in his plays as he went from being Anonymous to assuming the nom-de-plume of William Shakespeare.

As for the "Stars or Suns" remark, we find that, historically, there once was a battle whose outcome hinged upon the ability of a military commander to distinguish between the two of his opponent's insignia. Such was the battle of Barnet in the Wars of the Roses fought on April 14, 1471. As always, the men of John deVere, 13th Earl of Oxford, were arrayed on the side of Lancaster, and for this battle the men of the Earl of Warwick were on the same side. However, disaster struck the Lancastrian cause on this particular day when the commander of the Warwick archers saw, through a mist, a body of fighting men approaching his position bearing what he took to be a sun on their accoutrements. The soldiers were those of the Earl of Oxford and they wore a star - the same star which the deVeres had carried into the battle since the First Crusade. Mistaking it for the sun of York, Warwick's commander ordered his archers to fire, routing the Lancastrians and assuring victory for the forces of York who proceeded to restore Edward IV to the English throne.

Examining the passage in the light of Oxford authorship, we may be sure that the boy who was to be the 17th Earl of Oxford had been told, during his youth, about the day on which the fate of a throne rested on a man's ability to distinguish between a star and a sun. When I heard this episode in Henry V, I chuckled and said to myself, "You sly old fox, you managed to leave an Oxfordian allusion in the play." You see, Henry V was not the first play about the heroic king. That prolific Elizabethan playwright Anonymous had written an earlier play, The Famous Victories of King Henry the Fifth. (sic) which included not only the Agincourt campaign, but also material which later appears in the Henry IV plays. In particular, it contained the highway robbery escapade at Gad's Hill which Charlton Ogburn, in The Mysterious William Shakespeare, has shown to have been drawn from an actual episode in the life of Edward deVere, even to the extent of identifying the exact date. The earlier play also featured a prominent role (having some degree of historical basis) for the 11th Earl of Oxford at the battle of Agincourt.

By the time Edward deVere had written the later version and seen it staged and published as Shakespeare's Henry V, the role of Oxford was written out of the play completely. Perhaps deVere was told by his royal patrons to tone down the role of

the Earl of Oxford in order to focus on the king. He did so, even to the extent of writing 'out his ancestor who had legitimately played a major role at Agincourt. And yet the playwright could not resist the temptation to leave his mark in the final play, in the seemingly pointless remark about "Stars or Suns".

Excerpts from the Obituary of Dr. Peter Sammartino
in the New York Times (3/30/92)
(A picture was included)

"Peter Sammartino, the founder of Farleigh Dickinson University (died March 29, 1992)...

The University Dr. Sammartino founded...is to celebrate its 50th anniversary this year (and) is the largest private university in New Jersey...

Dr. Sammartino served as president until he retired in 1967 but remained active at the university and in other causes. He was the president of the New York Cultural Center in the former Gallery of Modern Art building at Columbus Circle for five years... He also founded the International Association of University Professors and served as its president.

...He also participated in the President's Commission on Higher Education, the White House Conference on Education, the Peace Corps advisory board and the National Board of Foreign Scholarships.

Dr. Sammartino was born in New York City. He graduated from City College in 1924 and earned a doctorate in Philosophy from New York University in 1931...He wrote more than a dozen books on education..."

Dr. Sammartino was a notable and dedicated Oxfordian for many years and a significant and active member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, particularly during the last five years when he finished his highly recommended The Man Who Was William Shakespeare (Cornwall Books 1990). It is, therefore, difficult to believe that the N.Y. Times obituary archives did not contain Dr. Sammartino's prominent and scholarly contributions to the resolution of the world-wide and over a century old Shakespeare authorship question.

THE SHAKESPEARE CONTROVERSY BOOK FULFILLMENT

To date, the book order for The Shakespeare Controversy (by Dr. Warren Hope and Kim Holston) totals 100, giving the Society a discount of 40% off the retail price of \$29.95. Thus, the discount price per book for members comes to \$15.60, plus \$1.50 (for each book ordered). Members should receive their copies in August.

Members who ordered should make out their checks to the "Shakespeare Oxford Society". Mail to: Gary Goldstein, Trustee, Shakespeare-Oxford Society, 123-60 83 Avenue, Suite 11-0, Kew Gardens, NY, 11415. In order to guarantee the discount, we must have checks in hand by July 17. Those who have not yet ordered may still do so at the same discount price.

OXFORD AND ANAMORPHIC ART

by Linda B. McLatchie

In art, the use of extreme perspective to condense and distort an image beyond immediate recognition is called anamorphism. In order to "undistort" anamorphic art, one must tilt the artwork at an angle and look at it sideways. Because it is merely a technical curiosity, anamorphism is a bit of a rarity.

Sixteenth-century anamorphic art was primarily Continental -- Italian, German, Flemish. The earliest known example of anamorphic art appears in the sketchbooks of Leonardo da Vinci (1425-1519). In the 1530s, Erhard Schon, a pupil of Durer, produced several anamorphic prints. In 1533, Hans Holbein painted "The Ambassadors", featuring an anamorphic skull between the two subjects' feet.

In sixteenth-century England, an example of anamorphic art used to hang in Whitehall Palace (it can now be seen at the National Portrait Gallery, London). It is the anamorphic portrait of Edward VI, Henry VIII's only son and Elizabeth I's half-brother. The portrait, dated 1546, is attributed to William Scrots.

A German traveller, Paul Hentzner, was struck by this portrait when he visited the principal apartments at Whitehall Palace: "A picture of King Edward VI representing at first sight something quite deformed, till by looking through a small hole in the cover, which is put over it, you see it in its true proportions." (The portrait was housed in a box.)

Shakespeare was familiar with anamorphic art (and knew that one must look at it at an angle to make sense of it), as is apparent in these lines from Richard II:

For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire, to many objects,
Like perspectives,* which rightly gaz'd upon,
Show nothing but confusion, ey'd awry,
Distinguish form!

Richard II, act 2, scene 2)

Considering the rarity of anamorphic art in sixteenth-century England, Shakespeare was probably referring to the portrait of Edward VI. The question is: Who would have been more likely to have seen the anamorphic artwork of Whitehall Palace -- Oxford or Shaksper? Stratfordians would contend that Shaksper, as an actor in the Company of Lord Chamberlain's men, might have performed at Whitehall Palace.

Whitehall Palace (which Henry VIII confiscated from Cardinal Wolsey) was Elizabeth I's principal royal residence in London. Although little of it remains today, in Elizabeth's time it was an enormous structure with hundreds of rooms, covering over 20 acres. Even if it is true that Shaksper the actor performed at Whitehall, he would have done so in the Great Hall. The Edward VI portrait, however, hung in the principal apartments.

Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, was no doubt well acquainted with the private apartments of Whitehall, both as an intimate of the Queen and as the ranking peer of the realm. One can almost imagine Elizabeth herself hosting Oxford at Whitehall and pointing out this clever, distorted portrait of her long-dead half-brother.

The reference to anamorphic art is just one more small bit of evidence that points to Oxford, not Shaksper, as the author of the Shakespearean canon. It is my belief that Oxford soaked up every experience like a dry sponge and transmuted his experiences into the poetic images of Shakespeare.

*"Anamorphism" is a 17th-century term; Shakespeare, or Oxford, would have known it by the term "perspectives".

REFERENCES

- Baltrusaitis, Jurgis. Anamorphic Art, translated by W. J. Strachan. Cambridge, 1977.
Hearsey, John E. N. Bridge, Church and Palace in Old London. London, 1961.
Hentzner, Paul. A Journey into England. 1598.

IONA DELETES OXFORD PAGE FROM SHAKESPEARE NEWLETTER

For those of you who were unaware of it, The Shakespeare Newsletter (SNL) edited by Dr. Louis Marder has, for the past several years, carried an "Oxford Page" edited by Russell de Cognets, a Vice President of SOS. It has been one of the most popular features of the Stratfordian organ and was the result, initially, of a "gentleman's agreement" between Dr. Marder and Mr. des Cognets whereby Mr. de Cognets made a contribution to SNL and a Shakespeare data bank operated by Dr. Marder, and the good doctor allowed the publication of the Oxford page.

Late last year, Dr. Marder sold his interest in SNL to Iona College and the newsletter has come under the editorship of the apparent head of the English Department at Iona, one Professor Thomas Pendleton. Dr. Pendleton and the scions of free academia discourse at Iona have decided that the Oxford Page must go, and the college will allow no more submissions by Mr. des Cognets in the previous format after the Spring, 1992 issue. In the most recent issue of SNL (Winter, 1991; Iona's first), Dr. Pendleton presumed to dispose of the entire matter in a short editorial announcing Iona's decision. Citing the need to be a "responsible" publication (we define the word "responsible" differently, he and I), Dr. Pendleton notes the two clear arguments which make the granting of an Oxford Page the extension of a "prominence" which it does not deserve. First, he points out that by the "generally accepted chronology" of the writing of the plays, Oxford simply died too soon to have been the man. Second, he states that it is absolutely absurd to think that a conspiracy to conceal the authorship could possibly have survived to this day, what with all of the handful of people that would have been privy to the secret in autocratic Elizabethan England that just could not keep quiet, people in such circumstances being so eager to go the way of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Why did we not think of these? Why, it seems that Dr. Pendleton could have saved us all of this time and trouble reading books, plays and poetry, forming societies and making national tours if he would simply have advised us of these two devastating death-blows to Oxfordianism years ago. Of course, if we had allowed ourselves to have been so misled, we also would have been deprived, as his students apparently will be, of the profound satisfaction of reading and experiencing the works of Shakespeare knowing the identity of the author. Dr. Pendleton's "clinchers" have long since been dissolved by the work of Charlton Ogburn, Jr. and J. Thomas Looney as well as others, but it is easy to make an argument when you try to silence the opposition and you do not spend too much time discussing the issue.

Russell des Cognets asked me as an attorney to help him run interference for him in his dispute with Iona and I continue to do so. Events which occurred after the initial agreement between he and Dr. Marder resulted in a binding contract for the continuance of the Oxford Page and we are determining the proper forum and style of action to be brought against Iona and, of necessity, Dr. Marder. But the real battleground upon which this fight will be pressed is that of academic honesty and one can only assume that Stratfordianism declines to engage because it fears the weapons of Oxford brings to bear at the tilt.

Len Deming
Nashua, N.H.

WHEN THE SEARCH FOR SHAKESPEARE GOT SPOOKY

by Gene Williamson

A strange thing happened in Williamsburg, Virginia. When no one was looking someone dug a "mysterious hole" on the grounds of the Bruton Parish cemetery. The date was September 9, 1991. As reported in the local Daily Press, it was "the work of a group seeking documents it believes will prove Sir Francis Bacon wrote plays credited to William Shakespeare." Bruton Parish, an Episcopal church, was built in 1715.

When the hole was discovered eighty feet from the chapel, it was empty and nothing had been removed. Parish administrator Paul Parsons, declining to name the diggers, said he suspected the dig was linked to the "quest for some vault." It was not the first time. Fifty-three years ago, with the church's permission, a group known as Veritat hoped to unearth documents brought to Williamsburg in the 1600s that would prove Bacon wrote the Shakespeare plays. Of course in the 1600s there was no Bruton Parish, but Veritat leader Marie Bauer Hall was prompted by "anagrams" in the plays which she said indicated the vault location. Parsons said there was no apparent connection between Veritat and the latest digging but felt the second group had the same goals. Though Hall told Associated Press that Veritat was not responsible, she did "urge church officials to conduct another excavation." Bruton Parish Rector Richard May was confident that nothing but the foundation would be found.

On September 13 the Daily Press headline read: DIGGERS SAY SHAKESPEARE A SHILL. The article revealed that a group from New Mexico had admitted digging the hole to find documents that would show William Shakespeare of Stratford did not write the works bearing his name--a belief shared by many skeptics who contend he "was an ill-educated bumpkin acting as a shill for a true literary genius." His name was spelled in the records as Shaksper.

This was too much for Robert Fehrenbach, professor of English at the College of William & Mary: "There's a lot of people in the world with a lot of time on their hands who have to do something." Fehrenbach did admit that Shakespeare's life "remains mysterious and that leads to the belief that Shakespeare didn't write the plays. Everything about him is a mystery." Still, he said, most scholars believe Shakespeare did write the plays, adding that much of the evidence put forward by skeptics is circumstantial; i.e., that the man from Stratford had no more than a grammar school education. "It puzzles a lot of people that the guy never went to the university," said the professor. Skeptics say there is no evidence that he even went to grammar school, or that he could read and write.

Fehrenbach held that "many [skeptics say none] of his manuscripts have never been found" and that he abandoned the stage at the height of his career. He explained that Shakespeare "was a good businessman" in it for the money. Once he had his nestegg he quit the stage, "went home, bought the biggest house in town and raised sheep. That doesn't sound like someone interested in high art." Nor does it sound like the man who wrote Hamlet.

Fehrenbach pointed to the claim by some that a nobleman would have been looked down on for being a professional playwright and he would have needed a front man to publish the plays. He likened it to Prince Charles being "the writer of all kinds of potboilers." No one asked if he was calling Henry V a potboiler.

The Daily Press explained that "those who believe Shakespeare wrote the plays are called Stratfordians and that the supporters of Sir Francis Bacon are known as Baconians." When the Baconian theory was advanced by Delia Salter Bacon in 1856, she took this swipe at the Stratford Shaksper: "You do not know what is really in the plays if you believe that that booby wrote them." But, said the newspaper, "even

confirmed Baconians admit that their candidate is no longer the leading alternative." According to Elizabeth Wrigley, current director of the Francis Bacon Library in California, "It goes in cycles. Bacon hasn't been ahead for a long time." She said "the leading candidate now is Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford," the highly regarded Elizabethan poet who, because of his jousting skills, was known as the spear-shaker. His supporters, now called Oxfordians, dispute the phrase "alternative for authorship" because they believe that de Vere and Shakespeare were one and the same.

Fehrenbach said the evidence that Shakespeare wrote the plays comes in "the form of references to him by those who would have known him." Oxfordians and other skeptics say the references are to Shakespeare, often hyphenated as a pen name, not to Shaksper or Shaxpr or whatever it was the Stratford man called himself.

Most traditionalists say that Anti-Stratfordianism is lunacy perpetuated by nonprofessionals (eccentrics other than professors of English lit). Yet it was Freud who said the man of Stratford "seems to have nothing to justify his claim." And Mark Twain wrote, "Isn't it odd, when you think about it, that you may list all the celebrated Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen of modern times, clear back to the first Tudors--a list containing five hundred names, shall we say?--and you can go to the histories, biographies, and cyclopedias and learn the particular lives of every one of them. Every one of them except one--the most famous, the most renowned--by far the most illustrious of them all--Shakespeare!" A baffled Twain continued, "About him you can find nothing. Nothing of even the slightest importance...Nothing that even remotely indicates that he was ever anything more than a distinctly commonplace person." Said "nonprofessional" Henry James: "I am 'sort of' haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world."

On September 17 Bruton Parish officials said if there was any evidence buried in the churchyard to prove that Bacon did write the plays, it would not be unearthed anytime soon. Yet the vestry which directs church affairs "left open the possibility that further research and possible digging might take place under their auspices." Consideration would be given to an investigation conducted by professional archeologists. "We don't want it to be a circus," said a member of the vestry.

A Daily Press editorial stated: "No doubt the church leaders would like to settle the issue once and for all by proving conclusively there is nothing there--no vault, no writings, no mystic messages." The use of radar and other electronics to test the soil on a limited basis in 1985 and 1986 suggested that something might lie under the churchyard.

On September 20 officials said they would not prosecute the New Mexico diggers--identified as Marsha Middleton, her husband Frank Flint, Middleton's two sons (ages seven and twelve), a friend Doug Moore, and eighty-two year old Aurora Burnell who financed the project. Middleton sought Parish cooperation but vowed "to keep on with her search even if it means being charged with trespassing." She claimed her mission was greater than any decision by church officials, greater even than the desire to prove that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. Hers was a holy mission. Middleton believed the vault also contained a "pattern of utopia" written by Bacon when he was "re-embodied" as a saint. "We can't have these little groups saying Marsha's a bad person," she said. "It's time to mature. This is a spiritual thing. This is God's law."

As reported in the Daily Press, while the thirty-nine year old Middleton was digging, "the Virgin Mary appeared before her and provided her with an encouraging warm presence." She had seen the virgin mother once before as a teenager, and said she was blessed with the supernatural powers of a clairvoyant.

Christ first appeared to Marsha Middleton when she was nineteen, attending business school in a "ritzy" southern California beach community. She decided

devote her life to "humanity" and that devotion led her to colonial Williamsburg "to help prevent World War III and to unearth the first in a series of blueprints for utopia, secreted centuries ago." Thus when she and her followers dug the hole in the churchyard they were seeking (in addition to proof that Bacon wrote Shakespeare) "the first step in a message of spiritual enlightenment that must be revealed before the end of this century." She described the Bacon utopia as an "evolution-revolution" that would eliminate evil and unite all religions under one God. Bacon had predicted "a new democracy, a redistribution of resources and an end to hunger and homelessness." Middleton called it "the second coming of Christ." But--and here the dig took on its ominous overtones--if Bacon's message is not revealed before the year 2000, we are looking at "global catastrophe."

Robert Basil, editor of Prometheus Books in Buffalo, New York, described Middleton's mission as a manifestation of typical New Age yearning born of despair. He called New Age a religious movement "characterized by mystical belief in global peace, ecology, spiritualism and clairvoyance." Such movements are usually associated with some event of world-changing spiritual significance "occurring at the end of a century."

Middleton denied charges that she and her friends were "crazy, on drugs, trying to attract followers or collect money."

Financial backer Aurora Burnell described herself as a former teacher who had owned an art gallery in Connecticut before entering the travel business in New York. When she retired to New Mexico she met the Middleton group and found the "rapport was immediate." She had the feeling she had "known these people before."

Forty year old Frank Flint met Middleton in California and married her in September 1990. A native of Canada, Flint owned a wholesale bakery business in 1987 when he "experienced a blinding light" that made him burst into tears. He said the light had to do with "purity and love" and his destiny. So he quit his business and started having visions, some of which concerned the documents he believed were buried at Bruton Parish. "I ignore my rational mind and go where the spirit guides me," said Flint.

Doug Moore, age twenty-six, quit college and moved to New Mexico from Washington when he decided "there was no substance" to his studies. Middleton's project was the kind of substance he was looking for.

Marsha Middleton said her quest in Williamsburg was guided by the teachings of Marie Bauer Hall who had learned about the vault from codes in an unnamed seventeenth century book. A believer in reincarnation, Middleton said that in a past life she was the wife of Saint Peter and that Hall was the wife of Bacon. She described the buried documents as Bacon's prophetic philosophies, the original King James version of the Bible, the Book of Peter, the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence, and a guide to locations of eight other vaults. Neglecting to explain how the Constitution and Declaration (written in the late 1700s) managed to be buried in the 1600s, she said if all the documents are not located soon "the people will hold a peaceful demonstration until they are found." Or else, world-wide destruction.

Holocaust aside, anyone (mystic or otherwise) who believes Sir Francis Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare has never read Bacon. Any reader with the patience to wade through Bacon's utopian tale, New Atlantis, is bound to wind up with a case of terminal boredom. And though Bacon's essays "rank among the greatest ever written," they offer about as much wisdom today as an evening with William F. Buckley, Jr. All one needs to separate Bacon from Shakespeare is to peruse the first few lines of Bacon's essay Of Seeming Wise:

It hath been an opinion that the French are wiser than they seem, and the Spaniards seem wiser than they are; but howsoever it be between nations, certainly it is so between man and man; for, as the apostle saith of godliness, Having a show of godliness, but denying the power thereof, so certainly there are, in points

of wisdom and sufficiency, that do nothing, or little very solemnly--trifles, with great effort. It is a ridiculous thing, and fit for a satire to personify of judgement, to see what shifts these formalists have, and what prospective to make superficies to seem body, that hath depth and bulk. Some are so close and reserved as they will not show their wares but by a dark light, and seem always to keep back somewhat; and when they know within themselves they speak of that they do not well know, would nevertheless seem to others to know of that which they may not well speak...."

Or not well write. It perhaps is comment enough to borrow the words of Shakespeare's Ulysses in Troilus and Cressida: "I will not praise thy wisdom...." Yet one cannot resist the temptation to include the 1861 William Palgrave description of Bacon's verse as "a fine example of a peculiar class of poetry...written by thoughtful men, who practised this art but little." Or the 1897 footnote in D. H. Madden's The Diary of Master William Silence: Bacon "has been at pains to prove his incapacity of the higher flights of poetry by printing in the year 1625 a Translation of certain Psalms into English Verse, with a dedication to his very good friend Mr. George Herbert, in which he has transmuted fine oriental imagery into poor rhyming prose." Madden concluded: "It would, however, be unreasonable, and contrary to experience, to look for poetry of the highest order at the hands of a great philosopher...."

Bacon wrote a total of fifty-eight essays, including one On Friendship which he neglected to show to his friend Essex before he endorsed the crown's decision to put the earl to the axe, and one on Honor and Reputation (as well as Judicature), either before or after he was sentenced to the Tower for taking bribes as a judge. He also wrote an essay on Prophecies which he concluded by saying that "almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures...."

Bacon, in his wisdom, died of pneumonia on April 9, 1625, shortly after stuffing chickens with snow.

If what he wrote and published (under his own name) is the sum of Bacon's utopian wisdom and the only clue to his authorship of Shakespeare, then Marsha Middleton may as well give up the hunt for the vault and try to explain to the Roman Catholic papacy how she managed to marry the first Bishop of Rome.

On September 15, 1991, an injunction was issued by the circuit court barring Marsha Middleton and her merry band of mystics from further digging on the Bruton Parish property. Any more trespassing "could be punishable by up to a year in prison." Said the church rector: "She got in one dig for free, so to speak. Now we want her to be on notice." Middleton claimed the order was invalid because David Bray, a descendant of Bacon, holds deed to part of the property and she intends to seek his permission to find the hidden vault. She said that church officials "aren't mature enough to realize how life will change once the vault is opened." The officials said they mean business. One might hope that would end the farce and the world once again would be safe from catastrophe, but a later despatch reported that Middleton was now convinced "there are historically significant vaults also buried on the grounds of St. Luke's Historic Church in Smithfield and at Bacon's Castle Museum in Surry County [both sites in Virginia]." Moreover, she had gained support from Fletcher Richman, a public relations consultant and janitor who announced he would request the help of Shirley MacLaine, "the actress who believes in reincarnation and her ability to communicate with the dead." Richman said he also had obtained new evidence that the Williamsburg vault was "only one of 144 vaults buried around the world." He led a group of tourists to the Bruton Parish graveyards and explained the tombstone engravings told where the vault was buried. An "open-minded" tourist from New Jersey said, "I'd like to be around when they excavate."

By October 1 the controversy had reached official levels in the nation's capital. Middleton told a gathering that resistance was coming from the Smithsonian Institution.

and a "conspiracy by the Bush administration and others to cover up the existence of the Bruton Parish vault and the truth revealed in the documents."

Despite the shifting emphasis to Middleton's belief that the hidden vaults would lead to a twenty-first century utopia, her claim for Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare's works continued to rankle the local Stratfordians. In a letter to the Daily Press a reader wrote that "Shakespeare might roll over in his grave where he has been sleeping since his death in 1616 if he could only hear of the attempts to prove him to be a literary fraud." He concluded: "Methinks the great bard would have had his detractors remember a few lines from his Othello Act II, Scene 3: 'Who steals my purse steals trash, tis' something 'twas mine, now his, and has been slave to thousands. But he that filches from my good name, Robs me of that which now enriches him, And makes me poor indeed.'"

Unwittingly, contend Oxfordians, the letter writer took the words right out of Edward de Vere's pen.

According to Oxfordians, Edward de Vere was forced to conceal his identity as Shakespeare because, as a leading nobleman and intimate of Elizabeth I, he was privy to court intrigues, scandal, and treachery which he attempted to expose in the plays and poems. Had he written under his own name both he and his works would have been destroyed. Apparently, the man in charge of the cover-up was William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the queen's chief adviser. He has been called the J. Edgar Hoover of the Elizabethan administration.

But thereby hangs another tale.

####

CORRESPONDENCE

(British Heritage)

"Only Shadows"

I am among the growing number who believe that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is author of the matchless works [attributed to Shakespeare]. However, I welcome any discussion that focuses attention on the authorship of the wonderful plays and sonnets.

The attitude of those who hold to the traditional belief that a glover's son born in Stratford-upon-Avon wrote the matchless works calls to mind a significant allegory in Plato's Republic, about a group of men imprisoned in a cave. They were tied in such a way that they could see only shadows projected on the wall. One day one of the men escaped. At first he found the shadows of the cave cleaner than the blinding light of the real world, but as he became accustomed to the sun, he began to realize that the images on the cave wall were only shadows of the world he now saw so clearly. He returned to the cave where his former comrades greeted his discovery with indignation. He was ridiculed and abused, and some of the men wanted to kill him, just as the Athenians had slain Socrates when he told them they did not know what they thought they knew.

And so it is with the Stratfordians who cling to the shadows of a man who could barely write his own name, who never claimed to have written the masterpieces and who was never identified as the author while he was alive.

The intransigence of the Stratfordians when confronted with such information is certainly akin to the men in the cave. They have dealt with shadows for so long they cannot discern reality.

Trudy Atkins
Greensboro, N.C.

An Oxfordian Stratfordian

by Edith Duffey

I have been wading in the muddy waters of orthodox writing and am pleased to have found a good book: Eric Sams' Shakespeare's Lost Play Edmund Ironside (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1985). In fact, I'm giving Lost Play a place on my shelf of Oxfordian literature for its contribution to the Earl of Oxford's cause. Though a traditionalist, Sams belongs to the knowledgeable, sometimes perceptive, honest but blinkered group who will go ninety percent of the way and then turn back to Shaksper of Stratford on Avon.

Sams' purpose in writing Lost Play is to show that the old anonymous manuscript, dramatizing the 1016 battle between Saxon King Edmund of England and the Danish king, Canute, is the earliest play Shakespeare ever wrote. In this objective Sams is eminently successful. He gives us the play in its entirety; he then compares it in plot structure, scene and dialogue development to Titus Andronicus, Henry VI and other early canonical plays. The many similar, sometimes almost identical, passages in Ironside and the two plays mentioned above leave me in no doubt that Shakespeare was indeed the author.

In this play we see the great playwright beginning to spread his wings but not yet allowing himself to fly very high. The play is short and straightforward with no interwoven secondary plot and very little complexity in the characters--in short, a very early play.

The best part of the book--besides the play itself--is the enlightening commentary where Sams analyzes in detail Shakespeare's verbal habits, his mannerisms and idiosyncrasies. Sams does this with care and insight.

He gets into trouble only when he tries to fit Shaksper's feet into Shakespeare's shoes. His finger, continually attempting to level at the Stratford man, always swings around like a weather vane in a brisk wind, to point at Oxford. Sams sometimes seems like an Oxfordian already. He gives his colleagues a good scolding for their refusal to entertain new ideas, and he does this in terms that Oxfordians have often used. And shortly thereafter he shows that fifteen or sixteen distinguished orthodox scholars don't know an early Tudor play when they see it. Their datings of Ironside stagger up and down the 1590s with old Halliwell Philips declaring for 1647. Sams is considerably put out by these wild guesses. And it is odd that such highly regarded professors (including E. K. Chambers and W. W. Greg) did not notice the play's "monologues, messengers and moralizing", as Sams puts it, or its frequent alliteration and rhymed couplet endstops, sure signs of early Tudor composition.

But Sams' date for the writing of Ironside is not much better than the others. First he tells us that Ironside, Titus, and Henry VI were all written about the same time. All three, he says, are imitations of the Senecan revenge tragedy, a genre which began in England in 1570 with the publication of Gorboduc and continued until 1588, by which time both the playwrights and their audiences were thoroughly bored with it. Then Sams tells us that Ironside was written in 1588 with the other two plays coming right after it. What? A brilliant young playwright commencing his career by writing not one but three plays in a style everyone is sick of? I cannot believe the author would have been so dull-witted.

My second reason for rejecting Sams' date is that if Shaksper came to London at any time between 1585 and 1587, he would have left behind a wife with three small children and his old father addicted to alcohol, deeply mired in debt and unable to cope. As William was the eldest son it is reasonable to believe that since 1577 he had been the mainstay of the family. With an 8th grade education (or none at all), with large debts to pay off and an eleven-member family to feed and clothe, he could hardly have spent those years lying around the house with his nose in a book or sitting in a corner scribbling. To imagine him leaving home in 1587 to embark on a career

as a playwright seems sheer sentimental fantasy.

My third reason for rejecting Sams' date is that all his arguments for it, except one or two which are specious and absurdly speculative, refer to internal evidence from the play. This evidence applies to all the years from 1570 to 1588 and therefore may not be used exclusively for 1588.

My fourth reason is that not a scrap of evidence exists that Shaksper was anywhere near London in 1588.

Oxfordians tend to think of Oxford/Shakespeare as being the first to write in contemporary genre, not, as Sams proposes, the last. Therefore we must look back to 1570, his twenty-first. What evidence does Sams give us of such an early date for Ironside? He discusses three important subjects by which we may compare the likelihood of either candidate writing this play: 1) the source material; 2) the paper used in the manuscript; and 3) the battle scenes.

Sams tells us that Shakespeare "draws on two chronicles, Holinshed [1587] and Grafton [1569] and also apparently shows some acquaintance with Lambarde's Archaionomia (1568)" (p.210). In other words, since Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland was not published in toto until 1587, Sams has no choice but to date the play in 1588 to give his author time to find Holinshed in Paul's Churchyard, take the six volumes home, read them, decide which episode to dramatize, and write the play. Sams does suggest that in previous years Holinshed might have passed his unfinished manuscripts around for his friends to read, as Shakespeare did the sonnets, and perhaps Shaksper saw them then. But Sams does not pursue the notion.

The real mystery is how Shaksper obtained Archaionomia or Grafton's A Chronicle at Large. Grafton may have been reprinted in 1572--there is some doubt about it--but Lambarde was not reprinted until 1644. How then did Shaksper find these books, twenty years after the one and, at the closest, sixteen years after the other was published, since there were no public libraries, not even in London?

Sams perhaps does not know that Oxford's first tutor at Cecil House was Lawrence Nowell, a fine Latinist, but his great love was Anglo-Saxon history and language. He owned several original chronicles, was an expert on Anglo-Saxon law, and could well have been a source for the early period covered by Holinshed. During the 1560s Nowell translated Anglo-Saxon law into Latin and sold the book to William Lambarde for publication under the title Archaionomia.

When in 1563 Nowell discovered there was little Latin he could teach that his precocious pupil did not already know, it seems inevitable that he broached the subject that fascinated him and was gratified by the boy's ready response. Oxford was 13 years old, just the right age to fire up at tales of heroes and heroic deeds. One can imagine that such a boy would want to see the curious old documents with their strange handwriting and archaic words (some of which later turn up in Ironside) or that such a man would show them to him and read him some of the events recounted there.

We believe that during his middle teens Oxford undertook the enormous task of translating Ovid's Metamorphoses which has fifteen long books, filled with legendary and mythological tales. The task would take him most of his fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth years. The translation was published in 1567, the year Oxford entered Gray's Inn. Surely after such a long concentration on the Roman gods and goddesses, nymphs and satyrs, he would have forgotten the Anglo-Saxons if Nowell's words had not made a strong impression. Oxford did not forget. In his second and third years at Gray's Inn he must have bought Archaionomia (1568) and Grafton's Chronicle (1569) since Sams tells us they turn up in Ironside.

We may also consider Gorboduc as a source for the writing of this play. This first imitation of Senecan tragedy was written in 1561 by two students at the Inner Temple, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. The play was narrated a number of times in ensuing years, was published first in 1565 and then again in 1570. It is altogether likely that Oxford should have heard it read or read it himself. Perhaps because of its bloody violence, new to audiences of that time, no

action takes place on the stage; the events are narrated in blank verse. Oxford would have realized at once how much more effective such a piece would be with its action where the audience could observe it and feel some identification with the characters and situations presented. And this is what he did with Ironside.

And finally on the subject of source material, there is Holinshed. During the late 1560s the Queen's printer, Reginald Wolfe, was asked by her Majesty to write a universal history of all the nations in the world. Wolfe engaged Holinshed as translator and when he died in 1573, the work was abridged to cover only the history of the British Isles and Holinshed moved up to become chief translator and writer. Oxford had met him in 1567; they lived in the same parish. If Holinshed did pass around his unfinished manuscripts for his friends to read, it seems likely that the Lord Great Chamberlain, of similar interests, would have been one of them. Discussion of sources shows Oxford the authentic author.

Another way in which Sams leads us to Oxford is his description of the paper Ironside was written on. He tell us that

"... some leaves have been ruled on one side by an impressed style. This method at one time universal seems to have gone out of use in literary manuscripts in about the 12th century, but it survived in legal use until quite a late date. Typically the terminal date is not specified and presumably not known with any certainty. But Ironside is after all a literary manuscript and this survival of a 12th century practice might suggest earlier rather than later in Tudor times." (p. 13)

Indeed it might. In 1570 Oxford was only a year out of Gray's Inn and would be familiar with the use of legal paper. In addition, in 1570 he was still making his home with his guardian, William Cecil, who had much to do with writing, adding to or rescinding the laws of the realm on legal paper. This explanation seems to me more reasonable than Sams' belief that Shaksper, clerking in some law office, swiped the firm's paper to write plays on.

But was Oxford a preserver of a tradition four centuries out of date? I see instead a young author with a trenchant passage already composed in his mind, hurrying to write it down while the creative spark was at its brightest and using the first sheaf of papers that met his hand.

On October 9 Oxford's friend and cousin, the 4th Duke of Norfolk, was imprisoned in the Tower for conspiring to marry Mary of Scotland, to march with the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland on London, to seize the throne and dispose of Elizabeth and her government. Cecil at once sent the Earl of Sussex, as commander of the English forces, to the northern border to vanquish the rebels. Oxford was ill at the time and unable to leave London, but at the end of March 1570 he was on his way to join Sussex.

Elizabeth's reprisals against her enemies were terrible. Oxford may have arrived too late to see the hangings of 800 ordinary soldiers, but must have been present to witness some of the carnage when the 90 fortified castles were blown up and razed, to observe some of the 300 villages burned to the ground. It is hard to imagine that he would have stayed for very long to watch the mass murder of innocent townspeople.

One of the best sections of Shakespeare's Lost Play Edmund Ironside is Sams' analysis of what the young Shakespeare made of war, what he remembered and later used in his writings. He observed, of course, the brave soldiers who led the others into the thickest of battle, shouting and brandishing their swords. These heroes even hacked lanes through the enemy's crowded ranks. But the author of Ironside also sees the soldiers marching or fighting with bare feet and those who are insufficiently clothed or who have not enough to eat. He is aware of the loneliness of the sentries who have to stand all night in the chilly darkness keeping guard while others sleep in their warm beds. He feels the sentries' resentment. He notices also the officers who hold back their men's pay and use it for their own pleasure. This seems to him

despicable. He is also very conscious of the frightened soldiers who try to escape. "It is rather unreasonable to blame them," Sams says, "as the writer of [Ironside] perfectly well knows. His choice of image may tell us much about his own feelings in the matter. The picture in the mind's eye is one of collective panic, perhaps drawn from eyewitness experience [*italics mine*] of just such a 'flock of fearful runaways', as Canute unkindly calls his army." (p. 262) The playwright has noticed also the poor wretches forced into the army for no more reason than to be cannon fodder. He observes that they are well aware of their plight and often fade unobtrusively away when no one is looking. "However," says Sams, "there is no question of reproach, still less condemnation on the part of the dramatist. He simply records the facts of military behavior as he sees them with wry candour." (p. 258)

Sams is certainly conscious that the dynamics of real war course through the history plays. He succumbs to them himself in his descriptions of Shakespeare's metaphors, symbols, and other imagery -- so much so that the reader feels he is close to the thought processes of the Earl as he stands beside Lord Sussex, watching the chaos before him or, pulling out his sword, charges into the fray. Sams sums it all up with the statement, ". . . all this regularly rings true, as if from first hand experience [*italics mine*] or uncommonly attentive listening; the soldiers are not just stage extras but real known people." (p. 258)

What comes out most clearly in this account of combat is the generous spirit of the young nobleman who, though brought up in privilege and wealth, had the uncanny ability to put himself into the minds of others, even those far different from himself in background, circumstance, and personality, to think and feel with them,, almost empathetically. This ability is, of course, the core of his genius which, with the magic of his words, has kept posterity reading and watching his plays for over four hundred years. There is no evidence that Will. Shaksper ever went to war.

Perhaps two more comments may be allowed: Sams spends much time conjecturing as to why Ironside was never published. He decides finally that because of the Marprelate pamphleteering, the authorities in 1588 were particularly aggressive against any satire or ridicule of Anglicanism. The third act of Ironside begins with a scene in which the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are made to look like haggling fools, each concerned only to wield power over the other. To Sams' argument one can only suggest that a frightened queen, at war in 1570 with her Catholic enemies, might be equally aggressive against such satire. It would have been considered Catholic propoganda and treasonous and the play called in. That any commoner would have dared write such a scene seems preposterous.

So when did Oxford/Shakespeare write Ironside? Here I must theorize. By the end of 1569 he had completed his education. He was on fire to write -- O momentous occasion -- the first play of his adult years. But war intervened. He had to wait five long months before the Queen allowed him to join the troops. My theory is that, using the legal paper ready at hand, he wrote Acts I and II and the first scene of Act III in the waiting period. No battle scene occurs in that part of the play. I believe he went to war to prove his patriotism and also to discover for himself what war was really like, so that he could dramatize the battle scenes with confidence. Then some months later, on his return to civil life and using a different kind of paper, he wrote the rest of the play. There is this much to say for my theory: we can state with near certainty that Oxford was no dawdler. Procrastination in writing was not a weakness. I believe he would have wanted to write the battle scenes as soon as he got home, while the memory of military life was still vivid in his mind. It would not have taken him long to do so.

One matter we can investigate: the handwriting of the manuscript. Surely an Oxfordian somewhere can get access to the British Library and take a facsimile of one of Oxford's letters -- the earlier the better -- to compare the penmanship. If by some revolution of Fortune's Wheel, he did write those pages, we could then have some tangible evidence that our opponents could not easily ignore.

An interchange of letters in the New York Review of Books

To the Editor

December 31, 1991

Professor E. A. J. Honigmann begins his astute article, "The Second-Best Bed", with the quotation "In the name of God amen I William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon. . ." In fact, the testator wrote, "I William Shackspeare." And "Shackspeare" is how the name is rendered at the head of the will, and "Shackspere" in the body of the document. John Combe did not leave five pounds "to Master William Shakespeare" as Professor Honigmann quotes him as having written but "to Master William Shackspere." While Professor Honigmann refers glibly throughout to "Shakespeare", the name nowhere appears in connection with the will. The man buried as "Will Shakspere, gent." signed the three papers of the will "William Shakspere", "Willm Shakspere" and "William Shakspeare". If his name was "Shakespeare" with a long "a" in the first syllable he nowhere to our knowledge gave any sign of knowing it.

Professor Honigmann might have told us that no fellow villager known to us attributed any distinction to Stratford's subsequently famous son for generations to come and that those who knew him deemed him not even worth having his name on his tomb. The outsiders who erected the monument to "Shakspeare" in Trinity Church, clearly as part of the scheme to deflect to the Stratfordian the interest certain to arise in the identity of the mysterious poet-dramatist "William Shakespeare", said nothing in the inscription of the subject's having been a dramatist or actor or a poet except in the obscure "arte Maronem." They were not going to, when those who knew "Will Shakspere, gent." must have known him as a near-illiterate who never claimed to have written anything, who mentioned no books in his will and left not a line of manuscript to turn up in the house that remained in the family for two more generations, while three collected editions of Shakespeare's plays were hailing their author as his nation's triumph.

Yours very truly,
Charlton Ogburn

E.A.J. Honigmann replies:

Mr. Ogburn believes that the Earl of Oxford wrote the plays usually attributed to William Shakespeare (see my review of his book in The New York Review, January 17, 1985, page 23). In "The Second-Best Bed" I stated that "I have modernized the quotations from wills" (page 30, footnote 7) - not to bend the evidence against Oxford, as Mr. Ogburn seems to believe, but simply as a matter of convenience. Stratford, by the way, was not just a village in Shakespeare's time, though it suits the "Oxfordians" to present Shakespeare as an ignorant village yokel: "By the King's letters patent in the seventh year of Edward VI's reign, it became an independent township; a corporation possessed of a common seal and consisting of a baliff and a council of fourteen burgesses and fourteen aldermen." (S. Schoenbaum, William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life, Oxford University Press, 1975, page 5.)

Two short questions for Mr. Ogburn. (1) Is there any evidence that "outsiders erected the monument"? (2) Did the author of the epitaph for Susanna (Shakespeare) Hall not attribute distinction to her father? - "Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,/Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall,/Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this/Wholy of him with whom she's now in blisse..."

To the Editors:

April 21, 1992

I appreciate very much indeed your having printed in the issue of April 9th my letter responding to Prof. A. E. J. Honigmann's article on "The Second-Best Bed".

In taking issue with a review or article, one should generally expect to come out the worse, since the author being challenged is given the right to reply and thus has the last word, generally only compounding his offense, if such there was. In this case I am very glad to have had my letter printed since I feel the points that Prof. Honigmann offered in rebuttal are not very strong. He concludes by propounding "Two short questions for Mr. Ogburn..."

The first question is: "Is there any evidence that 'outsiders erected the monument'?" The answer is, yes, evidence that would appear to settle the issue. On page 215 of The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality, which Prof. Honigmann presumably read before reviewing it for your magazine (and paying it a very nice compliment, by the way), I observe: "His [Shakspeare's] widow and daughters were certainly not responsible for the memorial. They would not have approved an inscription that put the body in the monument when they had buried it years before under the floor. Moreover, to the immediate family a member's first name is of particular importance, since the last name is common to all. And no "William" appears on the monument."

The second question asks if the author of Susannah's epitaph did not attribute distinction to her father with the claim that she was witty above her sexe" and "wise to salvation", and that "Something of Shakespeare was in that." My answer is that if Prof. Honigmann can believe that the greatest writer in our language and perhaps in any other could, as far as we know, achieve no greater recognition of his genius on the part of his fellow townsmen and of their children and grandchildren than that he was witty and wise to salvation, then I can only reply that Prof. Honigmann's imagination is far more elastic than mine. Incidentally, as I point out in The Mysterious William Shakespeare, wit is, to the best of our knowledge, the only commendable trait ever recognized in Will Shakspeare by his contemporaries. Even as late as 1773, a minister traveling in Warwickshire reported that "all the idea that the country people have of that great genius is that he excelled in smart repartee and the selling of bargains, as they call it."

As for the size and importance of Stratford-upon-Avon, of which my critic makes much, I may quote again from my book (page 273): "And what kind of town was that? 'An important center of trade, the business metropolis of a large and fertile area.' Metropolis? So Oscar James Campbell of Columbia University says. In fact, in 1590, the town comprised 217 houses. Calculating from recorded births and deaths [Charles] Knight estimates its population in the year of Shakespeare's birth at 1,400. It does not even exist for the Historical Atlas by William R. Shepherd (also of Columbia) assigned me at Harvard, which recognizes only the Stratford near London."

Believe me, there is inexhaustible fascination in this field for those who can surmount the barrier of the professoriat.

Charlton Ogburn

LYLY AND SHAKESPEARE

John Lyly in 1579 published "Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit". The title page says, not written, but compiled, by John Lyly. It started a school of literary expression, became a linguistic movement of tremendous force and enriched and refined the English language. It revived the antithesis of the Greeks and reached into classical roots to coin thousands of new words. Scholars have held that over 5000 words were added by Shakespeare to our common language. John Lyly was Edward de Vere's private secretary and chief factotum for more than ten years. Although the body of all Lyly's work is uniformly mediocre, there occur lyrics of such singing beauty that wonders if the hand of the master sometimes guided the pen of the secretary. Not once after leaving Oxford's employ did John Lyly ever write a play.

Stanley P. Lovell

A letter in the May 1992 Atlantic

Tom Bethel and the Earl of Oxford win the Battle of Stratford hands down ("Lookin for Shakespeare", October Atlantic). As a screenwriter working on an adaption of one of Shakespeare's history plays, I was struck by the ties Bethel notes between the play and the details of deVere's life. Any writer will tell you that autobiographical images, even when unlooked for, seem to find their way into the page. These range from the minutiae of the author's daily experience, insignificant as literary reference - a street sign glimpsed from a car window becomes a character's name, for example - an imitation of a friend's personality in an otherwise fictional character. "Pure imagination" is probably an oxymoron: even the most gifted author must begin each thought with a kernel of the known, some reference to the reality of his own experience.

Add to this the restriction of a pseudonym and a mind as richly attuned to language as that of our Bard, whoever he was, and you have a formula for precisely the kind of clever hinting and dodging that Bethel cites. Far from mere coincidences, to be expected in such a vast oeuvre - as Irvin Matus implies in his rebuttal - such possible references are exactly the kind of evidence we should be looking for. They make sense; the Shakespeare we know from his pun-laden, word-playing plays and poems would have loved them.

Matus makes a strong case that the man from Stratford could technically have written the plays, but he fails to address head on the issue of similarity with Oxford's life. Instead, he focuses on the differences between the Elizabethan and the present-day conception of authorship. These may be completely different, but I doubt if any author, then or now, fails to write himself onto every page.

Peter Linett
Los Angeles, Calif.

A Message from the President

First of all, humble apologies for the excessive delay in getting the video tapes of the 1991 Annual Meeting to those of you who ordered them. They have finally been edited and the duplicating process will be done in another few days. Your tapes will be sent to you via UPS in another week. Two talks, Isabel Holden's and Roger Stritmatter's, were unfortunately untapeable because of lack of lighting. All other presentations are included in two tapes which may still be bought for \$20 each. These tapes also show a glimpse of the Brazilian Court setting, the Saturday banquet, the Sunday awards ceremony and the final toast to the Earl of Oxford.

We have had a sharp increase in our membership in the past few months. The tremendous spread in "The Atlantic" and the Earl of Burford's speaking tour across the nation have both contributed to this rapid growth. For the Burford Tour, we owe so much to John Loyther, whose vision and dedication made it happen. Amazingly, new-member inquiries are coming from remote places, such as Estonia and Australia. If our count is correct, we have about 550 members spread out over nine countries. But with all this gain, we have no real home for our archives and library.

There is an Oxford article in the June/92 issue of "GQ" (Gentleman's Quarterly).

We look forward to hearing from a number of Oxfordians who have been doing important research this past year; Roger? Ignoto? some new members? We want to hear from you. We should have a large turn-out this year and I look forward to seeing you all in Cleveland.

Yours for E.Ver!
Betty Sears

"THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER"

16th Annual Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society will be held on Oct. 16 through 18 at the Omni Hotel in Cleveland, located in the famous Cleveland Clinic complex with a four-star restaurant: 2065 East 96th Street, Cleveland, Ohio, 44106-2945: (216) 791-1900: Fax (216) 231-3320. Special rates \$65 per room (single or double). Make reservation with hotel and note attending Society Conference. Special rates available for at least two days previous to and/or following Conference. Registration will begin at 10 A.M. Friday. Check early with travel agent for possible savings. If you want to share room with another, please inform me at 1444 West 10th Street, #501, Cleveland, Ohio, 44113; Phone (216) 696-7095. I will try to put you up with a compatible roommate.

Father Francis Edwards, S. J., a Vatican archivist for over two decades, currently posted in London, has accepted invitation to be a featured dinner speaker and lecturer. He is author of several books on English conspiracies and if you think "JFK" was heavy duty, wait until you hear about the capers of our dear friends, the Cecils, "which so did take our Liza and our James!" Some of his books may be available at the Conference, one of which "The Marvelous Choice" deals with matters fearfully relevant to the 17th Earl of Oxford.

If you have a paper to present at the Conference, please contact Chair Margaret Robson by August 1st; 736 Waterway Drive, North Palm Beach, Florida, 33408, (407) 626-0700 and send her a copy. Speakers have a strictly observed 20 minutes, and ten minutes for questions and answers.

Lord Charles Burford has wound up his spectacular speaking tour and generated more than 100 front page stories on the Shakespearean Authorship and told the deVere story in prestigious venues from the Folger to the Huntington.

Great credit for the fantastic success of the Burford Project is due President Betty Sears and Board Member Isabel Holden, but most especially John Louthier whose foresight, daring, initiative, planning and execution were the key ingredients in making the project possible, as well as achieving its resounding success. John has passed his mantle to Eileen McKinnon, who is now scheduling speaking dates in September and October for Lord Burford. Almost all of his engagements to date have been arranged by Society members. It is, therefore, extremely important that Oxfordians who have connections with a school, college, learned societies, library or English Speaking Union chapter which might be interested to contact Miss McKinnon, 19 Kendall Drive, Woburn, Mass. 01801: (617) 935-1909 (after 5:30 p.m.).

Membership Chairman Victor Crichton reports that the Society has had an increase of over one hundred fifty new members since Lord Burford's speech at the Folger a year ago April. That brings our membership well over 500, quite an increase from 134 total membership figure of 1987!

Membership lapel pins will be available from the manufacturer by mid-June and distribution will be arranged after that time thanks to the efforts of Membership Chairman, Victor Crichton. The small 1/2" pin is free for all members and the large 7/8" pin cost \$3.00 for members who will also receive a free small pin. Each pin is a replica of the DeVere arms.

Your Chairman is working on a blockbuster tour of England and Italy for 1993. With assistance from Richard and Jane Roe and Verily Anderson, it should be the most exciting Oxfordian event since the first performance of "Hamlet"! Verily knows the territory in England like the back of her hand, and what needs to be said of Richard and Jane Roe's researches on the Italy of Oxford. We'll make this tour available as one great package, or in separate segments of either England or Italy. Start saving your pennies for the tour of a lifetime!

This is the first "Chairman's Corner" in our Newsletter. We await your comments and decisions as to whether it should become a permanent fixture. Let the editor know how you feel about it. Stratfordium Delenda Est! Vero nihil veritas! Yea! Verily! Johnny Price, Chairman.

UNCOVERING SHAKESPEARE: AN UPDATE

A NATIONAL VIDEOCONFERENCE -- SEPTEMBER 17, 1992

The GTE Corporation, a Fortune 500 communications company, is broadcasting a three-hour interactive videoconference on the Shakespeare Author Issue on September 17, 1992, from 1:00 - 4:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time, entitled "Uncovering Shakespeare: An Update". The Program features Mr. William F. Buckley as host and moderator, with principal guest Charles Vere, Earl of Burford, and a panel of Oxfordian scholars that includes Professor of Theater Felicia Londre, University of Missouri, Kansas City; Dr. Warren Hope, author of The Shakespeare Controversy; and Tom Bethell, author of the October 1991 Atlantic Monthly cover story, "Looking for Shakespeare".

In addition, the program will present new archival discoveries and interviews with theater professionals on how the authorship issue affects modern Shakespeare production. Viewers will be able to call in via telephone with questions to Lord Burford and the panel.

To view the program, SOS members should contact the audio-visual manager of their nearest college or university to determine if the college has registered for the program. If it has, ask to view the program. If it has not, ask whether it will allow members to view the program provided that the registration fee is covered. Site registration is \$450.00. Thus, if 25 SOS members in a region wish to watch the program, each individual would contribute \$20.00 to achieve the registration fee. If a college agrees to allow use of their audio-visual facilities to SOS members, inquire if it wants to charge an extra fee for its use. If your nearby university is unwilling to register, you may choose to contact a nearby hotel with satellite facilities and offer the same terms.

Those wishing more information may call Gary Goldstein, GTE VISNET, 1-800-828-3465.

JOIN SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY AND RECEIVE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The purpose of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to document and establish Edward deVere, 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 corroborating information and commentary.

DUES

Student \$15.00	Annual Regular \$35	Sustaining \$50.00 or more
-----------------	---------------------	----------------------------

Dues and requests for membership information to:

Victor Crichton, Cathedral Station - Box 0550, New York, NY 10025

Submit materials for publication in the Newsletter to:

Morse Johnson, Suite 819, 105 West 4th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202

The Shakespeare Oxford Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state as a non-profit educational organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. IRS number: 13-6105314. New York number: 07182.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society

Central Station, P.O. Box 0550, New York, N.Y. 10025-0550

Morse Johnson, Editor

NEWSLETTER
SUMMER, 1992
VOLUME 28, NO. 3



"Never be certain of anything, it's a sign of weakness."
by Fred W. Manzo

Have you ever wondered who wrote Hamlet? I mean really wondered? Perhaps the Stratfordians are right to imagine Will Shakspere as the author of the finest play in literature.

There is nothing wrong with this, for doubt is what separates Knowledge from Ignorance. And though I believe Edward De Vera did write Hamlet, I'm quite willing to concede I may be wrong. All it takes to change my mind is proof. But can the same be said of Stratfordians? I think not.

Stratfordianism, or any other pseudoscience, is not based on logic, proof, and doubt, but on belief, authority, and a distorted view of the world.

After all, who believes Elizabethan England to have been a class society, dedicated to defending freedom of speech? The Stratfordians apparently do. For their Horatio Alger hero effortlessly glided through the heights of Society, addressed Southampton as an equal, poked fun at the powerful, and was manipulated by rebels all without generating even a hint of resentment among the Establishment. And this from someone with 3 relatives - and a family friend - executed in 1583 for the attempted assassination of Queen Elizabeth (Pohl 27-28)!

Ah, sweet liberty.

However, exactly what ideas should be accepted in place of an irrational Stratfordianism is an open question.

The following points are correct as far as I am aware. If, nevertheless, they turn out to be wrong, that's just part of the process.

1. My first area of concern involves Shakespeare's military knowledge. Now I know some suppose William of Stratford ran off to be a soldier in the Low Countries. But this notion raises more issues than it answers. Not only does it make Shakespeare's understanding of law, court life, history, and the sea inscrutable, but it still fails to explain his grasp of command problems.

In particular, I'm thinking of the argument in Julius Caesar between Antony and Octavius in Act V over the leadership of the right wing of the army. Because, if veterans tell their own war stories first and the author was a common soldier, why not have them argue about the best way to chaat enlisted men?

On the other hand, leading the right wing of any army is just the sort of thing generals have argued about since the days of the Graek phalanx.

Originally, these arguments neither concerned a misplaced sense of military etiquette nor the direction from which an enemy approached. Rather the prestige of the right wing resulted from the ancients belief that it was destined to triumph over its opponenta. For once commanders realized individual soldiers would drift rightward to keep their shields between themselves and the enemy, it became clear that each army's right was being continually reinforced at the expense of its left. Simply put, each army's strengthening right wing should beat the other side's weakening left wing (Delbruck 123 and May 5).

But from our point of view it's only important to realize that officers argued about commanding the glorious right wing, privates argued about deserting.

Another example of Shakespeare's unusual military knowledge may be found in Henry V immediately after the king is informed of the battle's outcome (Act IV, Scene VII). At this point we might expect a perfect monarch to explain why God was on his side. Or, conceivably, why it's time to increase his political demands on the French. But no, as the winning commander, he first does the correct - and chivalrous - thing. He names the battle.

Once again, who but a high-ranking officer would put that in a play? The author already said he was condensing years of history into hours. Would anyone object if such small details were left out? Presumably not. They were included because the author had seen something like them himself.

2. Next, I examined the Restoration in the hope that an impaired Stratfordianism could not stop controversies over the Swan of Avon's identity from going public. To illustrate this argument I'd like to quote a few orthodox authorities [emphasis added]:

A History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700 by Allardyce Nicoll (270-271).

Up to this date the theatrical history of the time is fairly easy to follow. It is the few months immediately after June, 1660, that seem wrapped in an almost unfathomable obscurity.... On July 9 and on July 19, 1660, warrants were issued to prepare grants of monopoly in theatrical affairs to Thomas Killigrew and to Sir William D'Avenant respectively.... Killigrew...was first in the field. He appears to have come to an arrangement at once with the Mohun company, and to have started them playing on Thursday, Nov. 8, at Gibbon's Tennis Court...converted for the nonce into a theatre-royal.... Within a few months trouble appears to have arisen for on Sept. 9, 1661, there is an order for the shutting of the theatre.

"The Theatres" by Edward Langhans (36-37).

Both Davenant and Killigrew must have seen that the least expensive way to get their companies into operation was to settle into existing playhouses.... The manager least likely to have been interested in a sceneryless theatre was Killigrew. He had spent part of the interregnum in Venice, which by the middle of the seventeenth century had some of the most advanced theatres of the time. Killigrew also had a thirst for court life and would surely have wished to attract the king's favor by presenting the kind of scenic spectacles Continental monarchs enjoyed. But, remarkably, he chose not to use any existing playhouse but to convert a tiny tennis court...into something like an Elizabethan private theatre, with no scenery.

Shakespeare Adaptations, by Montague Summers (xxix-xxx).

It should be remarked that, so far as is recorded, during the twenty years which directly followed the Restoration the plays of Shakespeare performed at...the Theatre Royal were, with the single exception of "Sauny the Scot", given as originally written, whilst in the same period Davenant's company produced no fewer than nine known alterations and adaptations. Such a record cannot be the result of mere chance or accident, and the fact that the King's House played Shakespeare without tampering and trimmings I incline to the influence to Charles Hart, who was...the greatest and most sublime actor was has ever graced any stage.... Hart's relationship to Shakespeare is often asserted, but no proof is forthcoming.

Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683), on the other hand, was related through his mother to both Francis Bacon and Edward de Vere; and after he rebuilt Gibbon's Tennis Court it became known as the VERE STREET THEATRE.

But are these events part of a struggle to commemorate Edward de Vere? I think they might be.

3. My last thesis concerns Shakespeare's monument in Trinity Church. While its equating Nestor, Socrates, and Virgil to William of Stratford has long puzzled observers, in my opinion, this problem has never been adequately examined.

As apparently in a country where even elementary school drop-outs were fluent in Latin, someone got not one but three ancients mixed-up. Not only were they mixed up, but the error remained unnoticed by the local intelligentsia. Before, however, we assume that level of ignorance, consider the following:

Nestor was mentioned in the Iliad. (Although the Iliad was not transcribed until the 6th century B.C., Homer was considered a reliable historian.) Therefore, Nestor's fame didn't rest on his own writings but on Homer's or, more precisely, the unknown Athenian dramatist who finally wrote out the Iliad in Homer's name.

Socrates also did not write. He became famous with the help of Plato who wrote in his name.

Virgil, of course, was literate, though he died before completing his masterwork, the Aeneid. However, after the Emperor Augustus was said to have countermanded Virgil's wish for its draft to be burned, a corrected version was written out and published in his name.

Now what do these people have in common with William of Stratford? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps that all three involve world famous individuals whose reputations rested on the work of unseen WRITERS.

Well that's it. As these are only initial thoughts, I'd be perfectly happy to modify or abandon them in the face of superior logic. But I do believe they raise - at least - several intriguing questions.

Works Cited

- Delbruck, Hans. History of the Art of War Within the Framework of Political History, Volume I, Antiquity. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1975.
- Langhans, Edward. "The Theatres". The London Theatre World, 1660-1800. Ed. Robert D. Hume. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.
- May, Elmer C., Gerald P. Stsdler, and John F. Votsw. The West Point History Series: Ancient and Medieval Warfare. Ed. Thomas E. Griess. Wyne, New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group, Inc., 1984.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. A History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700. Cambridge (England): The University Press, 1940.
- Pohl, Frederick J. Like to the Lark. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1972.
- Summers, Montague. Shakespeare Adaptations. New York: Haskell House, 1966.

* * * *

The Orthodox Shakespere Faces Death

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
(Unto my wife my second-best bed),
Lest the wise world should look into your moan
(And curst be he that moves my bones!)

by Joseph Sobrsn

AN ELOQUENCE OF LIGHT QUENCHED IN DARKNESS
by Derran K. Charlton

In 1961, Hugh Ross Williamson, S. J., an English historian and authority on the Elizabethan and early Stuart period, a theologian and literary critic, as well as a novelist, playwright and actor, wrote a meticulous and exciting book on the Stratfordian interpretation of Shakespeare's life. The book The Day Shakespeare Died was published during the following year by Michael Joseph, London, and immediately acclaimed for its high scholarship.

On page fourteen he drew attention to the opening words with which Blessed Edmund Campion opened his own trial defence: 'Since what I am to say must be but that which contradicts my accusation, and the testament on my part no other but what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me to say "Not Guilty"'. As a footnote, Hugh Rosa Williamson added, "I must record my gratitude to Mrs. Martin Hotine for pointing this out to me. It, together with other references, sheds an entirely new light on The Winter's Tale and gives a clue which, if patiently followed, may revolutionize the interpretation of the last four plays."

In heeding the sound advice that this clue be 'patiently followed' researchers have to realistically accept the fact that William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was aged only seventeen when Edmund Campion - an eloquence of light quenched in darkness - defended himself with unfailing gracefulness and Hamlet eloquence in the deep awareness that, however eloquent his expressions, however searching his deep religious reasonings, however much he lit the darkness, his words would be received with frozen disbelief and the inevitable verdict of 'Guilty'.

Whilst no evidence exists that William Shakspeare (1564-1616) ever met Edmund Campion (1540-81) or, indeed, that Edmund Campion had even heard of William Shakspeare, the same fact cannot be claimed of Edward de Vere, for it was following Edward de Vere's disclosures to Queen Elizabeth that a Royal Proclamation was issued on the 15th July, 1580 calling for the loyalty of all Englishmen and the denunciation of traitors living abroad. A second Proclamation was made on the 1st January, 1581 "for revocation of students from beyond the seas and against the retaining of Jesuits." As a direct consequence Campion was arrested.

He was held in the White Tower, in a cell of little ease, and initially questioned by Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, and William Day, Dean of Windsor. Nowell, a septuagenarian, and the author of the Anglican catechism that was in use for more than a century, was the brother of Laurence Nowell, Dean of Litchfield, an authority in Anglo-Saxon law, cartographer, cosmographer, and, for a few years, a personal tutor of Edward de Vere, at Cecil House, until 1563 when he wrote to William Cecil, "I clearly see that my work for the Earl of Oxford cannot be much longer required."

The trial of Edmund Campion was presided over by Sir Christopher Wray. There were three Judges: John Southcote, Thomas Gawdy, and William Ayloff. The prosecution was led by Edward Anderson, the Queen's serjeant-at-arms, Lord chief justice of the Common Pleas, assisted by John Popham, attorney-general and Lord chief justice of the Queen's Bench, and Thomas Egerton, the solicitor-general, who was to become Lord Chancellor under James I.

The Dictionary of National Biography, referring to the trial, records:

"...the principal witnesses for the crown were George Eliot and three hired witnesses, Munday, Sledd, and Gaddy, who pretended to have observed the meetings of the conspirators at Rome; but their testimony was so weak, and the answers of Campion were so admirable, that when the jury retired, it was generally believed that the verdict must be one of acquittal."

The fact that Munday (Antony Munday) was one of the three witnesses is of Oxfordian significance, for in 1579 he had dedicated to his patron, Edward de Vere, his book 'Mirrour of Mutabilitie, or Principal Part of the Mirrour for Magistrates', commending it to his 'courteous and gentle perusing'. The book contained the acrostic poem:

Except I should in friendship seem ingrate
Denying duty, whereto I am bound;
With letting slip your Honour's worthy state
At all assays, which I have noble found.
Right well I might refrain to handle pen;
Denouncing aye the company of men.

Down, dire despair, let courage come in place
Exalt his fame whom Honour doth embrace.

Virtue hath aye adorn'd your valiant heart,
Exempl'd by your deeds of lasting fame:
Regarding such as take God Mara his part
Each where by proof, in honour and in name.

This acrostic poem prompts the probing question: "What 'worthy state' of Edward de Vere 'At all assays (essays) which I have noble found' had Munday so despaired of 'letting slip' that he 'right well might refrain to handle pen, denouncing aye (always) the company of men'? Could it have been the fact that he despaired of inadvertently revealing that Edward de Vere was writing plays or 'lasting fame' under the martial pseudonym of "Shake-speare"?

The D.N.B. records that Munday's first spying mission was in 1587 when he was accompanied by Thomas Nowell - 'The object of this trip was to spy into the conduct of the English seminary at Rome, and then to betray it'. Thomas Nowell was the son of Lawrence Nowell, previously the tutor of Edward de Vere.

Upon his return from Rome, Munday wrote "An Advertisement and defence for Trueth against her Backbiters and specially against the whispering Favourers, and Colourers of Campion, and the rest of his confederats, treasons."

It is evident that Edward de Vere was central to the trial of Blessed Edmund Campion and that he would have been clear-haunted by the memorable opening words of his defence and subsequent State execution. As an Oxfordian I suggest that Edward de Vere treasured those opening words, that he never forgot them, and that his homage was that, other than with one slight variation, he never changed them. He simply altered the word 'testament' to 'testimony' thus gaining an additional syllable to create a ten syllable line. He then gave the flowers to Hermione:

"Since what I am to say, must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say, 'Not Guilty'..."

"The Winter's Tale" Act III, ii, lines 22 onwards.

S. Schoenbaum. Shakespeare's Lives, New Edition.
Clarendon Press (Oxford). 1991. 593 pages.

by Gordon Cyr

When Samuel Schoenbaum - now distinguished Professor of Renaissance Literature and Director of the University of Maryland's Center for Renaissance and Broque Studies - published Shakespeare's Lives in 1970, his book was widely hailed as an important addition to Shakespearean biography and a valuable compendium of previous student's efforts in this field.

Professor Schoenbaum's more skeptical readers, however, noticed his carelessness with facts, selective omissions, and often dubious conclusions. Such skeptics also commented on the numerous aspersions cast, not only on anti-Stratfordians (who, as expected, got the largest share), but on any Shakespearean commentator - no matter of what persuasion - who offered speculations differing from Schoenbaum's own. A few factual errors in the earlier edition (but by no means all) have been corrected; omissions, dubious inferences and aspersions - for the most part - remain.

Of course, anti-Stratfordians - after recovering from Schoenbaum's sixty-six page tirade called "Deviations" (reduced from the first edition's hundred pages) - can take comfort from brickbats hurled at Stratfordian tormentors, past and present. Some of the author's targets are indeed deserving, e.g. the pompous certitudes of A. L. Rowse.

Aside from this occasional fun, Shakespeare's Lives, in both editions, is slipshod work. It takes one's breath away to read Schoenbaum's accusations of "amateurism" and "ignorance of fact and method" against not only anti-Stratfordians, but even respected Stratfordians like Charlotte Stopes, about whom he writes, "Her slovenliness, the vice of amateurism, disheartens." Such charges come with ill grace from one whose apparent heroes are Malone (a lawyer) and E. K. Chambers (a civil servant) - both amateurs. Even one amateur anti-Stratfordian, Sir George Greenwood, wins grudging respect.

Schoenbaum reserves a special calumny for Oxfordians and consistently misrepresents their arguments. Like many Stratfordians, Schoenbaum fills the holes in reasoning with theological polemics. Those who hold the traditional view are hailed as "orthodox", "believers", or "the faithful". For those of us who do not, Schoenbaum dons the mantle of Torquemada and dubs us "heretics" and "schismatics". When medieval discourse fails, he indulges a layman's bent toward psychopathology: "The mad people", we are called.

If a "heretic" is an eminent author, such as Henry James, Walt Whitman, or John Greenleaf Whittier, Schoenbaum draws back somewhat from traducing him in this fashion. But he cannot resist turning the tables on Sigmund Freud (an Oxfordian) by citing some shrink's "psychoanalysis", obviously unhappy with the Master's pungently expressed doubts about the Stratford myth.

However, Prof. Schoenbaum and his academic colleagues tend to dismiss the views of Henry James, et al., because - whatever their literary stature - they are alleged amateurs in Shakespearean studies. This blinkered view ignores such writers' special expertise, not shared by textual critics: Galsworthy, James, and Mark Twain wrote imaginative fiction, as did Shakespeare. Whittier and Whitman were poets, as was Shakespeare. Can anyone deny that these writers intimately knew the creative process? Or that they might know better about what a dramatist, novelist or poet puts into his work? "A writer writes of what he knows:" that is the rule. Can Shakespeare

really have been an exception? One does not have to be a "snob" (an epithet all-too-recurrent in the book under review) to observe with Walt Whitman that Shakespeare's chronicle plays were more likely written by "one of those wolfish earls...or a born descendant and knower", than by the bourgeois Stratford citizen, no matter how well-connected his supporters imagine him.

Schoenbaum complains of the "sheer volume" of anti-Stratfordian literature he was obliged to read. He still doesn't get it. Anti-Stratfordianism only came into existence because none of Shakspeare's biographers (including Schoenbaum) has been able, in the words of Henry James, "to square the facts of Stratford" with Shakespeare's plays. This situation is without parallel in our civilization's literary history. Doubts about any other author's identity have not persisted this long. Whatever the faults of Oxfordians' scholarship -- from Looney to Ogburn -- they have unearthed enough correlation between de Vere's life and Shakespeare's to form a strong circumstantial case for Oxford's authorship. Can Stratfordians make the same claim? Schoenbaum simply evades the issue: He pretends there is no necessary relationship between an author's life and his writings, and thus no one should be disturbed if there is none or little in Shakspeare's case.

Here is how Schoenbaum tries to discount the Oxfordian theory, using many tactics a more serious scholar would shun:

A) He suppresses evidence. Schoenbaum has some difficulty explaining how Shakspeare could have read Lord Burleigh's Precepts to his son, Robert Cecil, not published until 1516. Many have wondered about this, because Burleigh's advice so closely resembles Polonius's to his son Laertes. Schoenbaum follows the Stratfordian line: "Maybe Shakespeare saw [the book]...in manuscript." (Any time a Shakespearean source's availability doesn't fit Stratfordian chronology, Shakspeare's alleged access to "manuscripts" seems to have been unlimited!) Professor Schoenbaum ignored Charlton Ogburn's four other clues in Hamlet identifying Polonius with Burleigh and thus avoids having to account for Shakspeare's knowledge of these as well. This typically Schoenbaumian suppressio veri allows him a convenient dismissal: The argument has, he sniffs, "given comfort to those who envision Shakespeare at home in the corridors of power, as well as to Oxfordian schismatics [present writer's emphasis]." When he does not impute madness to anti-Stratfordians, Schoenbaum trots out "snobbery" to explain away dissatisfaction with Stratfordian "dogma". If they are not crazy, the professor seems to say, then these "heretics" must be snobs. Why else would they insist the author "moved in the corridors of power" and was an aristocrat?

B) He treats selected items from the case singly, as if it were solely dependent on that one item. He forgets that circumstantial evidence can convict if there is enough of it. But no matter how abundant the evidence for Oxford, to Schoenbaum it is all merely "a row of zeroes adding up to zero", (as he expressed it once to Oxfordian writer Joseph Sobran.) Eerie concordances between Oxford's curriculum vitae and Shakespeare's works only impel Schoenbaum to cop-out: "[L]iterature and Life," he writes (twice in the same book!), "are full of cunning parallels." Schoenbaum should be reminded that in both literature and life there is such a thing as too much coincidence to stomach. It is the especially "cunning parallels" between one particular life and one particular author's writings that are the point at issue.

When it comes to the Oxfordian theory, space permits a detailed examination of only one of Schoenbaum's many misreadings: On page 443, he questions J. T. Looney's assignment of a motive for Oxford's anonymity:

[I]f people knew that Oxford graced the stage with plays, why had he need of employing Shakespeare as a mask? The only motive [present writer's emphasis] that Looney can suggest is self-effacement.

Now let us see what Looney himself says on the matter, besides the few words Schoenbaum wrenches out of context. On page 173 of "Shakespeare" Identified, (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1949) he asks "why the author of the great dramas should have wished to throw a veil over his identity as he did; and the strange thing about this matter is this, that, with the Shakespeare sonnets before us, we should have been so slow in framing this question and answering it satisfactorily." He then goes on to quote enough lines in the sonnets to show their author as "one whose name had fallen into disrepute and who wished that it would perish with him."

But a further reading of Looney exposes the full extent of Schoenbaum's misrepresentation. On page 176 we find,

We do not maintain that the motive assigned in the sonnets was the only one that operated. [After 1593 - the first appearance of the name "William Shakespeare" on published plays' title pages] there are evidences that Oxford was making efforts to retrieve his position socially as well as financially... Needless to say to have appeared in the role of dramatic author would have been completely fatal to any chances he may have had: for in those days dramatic authorship was considered hardly respectable.

On this last point, there is much contemporary testimony - from Puttenham to John Selden in Table Talk - that not only was writing plays "hardly respectable" (Sir Thomas Bodley in 1600 was determined that "no such riff-raff as playbooks should ever find admittance" to his Bodleian Library), but for nobility to write plays for the public stage and to publish them was wholly unacceptable. Eva Turner Clark in her Hidden Allusions In Shakespeare's Plays (1931) documents the performances of Oxford's unpublished plays before the court and nobility, at such places as Hampton Court, before the Queen, Whitehall and the like, in the 1570s and 80s, and the unpublished comedies cited by Meres and Puttenham had reference thereto. Oxford's need for privacy by first using anonymity and then the pseudonym "William Shakespeare" only became compelling when it was decided to have the plays performed on the public stage and ultimately published. Stratfordian "scholars", like Schoenbaum who so freely accuse "amateur" anti-Stratfordians of arguing out of historical context, suffer a convenient memory lapse on this issue.

C) Schoenbaum indulges in ad hominem debating tactics. We have already seen samples of his many attacks on "amateur" doubters. Unable to find anything amateurish in such "heretics" as Greenwood or Canon Gerald Rendall, he trains his sights on those distinguished in other than Shakespearean fields. Since Schoenbaum does not hesitate to assign base motives to opponents, his own prejudices can come under scrutiny as well. The jealousy of the alleged "expert" peeps through almost every line. He complains that many "anti-Stratfordian diatribes [sic]...have been sponsored by well-esteemed commercial [publishing] houses which would refuse, as a poor business risk, the scholar's sober monograph." (Does this mean that Shakespeare's Lives - having found a ready publisher for two editions - is not "sober" scholarship?) The idea that J. T. Looney, a mere schoolmaster, untutored in textual criticism and supposedly lacking historical methodology, could possibly solve a puzzle that his predecessors could not is an anathema to Schoenbaum. He doesn't understand that where doubts about an author's identity are concerned, no amount of textual expertise can confer knowledge.

Not content with traducing those who disagree with him, Schoenbaum lashes out at the Earl of Oxford as well. In a snide little snipe at Looney's list of the author's characteristics revealed in Shakespeare's works, Schoenbaum cites an Aubrey story he admits is "presumably apocryphal". He then chides Looney for not including "flatulence as another of his hero's special attributes. Nor does he list cruelty, perversity, and profligacy as features of the author evident from a perusal of his work."

No, but neither does Schoenbaum show how such traits, even if true, are a bar to Oxford's authorship. And two can play the character assassination game: No Stratfordians find Shakspeare's alleged drunkenness, stinginess to his wife, pretensions to gentility, hounding small debtors in court, or support of the common Lands' enclosure a disqualification for playwriting either.

D) Schoenbaum resorts to half-truths. For example, he reports that, "(Shakespeare's) 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..." Schoenbaum implies that Shakespeare did not receive as many eulogies at his death as Jonson, even though he knows that Shakespeare did not receive any posthumous eulogies until six years after his death - and then only a few -, a fact which Schoenbaum wants to conceal since he cannot explain.

Because Schoenbaum is quick to condemn "schismatics" for our alleged "ignorance of fact and method", it is fair to ask how well he himself performs in this regard. What about his care with facts? Here is a partial list of errors in Shakespeare's Lives. Let the reader judge.

Page 14: "During the Civil War, when Queen Henrietta Maria journeyed across England to join her husband in Oxford in July 1643, she passed two nights at the Great House as the guest of Lady Bernard [present writer's emphasis]."

In his review of this book's first edition (Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter, March 30, 1971, p. 10), former S.O.S. president Richard C. Horne, Jr. wrote:

"There was no Lady Bernard until 1661. Elizabeth Hall Nashe was living with her husband Thomas Nashe in his home in Chapel Street. If the Nashes had a guest then it was presumably Susanna, who had been moved out by the Queen when she occupied New Place."

Schoenbaum's error here is especially inexcusable. He later (p. 22) admits that widow Nashe did not marry the still unknighthed John Bernard until 1649. (And Schoenbaum accuses us of snobbery!)

Page 336: "In the top left-hand corner [of the Ashbourne portrait] is inscribed in gilt: AETATIS SUAE 47°:1611 [Shakespeare was then 47]. It is a pity that the sitter - a physician? a philosopher? Shakespeare? - cannot be traced [present writer's emphasis]."

The professor surely knows better since he further states:

"Cleaning of the painting by a conservator has revealed that the date 1611 of the inscription has been altered from 1612 [Shakespeare was then 43], the outline of the original '2' now being visible."

The same conservator (the late Peter Michaels) also revealed Sir Hugh Hammersley's coat-of-arms with his family's motto: Honore et Amore. Sir Hugh, later Lord Mayor of London, was born in 1565 and 47 in 1612, thus confirming his identification. Both Helen Cyr (then secretary of the Shakespeare Oxford Society) and the Folger Library staff, working independently in 1979, reached the same conclusion, announced in Louis Marder's Shakespeare Newsletter, #160, November 1979.

Page 443: "Certainly Freud's position [on the Oxfordian theory] cannot be understood on purely rational grounds: he knew from the example of Leonardo what a supremely creative mind could accomplish without formal training [present writer's emphasis]."

Sir George Greenwood in The Shakespeare Problem Restated cites Sidney Colvin's Encyclopaedia Britannica article on Leonardo da Vinci:

"As a boy [Leonardo] was put to study under Andrea del Verrochio (a) 'goldsmith, sculptor, and painter' till his twenty-fifth year (and then) taken into the special favour of Lorenzo the Magnificent (as) a student of literature, science, and art."

Greenwood compares da Vinci's and Shakespeare's background and then makes a cogent summary of the whole authorship problem.

"But there is no miracle here, no mystery, no irreconcilable non sequitur, such as to make the alleged Shakspeare-Shakespeare identity something which seems to shock us as even monstrous because contrary to the whole world's experience...What analogy is there here with the case of the unlettered provincial, Player Shakspeare, the easy-going, jovial boon-companion, writing currente calamo, by plenary inspiration, (according to the hypothesis), unblotted pages of immortal poetry and equally immortal philosophy, for the instruction, delight, and wonder of all time? No analogy at all, but a sharp and most instructive contrast...No. Truly we may ransack history where we will, from the dawn of civilization to the present time, in the vain search for a parallel, but no parallel can be found.

Enough has been exposed here of Schoenbaum's shoddy "scholarship" and his own "ignorance of fact and method". He fails to prove Shakspeare wrote Shakespeare, and stumbles badly in the attempt. Why waste so much time on his book?

Unfortunately, the esteemed French Renaissance scholar, Prof. Abel LeFranc, was premature when we wrote in 1922, "The hour is past when curiosity provoked by the Shakespearean problem can be satisfied with fine doctrinal negations." Shakespeare's Lives is depressing evidence that the object of LeFranc's - "the contradictions underlying the Stratfordian credo, the insignificance and improbable poverty of means employed in defending it"* - are yet very much within us.

*"Le Secret de William Stanley", Le Flambeau (Brussels and Paris), July 31, 1922. Cited in Greenwood, Lee, Shakespeare and a Tertium Quid. C. Palmer, London, p. 22.

* * *

HAROLD WILLIAM PATIENCE, 1921-1992

It is with deep regret and sadness that we learned from Mrs. Laura Patience of the death of her husband, Harold, from a heart attack at their home in Braintree, Essex, on June 19th.

Harold W. Patience had long been in the forefront of the campaign to have the facts of the authorship of Shakespeare's works generally recognized. Interested in Shakespeare at school, he became convinced many years ago of the validity of the case for Edward de Vere and did a lot of research in the subject. He promoted the great distinction in the county of Essex as the home of the 17th Earl of Oxford and precedent earls of that illustrious family, and became widely known locally. Oxfordians owe their acquaintance with sites prominent in the history of the de Veres, notably Earl's Colne and Cestle Hedingham, to Harold's ever-readiness to conduct visitors for which he never lost his enthusiasm. He will be greatly missed and Oxfordian visitors to Essex will be the losers in being deprived of the generously given services and warm companionship of a highly knowledgeable guide.

Mr. Patience is survived by his wife of 45 years, a daughter and two grandchildren, to all of whom we extend our condolences.

Traditional Portraits of William Shakespeare

Professor S. Schoenbaum postulates in his Shakespeare's Lives (1975) that the bust on the Stratford Monument "is the first authentic portrayal of Shakespeare. There would be a second [the Droeshout portrait in the First Folio], and then no more, although later an eager public would be besieged with claims for one likeness or another." In his The Mysterious William Shakespeare, Charlton Ogburn reports at pp. 73-74:

When Emerson remarked on the wide contrast between the Shakespeare of the Shakespeare Societies and Shakespeare's thought and said he could not marry the one to the other, he was expressing the difficulty the orthodox biographers encounter - and not the biographers alone. Thomas Gainsborough was evidently defeated by the same problem. Having done a full-length portrait of David Garrick, he was asked by the actor to paint an ideal portrait of Shakespeare to grace the celebration at Stratford that Garrick was to stage-manage in 1769. Gainsborough seems to have responded with alacrity. He would do a portrait that 'should take the form from his pictures and statues, just enough to preserve his likeness,...and supply a soul from his works.' But this appears to have been just what he was unable to do. He wrote to Garrick that "I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare." He went on to say, 'Shakespeare's bust is a silly, smiling thing; and I have not sense enough to make him more sensible in the picture, and so I tell ye, you shall not see it.' In another letter, he wrote that 'Shakespeare shall come forthwith.' But no evidence tells that he ever finished the work or let anyone see what he had done. Even Gainsborough could not bring it off."

and then at p. 222:

"Droeshout's is the standard portrait of 'Shakespeare', the one by far the most frequently reproduced; little is seen of the even more repugnant effigy in the monument, supposedly approved by Shakspeare's wife and daughters. Stratfordians, who have no case if they do not take the First Folio at face value, must grant it the claim of authenticity. It goes hard with some or most of them, who would find it difficult to dispute the judgment of the painter Gainsborough respecting the engraving: 'Damn the original portrait. I never saw a stupider face. It is impossible that such a mind and such a rare talent should shine with such a face and such a pair of eyes.'"

"The Ghost of the Bard" is an article in ART news (Summer 1992):

Long content with her portrait of Johann Christian Fischer by Thomas Gainsborough, the Queen of England suddenly learned that it contained far more than she thought: beneath the 1780 image of the musician and Gainsborough son-in-law is a long-lost portrait of William Shakespeare.

But why did it take so long to discover? Martin Postle, while researching his forthcoming book on Reynolds, stumbled across a reference to the work in W. S. Spanton's A Discursive Handbook on Copying (1920): "Gainsborough's unsuccessful attempt to paint Shakespeare in the act of writing attended by the figures of Tragedy

and Comedy may be seen underneath the full-length portrait of his son-in-law, Fischer."

Digging further, Postle discovered Sir John Robinson, surveyor of the Queen's pictures, writing in 1835, "It is remarkable that the portrait of Fischer is painted over another picture, i.e. upon a canvas on which a painting, apparently a 'fancy' or historical subject, had been previously executed."

The Queen then agreed to have the painting X-rayed while it was at the National Gallery for an exhibition, and sure enough, when the X rays were pieced together, Shakespeare emerged. His head is on the right of the canvas gazing heavenward beyond an outstretched hand holding a quill. At his feet kneels a lady. She is Comedy, holding a mask before her face. At left is a third head, probably Tragedy.

Letters Gainsborough wrote to the Shakespearean actor David Garrick show how he agonized over the portrait. But why use the rejected canvas for his painting of Fischer? Postle suggests that since Gainsborough was painting Fischer's portrait for free, he did not want the expense of a fresh canvas.

Nor did he have to dwell long on Fischer's pose; it closely resembles Scheemakers' famous Westminster Abbey statue of the playwright. The Fischer portrait is on view through September 13 at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

* * *

The Wilkes University Attorney's Report 1991-1992
The 1991 Lecture: "Justice Stevens on Shakespeare"

Applying the most basic rules of legal research, Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens set out to determine who wrote Shakespeare's plays, and his detective work presented in the Max Rosenn Lecture Series in Law and Humanities last spring fascinated the crowd of more than 1,000.

Identifying the collected works of Shakespeare as the "Shakespeare Canon", Stevens described them as "perhaps the most stimulating and exciting works in the English language. Canons of statutory construction, in contrast, are probably the duller materials that law students read."

Working from "the unorthodox view that Edward De Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, is the true author of the Shakespeare Canon," Stevens set out to demonstrate "the utility of certain canons of statutory construction in the search for truth and justice."

Dividing his presentation into "five acts", the Supreme Court Justice examined how each of five canons supports his original thesis, documenting his contentions with tidbits of information such as the substantial, no-strings-attached stipend Queen Elizabeth paid annually to De Vere and the absence in Shakespeare's son-in-law's writing of any reference to an illustrious father-in-law.

Ed. Note: Justice Stevens's speech is published in the April, 1992 edition of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review.

Professor Thomas Pendleton
Department of English
Iona College
New Rochelle, N. Y. 10801

June 18, 1992

Dear Professor Pendleton:

I am sending you the enclosed Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter since Leonard Deming's summary of the contretemps, re the Oxfordian page in The Shakespeare Newsletter, is on page 6. I am also taking this opportunity to challenge the validity of the reasons for canceling that page as you set forth in your Winter 1991 Newsletter:

We exclude the Oxfordian pages with some reluctance, because we are aware the action will displease a number of faithful and generous supporters of SNL. But as editors of a responsible publication, we see no other option: although the "authorship controversy" has a certain interest - more for the general public, we think - to argue it at length in every issue of SNL is to give it a prominence and a plausibility it does not deserve.

It is our conviction, as it is that of virtually all academically based Shakespeareans, that there is no real possibility that anyone other than William Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays published under his name. And, although we do not propose to continually debate the issue, it is perhaps appropriate - at least once - to indicate something of why we believe as we do.

To illustrate, I am submitting three questions and will print both this letter and your answers in the forthcoming Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter - Deadline August 30, 1992.

1. Facts: There is an entry on April 25, 1616 in the Burial Register of the Stratford Trinity Church which reads, "Will. Shakspeare, gent.", but no record of how and where he died, no record of his funeral, no name or vital statistics on the gravemarker on the floor of the chancel under which he is assumed to be interred and no known mention of his death by anyone, anywhere, in any way for at least 5 years. The universal reaction to his death, therefore, was, save the Register entry, a total, singular and protracted blackout.

Question: Since Stratfordians are convinced that the person who was the dramatist and poet William Shakespeare was, during his lifetime, known as such to all persons who came in direct or indirect contact with him but then at Will. Shakspeare's death and for years thereafter all such persons in Stratford, London and elsewhere, for no apparent reason and in what had to be voluntary and ununited interaction, made no known mention, record or memorial of any kind that he had died, how do academically-based Stratfordians explain that thundering silence?

2. Facts: As you know, Re Hopkins' Will and Trust, 3 All England Reports 46, (1964), is the only litigated case in which the question of the authorship was directly at issue. Justice Wilberforce ruled that "the question of the authorship cannot be considered closed." This, of course, means that the academically-based Stratfordians, who testified for Will. Shakspeare's authorship, did not, indeed could not, produce any fact that Will. Shakspeare was identified either by himself or by any of his contemporaries, as the dramatist and poet William Shakespeare.

Question: Do academically-based Stratfordians now know of any fact which conclusively proves that during his lifetime Will. Shakspeare was identified as the dramatist and poet William Shakespeare, which fact would not have been introduced in the testimonies of those highly respected academically-based Stratfordians?

3. Facts: The epitaph on the Stratford Monument is recognized as the first public, posthumous eulogy to William Shakespeare. According to tradition, William Shakespeare is buried under a nameless gravemarker nearby but not contiguous to the Monument. The epitaph proclaims "ENVIOUS DEATH HATH PLAST WITH IN THIS MONUMENT/SHAKSPEARE" and blatantly flies in the face of the nameless gravemarker by superfluously asserting, "WHOSE NAME DOTTH DECK THIS TOMBE", and does not identify "SHAKSPEARE" as a playwright. The Monument, moreover, does not have enough space to contain the remains of any person.

Question: How do academically-based Stratfordians explain that such an incongruous, self-contradictory, demeaning and inappropriate epitaph was chosen for such a significant eulogy?

Sincerely,

Morse Johnson

MJ:bh

Dear Mr. Johnson:

July 9, 1992

Thank you for your letter of June 18, and for the copy of The Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter. I appreciate your courtesy in apprising me of Mr. Deming's summary of his correspondence with The Shakespeare Newsletter. Mr. Deming's summary misstates both the argument of the editorial in our Winter 1991 issue and the legal claims he has made against SNL.

Since SNL's position -- and mine -- on the authorship controversy has been published already, I do not intend to engage the specific questions you pose. If our position is of sufficient interest to you, please feel free to reprint the entire editorial "The Authorship Question".

In order for SNL to remain current on matters Oxfordian, we would appreciate establishing an exchange subscription with your publication -- we will regularly send you SNL and ask that you send SNL your newsletter.

Yours truly,

Thomas A. Pendleton

Dear Professor Pendleton:

July 16, 1992

I received your July 9 letter and am impelled to reply. Since your refusal to answer my questions is based on irrevocable dogma, I can only infer that if a student of yours would pose the same questions, you would render the same reply!:

"Since SNL's position -- and mine -- on the authorship controversy has been published already, I do not intend to engage the specific questions you pose."

Since the previous Newsletter only quoted two of the five paragraphs in your editorial, "The Authorship Question", I will quote the other three with a commentary following each.

"First, the Shakespeare plays were so many, so popular, and performed in so many venues over so long a period that to presume that the identity of their true author (whoever may be proposed) was successfully concealed is to presume a conspiracy of many dozens, if not many hundreds, of participants. That no one of them, over the course of twenty-five to thirty years of active deception and many decades of keeping quiet, ever betrayed the secret is simply more than can be believed of human nature. And even if it were not, the conspiracy one must posit is so large and of so long a continuance that it becomes difficult to imagine from whom the secret was being kept."

The Stratfordian attribution relies on a conviction that Will. Shakspeare of Stratford was known by many more than "many dozens, if not many" thousands, and the facts show that not one of them ever left any record thereof. In your words therefore, your attribution "is simply more than can be believed of human nature." There are corroborating contemporary facts which evidence that for social and political reasons the identity of the authentic author of the works was camouflaged and concealed under sanctions enforced by Court officials and such reasons and sanctions were still operating at his death and for years thereafter, e.g., the anonymous epigram in Wits Recreation (1640):

To Mr. William Shake-spear

Shake-speare, we must be silent in thy praise,
'Cause our encomiums will but blast thy bays
Which envy could not, that thou didst so well;
Let thine own histories prove thy Chronicle.

As far as I know, no Stratfordian biographer has ever cited that epigram and such omission can only be attributed to avoiding the embarrassment it presents.

"Second, with special reference to Oxford. He died in June of 1604, before about a dozen of the Shakespeare plays, by the generally accepted chronology, had been written. It is of course true that it is almost always impossible to document irrefutably when any of the plays was composed; but this is far from an authorization to ignore everything that has been presented as evidence for

chronological placement by the study of sources, influences, contemporary allusion and relevance, and literary and theatrical history. (A brief look at the "Canon and Chronology" section of the Oxford Textual Companion will demonstrate how extensive these materials are.)

Even more important, simply relocating all the later plays back to about the time of Twelfth Night would in effect deny everything of coherent interrelation and artistic growth that generations of readers have discerned and appreciated in Shakespeare's mastery of the tragedies from Othello on, and in his development of the new genre of tragicomic romance. This is an improbability far exceeding anything that might be extrapolated from Hamlet's having been written by a tradesman's boy with a grammar school education."

You refer to the "generally accepted chronology" of the dating of writing plays but in defining such you must have ignored the chronological placements found and deduced by many outstanding Stratfordians after their study of sources, influences, contemporary allusions and relevance and literary and theatrical history. I refer to such as F. P. Wilson, C. J. Sission, Marchette Chute, Edward Dowden, Andrew S. Cairncross, Karl Elze, Charles Knight, et. alia. You have also ignored the findings by distinguished Oxfordian researchers, particularly Eva Turner Clark. I, therefore, attach a reproduction of "The Question of de Vere's Dates" in Charlton Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare (pp. 382-390) in which he sets forth the evidence and extrapolations rendered by Stratfordians and Oxfordians on which he bases his conclusion that, "The truth is, proof is wholly lacking that any of Shakespeare's plays were written after 1604-..."

There is one fundamental and provable difference between Stratfordian biographers and Oxfordian biographers -- all Oxfordians read all of the major 20th century Stratfordians but, with a very few exceptions, Stratfordians do not read any of the major Oxfordians. The position you depict for yourself in your "The Authorship Question" proves that you have not read any major 20th century Oxfordian biography.

I appreciate and accept your proposal to exchange subscriptions of our respective publications.

Sincerely,

Morse Johnson

MJ:bh

Addendum: As editor of the 3rd edition of Eva Turner Clark's Hidden Allusions In Shakespeare's Plays, our distinguished member, Ruth Loyd Miller, wrote a prefatory article relating to the dating of the writing of Shakespeare's plays entitled, "Topicalities", from which the following is an extract:

"The players are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." Hamlet II, ii

Shakespeare's dramas were the Will Rogers radio programs and the Bob Hope shows of the sixteenth century. Like Hope, Shakespeare filled his productions with comments and observations upon persons, incidents, political events, and social situations and attitudes contemporaneous with the time each was written. Hamlet proclaims this as he says to Polonius "the players are the abstract and brief chronicles of the times."

Contemporary allusions and comments lose their impact as the circumstances that engendered them are forgotten. Pierre Augustin Beaumarchais' Figaro is now considered a light, flimsy comedy. But at the time it was first presented, the topical allusions which filled it caused such an uproar Beaumarchais had to flee to the country. It is considered one of the final triggers of the French Revolution in 1789. The historic vacuum in which Shakespeare's plays have traditionally been studied precludes recognition of historic allusions and topicalities. A few exceptions, where allusions and topicalities have been acknowledged in Shakespeare's works, are accounted for in later revisions of the plays, or in references to great events not soon forgotten. Small topicalities are lost or overlooked when the play is assigned an erroneous date of composition. For references to small topicalities to be meaningful to an audience, mention must follow soon after the event occurs and while public memory is fresh.

Shakespeare's topicalities are made more difficult to recognize by the subtle casualness with which he camouflages them. An example of this is supplied by Mrs. Julia Cooley Altrocchi, poet, historian of the West, and author who reported it in the Shakespeare-Oxford Society Newsletter, March 1971:

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., Vol. xv, under title, Magnetism Note 2, reports:

"Robert Norman published a work, of which the following description is given in Ronalds Catalogue: The Newe Attractive, containing a short discourse on the Magnes or lodestone . . . Now first found out by Robert Norman, Hydrographer, London 1581."

So a fascinating book about a newly discovered magnetically attractive metal was in circulation among the court intellectuals in 1581. Then it was new and timely. One can hear the appreciative ripple of laughter when Hamlet was first played at court:

Queen: 'Come hither, my good Hamlet, sit by me.'

Hamlet: No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.'

The obscurity of these lines is evidenced by the fact that no editors of Shakespeare, from Malone and Steevens, to the present, have commented upon them. Orthodox chronology, which places Hamlet in the late 1590's or early 1600's, cannot explain this allusion for the key is found in the early 1580's.

Topicalities cannot be recognized, or easily discovered, when the play is out of focus as to time, place, circumstance, and authorship. The chronology followed by Sir Edmund Chambers and his predecessors, based on the life of William Shakespere of Stratford, prevents discovery of historic and topical allusions to matters of contemporary interest.

Since all orthodox chronology for the plays is keyed to the date of birth of William of Stratford in 1564, it is destructive of orthodox attribution of authorship to date any play before the early 1590's. Even genius must have time to grow up. Even genius must have time to account for a wife and three children before the age of twenty-five, walk the mud roads to London and find himself a job, learn French and Italian, acquire classical knowledge and culture, refine his language, learn to spell non-phonetically and to shake off a Warwickshire dialect, learn legal terms and concepts, fight with an army, sail at sea, and travel in Italy.

Dr. A. S. Cairncross, once recognized as a scholar of standing, fell from grace in 1936 when Macmillan and Company published his Problem of Hamlet, in which, with sound argument and documentation, he shows Hamlet was written

as early as 1583. Though Dr. Cairncross has never been refuted, his book has quietly disappeared from library shelves. The orthodox community now refers to him as "disreputable" without assigning reasons.

Earlier dating of the plays also gives credit to Shakespeare for much more originality and imagination, if not genius, than the orthodox chronology, which denies and negates the qualities. The only way by which orthodoxy can acknowledge Shakespeare's debt to what they term "pre-Shakespearean drama" is to accuse him of plagiarism. He merely takes old plays and rewrites them. Malone leveled this charge at the end of the eighteenth century:

From some words spoken by Polonius in Hamlet, I think it is probable that there was an English play on Julius Caesar before Shakespeare commenced as a writer for the stage. Stephen Gosson, in his Plays Confuted in Five Actions, published about 1582, mentions a play entitled The History of Caesar and Pompey . . . It also should be remembered that our author has several plays founded on subjects which had been previously treated by others. Of this kind are King John, Richard II, 1 Henry IV, 2 Henry IV, Henry V, Richard III, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure, Taming of the Shrew, Merchant of Venice, and, I believe, Timon, and 2 and 3 Henry VI, whereas no proof has hitherto been produced that any contemporary writer ever presumed to new-model a story that had already employed the pen of Shakespeare.

The very subjects Malone listed should have made him suspicious of the attribution of authorship to William of Stratford. But neither Malone nor any scholar of his time considered the possibility of "Shakespeare" being a pen name, though the use of pen names was common among Elizabethan writers. Malone was aware that the use of stooges to figure as authors on title pages was also a common practice. Because William Shakspeare was too young to have written the plays on Malone's list, Malone assumed, as other critics have, that he merely appropriated and revamped them to his own purposes.

Since the label of plagiarism satisfies Shakespeare worshipers, no one need ask the question regarding these old "pre-Shakespearean dramas" as to who wrote them in the first place. That Malone, with all his astuteness, failed to piece together the clues which might have aroused his curiosity as to authorship, can be explained and forgiven by his many preoccupations, especially that of exposing the forgeries of Samuel and William Henry Ireland. . . Nor should it be overlooked, that as his reputation grew as a "Shakespearean authority", Malone had less and less desire to admit he had been deceived. . .

* * *

Dear Editor Johnson:

In the letters section of the New York Times Book Review of 5 Jan 1992, as part of an observation upon a prior article by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., entitled "Cultural Impersonators", Steven G. Kellman of San Antonio, writes, "If a monkey doodling at the typewriter happened to pound out the precise text of 'Hamlet', the result would be as different from Shakspeare's as if authorship by the Earl of Oxford were definitively established." What delights me in this obscure reference to the Shakespeare controversy is the matter-of-fact-ness of Mr. Kellman's reference. It seems to imply that in his mind the authorship dispute is a legitimate one. Obscure, but not trivial: even small blows like this help to split the stone of orthodoxy.

James Fitzgerald

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM FOR 1992 CONFERENCE OF SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY
 Omni International Hotel, 2065 E. 96th St. Cleveland, Ohio 44106
 Information/Reservations (216) 791-1900; FAX (216) 231-3329
 Reservations 1/800 THE OMNI

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1992

- 9-12:30 Committee Meetings
(To be scheduled)
- 10-12:30 General Registration
(Tables manned 9-4:30)
- 12:30-2 Buffet Luncheon-Greetings from
Chptr. Chmn. & Pres. Round
Table introduction of Conferees.
Announcements
- 2:30-4:30 Papers 1,2,3,&4.
Time Limit: 20 min.; Q&A: 10 min.
- 4:30-7 Free Time. (Possible trip to
Cleveland attractions, committee
meetings or additional papers.)
- 7-8 Cocktails. Cash Bar.
- 8-9:30 Dinner.
Speaker: the Earl of Burford.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1992

- 8-9 Breakfast Buffet
- 9:30-11:30 Annual General Meeting
and Elections.
- 11:30-12:30 Papers 5 & 6
- 12:45-2:15 Luncheon.
- 2:30-4:30 Special Papers (Strittmater,
Whittemore, Roe)
- 4:30-6:30 Free Time.
- 4:30-7 Board of Trustees Meeting.
- 6:30 Cocktails in Oval Lobby.
- 7:30 Elizabethan Banquet.
Speaker: Fr. Francis Edwards SJ
- 9:30 Entertainment.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

- 8-9 Continental Breakfast.
- 9:15-10:45 Papers 7,8 & 9
- 11-12:15 Panel on proper methods and procedures for Oxfordian research.
Panel for teachers.
- 12:30-2 Awards Luncheon. Presentation of Awards.
- 2:30-4 Committee Roundtables.
- 4-5 Conclusions and reports of Committee Roundtables.
- 5 on Free time for socializing and discussions.
- 7-8:30 Final Dinner. Closing Toast by Lord Burford.
- Evening for socializing and discussion

SPEAKERS WHO WILL BE PRESENTING PAPERS:

Father Francis Edwards, S. J.
 The Hon. Charles Vere, Earl of Burford
 Richard Roe
 Winnifred Frazer
 Roger Strittmater

Andy Hannas
 Johnny Price
 Mildred Sexton
 Hank Whittemore
 (more to come)

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

A Trustee's meeting was held at the Omni International Hotel, site of the Society's Annual Conference, October 16-18. The Western Reserve Chapter was launched at a supper and brunch and about 20 members from the area attended with Trustees. It was a fine combination of business and pleasure. The Chapter is now actively engaged in organizing a successful conference in October. Omni's head chef, Tony Paxton, has great plans for an authentic Elizabethan Banquet on Saturday evening with delicacies, mead, wines, and beer.

There will be a full evening on unstructured socializing after the Sunday evening banquet. Many members feel that these informal "bull sessions" are outstanding and informative seminars and give conferees an opportunity to digest the meat of the conference and to form Oxfordian friendships in a relaxed atmosphere.

Check with your travel agent immediately. In past autumns many airlines have offered special bargains. Every member will soon receive a conference registration package. Please fill out the necessary forms and return as soon as convenient.

Father Francis Edwards, S.J. will attend the conference and while in the States be seeking an American publisher for his new book on Robert Persons. He would be delighted to learn of any contacts Oxfordians may have in the field. Verily Anderson will, alas, be unable to attend. Her new book, The de Veres of Castle Hedingham, will probably be published around Christmas.

Western Reserve Chapter member, Ralph Bota, will be heading the Blue Boar Gifte Shoppe at the October conference. On sale will be Oxfordian books, polo and T-shirts, tote bags, note paper, Christmas cards, and a few surprise items (if we can get them delivered on time). They will make excellent gifts and stocking stuffers and profits will go into the Society's general fund. If you have any quality items you think would be popular, contact Ralph: 5707 Hampstead, Parma, OH, 44129; (216) 884-3695.

It is VERY important that all of us assist in securing lecture venues for Lord Burford. He has done a truly spectacular job in bringing the Oxfordian message to every corner of the country. In September he will be embarking on a new lecture tour throughout the U.S. and Canada. It has been the case, almost without exception, that Charles Burford's bookings have been the direct result of the efforts of Oxfordians — and NOT those of the institutions where he spoke. Your help is needed! Please do what you can. Contact Eileen McKinnon: 67 Broadway #3, Arlington, MA, 02174, or phone (617) 643-6115.

We look forward to seeing you in Cleveland in October! Yea! Verily! Johnny Price, Chairman.

JOIN SHAKESPEARE OXFORD 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 corroborating information and commentary.

DUES

Student \$15.00

Annual Regular \$35

Sustaining \$50 or more

Dues and requests for membership information to:

Victor Crichton, Cathedral Station - Box 0550, New York, NY 10025

Submit materials for publication in the Newsletter to:

Morse Johnson, Suite #819, 105 W. 4th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202

The Shakespeare Oxford Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state as a non-profit educational organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. IRS number: 13-6105314. New York number: 07182.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society

Cathedral Station, P.O. Box 0550, New York, N.Y. 10025-1550



WALT WHITMAN ON SHAKESPEARE

by Paul A. Nelson

Born in West Hills, Long Island, May 31, 1819, Walt Whitman resided in Camden, New Jersey, from 1873, the time of his first paralytic stroke, until his death on March 26, 1892. Celebrated for introducing a new freedom of poetic style through his Leaves of Grass, Whitman exerted as profound an influence on modern American and English literature as did Homer, Dante and Shakespeare on literature of their respective countries and times. First published in 1855, Leaves of Grass went through repeated revisions with each of its nine editions during the author's life-time, culminating in the so-called deathbed, certified as "complete", edition of 1892. In 1855, within a few weeks of publication of the first edition, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote the author: "I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of Leaves of Grass. I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed....I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be....I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start."

Often quoted is Whitman's comment in his November Boughs (1888) regarding William Shakespeare's historical plays:

Conceiv'd out of the fullest heat and pulse of European feudalism - personifying in unparallel'd ways the medieval aristocracy, its towering spirit of ruthless and gigantic caste, with its own peculiar air and arrogance (no mere imitation) - only one of the "wolfish aarls" so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant and knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works - works in some respects greater than anything else in recorded literature.

In this article the reader's attention on the other hand is directed to less well-known quotations by Walt Whitman concerning Shakespeare's works and the authorship controversy.

Shortly after settling on Mickle Street in Camden, Whitman became acquainted with Horace Logo Traubel (1858-1919), a young teenager, who soon was running errands for Walt and doing odd jobs for him. A strong father-son attachment developed between them which lasted until Whitman's death. Employed later on as a clerk in a local bank, Traubel visited Whitman frequently when Walt was in Camden, sometimes several times a day. Eventually, Traubel served Whitman as proofreader, editorial assistant, volunteer secretary, and even proxy. He was a great help especially in 1888 in the completion of November Boughs and also in 1891 of Goodbye, My Fancy. In Whitman's handwritten Last Will and Testament, dated June 29, 1888, together with Dr. Richard Bucke and Thomas Harned, Horace Traubel was listed as one of three persons eventually to be in "absolute charge of my books, publications and copyrights and to manage and control the same - and make such use as they decide on my literary property and copyrights." Without question, however, Traubel's greatest service to Whitman and to posterity was to record faithfully between 3/28/88 and 9/14/89 Whitman's conversations and many of the letters he had received. This material was carefully edited and subsequently published between 1906 and 1964 in five volumes, each consisting of approximately 500 pages and comprising altogether of more than

one million words. Walt instructed Traubel: "I want you to speak for me when I am dead. Be sure to write about me honest: whatever you do do not prettify me; include all the hells and damns."

The five volumes With Walt Whitman in Camden, compiled, edited and published by Horace Traubel, contain over one hundred references to works of William Shakespeare and the Francis Bacon/Shakespeare authorship controversy. The preeminent Americans figuring in this literary tempest were Delia Bacon, William O'Connor and Ignatius Donnelly. Whitman spoke frequently about each of them:

Delia Bacon - "The sweetest, eloquentist, grandest woman, I think, that America has so far produced - a woman rare among women, rare among the rare. Romanesque, -beautiful, not after the ideals of the fashion plates, but after Greek ideas... No, I never met her, but somehow I feel that I have known her, nevertheless...It was not surprising Emerson helped Delia Bacon. She was eminently attractive to serious minded persons, always. See how even Hawthorne sends out one of her books with a note bearing his name. Hawthorne, so chary of lending name or countenance to anything that savored of pretense. And she was poor, of course, very unworldly, just in all ways such a woman as was calculated to bring the whole literary pack down on her, the orthodox, cruel, stately, dainty, over-fed literary pack - worshiping tradition, unconscious of this day's honest sunlight."

William O'Connor - A great friend and frequent visitor to Whitman's home, O'Connor wrote a booklet entitled The Good Gray Poet, by which Walt soon was identified.

"William O'Connor was a storm blast for Bacon. I never saw anybody stand up against William when he really got going: he was like a flood: he was loaded with knowledge - yes, with knowledge and knowledge with William was never useless - he knew what to do with it....I am firm against Shaksper - I mean the Avon man, the actor: but as to Bacon, well, I don't know."

Ignatius Donnelly - "Have you noticed the dirty tricks to which Donnelly's enemies resort to discredit him? I put no faith in the stories of his political crookedness: his literary enemies make a lot of it: consider it a final adverse argument - though what that has to do with Shakespeare versus Bacon I don't see. The typical literary man is no more able to examine this question dispassionately than a priest is to pass on objections to the doctrine of the atonement, hell, heaven: not a bit more able: the scribblers are blind from the start: they are after effects, technique, what a thing looks like, not what it is: they don't read farther up or farther down than the surface of the ground they walk on."

"The one thing I have against Donnelly - if I have anything against him - is that he is a searcher after things out of the normal: not abnormal - I should not say that: but out of the normal: a man who likes to go about showing us how we have made mistakes - put a wrong twist into facts: that Judas was a pretty good fellow, of some use, after all: that Caesar was not thus and so, but thus and so: that there was no William Tell - that the William Tell Story was wholly a myth....This sort of thing inheres in modern criticism: it demonstrates the temper of the age. I do not complain of it - indeed, welcome it: the arguments are at bottom irrefutable: but the letter of destructive criticism must not be pushed too far - it tends to render a man unfit to build."

After a pleasant ride out in the country with his friend, Dr. Bucke, on Sunday, Walt returned home in fine spirits. Sunday, June 3, 1888, Horace Traubel visited 328 Michel Street and found Whitman lying on the sofa in the parlor surrounded by concerned friends. Apparently, Sunday evening he had attempted to give himself a sponge bath alone in his upstairs bedroom and had fallen to the floor where he had lain helpless for perhaps several hours.

Nevertheless, Walt Whitman's animated conversations continued on for four more years, his mind remaining clear and cogent. In December 1888 he confided to Horace Traubel:

"I am disposed to trust myself more and more to your younger body and spirit, knowing, as I do, that you love me, that you will not betray me - more than that (and in a way better than that) that you understand me and can be depended upon to represent me not only vehemently but with authority."

Whitman read extensively: Goethe, Voltaire, Homer and Keats to mention a few. His comments reveal a penetrating, critical mind, both sensitive and perceptive. The following illustrates the range of his recorded conversations.

"Goethe suggests books - carries the aroma of books about with him - seems to be a great man with books, by books, from books. Now, whatever Shakespeare was or was not, he was not that sort of man: he came, with all his scholarship, direct from nature. To me that means oh! as much - to come straight from life - to be rooted in an immediate fact."

Talked of Voltaire. "Now there was a great man, too," said W.: "an emancipator - a shining spiritual light; a miraculous man whose ridicule did more for justice than the battles of armies. Voltaire never was of a mind to condone Shakespeare: Shake-speare's crudities were offensive to him: there was something crude, powerful, drastic in the Shake-speare plays: Voltaire could not reconcile his nerves to their brutal might. But you cannot shift such luminaries from their orbit by a sneer - by an adjective. Do you think Leaves of Grass was ever really hurt by the people who went at it with a club?"

W. resuming: "The Shakespeare plays are essentially the plays of an aristocracy: they are in fact not as nearly in touch with the spirit of our modern democracy as the plays of the Greeks - as the Homeric stories in particular. Look at the Homeric disregard for power, place: notice the freedom of the Greeks - their frank criticism of their nabobs, rulers, the elect. You find the Greeks speaking of 'the divine hog-keeper', 'keeper of the hogs' - saying things like that - very convincing things - which prove that they had some recognition of the dignity of the common people - of the dignity of labor - of the honor that resides in the average life of the race. Do you find such things in the Shakespeare plays? I do not - no, nothing of the kind: on the contrary everything possible is done in the Shakespeare plays to make the common people seem common - very common indeed. Although, as I say, I do not admit Bacon, this is an argument which may go to the Bacon side."

"But, after all, Shakespeare, the author Shakespeare, whoever he was, was a great man: much was summed up in him - much - yes, a whole age and more: he gave reflection to a certain social estate quite important enough to be studied: he was a master artist, in a way - not in all ways, for he often fell down in his own wreckage: but taking him for all in all he is one of the fixed figures - will always have to be reckoned with. It is remarkable how little is known of Shaksper the actor as a person and how much less is known of the person Shakespeare of the plays. The record is almost a blank - it has no substance whatever: scarcely anything that is said of him is authorized. Did you ever notice - how much the law is involved with the plays? Long before I heard of any characteristic turns, the sure touch, the invisible potent hand, of the lawyer - of a lawyer, yes: not a mere attorney-at-law but a mind capable of taking the law in its largest scope, penetrating even its origins: not a pettifogger, perhaps even technically in its detail defective-- but a big intellect of great grasp....I go with you fellows when you say no to Shaksper: that's about as far as I have got. As to Bacon, well, we'll see, we'll see."

Walt Whitman once wrote: "In estimating my volumes, the world's current times and deeds, and their spirit, must be first profoundly estimated. The poet fails if he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides...and if he be not himself the age transfigured." Four hundred years ago in his plays and Sonnets Shakespeare eloquently epitomized Elizabethan England on the verge of a literary and cultural renaissance, although the country was constantly threatened by Spanish invasions and replacement of Elizabeth on the throne by Mary of Scotland. In a similar way Whitman, through his Leaves of Grass, this optimistic prose and thoughtful critiques, epitomized the love of freedom and pride in honest labor possessed by average nineteenth century Americans living amidst calamitous social realities. The influence of each of these savants profoundly affected the future development of literature and culture both in his country and the world.

Reference

- Emerson, R.W.: Letter to Walt Whitman from Concord, MA, 21 July 1955. Inserted copy on flyleaf of reprinted first edition of W. Whitman: Leaves of Grass New York, The Eakins Press, 1966
- Whitman, W.: What lurks behind Shakespeare's historical plays? In November Boughs, p. 52. London, Alexander Gardner, 1889
- Whitman, W.: Note reprinted from London edition (1887) of Specimen Days, p. 121. Boston, David R. Godine, 1971
- Whitman, W.: Facsimile of Whitman's last will and testament. Frontispiece in Traubel, H.: With Walt Whitman in Camden Vol. I March 28-July 14, 1888. New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1908.
- Whitman, W.: To Horace Traubel. Injunction opposite p. 1 in Traubel, H.: op. cit.
- Traubel, H.: With Walt Whitman in Camden Vols. I, II, III, IV, and V.
- Reynolds, D.S.: Of Me I Sing: Whitman in His Time. New York Times Book Review (October 4, 1992), p. 1

Excerpt from Poe on Shakespeare Worship
(Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter Fall-Winter 1981-1982)

Poe tersely took Carlyle's measure in an outspoken note which he included in his "Marginalia" for April, 1846--some years before Carlyle's acquaintance with Delia Bacon. Poe's consideration of Carlyle's Hero-Worship rapidly led him to a consideration of Shakespeare worshippers. Poe wrote:

The book about "Hero-Worship"--is it possible that it ever excited a feeling beyond contempt? No hero-worshipper can possess anything within himself. That man is no man who stands in awe of his fellow-man. Genius regards genius with respect--with even enthusiastic admiration--but there is nothing of worship in the admiration, for it springs from a thorough cognizance of the one admired--from perfect sympathy, the result of the cognizance; and it is needless to say, that sympathy and worship are antagonistic. Your hero-worshippers, for example--what do they know about Shakespeare? They worship him--rant about him--lecture about him--about him, him, and nothing else--for no other reason than that he is utterly beyond their comprehension. They have arrived at an idea of his greatness from the pertinacity with which men have called him great. As for their own opinion about him--they really have none at all. (from Eric W. Carlson, IL, 1967, pp. 522-523. The emphasis is Poe's.)

Poe did have an opinion of his own about Shakespeare and he expressed that opinion in a review (1845) of William Hazlitt's The Characters of Shakespeare. Poe's opinion should be of particular interest to Oxfordiana and all students of the authorship question because that opinion constitutes the psychological crowbar with which the locked treasure chest of the Shakespearean works has been forced open. Poe said in that review, in part:

In all commentating upon Shakespeare, there has been a radical error, never yet mentioned. It is the error of attempting to expound his characters--to account for their actions--to reconcile his inconsistencies--not as if they were the coinage of a human brain, but as if they had been actual existences upon earth. We talk of Hamlet the man, instead of Hamlet the dramatis persona--of Hamlet that God, in place of Hamlet that Shakespeare created. If Hamlet had really lived, and if the tragedy were an accurate record of his deeds, from this record (with some trouble) we might, it is true, reconcile his inconsistencies and settle to our satisfaction his true character. But the task becomes the purest absurdity when we deal only with a phantom. It is not (then) the inconsistencies of the acting man which we have as a subject of discussion--although we proceed as if it were, and thus inevitably err, but the whims and vacillations--the conflicting energies and indolence of the poet. It seems to us little less than a miracle, that this obvious point should have been overlooked. (Carlson, p. 506)

Needless to say, it seems to us little less than miraculous that this obvious point should continue to be overlooked--particularly by Shakespeare worshippers, those multitudes who respond to the facts and arguments of the Oxford case with the empty tintinabulation, "What difference does it make who wrote the plays?"

Warren Hope

THE STRATFORD DEFENDANT COMPROMISED BY HIS OWN ADVOCATES

by Louis Bsnezat

(Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly July 1945)

The adherents of the Stratford story are like the devoted followers of a deep-seated religion. To doubt is to commit sacrilege. When one high priest of Stratford was shown the photographic plates which betrayed that the Ashbourne portrait had been tampered with, he walked away as though he were in a trance. Someone had slain his God.

It is strange to see the straws to which the Stratfordians cling, to keep their heads above the rising Oxford tide.

The writer once took part in a debate at an Eastern college, with the professor who teaches Shakespearean courses, before an audience composed largely of the latter's students.

My opponent, at one stage of the debate, cried out, "I don't know, I can't answer these questions. I'd like to hear George Lyman Kittredge answer them."

...

This paper is already too long. Many books could be compiled out of the passages in works on Shakespeare which bear evidence on the side of the Oxford authorship. However, before closing, let us call one more witness. This is Professor J. Dover Wilson, in The Essential Shakespeare.

Wilson takes violent issue with Sir Sidney Lee, whose Life of Shakespeare has for its theme "the story of the butcher boy of Stratford who made a fortune in London." He says that the image in Lee's heart was that of a typical English manufacturer who happened to deal in Twelfth Nights and Lesirs instead of brass tacks.

He then says that our greatest obstacle to the true understanding of Shakespeare is the conception we have of him as portrayed in the Stratford bust and the Droeshout engraving in the First Folio. Dr. Wilson, in describing the bust, speaks of its wooden appearance, vapid expression, coarsely shaped half-moon eyebrows, staring eyes set too close together, nose too small for the face, and the "general air of stupid and self-complacent prosperity. All this might suit well enough with an affluent and retired butcher, but does gross wrong to the dead poet." "...It is time an end was put to the scandal of three centuries. For Jonsson's self-satisfied pork butcher and the Folio engraving taken from it, which J. C. Squire has called 'the pudding-faced effigy of Droeshout', stand between us and the true Shakespeare, and are so obviously false images of the greatest poet of all time that the world turns from them in disgust and thinks it is turning from Shakespeare himself."

This is just what the Oxfordians have been claiming from the outset. Neither the engraving nor the bust is genuine. They are parts of the hoax, of the plan to give the play to the world while veiling the identity of their noble author. Professor Wilson does not know the story of the change in the bust, but, judging from Sir William Dugdale's drawing, the original was just as great a libel on the author as is the second copy, installed by John Ward. Wilson fails to see that he has declared that there was hocus-focus connected with the whole Stratford myth. But there was, and he has put his finger unerringly on the proof: these two portraits which for centuries were palmed off on the world.

...

"Transvestite Shakespeara"
by Winifred L. Frazer

Marjorie Garbar, Professor of English at Harvard, widely known Shakespearean scholar (Shakespeare's Ghost Writers), has written a witty and topical book, Vaunted Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (New York: Routledge, 1991) in which a section labelled "Transvestite Shakespeare" is of great interest to Oxfordians.

"The death of Sir Laurence Olivier on July 11, 1989, was mourned and commemorated as if it were the death of Shakespeare himself — only this time, much more satisfyingly, with a body. At a memorial service in Westminster Abbey, where, famously, Shakespeare is not buried, although a portrait bust represents him, 'the casket', according to the Boston Globe, 'was surmounted with a floral crown...studded with flowers and herbs mentioned in Shakespeare's works: from lavender and eavory to rue and daisies...'

That impossible event in literary history, a state funeral for the poet-playwright who defines Western culture, doing him appropriate homage — an event long-thwarted by the galling absence of certainty about his identity and whereabouts — had now at last taken place. Through a mechanism of displacement, the memorial service for Olivier became a memorial service for Shakespeare."

It is gratifying that Garbar quotes from Charlton Ogburn's report in The Mysterious William Shakespeare that a Harvard Professor compared the Oxfordian view to those who claim "that the earth is flat", and that "Queen Victoria was in fact a Peruvian transvestite." While I doubt if we can count Garbar as one of the faithful, I believe she is much more open-minded than most Shakespearean professors of her prominence.

* * * * *

SIGNS OF A TURNING TIDE

In his Preface to the Second Edition of This 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, "Revised and Updated for the Nineties", Dr. Michael H. Hart writes:

"another revision — and one which is likely to be controversial — is my inclusion of Edward de Vere as the real 'William Shakespeare', rather than the man from Stratford-on-Avon who is described as the author by most 'orthodox' textbooks. This change was made only reluctantly: It represents an admission that I made a serious error in the first edition when, without carefully checking the facts, I simply 'followed the crowd' and accepted the Stratford man as the author of the plays. Since then I have carefully examined the arguments on both sides of the question and have concluded that the weight of the evidence is heavily against the Stratford man and in favor of de Vere.

"I regret that in a book this size, space does not permit the inclusion of all the arguments which show that Edward de Vere rather than the Stratford man was the author of the plays. I hope that the facts presented in my article will be sufficient for most readers. For a fuller and more detailed exposition the interested reader might consult the excellent book by Charlton Ogburn, This Mysterious William Shakespeare, which is perhaps the definitive book on this interesting topic."

From the back cover of the book we learn that "Dr. Michael Hart holds an A. B. from Cornell, an L.L.B. from New York Law School, and M.S. in physics from Adelphi University and a Ph.D. in astronomy from Princeton University. He has worked at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, and Hale Observatories in Pasadena, California. He is currently a senior staff scientist with the Systems and Applied Sciences Corporation in Riverdale, Maryland" — among other positions. Of Dr. Hart's erudition, the reader of his The 100 will have no doubt. His article on "31. EDWARD DE VERE better known as 'William Shakespeare'" presents to the limit of 15 pages a telling resume of the evidence in the case. It may be noted that the first edition of his book, published in 1978, has sold 60,000 copies and continues to be translated into additional languages.

Casual references by literary writers can, by their very off-handedness, carry a special weight. In an undated article in the Boston Globe sent to Gary Goldstein with the notation (over undecipherable initials) "Today the Globe. Tomorrow the World!", Scott Lehigh of the Globe staff remarks of H. Ross Perot that "His allusions are also down to earth and accessible. He quotes popular, easy-listening songs, not the Earl of Oxford, the ancient Graeka or Thoreau." And in the course of an article of November 8th on writers he would or would not like to meet, Larry Swindell, book editor of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram says, "Shakeapeare? Naah...I'm with those who believe he didn't really write those plays and sonnets. (However, I wish I could have known Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.)"

* * * * *

Correction by Edith Duffey

Anybody who read last June's Newsletter may remember my article, AN OXFORDIAN STRATFORDIAN, about Eric Sams's excellent book SHAKESPEARE'S LOST PLAY EDMUND IRONSIDE. This manuscript play, which Sams found in the British Library, dramatizes the story of the Anglo-Saxon battle between Edmund Ironside and the Danish king Ganute.

When I learned from several sources that Oxford's first tutor at Cecil House, Lawrence Nowell, Dean of Lichfield Cathedral, was an enthusiastic collector of Anglo-Saxon chronicles, I speculated that he might have shown or read parts of them to his pupil, then 12 or 13 years old. Since then I discovered that this Lawrence Nowell did not collect such chronicles and could not have shown or read them to Oxford. Dean Nowell's cousin of the same name was the chronicle-lover who gave his collection to William Lambarde, asking him to translate the Anglo-Saxon laws into Latin and publish the result. Lambarde's book was entitled ARCHAIONOMIA and printed in 1568 when Oxford was 18 and studying law at Gray's Inn. Thus ARCHAIONOMIA was probably the first book Oxford read on early English history.

If anyone has a question about these two Lawrence Nowells, who have confused a number of historians, he may find the answer in Retha Warnicke's article, "Notes on a Court of Requests Case in 1571", ENGLISH LANGUAGE NOTES (Boulder, Colorado, 1973; See Requests 2, 45/13, ff. 1-16.)

Professor Thomas Pendleton
Department of English
Iona College

September 28, 1992

Dear Professor Pendleton:

As a subscriber to the Shakespeare Oxford Society's Newsletter I have read the exchange of letters regarding your decision to exclude the "Oxford Page" from the Iona College SNL. Having followed the broader controversy ever since reading Charlton Ogburn's book seven years ago and having read a good deal since on both sides of the question, I feel like passing on a few things to you.

The impulse derives, I suppose, from the way in which you brushed off the Oxfordians. You delivered, I am afraid, the gratuitous insult "in a tone of voice remindful of some aeventeenth-century French pedant discoursing on high and low style", by subauming for your magazine the oh, so heavy burden of being a "responsible publication". I guess it's the class warfare aspect that I don't care for. I mean, if you had just said, "Look, we're all Stratfordians here, go get your own rag", it would have been one thing. But acting as if you are the New England Journal of Medicine discussing the circulation of the blood is something else again.

After all, it doesn't take an "academically based" (whatever that may mean) person to realize that the quarter page of the known facts of William Shaksper's life can be mastered by a twelve year old and that all the rest of the stuff that haa been written - in the attempt to connect his "life" and the works - by Brown, Chambers, Chute, Rowse and Schoenbaum, et al, ad nauseam, is, and always has been, as Vladimir Nabokov once put it, in another context, "thirty-two (percent) nonsense and fifty of neutral padding".

Josephine Tey called it "tonypandy".*

The longer this goes on the more the "academically based" Stratfordians have come to resemble a croodle of witch-doctors crouched about a campfire, muttering incantations into an odiferoua and musty old pot, glancing fearfully over cold shoulders, hardly daring to leave the sanctity of the fire to gather more wood. Every now and then a Greenwood, a Looney, an Ogburn or even a John Smithson Doe will stride into the light, peer into the pot and announce to the throng waiting in the darkness beyond that, never mind, it's the same old rabbits' foot stew again.

It's a cult. You know, like PTL. And "academically based" means "Stratford born and bred".

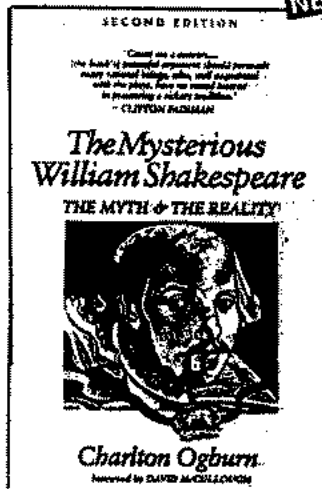
I've said it before and I'll say it again: the perpetuation of the myth that the illiterate William Shaksper of Stratford is the author of the plays is the supreme example of literary philistinism of our time.

Well, that's all. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Philip F. Howerton, Jr.

*Editor's Note: A nonsensical, untrue story grown to legend and generally accepted by the public in the face of all the evidence to the contrary while those who ought to know better either keep silent or encourage the legend.



THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:

The Myth & The Reality, Second Edition

Charlton Ogburn

In his Foreword noted historian David McCullough set the level for the praise that has been heaped on THE MYSTERIOUS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE since its publication in 1984. "The scholarship," he wrote "is surpassing—brave, original, full of surprise—and in the hands of so gifted a writer it fairly lights up the sky."

With "Ogburn's patient and eloquent labors," declared Charles Champlin of the *Los Angeles Times*, "the evidence mounted for the Earl of Oxford [as the real Shakespeare] can no longer be ignored by reputable scholars."

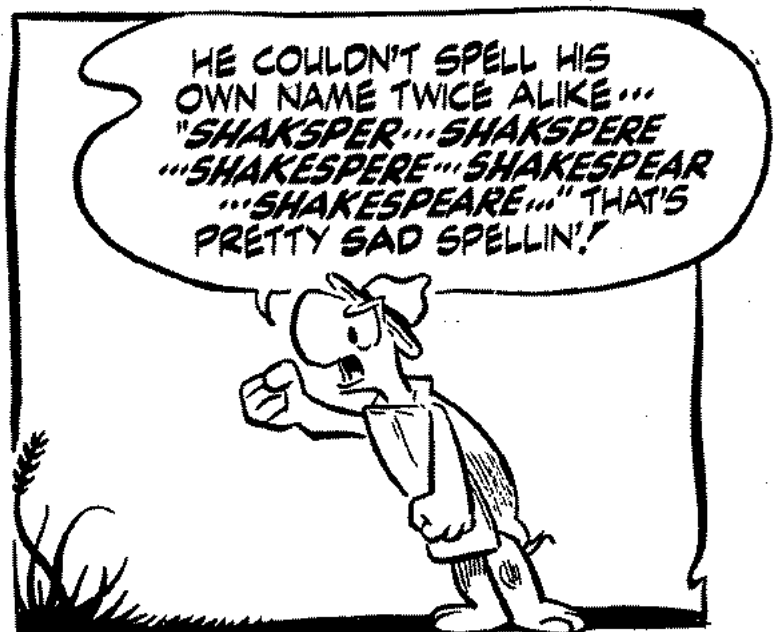
"The definitive book on the man behind the name Shakespeare," it was also considered by Kevin Kelly, the

Boston Globe drama critic, "perhaps the single most revolutionary book in the whole of Shakespearean scholarship... Once and for all, Ogburn seems to me to prove the case for Oxford."

Not content to rest on laurels, Ogburn has brought together in this augmented Second Edition a mass of evidence more impressive than any heretofore assembled. The case for Will Shaksper, the barely literate glover's son of Stratford, leaves a record of misreadings and misrepresentation. The case for Oxford reveals a real-life Hamlet, prevented by his station from acknowledging his masterpieces and by what would be disclosed in them if he did.

An engrossing detective story and a poignant drama, this historic volume reveals new depths in Shakespeare's works, the greatest of our language.

David Korr wanted Oxfordians to know that the always-skeptical Walt Kelly in his *Pogo A La Sundae* had his doubts about that fellow from Stratford.



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

The 16th Annual Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society at the Omni International hotel in Cleveland, October 16-18, was a huge success with over one hundred Oxfordians in attendance. Featuring contributions from such outstanding speakers and scholars as Lord Charles Burford, Elizabeth van Dreunen, Dr. Ross Duffin, Father Francis Edwards, Dr. Winifred Frezer, Andrew Hennes, Dr. Felicia Londre, Dr. Paul Nelson, Elisabeth Seare, Mildred Sexton, Roger Strittmater, and Hank Whittemore, attendees were treated to exciting Oxfordian scholarship and research. Connie Price masterminded an Elizabethan Banquet to end all Elizabethan Banquets, complete with jugglers, fire eaters, magicians, a pack of gigantic Irish wolfhounds, an entire roast boar (with an apple in his mouth!) and many other tempting Elizabethan delicacies. Mead and choice wines and spirits enlivened the proceedings. The presiding catering genius at the Omni, Tony Paxton, and his entire staff, outdid themselves in creating a renaissance ambiance in the banquet hall, with weapons, banners, erreses and testy viands offered to more than one hundred twenty feasting liege-men (and women) to the Earl of Oxford.

"Oxfordian of the Year" Award was given to John H. Lonther, for his tremendous efforts in conceiving the Burford Project and directing it to a triumphant reality. A Lifetime Award from the Society was made to Morse Johnson in tribute to his many years of service to the Oxfordian cause and most particularly for his accomplishments as editor of the Society's Newsletter.

The proceedings were officially terminated after the Sunday dinner with Lord Burford proposing the closing toast to his illustrious ancestor, "To the ever-living memory of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford!"

After the Sunday evening dinner, the Omni provided a comfortable private lounge with all of the unconsumed beer and wine and plenty of sneaking items to sustain the ensuing Oxfordian feeding frenzy. There was even a cash bar available for those requiring higher octane fueling. This delightful Sunday evening innovation, hopefully, will become a feature of future conferences. Oxfordians, in many cases, cross the continent to attend, and it is important to be able to relax in congenial surroundings to discuss and digest the events of the previous three days.

A popular innovation was the Blue Boar Gift Shoppe, presided over by Western Reserve Chapter member, Ralph Bote. Items included the new edition of Ogburn's "The Mysterious William Shakespeare", which arrived hot off the presses. In addition there were Oxfordian polo and T-shirts, window decals, Cestle Hedingham note paper, VieNet teleconference tapes, and the promise of other items for future sale, including Oxfordian Christmas cards and mugs. The "Blue Boar" will become a year-round mail order facility. Profits go to the Society!

Congratulations for mounting an outstanding conference are due to the newly formed Western Reserve Chapter of the Society, and its Chairman, Rollin de Vere. Particular praise and thanks go to new Society member, James O'Brien, who contributed his formidable artistic talents to the creation of a design motif for the conference and the classy registration package.

Charlee Boyle, Russell dea Cognets, John Price and Jene Roe were reelected to the Board along with newly elected members Leonard Deming and Richard Whalen. John Price, Chairman; Elisabeth Sears, President; Russell dea Cognets, 1st Vice President; Charlee Boyle, 2nd Vice President; Dr. Paul Nelson, Treasurer, were reelected. Dorothy Davies was elected Secretary. Future conference sites selected are: for 1993, Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1994, Carmel, California; 1995, Asheville, North Carolina. Remember! Society dues (\$35) are due on January 1st. Have a joyous Holiday Season! Yes! Verily!

BURFORD PROJECT RENEWED FOR SECOND YEAR
11/21/92

The Society has negotiated a new contract with Charlea Burford, and the continued success of the project is now up to YOU! Oxfordians were responsible for ALL of Lord Burford's bookings on this last triumphant tour. Now we must do it again. If you know of a school or an organization which might be interested in sponsoring an address by Lord Burford, make contact and promote it. JOHN LOUTHER is coordinating bookings, sending out mailings and making calls. He needs YOUR local contact and assistance: 125 CARYL WAY, OLDSMAR, FLORIDA, 34677, TELEPHONE: (813)784-0563; FAX: (813) 786-8271.

Second in importance to your help in securing bookings for Lord Burford is MONEY. Attendees at the conference contributed nearly two thousand dollars to the Burford Fund. Only one-sixth of our membership attended the conference, and we are extremely hopeful that the rest of you will make contributions. Send your checks made out to the S.O.S. to Dr. Paul Nelson: 20201 North Park Blvd., Shaker Heights, Ohio, 44118. Without doubt, this is the most important and successful project in our Society's history. Please, become an active part of it!

We must not rest upon last year's laurels. We have struck an academic nerve, and some nervous pedagogues are already circling their wagons. It becomes increasingly evident that some of our academic opponents will not always bother to follow the rules of the Marquesas of Queensberry. Your active support of the Burford Project becomes, then, all the more important. May we enroll you in the Oxfordian lists? The game's afoot!

JOIN SHAKESPEARE OXFORD 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 corroborating information and commentary.

DUES

Student \$15.00

Annual Regular \$35.00

Sustaining \$50 or more

Dues and requests for membership information to:

Victor Crichton, Cathedral Station - Box 0550, New York, N.Y. 10025

Submit materials for publication in the Newsletter to:

Morse Johnson, Suite #819, 105 W. 4th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202

The Shakespeare Oxford Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state as a non-profit educational organization. Dues, grants, and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. IRS number: 13-6105314. New York number: 07182.

The Shakespeare Oxford Society

Central Station, P.O. Box 0550, New York, N.Y. 10025-0550

Morse Johnson, Editor



SHAKESPEARE'S SELF-PORTRAIT

by Charlton Ogburn

(A Summary of the case presented in **The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality** by Charlton Ogburn. Second Edition, revised E.P.M. Publications, P.O. Box 490, McLean, Virginia, 22101. 1992.)

Not long after William Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon came to be celebrated as the immortal poet-dramatist, in the mid-18th Century, his credentials as such began to be doubted. Beginning in the middle of the next century, outspoken disbelief in his having been the author of Shakespeare's works became a groundswell of such proportions that every biography of him has had to address the problem.

Why has there been this skepticism about the reputed author on the part of probably hundreds of thousands of readers? Those who share it would explain it as follows:

Shakspeare, the Stratfordian, according to such information as we have of him, was in his background, character, education, opportunities, reputation while alive and in the world he would have known, very nearly the antithesis of the kind of man we judge Shakespeare to have been on the testimony of his works. There is no evidence that Shakspeare ever had a day's schooling or wrote anything but six signatures of unpracticed penmanship. His parents, siblings, wife and children were illiterate except that one of his daughters could, like her father, sign her name. He never, so far as is known, claimed to have written any of the works later attributed to him, had no part in their publication and, dying when twenty of the plays remained unpublished, made no mention of them in his will and showed no interest in their survival. He is not known ever to have owned a book. His obscurity was such that at the height of his supposed fame not even the tax-collectors could discover where he lived. Had he been the author he would have been the most retarded poet of any stature in history, not being known to have written a single poem before the age of twenty-six. While he was alive, no one we know of ever suggested that he was the dramatist or a writer of any kind. As for his connection with the stage, he was never during those years listed in the cast of any play yet discovered, while the records of the reign of Elizabeth yield but one reference -- and it dubious -- to an actor called Shakespeare; the records of 70 municipalities in which actors performed contain no mention of his or any similar name. When he died, nothing was made over this event, supposedly so momentous to literature. His identification as the towering genius, William Shakespeare, rests on evidently studied ambiguities in the First Folio edition of the plays of 1623 and on the monument to "Shakspeare" in the church at Stratford -- surely the work of outsiders -- of which we first hear in the Folio. No fellow townsmen of Stratford of whom we have heard, to the fourth or fifth generation after

he lived, spoke of him in any way to attribute to him a special distinction. Finally, his name was clearly not "Shakespeare", with a long "a".

Biographers of Stratford's now famous son, in the number of hundreds, have been able to tell us almost nothing about him of any relevance to the masterpieces that have accounted for their interest in him. Accordingly, and in the light of the above, I am emboldened to suggest that we set aside what we have read about him and see how far we may extrapolate from Shakespeare's works the kind of man it would have taken to write them. Possibly it would put us on the trail of what is important about the dramatist that has escaped the orthodox biographers; as we have Anatole France to remind us, "The artist either communicates his own life to his creations or else merely whittles out puppets and dresses up dolls." Carried beyond the compass of a short article, our pursuit might afford us rich new insights into the masterpieces he left us and into the workings of an incomparable creative imagination.

Of the thirty-seven plays of the Shakespeare canon, thirty-six are laid in royal courts and the world of the nobility or otherwise in the highest circles of society. The one exception, The Merry Wives of Windsor, is of them all surely the most forced and unsatisfactory. The principal characters are for the rest almost all aristocratic, even the young man who wins the beautiful girl in Merry Wives. Shylock, "the greatest paradox in literature" as my friend Louis J. Halle calls him, is an exception. Falstaff would seem to be another, but he is a familiar of the peerage and the chosen companion of a prince; yet even he is spurned by the new king and humiliated at the end. No other dramatist before or since has drawn his casts so predominantly from the nobility or been such a literary habitué of successive English courts.

From all we can tell, moreover, Shakespeare fully shared the aristocratic outlook of his chief characters. The populace he seems to have regarded as unfit for any share in government. Even the rabble-rousing Jack Cade, the rebel leader, is exasperated by the light-headedness of his following. He is the only man of the people I recall in Shakespeare as being allowed to voice the grievances of his class, but the political theory imputed to him is that of a power-hungry demagogue and he is cut down with no visible regret on the dramatist's part.

Lower-class characters are almost all introduced by Shakespeare for comic effect and are given scant development as such. Their names bespeak their inferior status in his eyes: Snug, Bottom, Stout, Starveling, Dogberry, Simple, Mouldy, Wart, Feeble, Bullcalf, Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet. Walt Whitman, to whom the historical plays were "conceived out of the fullest heat and pulse of feudalism" by "one of the wolfish earls... or a born descendant and knower", lamented their author's undemocratic views, which he held not for Americans. What many readers have found striking in Shakespeare is a compassionate understanding of the burdens of kingship combined with a romantic envy of the supposedly carefree lot of a peasant, who, free of the "peril" of the "envious court", "sweetly... enjoys his thin cold drink" and his "sleep under a fresh tree's shade" with "no enemy but winter and rough weather". This would not be surprising in a writer were he more familiar with privilege than with privation.

The dramatist's favorite sports, it would appear, were those of the nobility: hunting to hounds, bowls, falconry and riding; one would judge him to have been a master horseman, while falconry repeatedly supplied him with images.

On the testimony of his works, Shakespeare was one of the best educated

men of his century. His frame of reference was immense. In Shakespeare's England a two-volume study in which 30 specialists in various departments of life and society under Elizabeth contribute chapters, 2780 passages from Shakespeare by my estimate are quoted for their illustrative value. No other writer of the time, we may be sure, had such a range. In language-skills, Shakespeare stands alone. Where the average well-educated person is said by the philologist Dr. Max Muller to use about 4000 words, Shakespeare is credited by the Shakespearean scholar Prof. Alfred Hart with a vocabulary of 17,677, twice the size of Milton's. The number of words, mostly of Latin origin, that he introduced into English is estimated by the Oxford English Dictionary at over 3,000. In a 400-page study, Sister Miriam Joseph shows "how Shakespeare used the whole body of logical-rhetorical knowledge of his time". We are dealing, in short, with a master of the language and peerless enhancer of it, one whose contribution to our phraseology, according to another noted philologist, Ernest Weekley, is ten times greater than that of any other writer to any language. Persons whose opinion I trust tell us that he could and did read Greek and Roman classics in the original and that he was at home in French and Italian, if not in Spanish.

The fascination the Continent had for him is evident. Of all his plays taking place in his own time, only one, the ill-favored Merry Wives again, is laid in England. All the others have Europe as their scene. Persons qualified to say tell us that he had a first-hand acquaintance with the cities of northern Italy, and there can be no gainsaying the spell they cast on him, especially Venice, whose spirit infuses The Merchant.

For two hundred years lawyers have been reporting Shakespeare's proficiency in their recondite field, even of the more abstruse legal by-ways of his day. The law seems ever ready at his elbow to suggest metaphors. And here the point should be made that Shakespeare does not display his familiarity with a subject when writing about that subject. He has not boned up on one to parade his knowledge of it, as Ben Jonson has. His learning comes out almost of itself, supplying images unrelated to the subject of conversation. Othello draws on falconry to make vivid his suspicion of Desdemona, Juliet her attachment to Romeo. To make poignant the king's insomnia, Shakespeare calls up "the wet sea-boy" falling asleep at the masthead". It is to characterize her fun-loving Anthony that Cleopatra recalls the disporting dolphin.

As one who has practiced observation of nature since boyhood, I am struck by Shakespeare's acuteness in it. We find him noticing that the lapwing runs in a crouch and that the cuckoo's favorite victim is the hedge-sparrow. Combine this observation with a love and knowledge of flowers wild and domestic that is so conspicuous in Shakespeare and we have, for my money, a privileged gentleman with a country seat. We have such a leisured gentleman, too, I believe, in his equally conspicuous love and knowledge of music; he uses a hundred musical terms.

The phrase "more fell than anguish, hunger or the sea" epitomized for Joseph Conrad the element so well known to him. Images of the chill sea-bottom recur to Shakespeare as they might to anyone who has known the perils of the deep. And I should be surprised if the originator of Othello's lines and Henry V's had not known the battlefield.

What else? Shakespeare wrote of the circulation of the blood before Harvey announced its discovery. He located the drawing power of the earth at "its very center" a century before Newton had enunciated his principal of gravity. He had mountains being leveled and the continent melt into the sea two centuries before James Hutton postulated that in the absence of

countervailing forces, this is indeed how they would end. Three centuries before the term was invented, his Friar Laurence enunciated the basic principle of ecology. Some scholars cite anachronisms in the plays as evidence of Shakespeare's lack of education, but chronological consistency was not a matter of concern in those days.

Let us now see if a further inquiry into the evidence will lead us to a specific nobleman of whom those things we have deduced to be true of Shakespeare will also be true, and uniquely true. We might think of ourselves as Elizabethan detectives seeking to identify the perpetrator of a crime of whom they know nothing except that he wrote the works of William Shakespeare. As such we should of course recognize that a nobleman writing for the common theatre would have been required by the mores of his class to adopt a pseudonym and that the requirement would have borne with particular stringency upon one who, as we read of "Shake-speare" in a poem of 1610, "would have been a companion for a king" had he "not played some kingly parts in sport".

Venus and Adonis was the first poem to which the name Shakespeare was appended. But it had to have been preceded by less skillful, less sophisticated verse. So we should look for a nobleman who wrote youthful verse under his own name, and verse bearing a resemblance to Shakespeare's. A man at home in the Court, a potential companion for the monarch, and familiar to his colleagues might have been difficult and controversial because of his life apart as the greatest creative genius in literature. He must have had a connection with the theatre and a close one. He would necessarily have been drawn to other writers and playwrights, some of whom would presumably have known him for who he was; and having the greatest of their art in their midst they must have given some witness of it. We must look for a nobleman highly, if elliptically, praised by his fellow writers.

Then consider the historical plays -- "works in some respects greater than anything else in recorded history", as Walt Whitman called them. Could this great body of drama have been composed with such passionate intensity and conviction, such sure instinct, such immense evocative power, unless the past it brought to life made an irresistible claim upon the author?

Another clue: Shakespeare's affection for friars has often been remarked, and Catholics find overtones of an inclination toward the Church of Rome in some of the plays, notably Hamlet, in which the doctrine of purgatory seems to be accepted, despite the risks of doing so openly in the reign of Elizabeth.

Having deduced so much about the transgressor who had written Shakespeare's works, would our Elizabethan detectives be prepared to make an arrest? Yes, undoubtedly. They would have descended without hesitation upon the poet pronounced "most excellent" of those of the Court by a critic in 1586, whom the playwright Anthony Munday (at one time our suspect's secretary) would someday warmly recall as a man "of matchless virtues", of whom Robert Greene had written that he stood in respect of other writers as Atalanta to hunters and Sappho to poets -- in other words, as the best of them all. And the reasoning we have had the detectives follow, I may add, is similar to that which in 1920 an English schoolmaster, J. Thomas Looney (Yes, I know) set forth in his enthralling book "Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford."

Who was this Edward de Vere?

The de Veres came in with William the Conqueror. As later Earls of Oxford, they were involved with all the monarchs who tread the boards in Shakespeare's historical plays. The 2nd Earl stood by King John, the 3rd

was among the barons who curbed his powers. The 6th fought under the three successive Edwards, the 7th beside "that black name, Edward, Black Prince of Wales" -- as the French King calls him in Henry the Fifth -- at Crécy. The 9th was an intimate of Richard II's with -- thanks to shared faults of character -- consequences fatal to both, we are told. The 11th Earl held an important command at Agincourt. The 13th -- "brave Oxford, wondrous well-belov'd", as he is in Shakespeare -- was a mainstay of the Lancastrian side, so clearly favored by the dramatist, in the Wars of the Roses; on the battlefield at Bosworth he helped bring down that super-villain (as Shakespeare portrays him), Richard III.

Edward de Vere was born on April 22 (new style), 1550, at Castle Hedingham in Essex, the family seat since 1150, of which the 80-foot keep still stands. Two of his uncles had been poets, Baron Sheffield and the well-known Earl of Surrey, who introduced blank verse and, with Sir Thomas Wyatt, the form of sonnet later known as Shakespearean. At nine years old, Edward matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, receiving a degree at fourteen. At sixteen he received another as Master of Arts from Oxford.

Two years earlier Edward's father had died. His mother is reported to have remarried only three months later. Edward had become a Royal Ward in the household of Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, for forty years Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisor. At Cecil House, close to the nexus of political power, he could have conceived "the relish and verve with which Shakespeare's characters speak the language of ambition, intrigue and policy", to quote the veteran member of the Commons, Enoch Powell, who adds that "this authentic knowledge of how men think and act at the summit of political power... could only have been drawn from experience of the political struggle." Here, too, while coming to know well the leading horticulturalist of the age, whom Cecil employed, Edward would have grown up in an atmosphere of rigorous intellectuality. He had the best tutors, including his maternal uncle, Arthur Golding, a noted scholar, at the time when the latter was translating Ovid's Metamorphoses, which so strongly influenced Shakespeare. The boy proved himself a dedicated and brilliant student and went on to acquire a legal education at Gray's Inn.

Edward had barely turned fourteen when Golding dedicated a work to him with a significant reference to the "desire your honor hath naturally grafted in you to read, peruse, and communicate with others as well the histories of ancient times, and things done long ago, as also the present estate of things in our days." A writer later dedicating a book to him declared that his "infancy from the beginning was ever sacred to the Muses".

With his twentieth birthday just behind him, Edward took part in the campaign against the Scots under the high-minded Earl of Sussex, whose siege of Hume Castle may have stood the youth in later literary service. At twenty-one he won first prize in a tournament against the best joustors of the day, to the general astonishment; it was the first of three tournaments we know of his entering, in all of which he copped first prize. In the same year he wrote an introduction in Latin to a translation of Castiglione's The Courtier, an extraordinarily finished piece of work for one who was the age of a college junior today. Equally polished was his later introduction to a translation of Cardanus Comfort -- and in both it would be easy to see a future Shakespeare. Macaulay would write of him that "he shone at the Court of Elizabeth and won for himself an honorable place among the early masters of English poetry". E. K. Chambers, the great Elizabethan scholar, commenting on the dearth of distinguished poets in the generation following Wyatt and Surrey, declares that "the most hopeful of them was Edward de Vere,

Earl of Oxford, a real courtier, but an ill-conditioned youth, who also became mute in later life." Mute only as Edward de Vere, the evidence suggests. What was young Edward's poetry like? Some years ago Prof. Louis P. Benezet of Dartmouth made up a pot pourri of about 35 lines each of Oxford's and Shakespeare's verse and tried the amalgam on Elizabethan specialists. I know of no one who has been able to say which passages are whose without looking them up.

Whatever Chambers may have thought he meant by "ill-conditioned", an observer of the Court wrote when Oxford was twenty-two that "the Queen delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and his valiantness than any other." They may well have become lovers. The preceding year the young Earl had married Cecil's daughter Anne when she was just past Juliet's age; Cecil had earlier in the year been made Lord Burghley, facilitating a match between a commoner's daughter and the premier earl of the land. The marriage, which would prove the single greatest misfortune in the lives of all three, joined in lasting close relationship two utterly unlike men, one aristocratic, mercurial, poetical and contemptuous of money, the other a self-made member of the new middle class, materialistic, crafty, hard-working, a devoted public servant -- two men who outshone all their contemporaries in their respective fields, if we may trust the trail that led us to the Earl of Oxford.

We might say that the principals of Hamlet had now taken their places on stage. That the Prince was the dramatist depicting himself seems to me unmistakable, and that Polonius was a caricature of Burghley has long been recognized; even E. K. Chambers asks if "'Polonius' [can] have resembled some nickname of Burghley" (which it did: Polus) and says that "Laertes is less like Robert Cecil than Burghley's elder son Thomas". And I am by no means the first to see Elizabeth and Leicester in Gertrude and Claudius. Leicester, a "lecherous villain" in more eyes than Oxford's, was the nearest to a husband Elizabeth ever had, and if he did not murder an earlier mate of hers to win his position, he was widely believed to have murdered his own to do so, as scandal also made him the poisoner of the noble Earl of Sussex, who seems to have stood somewhat in loco parentis to de Vere after the Scottish campaign. Significantly, Leicester won custody of the boy Edward's inheritance, the Oxford estates.

If de Vere saw himself as Hamlet in the retrospect of later years, he may probably be pictured in youth, when he stood high in Elizabeth's favor, as Berowne, "the merry, madcap lord", and as Bertram (with his glaring faults), Benedick and Faulconbridge -- high-spirited gallants all with a taste for soldiering. A penchant for "lewd companions", of which Burghley accused his son-in-law, probably referring to actors and writers, comes out in another of these gay young blades, Prince Hal, whose participation in the hold-up staged by his cronies at Gad's Hill on the highway between Rochester and Gravesend is simply a replay of the one staged by Oxford and his followers at the same place on the same highway when he was twenty-three.

At twenty-four, Oxford obtained from the Queen the permission he had long sought to visit the Continent. Most of his fifteen month's stay was spent in the Italian cities later to be the scenes of Shakespeare's happiest comedies. Evidently he was captivated by the country. He was drawn, too, seemingly with lasting consequences, to the Church of Rome. We know that like Bertram in All's Well he came back with Italianate ways, for he was chided for these by Gabriel Harvey, to the point of scandal. But Harvey also avowed of him:

For gallants a brave mirror, a primrose of honor,
...a fellow peerless in England.
Not the like discourser for Tongue and Head to be found out...
All gallant virtues, all qualities of body and soul.

On his way back from Europe (during which his ship was captured by pirates), Oxford had received tidings that bowled him over. He had rejoiced while in Italy at the delayed news that his wife had borne him a daughter. Now he evidently learned that the child had been born twelve months after he had last slept with her mother. The conveyor of this intelligence seems to have been a hanger-on of Oxford's, a fellow of treacherous instincts named Yorke (Y-orke=Iago?). In turmoil of mind he alienated himself from his wife and estranged himself from her father. The separation was to last for five years. In the interval he had an affair with a brunette minx newly arrived at Court, Anne Vavasor, in whom we may see both Rosaline of Love's Labour's Lost and the dark wanton of the Sonnets. By her he had a son, with the immediate consequence that he and the young mother were clapped into the Tower. (Those who served Elizabeth served a jealous monarch.) Another consequence was a sword-fight between Oxford and Anne Vavasor's kinsman, Thomas Knyvet. "This was the signal for war between the two houses." Albert Feurillat wrote in 1910. "As at another time in Verona, the streets of London were filled [surely an exaggeration] with the quarreling clamors of these new Montagues and Capulets."

Though the Countess of Oxford presented her husband with three other daughters, all of indubitable legitimacy, she lived only seven years after their reconciliation, such as it was, dying at thirty-one. If we may accept the testimony of the plays, Oxford castigated himself for his treatment of her. Othello, Leontes in The Winter's Tale, Postumus in Cymbeline and Claudio in Much Ado all are persuaded by a cynical third party on the flimsiest, most unconvincing grounds, of the infidelity of the young women to whom they are married or affianced and they angrily reject them. Angelo in Measure for Measure rejects Mariana with as little ceremony and reason. Of the others, three entertain thoughts of murdering their erstwhile loves. Othello actually does and Leontes thinks he has. All are overwhelmed by remorse. Hamlet rejects Ophelia somewhat less brutally, on grounds of general moral repugnance, but the consequences are as fatal for her as for Desdemona.

Obviously the theme gnawed at the dramatist. One could understand why, if Oxford had believed Anne to have been as chaste and noble as Desdemona, Hermione, Imogen, Hero and Mariana. But the opposite was evidently the case; long before Oxford's suspicions were aroused, Anne and her father themselves were worried to death that he would not accept the child. So why this pitiless remorse? Did he discover that poor Anne was more sinned against than sinning?

Or perhaps... Both Bertram in All's Well and Angelo were brought to consummate their marriages by being led to sleep with their respective partners under the misapprehension, fostered by darkness, that the assignation was with a female more enticing to them. Singularly enough, there are two independent reports that the same was true of Oxford, for whatever bearing this may have on the matter. As one of them had it, "the father of Lady Anne by stratagem contrived that her husband should unknowingly sleep with her, believing her to be another woman", with the result that a child was born to the couple.

During the 1580's the menace from Spain was growing. In 1584, Elizabeth finally sent an expeditionary force to the aid of the Protestants in the Low Countries. Oxford was named commander of the force but soon returned for unknown reasons, perhaps repining with Othello, "Farewell the plumed troop..." For the second time en route for England his ship was captured by pirates. It must have come as a relief when on his next venture upon the Channel, in 1588, the month after his wife's death, he was the attacker, going into combat with his own vessel against the Spanish Armada.

Eight years earlier, when Oxford was thirty, Gabriel Harvey had addressed him before the Queen in Latin verses with the words: "Thy splendid fame demands even more than in the case of others (Elizabeth, Burghley and Leicester, whom he also had addressed) the services of a poet possessing lofty eloquence." Terming Oxford's introduction to The Courtier "even more polished than the writings of Castiglione himself", he called upon it to "witness how greatly thou dost excel in letters. Many Latin verses of thine [all lost] have I seen, yea even more English verses." Nevertheless, probably at the instigation of Oxford himself, who yearned for military exploit, he exhorted him to "throw away the pen, throw away bloodless books... Now is the time to sharpen the spear and to handle great engines of war"; and he wound up declaring "Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes spears."

One suspects that Oxford's zeal for military honor, which the example of his cousins the "fighting Veres" -- Francis and Horace -- would have done nothing to cool, was thwarted by the Queen herself. Evidently she had other plans for him. In 1586, when he was 36, she made him a grant of the immense sum of £1,000 to be paid annually with no accounting to be required by the Exchequer, and this allowance, confirmed by King James, would continue for the remaining eighteen years of his life. This would have enabled him to support acting companies and, if he were Shakespeare, to have financed his writing for the stage, beginning with the historical plays; these could be expected to rally the nation in the face of the menace from Spain and to harrow it with the dreadful consequences they portrayed of disunity and disputed succession.

Oxford could surely have used the funds. From the fourteen-year-old who after his father's funeral had ridden out of Essex into London "with seven score horses all in black" -- or so it was reported -- he had been reduced to three servants. Like Jaques in As You Like It, he had sold his lands to see other mens', and like Timon of Athens he and those he favored had lived rather too well on his estate; "Let all my land be sold!" Timon grandly declares when none is left. Oxford was the most generous literary patron of the age. As the poet George Chapman wrote, he was "valiant, learn'd and liberal as the sun."

Both the 15th and 16th Earls of Oxford had maintained a troupe of actors and the 17th had at least one during most of his life. In addition he took a lease on Blackfriars Theatre and transferred it to his secretary, John Lyly, who used it to rehearse a boys' company for performances at Court. (Lyly's highly successful novel Euphues had, he said, been "sent to a nobleman to nurse, who with great love brought him up for a year, so that wheresoever he wander he hath his nurse's name in his forehead." That the sequel was dedicated to Oxford should leave no doubt as to whose stamp was on Euphues.) When we hear Hamlet addressing the actors on their craft, may we not hear Oxford addressing his own, and with an authority even those giants of the theatre, Burbage and Kempe, would have respected? I mention those two because they were stars of the Lord Chamberlain's company, which from the time of its formation in 1594 was the vehicle for the introduction of

Shakespeare's plays; and there are grounds for believing that it was Oxford, as hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain, rather than the holders of the title Lord Chamberlain, who managed the affairs of the company.

Not long after the celebration of the victory over the Armada, in which Oxford would have been one of the peers bearing the canopy over the Queen ("Were't aught to me I bore the canopy", we read in Sonnet 125), Oxford largely dropped from public view. This led the poet Edmund Spenser, if I am right, to lament in 1590 that

the man whom nature self had made
To mock herself, and truth to imitate,
 ...under mimic shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late.

Earlier in the year in one of the sonnets prefacing The Faerie Queene, Spenser had paid Oxford a remarkable tribute, speaking of "the love which thou dost bear" the Muses, "and they do thee; -- They unto thee, and thou to them, most dear". The next year he received the first of two dedications of books on music by the former organist and choirmaster of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, who declared that "using this science as a recreation, your lordship have overgone most of them that make it a profession."

Were the plays we know as Shakespeare's written by a nobleman of the Court and known to have been written by him, they would have been scrutinized for the light they might throw on personages and events at the highest level; and this the Queen, Burghley and others would not have tolerated. Those performed or printed (by pirates) before 1598 had no author's name associated with them. Then in that year Francis Meres named "Shakespeare" as the best for both tragedy and comedy and listed twelve plays to his credit. (About that time William Shakspeare of Stratford began to make his investments of huge sums of money.) In that same year, too, addressing one "whose silent name one letter bounds" -- surely Edward de Vere -- John Marston plainly took us to the nub of the matter in writing:

Far fly thy fame,
Most, most of me beloved....
 Thy unvalu'd worth
Shall mount fair place when Apes are turn'd forth.

Who had a "silent name" that "one letter bounds"? Who but Edward de Vere? Who else could it be and have the invocation make sense? Is not Marston foreseeing a future when deVere shall be honored and his fame fly far?

In Sonnet 81 the poet recognizes that "I, once gone, to all the world must die." In 1603 he was in fact facing the end, for in Sonnet 107, unmistakably referring to events of that year, and surely written no later, he says that "death to me subscribes".* Oxford died the next year.

*In arguing, with no good evidence, that some of Shakespeare's greatest plays were written after 1604, orthodox scholars ignore that plain statement, as they do the circumstances of the Sonnets' publication in 1609, which made it doubly clear that the author was dead, for he had no hand in it and was unable to provide a dedication; that was left up to the printer, who referred to the poet in it as "ever-living", a characterization never applied to persons actually alive. Some of Shakespeare's plays, moreover, had clearly been written by the late 1580s, before Shakspeare of Stratford could possibly have had a hand in them.

Hamlet, with very nearly his dying breath, cries

Oh good Horatio, what a wounded name
(Things standing thus unknown) shall live behind me!
...In this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

My guess is that it was Horace Vere who, in the year of Oxford's death, arranged to have Hamlet printed from the author's manuscript (a novelty in the case of a play of Shakespeare's) with the royal coat of arms of the Plantagenets on the first page, as befitted the passing of a prince. It was probably the best he could do to see that his cousin's story was told. The rest is up to us.

NOTE: To the evidence identifying Edward de Vere as the author of the poems and plays ascribed to "William Shakespeare", orthodox critics oppose the contention that a "gigantic conspiracy" would have been required to conceal his identity as such. The assertion, however, ignores the semi-totalitarian character of Elizabethan England, in which a quiet word from on high would have been sufficient to close the mouths of the knowing few, relatively speaking -- a word to be ignored at dire peril to the transgressor. Then consider the following:

The Elizabethans cannot have been oblivious to the qualities of the greatest of English writers that led John Dryden to call him "divine", Carlyle "the greatest of intellects" and Heinrich Heine "a creator second only to God". The first two publications adorned with the name "William Shakespeare", Venus and Adonis and Lucrece, were so popular that one printing after another was called for. Previously, writing of a play unmistakably Henry the Sixth, Part One, Thomas Nashe said that it had "moved to tears ... ten thousand spectators at least (at several times)". The first known mention of Shakespeare as a playwright called him the best of the English for both comedy and tragedy and declared that "The Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine-filed phrase if they would speak English." The most authoritative voice among his contemporaries proclaimed him the "Soul of the age! / The applause! delight! the wonder of our stage", Britain's triumph who "was not of an age but for all time" who "so did take Eliza and our James" -- the latter having had seven of his plays performed in the aftermath of his coronation in 1604. In 1623, he was paid the unheard-of honor of having his collected plays published, in the First Folio. (When Ben Jonson published his own plays as his Works in a folio of 1616, he was widely ridiculed for his pretension.) Surely other writers, actors, university men, courtiers would have sought the acquaintance of such a man as Shakespeare was. Yet no one we know of reported during the years when he was alive ever to have met, seen or had any communication with a poet or dramatist named William Shakespeare, and only three did so even years after his death: the actors Heminge and Condell were represented in the First Folio as calling him "so worthy a friend and fellow" without attributing a single personal characteristic to him while Ben Jonson could find none other than that he was "honest, and of an open and free nature" -- the only picture he left us of the immortal Shakespeare he loved "on this side idolatry". It can hardly be doubted that the poet-dramatist was known, where known, in a different identity, that the authorship was a dissimulated one and "William Shakespeare" a subterfuge, a fact attested by his contemporaries having hyphenated the name, "Shake-speare", as often as not, plainly demonstrating that they recognized it as a pseudonym.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Other Basic Oxfordian Books

Clark, Eva Turner: "Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays" (1931) 3rd ed. revised by Ruth Loyd Miller (Kennikat Press (1974).

Fowler, William Plumer: "Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford Letters" (Peter E. Randall 1986).

Greenwood, George G.: "The Shakespeare Problem Restated" (London 1908), Reprinted by Greenwood Press (Westport, Conn. 1970).

Looney, J. Thomas: "Shakespeare Identified" (London, 1920) 3rd ed. by Ruth Loyd Miller (Kennikat Press, 1974 2 vols.).

Ogburn, Dorothy & Charlton, Jr.: "This Star of England: 'William Shake-speare,' Man of the Renaissance." (Coward-McCann 1952 Reprinted Greenwood Press, 1972).

"Shakespeare Cross-Examination" (A compilation of articles and letters first appearing in the American Bar Association Journal 1960-1961 American Bar Association 3rd Printing 1974).

Recent Oxfordian Articles in Periodicals and Journals

Bethel, Tom: "Looking for Shakespeare", Atlantic Monthly (Oct. 1991)

Champlin, Charles: "William Shakespeare Is Still News After Four Centuries", Los Angeles Times (Feb. 8, 1990)

Goldstein, Gary: "Shakespeare Sleuths" Will the Real Bard Please Stand Up?", Stamford Advocate (July 21, 1959)

Holden, Constance: "No One Knows If Shakespeare Wrote the Plays" Oct. 24, 1987)

Hope, Warren: "It Was the Bard of Oxford, Not Avon", Philadelphia Inquirer (April 20, 1989)

Reed, J.D.: "Some Ado About Who Was, Or Was Not, Shakespeare", Smithsonian (Sept. 1987)

Sobran, Joseph: "Against Funding Odds", Washington Times (Nov. 20, 1990)

JOIN SHAKESPEARE OXFORD SOCIETY AND RECEIVE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The purpose of The Shakespeare Oxford Society is to document and establish Edward de Vere, the 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 corroborating 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

ANNUAL DUES

Student \$10.00

Regular \$35.00

Sustaining \$50.00 or more

1. Dues and requests for membership information to:
Victor Crichton
207 W. 106th St., Apt. 10-D
New York, N.Y. 10025

2. Submit materials for publication in the Newsletter to:
Morse Johnson
105 West 4th St., Suite #819
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Shakespeare Oxford Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and is chartered under the membership corporation laws of that state as a non-profit educational organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Shakespeare Oxford Society IRS number is 13,6105314. The New York tax number is: 07182