



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



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"Let me study so, to know the thing I am forbid to know"

Winter 1997

Shakespeare, Oxford and Du Bartas

*The little-known story of Edward
de Vere's revelatory last poem*

by James Fitzgerald



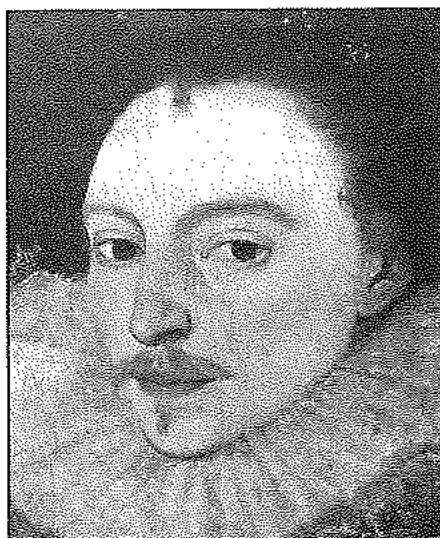
Tu ipse Vere?

While investigating the possibility that Oxford-as-Shakespeare might be the author of an oft-anthologized anonymous song about a peddler found collected in the works of the Elizabethan lutenist and composer, John Dowland, I decided to pursue the use

of a particular expression in the song ("orient pearl(s)"), knowing that the same phrase occurs a number of times in Shakespeare.

In checking *Barlett's Quotations* it turned out that the sole entry for "orient pearls" occurred in a collection of excerpts from the works of an unfamiliar French poet, Sieur Du Bartas. His translator was another stranger, Joshua Sylvester. The editors of *Barlett's* recorded in cross-referenced footnotes sixteen echoes of Du Bartas in English literature that also appear in their books; eight of these references resound in Shakespeare.

Deflected now from my initial research, I reported my discovery to a colleague, Andrew Hannas at Purdue University, remarking to him my bemusement at an apparent connection between Shakespeare and this thoroughly obscure French poet. Hannas, his curiosity piqued, then located a microfilm copy of Sylvester's translation (1605) of the *Semaines* of Du Bartas. And within the customary efflorescence of laudatory verses contributed by admiring contemporaries in



A New Portrait of Edward de Vere? Katherine Chiljan reports on her purchase of an anonymous 1580 oil painting that bears an uncanny resemblance to the known de Vere portraits, and whose provenance places it at one time in the hands of de Vere's descendants (page 18).

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Writing History

*The facts are the facts,
but interpretation is all*

In covering the Minneapolis Conference, the last issue of the *Newsletter* reported on the "Prince Tudor" controversy, an ongoing debate within the Society between proponents and detractors of the proposition that the 3rd Earl of Southampton was the royal son of Elizabeth and Oxford. Since then, all Society members have received a copy of Gary Goldstein's Autumn '96 issue of *The Elizabethan Review*, in which Diana Price in an article entitled "Rough Winds do Shake" attempts to deal the death-blow to the controversial theory. At first glance, she might seem to have succeeded.

The debate has also been a recent feature of the Oxfordian internet discussion group "Phaeton", where the argument has begun to revolve around definitions of evidence - what is, what isn't, and who judges the difference. The present discussion was sparked principally by the following claim made by Price in her "Rough Winds" article: "...the Tudor Rose theory is one of many conjectural interpretations of the Shakespeare canon, and interpretive evidence does not carry the same weight as documentary evidence."

Chief among those Phaetonites who have taken exception to this claim are Mark Anderson and Roger Stritmatter, whose work on Oxford's Geneva Bible has involved them in a similar debate with Stratfordians over what constitutes legitimate evidence. It is Price's faith in the infallibility of documentary evidence and its superiority over so-called interpretive evidence that has persuaded

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21st Annual Conference in Seattle

The Puget Sound Chapter of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to host the 1997 Annual Conference in Seattle, October 9-12. It will be the first time that the Society has held its Conference in the Northwest. Seattle, which is home to such diverse concerns as Microsoft and Starbucks, is fast becoming the cultural capital of the West.

The Meany Tower Hotel will host most of the conference activities and provide rooms for conference attendees at special rates. The hotel is located in the University District and is two blocks from the beautiful University of Washington campus. Access to downtown Seattle is quick and easy. Call or fax 206-634-2000 for accommodations.

Invited speakers include Michael York, Joe Sobran, Mark Rylance and Sir Derek Jacobi, while GreenStage, a noted theatre company of the region, have agreed to mount a production of *Cymbeline* for us.

In addition, discussions are under way with *Firing Line* about the possibility of a program live from the Conference. William F. Buckley's co-host on *Firing Line*, Michael Kinsley, now lives in Seattle, where he works for Microsoft as editor of the Internet magazine *Slate*.

For preliminary conference information,

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Call for Papers for the 21st Annual Conference

Individuals wishing to present papers
at the Conference should send them to:

Stephanie Hughes,
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Portland, OR 97201
Tel: 503/246-3934
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Papers should be delivered typed double
space, or on disk in ASCII format, Word Perfect
5.1 or Word 6.0 no later than July 31st 1997.
Length should be based on a presentation
time of approx. 30 minutes.

N.B. *The Oxfordian* has first rights of publication on all papers delivered at the Conference.

Branagh's Sound and Fury

by Charles Burford

Thanks to Kenneth Branagh, Shakespeare is now a popular presence in the cinema. His *Henry V* (1991) and *Much Ado* (1993) have provided the inspiration for a whole rash of screen adaptations, including *Romeo & Juliet*, *Othello*, *Richard III* and *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare is now "hip", and young people are rightly fascinated by his ideas and characters. Underpinning this new popularity is, I think, an as yet unconscious sense that Shakespeare's philosophy of life will provide an important foundation for the brave new world of the 21st Century.

That said, Branagh's 4-hour full-text movie of *Hamlet*, which should perhaps more accurately have been titled "The Danish Tragedy", may prove to be his Titanic. The wit and humanity of his previous two Shakespearean productions have given way to an all-pervasive narcissism, which, in conjunction with a number of injudicious casting decisions, served to distort many of the characters, including Hamlet himself.

For me the length wasn't a problem, though the play would never have been produced in its full-text form on the Elizabethan

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Society Library Has a Home

As we were about to go to press with this issue, some wonderful news arrived. The negotiations between the Society and its anonymous New England benefactor have resulted in the purchase of a 4-room condominium in Cambridge, which is to be made available to the Society for its library and other office-space needs.

The purchase is expected to be completed by April 1st, at which time the Society will be free to move in. Finally, then, the Shakespeare Oxford Society will have a place to call home, and more importantly, a place to shelve the Victor Crichton library purchased last Fall. Now the work of cataloging these books and making them available to Society members can begin, not to mention such long-delayed projects as indexing the Newsletter. We can also start

acquiring newly published materials of interest to Oxfordians.

The final lease agreement for this space will include an option for the Society to purchase the condo outright at any time. With this in mind, a new fundraising drive is planned for the Spring.

This is also the time and place for us to publicly thank those donors whose generosity made the purchase of the Crichton library possible. By any measure it's a valuable collection of books on Shakespeare and the Shakespeare authorship question, as well as Tudor and Jacobean history. It was the purchase of the Crichton collection that inspired the serious search for a Society headquarters, and now that the space has been secured, we can take our next confident steps towards future growth.

Special thanks are due to Betty Sears and Lydia Bronte whose fundraising efforts made the purchase possible, and to Victor Crichton's nephew Randolph Riddoch for his patience in keeping the library intact until the purchase could be completed.

The following members contributed the \$18,000 that went to purchase the collection:

Mr. Alan Beard
Dr. Lydia Bronte
Mr. James Hardigg
Mr. Greg Horne
Mr. John Louthier
Dr. Josephine Murray
Mr. Thomas Rowland
Mrs. Pidge Sexton
Mrs. Jean Hunt Van Nice
Mrs. Albert Walker

Funeral Elegy: Proof for Oxford?

by Richard Desper

In the Fall 1996 *Newsletter*, in the report on the 20th Annual Conference of this Society held last October in Minnesota, brief mention was made of the paper I delivered on the subject of the *Funeral Elegy*. Further details are presented here, particularly because of the recent attention that the *Elegy* has received from participants on both sides of the authorship controversy.

The subject poem is *Funeral Elegy for Master William Peter*, originally published in 1612 by T. Thorpe. Brought to light by Professor Donald Foster of Vassar in the 1980's the poem is available on the Internet at <http://the-tech.mit.edu/shakespeare/works.html>. As printed in 1612, the author of the *Elegy* was identified only by the initials "W.S.", but Foster has contended that the poem was written by the author of the Shakespearean canon. In the past year or so, Foster, along with Richard Abrams, have gone further to claim that the *Elegy* constitutes evidence in the authorship question. Their argument is that since the *Elegy* was written on the occasion of the death of a certain William Peter, who died in January 1612, it therefore could not have been written by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, whose death occurred in 1604.

Joseph Sobran was quick to take exception to this argument, showing that the text of the *Elegy* is not consistent with the known facts of the life of William Peter (see *Newsletter*, Winter 1996). For instance, William Peter had been married three years at the time of his death, while the poem seems to suggest that its subject had been married nine years. Also, the *Elegy* speaks of its subject in terms of fatherhood, while the historical William Peter died without issue. This opens up the possibility that the *Elegy* (or a predecessor version of the same name, as Elliott Stone has suggested) was written at an earlier date about an earlier death, eliminating it as evidence against the Earl of Oxford.

I took this as my point of departure, and not having made it my business to examine the text on stylistic grounds, I was willing to concede, if necessary, Foster's first premise,

that the poem was written by the author of the Shakespeare canon. However, along with Joseph Sobran, I took issue with Foster's second premise, that the *Elegy* was written in 1612 to commemorate William Peter. Rather than analyzing the words themselves (as Foster has done) for comparison with the Shakespeare canon, my approach has been to analyze the meaning of the words. In the process of examining what the author is saying, I have concluded that the subject of the poem is not William Peter, and that the *Elegy* is totally consistent with Oxfordian authorship. If I am right, what Foster and Abrams have advanced as a "smoking gun" for the Stratfordian case could be, instead, valuable evidence on the Oxfordian side.

In my view, the *Elegy* refers not to the death in 1612 of William Peter, but to a much earlier death, namely that of Edmund Campion, a Catholic priest executed by the English government in December 1581. And why does Campion come to mind? First of all, having found several allusions to Edmund Campion in Act IV, Scene ii of *Twelfth Night* (see *Elizabethan Review*, Spring 1995), I am convinced that Shakespeare at the very least knew of the martyred priest and was moved by his fate. And in terms of the Earl of Oxford, there is good reason to believe that he and Campion may have met. Oxford received an M.A. degree from Oxford University in September, 1566, while Campion was on the staff at Oxford. The awarding of the degree was part of a six-day Royal visit to the University, one in which history records that Campion, then a rising young star at Oxford, played a major part in ceremonies with Queen Elizabeth I. (Campion, supported at the time by a grant from the Earl of Leicester, was unable to accommodate his growing Catholic convictions with the expectations of the University. He later resigned from Oxford, eventually leaving England, returning later as a Catholic priest, and was executed after over a year of clandestine missionary work.)

Below are six points from the *Elegy* text which are specifically consistent with the Oxford/Campion interpretation, but are an-

tagonistic to the Stratfordian position. The six points are as follows:

First: "... she who those nine of years / Lived fellow to his counsels..." (*Elegy*, 511-3). "She" is the Catholic Church, whom Campion embraced from his exile to the continent in 1572 to his death in 1581, a span of nine years. Also, in line 526, the *Elegy* refers to the departed as "Father", a title which Campion received when he was ordained as a priest.

Second: there are numerous references in the *Elegy* (179-84, 318-24, 367-70, 391-6, 535-6) to a death by martyrdom, which do not fit the known demise of William Peter (he died as the result of a drunken quarrel), but which fit the life of Edmund Campion. Of especial note is 367-70: "Thus he, who to the universal lapse / Gave sweet redemption, offering up his blood / To conquer death by death, and loose the traps / Of hell". If we take the "universal lapse" to be the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, this passage amounts to a comparison of the subject's death to the death of Jesus Christ. Such a comparison is possible if the subject is Edmund Campion, but not for William Peter. While the authors of elegies may occasionally succumb to hyperbole and exaggeration in their praise of the deceased, there are limits of taste, beyond which the praises ring untrue and presumptuous. Edmund Campion died for his faith, but to compare William Peter's death to that of Jesus Christ is absurd.

Third: there are references to the departed as a condemned man, one under the sentence of death (34-5, 157, 249-68, 535-6). Most telling is line 157: "The many hours till the day of doom", which suggests the interval of time after the sentence is pronounced but before the execution is carried out. These "hours" have no meaning in the case of William Peter, who had no foreknowledge of his impending death. On the other hand, Edmund Campion was aware, for several days, of his impending execution.

Fourth: there are occasions (48, 159) in which it is noted that the body of the departed would not lie in a tomb. For Campion, the authorities saw to it that all traces of his body would be destroyed to foil possible relic-seekers. Thus there is no possible tomb for his body. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that

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Of Standins, Pseudonyms, Mummings and Disguisings

Exploring the influence of the ancient revels on Elizabethan Court masques

by Stephanie Hughes

Those of us who take seriously the hypothesis that the Earl of Oxford used William Shakespeare of Stratford as a standin must ask ourselves whether or not this was a situation that had precedents. Did it occur just this once, more than once, or was it more or less standard practice, that noblemen or women who wished to publish their writings used the name of a commoner? Unfortunately, if such was the case, it's going to be a difficult practice to uncover since its purpose would be precisely to avoid discovery. We will also be limited in our search to Shakespeare's own period, since true publishing had only just begun in England in his time. Which means that the only precedent we can hope to find will be practices of a similar nature in other eras.

Since a standin or a pseudonym is a form of disguise, we might ask ourselves what other kinds of disguises were commonplace then. What about the most obvious kind of disguise, clothing? Did the Elizabethans in general, and the aristocracy in particular, like to hide their identity by wearing different kinds of clothing? It would appear so. Throughout the period there were numerous angry commentaries on the confusion caused by members of one class wearing the kinds of garments that were perceived as belonging to a different class; what might be regarded as a sort of social, rather than sexual, cross-dressing. That this was regarded as a real problem is shown by the so-called Sumptuary Laws which set restrictions on certain garments, materials, fabrics, even colors (such as royal purple), as reserved for the nobility, others for the merchant classes, and so on down to the humble brown and green frieze that was all that was allowed for peasants.

As for reasons why such laws would be necessary, commoners who could afford to dress as their social superiors would no doubt get better treatment by merchants and vendors, while the nobility would have more freedom to do as they pleased when they went about dressed as commoners. Was this done? It was certainly done, over

and over, on the stage, not only by Shakespeare, who was particularly fond of the psychological bait and switch of cross-dressing, both social and sexual, but by many playwrights going back to the ancients. Did this reflect a real facet of human behavior, or did it happen only on the stage, possibly as a sort of extension of the disguising that was an inherent characteristic of actors assuming identities other than their own? Well, we know that in her youth, Mary Queen of Scots and her ladies-in-waiting used to go out on the town, all of them dressed as young men in cloaks and doublets, boots and hose. We also know from several published commentaries that women frequently went to plays wearing masks.

Further than that we probably cannot penetrate except by reasoned estimates, but one facet of early modern English life that has remained relatively unexamined in this regard might help us better educate our guesses. This is the cycle of seasonal entertainments known as the revels.

They were referred to in documents of the time by their Christian names, The Feast of the Innocents, The Feast of St. Stephen, etc., but behind the gentle names of pious saints lurked potent remnants of strange and fearful tribal rituals that, despite the diligent researches of cultural anthropologists, continue to stand outside the firelight of collective memory or imagination. The prehistoric rites of the great goddess and her earthly lovers included the induction of altered mental and emotional states by means of drumming, dancing and chanting, the retelling or reenactment of communal myths, the invocation of gods and animal totems, the ingestion of mind-altering substances, offermented spirits and hallucinogenic mushrooms, of various forms and degrees of sexual license and blood sacrifice, both human and animal. These early relatives of what we now regard as primarily forms of entertainment, certainly could not be considered entertainment, though some of the same elements of psychological release were

present. Their chief purpose was the seasonal reinforcement of a potent sense of communal unity, the cohesion of the group mind, a necessity for a people armed only with stone and wood in a world fraught with danger from outside forces of nature, beasts and tribes of other men.

With the advent of Christianity, the darker aspects of these seasonal rituals faded or were suppressed, leaving only odd vestiges (such as Christmas trees, yule logs, mistletoe, maypoles, Easter eggs, hot cross buns, etcetera) clinging to the feasting, dancing, games and plays, which were mostly all that was left by the 16th Century. Still, there's no doubt that a certain need for such rituals continued into Shakespeare's time, particularly in rural districts where the church was never able to overcome the instinct to maintain some sort of physical connection with the natural cycles of planting and harvest, of animal fertility, birth, and death; and that Christianity notwithstanding, many a maidenhead was lost while out a-Maying; and many a husband or wife came home shamefaced to their mates after a night spent with a stranger, or someone disguised as a stranger, deep in the woods on mid-summer night's eve.

The characteristics of the revels as they existed in Shakespeare's time dated from the Viking influences of the North to the French influences of the South, from the Dutch and Danish influences of the East to the purely Celtic West, from one social class to another, and from Court to country village, but all followed a similar pattern. Some were preceded by a Church ceremony, but all ended with feasting, music, dancing, and the ingestion of a sufficient quantity of fermented spirits to take the edge off the ordinary divisions caused by rank and offended feelings within the community.

For the lower classes the revels usually included games such as football or blind man's bluff, tests of strength such as wrestling, tugs of war or log throwing contests, simple homemade entertainments (like those that Shakespeare loved to parody, such as

the Nine Worthies in *Love's Labor's Lost* or the rude mechanics in *Midsummer Night's Dream*), Morris dances, and more or less professional entertainments such as acrobats, jugglers or puppet shows. The party would continue for some days until everyone was exhausted and ready to buckle down to another six-week stretch of pease porridge, hard work, and Christian virtue.

The longest revels took place at the winter equinox, and lasted from the beginning of December until the second week in January, a time when mariners and country folk slept late, relaxed and enjoyed themselves during the darkest and coldest part of the year. A bit like animals in hibernation, they fattened themselves with food, drink and excitement against the effortful months to come, of wresting a living from the ocean or the soil.

An interesting feature of the ancient Roman solstice festival, the Saturnalia, were the rituals of rank reversal, whereby some member of the lowest social order would be elevated for a week or two to a position of authority, and during that period waited on hand and foot by the real authorities. Vestiges of this ancient practice remained in Elizabeth's time in outlying areas in the ritual of the Boy Bishop, particularly in the North of England. Rank reversal rites derived from the Roman Saturnalia expressed nostalgia for the Romans' Golden Age of Saturn (the pagan version of the Garden of Eden) when all humans lived with each other as equals, before some had made themselves masters over the rest. (Such rituals of rank reversal appear also to contain elements of even earlier prehistoric rites whereby a tribal king was chosen from the people, feted for some period of time, then killed in a ritual sacrifice for purposes that are still a matter of intense scholarly debate.)

The importance of the revels at Court is shown by the fact that the department that dealt with all matters of entertainment and ceremony was known as the Office of the Revels. The revels at Court were different only in detail, not in substance, from the revels of town and village. There was feasting, music, dancing and the ingestion of a great deal of spirits. There were plays performed by professionals, but there were also entertainments created for the Court by its own members, in which courtiers took part,

writing poems, songs and dramatic "interludes," playing instruments, singing and dancing, and acting in masques.

This much is clear, yet in all discussions of the revels, from Court to country village, what is perhaps the most important factor is also one that generally sneaks right past our present day awareness due to the fact that there is little left in our modern life with which we can connect the reality behind the terms



From the title page of A Quip For an Upstart Courtier: Or, A quaint dispute between Velvet Breeches and Cloth-breeches.

"mumming" and "disguising," terms that continually recur in every commentary on the revels, and which are rarely explained sufficiently to convey their full import.

A disguising is a costume that is meant not just to enhance or to veil, but to totally disguise one's identity. In rural and poor communities where people could afford nothing but the necessities, disguising usually meant wearing someone else's clothing, often clothing of a member of the opposite sex, turned inside out, upside down, stuffed with pillows, with a stocking or homemade mask to completely cover the face, gloves to cover the hands, and so forth, and garnished with a silly hat or a mask that covered the entire head; the point being not so much to look like something specific as to lead all viewers away from any association they might be able to form with one's true identity.

"Mumming" was the promenade through a community sometime during the Christmas holiday season (or, in Shakespeare's day, most holidays) of a group of these disguised community members, known as "mummers", who sang,

danced, performed whatever tricks or entertainments were theirs to share, and told jokes and stories in disguised voices. Some high-spirited youth of the community would be disguised as the Hobby Horse, a figure whose tribal origins appear to be lost in the mists of time, but whose present function was to terrify all those not in costume, to the delight of his fellow mummers.

Mummers paraded from house to house, and were invited in to some and given food and drink, while members of the household did their best to guess who they were. Although this may well have been a vestige of some pagan rite, with community members originally disguised as totem animals, vegetation gods, or some such, its more modern function surely was to bring the excitement of the unknown into isolated communities where everyone knew everyone all too well, and where strangers were usually feared and shunned, at the same time that it offered those in disguise a break from the identities, ages, and genders they were stuck with the rest of the year. As soon as a mummer was correctly identified, they doffed their masks and became themselves again, until it was time to take the show to the next house.

This was the gentler aspect of mumming. There was a darker side. Protected by their disguises and fueled by cups of cheer, mummers were at risk of being ignited by a sort of collective vindictiveness. If an illicit affair was known to be in progress, if it was perceived that wrong had been done by someone to the community, notes pinned on trees or doors informed the world. Gates put on roofs, farm animals turned loose, haystacks set afire, were a rough form of vigilante justice, and if some sort of appropriately funny twist could be added to the revenge, that would make it doubly enjoyable, doubly sweet. It was also dangerously easy for someone to hide an act of personal revenge as a mummers' trick.

The Court version of the ancient rituals of mumming and disguising were known as "Masques," or "Masks" as they spelled it then, because of course, everyone was masked, or in disguise. Since the Court could not afford the broad license of the country village, nor the psychological release of total anonymity, nor the consequences of social reversal, they came as

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History (Continued from page 1)

Anderson and Stritmatter that her article is based upon a false premise.

"Let's not forget," wrote Anderson, "that by these standards the Oxfordian theory loses much, if not all, of its persuasive force. Looney did not solve the authorship problem by means of 'documentary evidence'. He looked at the works and asked what they tell us about the author and the life he lived. And it was that investigation and not an examination of the documentary evidence that led Whitman to conclude that 'one of the wolfish earls or some born descendant and knower might seem to be the true author of these amazing works.'"

In other words, Looney did something considered unscholarly by Stratfordians: he used the works of Shakespeare as evidence—evidence which, as "fiction", cannot be considered "documentary." Thus, the father of Oxfordianism himself made strong use of so-called interpretive evidence.

Roger Stritmatter followed up on this point by citing a passage from a section entitled "Interpretation in History" from historian Hayden-White's book *The Tropics of Discourse*:

"Theorists of historiography generally agree that all historical narratives contain an irreducible and inextinguishable element of interpretation. The historian has to interpret his materials in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form of the historical process is to be mirrored. And this is because the historical record is both too full and too sparse. On the one hand, there are always more facts in the record than the historian can possibly include in his narrative representation of a given segment of the historical process. And so the historian must 'interpret' his data by excluding certain facts from his account as irrelevant to his narrative purpose.

"On the other hand, in his efforts to reconstruct 'what happened' in any given period of history, the historian inevitably must include in his narrative an account of some event or complex of events for which the facts that would permit a plausible explanation of its occurrence are lacking. And this means that the historian must 'interpret' his materials by filling in the gaps in his information on inferential or speculative grounds. A historical narrative is thus nec-

essarily a mixture of adequately and inadequately explained events, a congeries of established and inferred facts, at once a representation that is an interpretation that passes for an explanation of the whole process mirrored in the narrative."

In short, what this rather Polonian narrative means is that interpretation is an unavoidable part of the process of writing history. There is really no such thing as interpretive evidence, as all reported facts and opinions have to be interpreted by the historian. Even the "official record" is still only somebody's individual interpretation of what happened at a given time, and is further "distorted" when filtered through the historian's lens.

"Looney did not solve the authorship problem by means of 'documentary evidence.' He looked at the works and asked what they tell us about the author and the life he lived."

As Oxfordians struggle to develop a concise and coherent theory of the hows and whys of the authorship problem, they must be prepared to make responsible speculation a part of their overall theory. Indeed, it should be remembered that the very existence of the authorship controversy is the result of an interpretive process, and were it the case that "documented facts" alone hold validity, the Stratford story would prove unassailable.

Over the last two centuries many have noticed how significantly the works of Shakespeare seem both to contradict and at the same time supplement the official, documentary account of the times. For the Shakespeare canon itself is a richly revealing documentary record that deserves to be considered as a key piece of evidence in elucidating the story of the times. Whether one calls it documentary or interpretive evidence is irrelevant given Hayden-White's axiom that all evidence used for historical purposes is *ipso facto* interpretive.

Because Stratfordians maintain such a blinkered reverence for "documented facts", they end up with a bizarre array of unrelated and uninterpretable events, which not only leave a jumble of unanswered questions in their wake, but which fail to yield a coherent

picture of Elizabethan society and politics. However hard they try to join up the dots, they can never produce a meaningful creature. It's hardly surprising, then, that they insist on the inadmissibility of the Shakespeare canon as evidence, for if one thing above all gives the lie to the two-dimensional Cecilo-Stratfordian worldview, in which politics and literature are separate planets, it's "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time."

The way Stratfordians deal with Francis Meres illustrates the point very well. In his *Palladis Tamia*, Meres makes it crystal clear that Shakespeare and Oxford are two different men, for they are both mentioned in the same list of those who have excelled at comedy. Stratfordians are eager and happy to take him at his word. But in doing this, they must leave a whole host of very basic and important questions unanswered, such as who is Francis Meres, what is the meaning of *Palladis Tamia*, why was it published in 1598, and why is the passage about Shakespeare so obviously a cuckoo in the nest? If, on the other hand, these questions are properly considered, the conclusion is inescapable that here is a document whose meaning lives between the lines (and thus demands to be interpreted), and which is part of the overall effort to conceal Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare canon. In such a world, politics and literature are inseparable.

Although the historian of the Elizabethan age has at his disposal an apparent wealth of surviving documents from the period, he is also confronted by a conspicuous absence of some key documents. Historian Hugh Ross Williamson, in research notes appended to his 1959 book *The Crown and the Conspirators*, made several observations that are germane to our discussion of evidence. Here are a couple of particularly relevant ones:

1) "No one who has studied the Domestic State Papers can doubt that all of them went through Cecil's hands as soon as he became Elizabeth's Secretary of State on Mary's death and that he weeded them out with great thoroughness" (p.216). (While this observation refers to Queen Mary's reign, it is surely equally true of her sister Elizabeth's reign. Here too the Cecils, father and son, were careful to leave behind a

thoroughly sanitized documentary record for future historians to ponder.) Williamson goes on to note the importance of ambassadorial reports in filling gaps in the official record.

2) In considering Queen Mary's relationship with Elizabeth, Williamson stresses the importance of dealing with the issue of Elizabeth's supposed bastardy (i.e. that she was the daughter of Anne Boleyn and Mark Smeaton, not of Anne and Henry VIII). He writes that "the first requisite for understanding Mary's attitude to Elizabeth is to know whether she thought of her as a sister or not. And in this (which is quite distinct from the question of whether her belief was or was not in accord with the facts) there is no room for any genuine doubt. Mary believed that Elizabeth was not her father's daughter" (p.218).

These are two critically important observations for those living in the house of mirrors known as the authorship debate. They assist us in understanding that it's often impossible to draw a meaningful distinction between what is belief and what is fact, and that one can't rely for the truth on a documentary record that has been deliberately sanitized. For there can be little doubt that over the 40 years that he was Elizabeth's chief counsellor, Lord Burghley plucked many a document from the state archives, leaving behind a very personal, not to say wilful, version of the truth. It's also likely that the most significant document to escape such a fate was the Shakespeare canon, much as the grand possessors and grand censors might have wished otherwise.

The works of Shakespeare are, then, as much a historical and political document, as they are a literary one. If we fail to appreciate this, we run the risk of creating a new quasi-Stratfordian orthodoxy with Oxford substituted for Shakespeare, but with all the other political icons such as the Virgin Queen left intact. We will thus have failed in our duty to interpret the works, and the authorship question will be reduced to an act of legerdemain; a cheap trick instead of a philosophical quest. In such a scenario "Oxford is Shakespeare" becomes a meaningless statement, for it implies nothing beyond the all too familiar cover-story.

The Prince Tudor theory is itself a metaphor for the whole authorship question.

Here again, the Shakespeare canon constitutes important evidence and helps us in our interpretation of the "historical record", which states that the Virgin Queen was indeed a virgin queen as unequivocally as it states that Shakespeare was the Stratford actor.

In her article "Rough Winds do Shake", Diana Price unwittingly demonstrates the pitfalls of taking the documentary-evidence-is-supreme highground. They are most evident in her handling of the so-called crown signature and her failure to deal with the political fallout of Oxford's death on June 24th, 1604.

Price dismisses the crown signature with the observation that the squiggles and dots

"For there can be little doubt ... that Lord Burghley plucked many a document from the state archives, leaving behind a very personal, not to say wilful, version of the truth."

above the center of the signature represent an earl's coronet while the horizontal line and seven dashes indicate the number seventeen. Thus Oxford was announcing to the world what everyone already knew i.e. that he was the 17th Earl of Oxford. (The sort of behaviour one would expect from a parvenu.) Because the fact that Oxford stopped using the crown signature when the Queen died in 1603 is irrelevant to Price's purpose - which is to scupper the Prince Tudor theory - she fails to mention it at all. In ignoring such an important piece of information, Price does what all the Stratfordians are forced to do: she creates a minefield of unexplained coincidences. This is the big danger of not attempting a theory to which all the facts can be accommodated.

Price creates even more coincidences around June 24, 1604, by opting to ignore the significance of James I's panic that day in rounding up Southampton and his followers (many of them survivors of the Essex rebellion). Nor does she find it significant that James I and Robert Cecil subsequently attempted to erase this event from history by leaving it blank in the official record. These things just happen to have happened.

In fact it is only through ambassadorial

reports that we know about James's actions on this occasion, which confirms Hugh Ross Williamson's assertion that such reports are vital in piecing together the history of the time. Ironically, Diana Price makes very pregnant use of French ambassador Fenelon's reports in her attack upon the Prince Tudor theory. Clearly, some pieces of evidence are more convenient than others, while for some Oxfordians questioning the Virgin Queen's virginity is "an icon too far."

Interestingly, there is a debate today over an American icon that has some instructive parallels to the Shakespeare story. Documentary film-maker Ken Burns (*The Civil War, Baseball*) has produced a 3-hour biography of Thomas Jefferson, which has drawn praise from professionals and laymen alike for its clear, uncompromising view of this contradictory figure of American history.

Although not an academic historian, in order to make his film Burns made use of all the documentary records of the time as well as the written histories and all the other available stories and anecdotes that contribute to the complex process known as "history".

In an article in the *Boston Globe* (Feb. 16), several quotes from Burns about how he dealt with the historical record in this case resonate with echoes of the authorship battle and our various fact versus fiction disagreements. The article's author, Renee Graham, reviews the current state of Jeffersonian biography, in which revisionists trash him as a "slave owner" who is therefore "useless", while the old school continues to revere him as the author of the Declaration of Independence, and therefore as "god".

"It takes a discriminating eye," writes Graham, "to discern the many parts of Jefferson. Indeed historians on both sides of this fervent debate have played fast and loose with the facts, highlighting or discarding whatever details might further their particular stance."

One of the decisions Burns made was to include all the controversial and contradictory aspects of Jefferson's life, such as the matter of his supposed relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemmings, on whom he is said to have fathered several children. Burns took the view that it would have been irresponsible to ignore the Hemmings story,

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News from England: De Vere Society Annual General Meeting held in London

The De Vere Society held its Annual General Meeting in London on February 8th. About 75 people attended. The meeting began at 11 in the morning and ended at 5 in the afternoon, with a break for lunch. Apart from the business meeting itself, there were four short papers from members and a special presentation by Mark Rylance, artistic director of the new Globe Theatre. The Society now has about 100 members from all over the world, including 26 members from the U.S.

The first paper, "Phantasies of Shakespeare: Depth Psychology & The Authorship Question", was presented by Sally Hazelton, who essentially gave a summary of her MA dissertation of the same name. The dissertation fell into two parts. In the first part, she explained, she had examined the background, i.e. the reason why biographers and commentators fantasize so unapologetically about Shakespeare and how they do it.

She pointed out that the paucity and insipidity of the biographical record lures people into the realm of fantasy, where they fill in the gaps and remedy the "deficiencies" both by means of conjecture and by turning to the works themselves for insights into the author's life and character. To Hazelton's mind, there are serious pitfalls with both approaches. The first involves the biographers' projections - their unconscious wishes and fears - which inevitably colour their image of Shakespeare. (As an extreme example, she cited G.B. Shaw's comment about Shakespeare, "I am convinced he was very like myself.") The second approach she found dangerous because it involves a huge assumption: that an author's works are actual accounts of his personal experiences. Jungians, for instance, might argue that an author's access to the collective unconscious furnishes him with archetypal experiences that are every bit as valid as "actual" personal experiences.

The second part of the dissertation explored ways in which depth psychology might be used to assist the authorship debate. Hazelton discussed Freud's contribu-

tion, in particular his emphasis on Oxford's Oedipal complex and the "compensatory satisfaction" he achieved through his literary works. Although Freud's method led to "lots of intriguing links between Oxford and Shakespeare", Hazelton concluded that his overall contribution was quite weak because of the subjective and hypothetical nature of his approach.

Finally, she looked briefly at theories of loss and creativity, citing in particular the work of British psychoanalyst, John Bowlby. She said that recent studies have shown that many of the world's most creative artists experience a significant early loss - usually that of a parent. Oxford, of course, lost his father at the age of 12. Hazelton further pointed out that Oxford had not only lost a parent but a familiar world as well. Of all the major authorship candidates, Oxford's psychological vein was the richest to mine, and his personality most compatible with psychiatric studies of highly creative writers.

Next Brian Hicks gave a talk entitled "Presenting the Case for Oxford." Hicks is a member of the De Vere Society's 2004 Committee, whose task it is to develop a strategy of growth and publicity for the Society that will enable it to mount a memorable public event to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Oxford's death in 2004.

Hicks suggested a number of ways in which members of the De Vere Society could increase public awareness of the authorship question. It was important, he said, to challenge assumptions of the Stratford man's authorship wherever they appeared in the local or national press. Written responses should be sent to the letters column. Conversely, he felt it was important to write directly to the author of an article, whose philosophy and approach suggest that he may be open to the Oxford hypothesis. He pointed out that there are many high-profile "anti-establishment" figures in Britain, who nevertheless seem to accept the divinity of the Stratford man.

Hicks also encouraged more people to

approach adult education centres and local historical societies about giving lectures. As more and more people become competent to give talks on Edward de Vere and the authorship question, so they should make use of these skills to further the cause. Other suggestions included placing ads in local theatre company programs in order to encourage the audience to join the search for the true Shakespeare, and ensuring that the main library in a member's town has details of the De Vere Society in its records and database, as many enquirers have had difficulty in contacting the Society. (The same has been true for the Shakespeare Oxford Society.) Hicks also distributed a list of 34 points against Shakespeare's authorship and a list of 17 points in favour of Edward de Vere's, which is part of the Society's campaign to equip its members to educate the heathen.

Mark Rylance arrived at noon to discuss his work at the International Shakespeare Globe Centre and his interest in the Shakespeare authorship question. He's the first artistic director of the Globe, elected by its Board of Trustees for an initial 3-year term, which can be extended if he so chooses. (They have just completed their first season of plays.) He indicated that the Board knew of his anti-Stratfordian tendencies when they elected him, though what that means is impossible to say. He in turn has created what he describes as an "Artistic Directorate", which includes such cinematic luminaries as Al Pacino.

Rylance first became interested in the authorship question when he attended a lecture at the Baconian Society in Islington about Hermetic and Rosicrucian thought. Through it he learnt of the Baconian theory of Shakespearean authorship. Later he attended Oxfordian lectures at Harvard and Boston University while playing Hamlet at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Mass. He indicated that he took the issue very seriously and was committed to opening an authorship dialogue at the Globe.

Rylance made it clear that it is his interest

in Shakespeare's philosophy as expressed in the plays that drives his interest in the authorship. Shakespeare clearly possessed a profound knowledge of Renaissance Hermeticism, as did Bacon and Raleigh and many other great Elizabethan men of letters, and Rylance spoke eloquently about the ancient wisdoms that inspired Ficino and others in the 15th Century to attempt a universal philosophy that combined both the occult arts and the rational sciences.

As an actor he mentioned that his knowledge of alchemy had provided him with useful insights into the text during a run of *Much Ado*. He spoke of the process of awakening within the plays, that leads people onto higher and higher truths according to their intellectual ability and spiritual readiness. In this context, he stressed the importance of the Globe's design, which makes room for the groundlings, whose presence generates a more active kind of theatre in which the audience can participate. For Shakespeare and his more enlightened colleagues, the theatre was a grand educational enterprise involving the whole of Society, and even in these more "democratic" times the social philosophy behind the original Globe remains valid.

Rylance related an anecdote about a Globe performance of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which he was playing the part of Proteus. It was the reconciliation scene of V.iv, and Valentine had just taken his, Proteus's, hand and that of Julia and said his lines "Let me be blest to make this happy close: / 'Twere pity two such friends should be long foes". Rylance (the inconstant and caddish Proteus) turned to face his Julia and said "Bear witness, heaven, I have my wish for ever", but before Julia could respond with her "And I mine", one of the groundlings shouted out with desperate conviction "Don't do it, Julia!" Such interventions he said greatly affect how the actors play their lines.

Rylance was an inspiration to everyone present, and we are singularly fortunate that we have an artistic director at the Globe who is committed to bringing Shakespeare's philosophy to the surface in his productions. It is a great undertaking and one that will be of benefit to all anti-Stratfordians.

After lunch came the business meeting. The old 1987 Constitution of the Society



Charles Burford, founder of the De Vere Society, addressed the General Meeting in London on February 8th.

which had been drawn up for use at Oxford University was rescinded, and a new 1997 Constitution adopted. Then the Executive Committee of the Society was elected, which at present consists of five members. Christopher Dams was reelected as Secretary and Alan Robinson as Treasurer, while Charles Burford stepped down as Chairman as he didn't feel in a position to contribute actively to events in England while continuing to make his home in America. He did, however, accept the nomination for President, and was duly elected.

Next Verily Anderson, author of *The De Veres of Castle Hedingham* delivered a talk entitled "Havering atte Bower", which quickly became a spirited plea to everyone to STICK TO THE FACTS. (Though if the title of her talk was a fact, Anderson certainly chose not to stick to it, or even mention it for that matter.) In broaching the infamous Prince Tudor theory ("that hideous fantasy"), she roundly praised Diana Price's *Elizabethan Review* article "Rough Winds Do Shake", for Diana, bless her, had stuck to the facts.

Anderson spoke about the film option that Warner Brothers have just renewed on her book, and asked those present whether it was proper for the whole Oxford story to be "juiced up a bit" before it appeared in celluloid.

In other words, should de Vere be shown sleeping with the Queen, and "should there be babies?" In a nutshell, if Hollywood wants Prince Tudor, should we give it to them?? The audience was divided in its opinions, though the majority view was that it was better to have a bold, imaginative film than a dull, prosaic one. Whereupon Anderson raised her fist in the air and gave one last "Stick to the Facts!" salute.

Finally, Charles Burford gave a brief talk entitled "The Politics of the Authorship Question", which was also a kind of plea, but this time for a spirit of open-mindedness on the Prince Tudor issue. He pointed out that the Prince Tudor issue was as old as the authorship issue, as it was the 19th-century Baconians who first openly posited Shakespeare himself (Francis Bacon) as the son of the Queen by the Earl of Leicester. In a veiled manner, however, the issue has existed since Elizabethan times. Burford also stressed that there were a growing number of Oxfordians who now believe that Oxford himself may have been the son of the Queen. As far as Southampton is concerned, he made it clear that no one knows exactly when he was born, 1573 or 1574, and that such vagueness is very common when dealing with both the birthdates and parentage of Elizabethan noblemen.

As for Diana Price's argument about the superiority of documentary over interpretive evidence, Burford made the point that if documentary evidence means accepting Lord Burghley's word for everything, then it should be treated with great circumspection. After all, what is the value of documentary evidence in a totalitarian state? Would you look for the truth about the fate of the Crimean Tartars in Joseph Stalin's files? Would you expect to find a piece of paper there signed by the Boss himself saying "Those I didn't exile to Siberia I murdered"? The point surely is that all evidence, documentary or otherwise, has to be interpreted. If it's not, then the historian has failed in his duty.

Burford reinforced his point by comparing Shakespeare's age to that of 19th-century Russia under the Romanovs. In that repressive, censorious society it was the Gogols, Turgenevs and Tolstoys who were the true chroniclers of their age, not the Tsarist government. To an even greater

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Fitzgerald (Continued from page 1)

the Introduction, he discovered what may well be the final poem ever written by Edward de Vere. The poem is written in Latin, signed "E.L. Oxon", and contains, I now believe after several years of close review of the poem and its Latin syntax, a direct statement from the author about his role as a "hidden" author. The statement itself is hidden in wordplay on Oxford's favorite word: *vere*.

But first, let's take a look back to the period when this now obscure French poet flourished. It was in the 1580's and '90's that the reigning literary figure in England, was, curiously, not English, but French, and today lies forgotten, of interest only to specialists. He was Guillaume de Salluste Sieur du Bartas, a Gascon Huguenot in the service of Henri of Navarre. Du Bartas was venerated, extolled, and lionized in England for his *Semaines*, or "Weeks," an immense, unfinished poem in two parts that sought to record and report in alexandrines the received sum of scientific knowledge and the history of mankind.

After his death he rather quickly fell out of favor in France, and remains sunk in oblivion to this day. His star took rather longer to set in England, where his Protestantism and a less rapid evolution in taste afforded him some initial protection from the assaults of esthetes. "The eager greeting of Du Bartas by the Elizabethans," observed Sidney Lee, "is a curiosity in the history of literary criticism."

Du Bartas had several English translators, first among them James VI of Scotland, a great enthusiast of the Frenchman. But his principal dragoman was the earnest Puritan, Joshua Sylvester, "a merchant turned poet," in the words of his modern editor, Susan Snyder. Sylvester experienced a derivative success and popularity in his translation, enjoying several editions until the 1640's, after which time he went as dead as his master.

Sylvester had been emitting fragments of the *Semaines* piecemeal during the 1590's. At last, in 1605, a nearly complete translation

Iosua Silvester Anagr: Verè Os Salustij.

O S tu SILVESTER nostræ car Ore vocaris?
An quod in Ore feras Mel? quod in Aure Mel-os?
An quod BARTASSI faciem dum pingis et ORA,
ORATUI pariter qualibet ora colit?
Nempe licet duram præ te fers nomine SILVAM,
Silvas et salebras carmina nulla tenent:
Sed quod Atheriarum COR, dux Salaminis olim
Dixit, Inest libris Osq; vigorq; tuis.
Ergo Os effo alijs, mihi Suadæ LINGVA videris;
Musis et Phæbo charus OCELLVS eris.

Ad Gallum de Bartassio iam toto Anglice donato.
Quod Gallus factus modo sit, mirare, Britannus
Galle? novam videas, nec tamen inuideas:
Silvester vesler, noſter Bartassius; ambo
Laude quidem gemina digni ut et ambo pari.

In detractores ad Authorem.
Taceat malevolum Os male strepentis Zoili;
Monstrum bilingue, septuplex Hydra caput:
Dum Septimanam septies faustam canis,
Te Septimana septies faustum facit
Quevis, nec vlla debeat Iosua Dies.
Nempe ORE fari Vera si licet meo,
Os ipse VERE diceris SALUSTIUS;
Qui si impetaris dentibus mordentibus
Impurioris ORIS, & Sæc Theon
Os non carere dentibus sciat tuum.

E. L. Oxon.

The poem as it originally appeared in the 1605 edition of Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. The layout of the poem and its headings as published in Dr. Grosart's 1880 re-issue of Sylvester's translation (see page 95 in Ruth Loyd Miller's edition of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*) vary from the 1605 original, particularly in handling the title's not too subtle message that an anagram follows. ("Anagr:" is spelled out as "Anagram" and placed on a separate line.)

was published, titled (with a nod to the Greek epic didactic poet, Hesiod) *The Divine Works and Weeks*.

At the head of *Divine Weeks* were placed ten commendatory poems written for the occasion by Sylvestrian admirers. Among them, the third in sequence, is, so far as we know, the final poem to come from the pen of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. It was written in Latin.

This poem, curiously neglected by Oxfordians in view of its being Oxford's final literary product, can be found on page 95 in Ruth Loyd Miller's edition of *A Hundreth*

Sundrie Flowres, reproduced from the reissue in 1880 of the works of Joshua Sylvester (*Chertsey Worthies' Library*, with introduction by Alexander Grosart). Or not so curiously: Oxford was an accomplished Latinist; his encomium is both polished and complex in its Latinity as well as recondite in its message.

Oxford's poem is headed: "Iosua Silvester Anagr: Vere Os Salustij." The public, exoteric intent of that brilliant Latin anagram was to proclaim the message that Joshua Sylvester was "truly the mouth [i.e. the voice, as translator into English] of Sallustius [Du Bartas]."

In the anagram, the second "e" in "Vere" bears the grave accent, which is best interpreted as "vere," the adverb "truly," derived from the adjective *verus*, "true." However, merely remove the accent and you have generated Oxford's surname. The very blatancy of "Vere" in both its positional and linguistic perspicuity begs the knowledgeable reader to interpret it, simultaneously with both senses, with imputed emphasis as "Vere truly the voice of Du Bartas." (And not, perhaps, Sylvester.) *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* lends implicit support to the ill-concealed import. In the Du Bartas entry (which employs Sylvester's translation), fully one-half of the sixteen cross-referenced citations to echoes of Du Bartas in English literature go to "Shakespeare."

Oxford's poem was among four composed in Latin; the remaining six are in English. What follows is an attempted identification of their authors. The names, abbreviations, and initials appearing within the inverted commas are the names of the authors exactly as they appear below their poems.

1. Car: Fitz-Geoffridus Lati-Portensis. Charles Fitzgeoffrey (1575-1638). Minorepigrammist.

2. Io: Bo. Miles. Perhaps Sir John Borough (no dates found). In 1592 he served under Walter Raleigh as a Vice-Admiral, when he saw action in the West Indies. He is cited as "Borough, controller of the navy" in 1595. "Miles" must be the Latin word for soldier, or, more broadly, military man, which accords here.

3. **E. L. Oxon.** E[dward] L[ord] Oxon[ford] (1550-1604). Andrew Hannas is illuminating: "This seems an odd way to indicate the Earl of Oxford, as I interpret E[dward] L[ord] Oxon[ford] as the unabbreviated form. However, one must remember that in 1605 Edward de Vere was dead. The 'E. Vere' alone could be construed as his son Edward, while his son Henry would assume the title of Earl of Oxford, potentially embarrassing in subsequent printings. The form given removes the ambiguity on all three counts. Nor should its posthumous printing with admission of authorship be overlooked: is this not the first poem over his name that didn't come from the 1570's or earlier (reprints excluded)?"

4. **G. B. Cantabridg.** This would appear to be Sir George Buc (d. 1623), one of the "minor pastoralists of the earlier years of King James." Also his Master of Revels from 1608-1622. Under Elizabeth, the licenser of plays.

5. **Samuel Daniel.** (1562-1619).

6. **G. Gay-wood.** Unidentified.

7. **John Davies of Hereford.** (1565-1618).

8. **E. G.** Probably Edward Grimestone, who compiled a General Inventory of the History of France, published in 1607 (note the French connection), and subsequent works thereafter. (No dates found.)

9. **R: N.** Very likely Sir Robert Naunton (1563-1635), a minor writer and creature of Robert Cecil.

10. **R: H.** The best candidate appears to be Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616), the geographer and divine, who also accompanied the English ambassador to France in 1583. The sonnet over "R: H." is filled with celestial imagery, appropriate to both of Hakluyt's callings.

Inclusive of Oxford, identified with certainty are authors 1, 3, 5 & 7; identified with greater or lesser confidence, authors 2, 4, 8, 9 & 10. One author, Number Six, Mr. Gay-wood, remains unidentified. Prescinding Oxford, seven of the (more or less well) Identified Eight are living in the year of publication of *Divine Weeks*, 1605. And Praiser Two, Sir John Borough, could easily be. A man young and hale enough to be engaged in a naval

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The Poem Translated

The following translation strives for accuracy at the expense of literary merit in bringing across a poem of deliberate obscurity. The words capitalized or in capitals reflect those so emphasized in the Latin. Words in quotes seem ironic or tongue-in-cheek in intent, as the translator (JF) perceives the poem. Numbers within parentheses indicate, as trailers, the corresponding line numbers of the Latin original. Where they do not appear singly, the Latin syntax has proven too convoluted or inspired to disentangle successfully.

Iosua Sylvester Anagr. Vere Os Salustij

- (1) OS tu SILVESTER nostro cur ore vocaris?
- (2) An quod in ORE feras Mel? quod in Aure Mel-os?
- (3) An quod BARTASSI faciem dum pingis et ORA.
- (4) ORA tui pariter quaelibet ora colit?
- (5) Nempe licet duram praec te fers nomine SILVAM
- (6) Silvas et salebras carmina nulla tenent.
- (7) Sed quod Athenarum COR, dux Salaminius olim
- (8) Dixit, inest libris OS[que]; vigor[que]; tuis.
- (9) Ergo OS esto alijs, mihi Suadae LINGUA videris;
- (10) Musis et Phoebus charus OCELLUS eris.

Ad Gallum de Bartassio iam toto Anglice donato.

- (11) Quod Gallus factus modo sis, mirare, Britannus
- (12) Galle? novum videas, nec tamen invideas:
- (13) Sylvester vester, noster Bartassius, ambo
- (14) Laude quidem gemina digni ut et ambo pari

In detractores ad authorem.

- (15) Taceat malevolum OS male strepentis Zoili;
- (16) Monstrum bilingue, septuplex Hydrae caput:
- (17) Dum Septimanam septies faustam canis,
- (18) Te septimana septies faustum facit
- (19) Quaevis, nec ulla debeat Iosua Dies.
- (20) Nempe ORE fari Vera si licet meo,
- (21) OS ipse VERE dicaris SALUSTII;
- (22) Qui si impetaris dentibus mordentibus
- (23) Impurioris ORIS, [atheos] theon
- (24) OS non carere dentibus sciat tuum.

E. L. Oxon.

(Joshua Sylvester Anagram: Truly the Mouth [i.e. voice] of Sallustius [i.e. Du Bartas])

How is it, O "WOODSMAN," that you are called a "Voice" by our Voice (1)? Can it be the "Honey" that you bear upon your LIPS? Or is it the Honied-speech you bear unto the ear (2)? Or are you so addressed for your portrayal of the fair POETRY of DU BARTAS (3), as he in turn honors your POETRY, of whatever sort it may be (4)? Granted that you bear before you in your name a rough "FOREST," so to speak, (5) and granted that no [genuine] poetry is touched with, as it were, "Wilderness" and rude speech (6). Still, what the Salaminian Duke [Themistocles] once (7) called the HEART of Athens, its power of LANGUAGE, in your MOUTH that, too, is present (8). Therefore, to others be a VOICE; to me shall you seem the TONGUE of Persuasion (9), and to Phoebus and the Muses a precious DARLING shall you be (10).

(To France, Du Bartas now wholly translated into English)

You marvel, Frenchman, that [Du Bartas] is now made English? Though you see something strange, yet despise it not (11,12). Your Sylvester, our Du Bartas: worthy are they both of a like commendation, as worthy both of an equal praise (13,14).

(Against the Author's Critics)

Let it be silent, that envious mouth of carping Zoilus [a bitter 4th century BCE critic of Homer], that monster of double tongue, that sevenfold head of Hydra (15,16). While seven times you sing the auspicious Weeks, you seven times fortunate any week make. Nor let any Day prove the destruction of Joshua (17-19). Certainly if it is permitted to speak True Things with my MOUTH (20), you yourself TRULY are called the VOICE of [DU BARTAS] (21). If Anyone should attack you with the biting teeth (22) of a more impure MOUTH, let him know, that offender ["atheos," lit. "godless one"] of the gods, that your MOUTH is not lacking in teeth (23,24).

E.L.Oxon

Fitzgerald (Continued from page 11)

action in 1592 thousands of miles from home, and then revealed to be safely ensconced in a desk job in 1595, might well be alive ten years later in 1605.

What draws our attention is that among the ten panegyrists only Oxford is unquestionably dead (in June, 1604) when the *Divine Weeks* sees the light of day in 1605. Could it be that publication was held back for some reason until Oxford passed from the scene? Ruth Loyd Miller has written to me with the following: "I think the Sylvester 1605 work was entered on the [Stationers' Register] about November, 1604—just a few months after Oxford's death & before Susan's [i.e. Vere's] marriage."

The confluence of Oxford's death, the entry into the Stationers' Register five months thereafter (if Mrs. Miller is correct) of the work that contains Oxford's swan song in literature and the publication in the following year of that literary work fills one with the suspicion of concealed motive, knowing that among ten encomiasts Oxford alone is known to be deceased, and recently so, at the time of publication.

Oxford's poem and my translation of it are shown in the box on page 11. The words in capitals are similarly represented in the original. **Lines 1-14** are in "elegiacs," the standard Latin meter for praise and eulogy. **Lines 15-24** are in iambic trimeter, the customary meter for invective, censure, and satire. The translation will reveal that Oxford adhered to the classical norms. The bracketed "ue" of line 8 is unsupplied, but understood, in the original as -que, "and". The bracketed "atheos" of **line 23** has been transliterated from the Greek orthography in which it originally appears.

We might note at the outset, and not with complete wonder, that Oxford makes strikingly abundant use of OS (and therefore O's), employing it fourteen times in varying permutations of case and number. The opening "O" of OS in line one is a titan of almost three lines height. The primary meaning of OS is "mouth," but several allied meanings may attach to it, and better suit the translation, as here: "voice," "speech," or "poetry" (as the product of the voice, or mouth).

This is a difficult poem: difficult in its language and prosody, not entirely eluci-

dated; difficult in its message, both open and occult; difficult in its tone, both jesting and serious.

The poem begins with a jest on the broad pun "Silvester," which is not only Joshua's surname, but also, and worse luck for him, the Latin adjective meaning "of or pertaining to the woods." Used as a substantive, it means "woodsman." Oxford goes on to toy with this conceit in "rough forest," "wilderness," and the "rude speech" (of a woodsman; or, less politely, of a naïf, a rube). One suspects that **lines 11 and 12** might be paraphrased as, "My God! What will the French think?" Did Oxford have cause for embarrassment in associating himself with Sylvester and his translation of the

"...for sure enough, as a writer, he [Oxford] was a feudal leviathan netted up in a school of Puritan minnows."

Semaines of Du Bartas? Or, for that matter, with the other nine eulogists; for sure enough, as a writer, he was a feudal leviathan netted up in a school of Puritan minnows.

Apart from their mutual admiration of the Frenchman, the Lord and the Merchant could not have been more antithetical. Joshua Sylvester (1564-1618), born in Kent in the same year as the Stratford fellow, went into the clothing business as a young man and remained in trade all his life. Susan Snyder reports that "certain tendencies of the Elizabethan middle class appear with particular emphasis, almost to caricature in Sylvester's Scripture-quoting, Rome-hating Protestantism." A. H. Upham informs us that Sylvester's formal schooling was limited, although it left him well grounded in French. "To the religious tone of the [*Divine Weeks*]," remarks Upham on Sylvester's magnum opus, "he gives a new twist, replacing the mild and liberal Protestantism of Du Bartas by a dogmatic and uncompromising Puritanic spirit, that hardens the moralizing and places parts of the work very near the boundaries of satire."

It does not startle us, then, to find Oxford hedging his praise; although, with what seems a pang of guilty compassion, he contrives in **lines 7 and 8** to get Athens and

Themistocles into a left-handed encomium on the "power" of Sylvester's verse, following it up in **lines 9 and 10** with eulogistic fustian of a more conventional sort.

Lines 15 to 19, which commence the iambic trimeter portion of the poem, are almost impenetrable. Are they freighted with hidden meaning, like *Finnegan's Wake*? Or are they deliberate nonsense on the part of the author, like *Finnegan's Wake*?

Line 20: Nempe ORE fari Vera si licet meo.

At line 20 Oxford suddenly turns serious; and together with line 21, the two lines compose the esoteric climax or nexus of the poem.

Owing to the apparent capriciousness of Latin word order, the words, where necessary, will not be examined in their Latin sequence, but in the order that best elucidates the logic of the thought as it is transposed into English.

Nempe: "certainly," "to be sure." "Used in confirmation or sarcasm" (Traupman).

si licet: "if it is permitted."

fari Vera: "to speak True Things." Or "Vere Things" (that pun which is ever in the background). The ending "-a" of "Vera" is the neuter plural ("things") ending of the adjective. "Vero Nihil Verius", the motto of the de Veres, supports the reasonableness of the dual understanding above. "Vero Nihil Verius" can be read as "Nothing truer than Vere," or as "Nothing truer than truth," in the wordplay on *verum*, truth. The willingness of others to invoke this pun can be found, for example, in the remark of Sir George Buc (*ex opere* D. and C. Ogburn, Jr.) that Oxford was "very learned ... and in deed as in name Vere Nobilis ... truly noble, a most noble Vere."

ORE...meo: (they go together in thought) "(with) my MOUTH." The expression is emphatic both for its orthography, and because the separated noun and adjective enclose the thought, "fari Vera si licet" ("if it is permitted to speak True/Vere Things").

Thus, in line 20 Oxford breaks free from the laudation of Sylvester by announcing that he is about to remove the mask of convention and speak openly to the reader; else why would he have implied that heretofore his capacity to speak "True/Vere Things" had been in some way suppressed?

Line 21: OS ipse VERE diceris

SALUSTIUS. Line 21 is extraordinary. "Os ipse VERE" confirms the reality of a second beginning, as it exactly parallels the commencement of the poem: "OS tu SILVESTER." Each trinity is composed of: "MOUTH," pronoun in the vocative case, surname in the vocative case (the grammatical case of direct address in Latin). In a discussion of the metrical scansion of line 21, Andrew Hannas observes, "As for the 'Vere', here I think we see Oxford's subtlety in poetic technique. That is, the crucial 'e' falls on the second anceps [anceps: a syllable which may be metrically long or short], yielding adverbial or vocative interpretations—or a resonance between the two."

Now, translating lines 20 and 21 together, with the Latin emphases reflected in the English orthography, we read: "To be sure [with possible sarcasm], if it is permitted to speak True/Vere Things with my [VOICE] (20). / You, VERE, yourself, are TRULY called the VOICE of [DUBARTAS]" (21).

Not only is the substantial meaning of lines 20 and 21 unconcealed; it cannot in fact be avoided. Taken at face value, the heading anagram identifies Sylvester as the voice of Du Bartas. Then in line 20, and without warning, Oxford declares that he is, with a hitherto unexpressed candor, about to communicate something revelatory; whereupon he once more informs the apostrophized Sylvester that he, Sylvester, is truly the voice of Du Bartas. This, on the face of it, makes for inanity, not revelation, and cannot be the true intent. If we look back now at the heading anagram, "Iosua Silvester Anagr: Vere Os Salustij," it seems both a send-up of Sylvester as a true poet and a set-up for Oxford to insert his message within the body of the poem.

Lines 22-24: If anyone should assail you with the biting teeth (22) of a more impure MOUTH, let him know, that offender [lit. "godless one"] of the gods, that your MOUTH is not lacking in teeth (23, 24).

Lines 22-24 are obscure, but with two plausible interpretations. Potential "detractors" are given fair warning against attacking Sylvester, with the caveat that he can bite them back. Oxford may be poking more fun at Sylvester's lack of polish again, in his mouth "not lacking in teeth." The jocularly echoic and barbaric "dentibus mordentibus

impurius ORIS" supports this understanding.

Cicero, whose forensic gifts exceeded his poetic, gave to the world the immortally bad hexameter line, "O fortunatam natam me consule Roman," which an inspired translator, G. G. Ramsay, sank to the occasion to render as, "O happy fate for the Roman State was the date of my great Consulate." Excluding Cicero, internal rhyme in Latin poetry is a tip-off to a non-serious or mocking intent on the part of the poet.

Nevertheless, we have seen in the heading anagram and in the climactic lines 20 and 21 of the poem, that Oxford, under cover of the perspicuous pun, VERE, asserts that he is the voice of Du Bartas. In the light of this

"Then in line 20, and without warning, Oxford declares that he is, with a hitherto unexpressed candor, about to communicate something revelatory..."

interpretation Oxford may also be perceived as apostrophizing himself: you, Vere, with that incomparable pen, have more than the means of responding to him who would attack you.

It should be further noted at this point how the "ipse Vere" phrasing also seems to echo the lines of the Clown Touchstone ("the fool that hath been a courtier") to William the country fellow in *As You Like It*:

All your writers do consent that *ipse* is
he. Now you are not *ipse*, for I am *he*.

(V, i, 42-3)

As previously remarked, the bracketed "atheos" ("godless one") in line 23 was transliterated from the Greek letters in which it was printed in the 1605 edition. The equally Greek "theon" ("of the gods") was represented in 1605 in Roman letters. Why the two should have been distinguished alphabetically is mysterious, although Andrew Hannas offers the possibility of a veiled profanity. In any event, line 23 remains a genuine *erux*; I am therefore not especially confident of the resolution above. However, before we move on to consider what Oxford means by his being "truly the voice of Du Bartas," we ought to examine

one more stylistic peculiarity to be encountered in the Sylvester eulogy.

Commenting upon an eccentricity of Du Bartas, Sidney Lee observes that "after the manner of the old *vers rapportes*, [Du Bartas] has an odd habit of repeating at the opening of the second line of his couplet the last two syllables or words of the first line." Yet this is the very thing that Oxford does in lines 3 and 4, with ORA/ORI, and in lines 5 and 6, with SILVAM/Silvas. (Both "-vam" and "-vas" are metrically "long," giving them an identical prosodic value.)

In *"Shakespeare" Identified*, J. T. Looney directs our attention to "a very unusual literary form of de Vere's, reproduced in Shakespeare." Its identity in rhetoric is "anadiplosis," defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "the reduplication of a sentence, line, or clause with the concluding, or any prominent, word of the one preceding."

In an early poem of de Vere we read:

What plague is greater than the grief of
mind?
The grief of mind that eats in every vein,
In every vein that leaves such clots behind,
etc.

(1-3)

And in *The Comedy of Errors*:

She is so hot because the meat is cold;
The meat is cold because you come not
home;
You come not home because you have no
stomach; etc.

(1, ii, 47-9)

In the anadiplosis of the de Vere poem and *Errors*, de Vere and Shakespeare are both observed engaging in that rare poetic device of which the *vers rapportes* of Du Bartas is a form, and which Oxford uses twice in his Sylvester eulogy.

Du Bartas, the man for whom Oxford declared himself the "Voice," was born in 1544 into a merchant family, in Montfort, in the Fezenac district of Gascony. In 1564 he went to Toulouse to study the law, at which time he began to write poetry. His exemplars, he said, were Homer, Vergil, and Ariosto. He first published in 1574, and in 1576 entered the service of Henri of Navarre. In 1578 he published the *Première Semaine ou Cre-*

(Continued on page 14)

Fitzgerald (Continued from page 13)

ation du Monde, the first half of a projected two-part *Semaines*. In 1580 he was granted a yearly pension by Navarre as "gentilhomme-servante", and probably began the composition of the *Seconde Semaine* at Bartas, his estate, during an extended lull in the religious strife between Catholic and Huguenot.

At the end of 1586, James VI of Scotland wrote to Du Bartas, inviting him to visit the Scottish Court during the following summer. Getting wind of this, Navarre enlarged the trip into a diplomatic mission to Elizabeth and James. Du Bartas arrived in England in May, 1587, where he was received with great acclaim, before traveling on to Scotland.

Du Bartas spent his last years of military service as "a cornet of cavalry," and died in July, 1590, at Bartas, of "general fatigue and old wounds ill-healed."

What one notices right off is that Oxford and Du Bartas were almost exact contemporaries, with but six years separating the elder Du Bartas from Oxford. Certainly their writing careers began close together in time; and in Du Bartas, Oxford may have desecrated the warrior-poet that he could never be. On at least two occasions the poets could have met: in 1575-6 during Oxford's continental tour, and in 1587 when Du Bartas came to England. Sidney Lee, noting Sylvester's faithful translation of Du Bartas's account of "a goodly jennet," suggests, by way of comparison, certain apposite passages in *Venus and Adonis*, remarking that "Shakespeare probably consulted the French text." No doubt.

Or was it that "the French text," if you will, consulted Shakespeare? If Oxford was Shakespeare, and as Oxford and Du Bartas were prolific contemporaries, then those "echoes" of Du Bartas in Shakespeare that we encounter in *Bartlett's* may be, at least in part, echoes in Du Bartas of Shakespeare. The practicality that Du Bartas existed in print whereas Oxford was more in manuscript argues for an Albion-wise preponderance. Still, assuming a mutual respect and admiration between Oxford and Du Bartas, an assiduous correspondence might have gone far to balance the equation, or more: being the "voice of Du Bartas" can also mean that Oxford was a source, in substance or inspiration, for at least some of the contents of the Bartassian oeuvre.

The palpable vehemence of Oxford's half-hidden claim to "Voice-ship" argues for the "of-Du Bartas, for-Du Bartas" duality of that office. From that angle, the overarching conceit in the Sylvester eulogy of two poets who reflect each other like a pair of mirrors is a perfect figure for characterizing the relationship between Oxford and Du Bartas, with Sylvester turning into the risible gooseberry that enables Oxford to pull it off.

Of course, it didn't work; primarily because Oxford could not foresee how utterly Du Bartas would disappear from literature, dragging Sylvester behind him. And the eulogy—which no one read—was simply too brilliant to be understood: Oxford was the "engineer" hoist with the "petar" of his own genius.

I should like to close with a citation from Holmes, Lyon, and Linker, the editors of Du Bartas.

We can date ... the revised edition of the *Seconde Semaine* from a letter written by Du Bartas on September 12, 1584, to Francis Bacon [Oxford's cousin], who was at Bordeaux. Du Bartas desired to send a message to Queen Elizabeth and he needed the advice of the English Chancellor [sic]. His friends in Paris who had seen to the printing of the *Seconde Semaine* had removed the name of an individual closeto Bacon. Du Bartas promised to give this person justice in the Fifth Day of the work, which alas! has never come to light.

The *Seconde Semaine* remained incomplete beyond the Fourth Day at the death of Du Bartas in 1590. Could it be that Du Bartas was prevented by that same "fell sergeant" from paying tribute to his great contemporary and probable inspiration, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford?

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Updated in March with the *The Poems of Edward de Vere* as edited by J. Thomas Looney, plus Looney's Introductory essay to *The Poems*. Prof. Steven May's 1980 essay on de Vere's poetry, and more!

Branagh's Hamlet (Continued from page 2)

than stage. Many of the Second Quarto's artistic shortcomings can be put down to the fact that it's a rambling autobiography of a play, which in a sense constitutes the author's last will and testament. Nevertheless, it's a richly ambivalent work that gives marvellous scope to an imaginative director familiar with the history of the times. Branagh, however, chose to put glamour before substance, with the result that even those elements of the production which show a new interpretive twist - such as the apocalyptic shadow cast over the Danish Court by young Fortinbras - were, one suspects, the result of cinematic whim rather than true insight into Shakespeare's text.

One of the very first things we see in the movie is a close up of Jack Lemmon (Marcellus) standing outside Blenheim Palace in a French policeman's helmet. The chin-strap is so tight he can hardly speak. The audience, all ten of us, tittered. Horatio, however, didn't seem to get the joke. Having walked straight out of a Jane Austen novel (worthy hand-wringing half-hero seeks serviceable backbone), he was too busy acclimatizing himself to ancient Denmark, or rather Elizabethan England.

All doubtful humour was dispelled by the appearance of the ghost, a former statue who comes alive to the sound of bad film music. There were clear echoes here of Branagh's recent adaptation of *Frankenstein*, though to some comparisons with Monty Python might strike the truer chord. At any rate, this was not the intimate, soul-searching father-son interview it can be. (I'm still looking for an adjective to describe the colour of the poor phantom's eyes: to call them blue would be to describe blood as reddish or Shakespeare as literate.)

The other major miscasts were the ever-anxious, almost apologetic Julie Christie as Gertrude and the clerkish Michael Maloney as Laertes. The most unconvincing line in the production comes when the latter says he will cut Hamlet's throat "i' th' church." (You have to be able to say boo to a goose first.) Minor miscasts included Robin Williams as an effeminate Osric. How, one might ask, can one direct Robin Williams in a comic role and not get a single laugh? Ask Ken Branagh.

Funnily enough, the miscasting of Laertes provided me with my one valuable

insight of the whole production. Because the discrepancy between Laertes' appearance and his words was so great, it forced me to think about who he really is.

Branagh had clearly made him a clerk because he is Polonius' son; the speeches given to him, however, and the great respect he is accorded by both Hamlet and Claudius paint a picture of a soldier-scholar-courtier in the mould of Hamlet himself. (Significantly, Hamlet refers to Laertes as his "brother" in Act V.) Moreover, when he returns to Denmark from France on the death of his father, Laertes comes at the head of a rabble army who proclaim him king. Here then is a young man of great substance and influence in the realm.

Now, if as Oxfordians believe, Polonius is essentially William Cecil, Lord Burghley, then might not Laertes (in Shakespeare's mind at least) be his ward rather than his son? For Laertes is treated like a royal ward by the King and Queen in this production if not actually as a son by Claudius, and he seems in most respects to be modelled more on the Earl of Essex than either of Burghley's actual children. Baconians have always considered Essex to be the son of Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester (Gertrude and Claudius respectively), and it is interesting in this connection that the Ogburns in *This Star of England* point out that "Laertes" is an anagram of "a Lester". Whether or not Laertes is modelled on the

Earl of Essex, his incongruity as the son of Polonius should give Oxfordians pause for thought. (It is strange, too, that the name given to Polonius' son is the name of one of the most famous *fathers* in classical mythology: Laertes, father of Ulysses.)

Branagh's lack of discretion was shown to greatest effect in *The Mousetrap* scene, in which his Hamlet is not content to sit with the Court and let the play's allegory speak for itself, but rushes instead onto the stage to kill the player king himself. In so doing, he destroys our picture of Hamlet as a conscientious artist who uses the theatre to hold up the mirror to his fellow courtiers. Suddenly he has more in common with that "rash intruding fool", Polonius, or the crocodile-eating Hamlet of Act V, Scene i. (It's worth remembering that the only time in the entire production that we see Hamlet perusing a book is when terror drives him to consult an Encyclopedia of Ghosts.)

In fact, the whole film might well have unravelled were it not for three excellent performances: Derek Jacobi as the charmingly ruthless Claudius, Richard Briers as a deviously focused Polonius, and Kate Winslett as the innocent, yet worldly, Ophelia. These people at least gave the impression that something was at stake in this play other than Hamlet's vanity. If only Kenneth Branagh could have taken his (Hamlet's) own advice to the players, we might have had a believable and richly

humorous protagonist, and one capable of holding "as 'twere the mirror up to nature." As it was, the following words of Hamlet were almost unbearably ironic: "O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings.... I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it." Quite.

Ultimately, however, Branagh's action-man antics (e.g. rushing onto the stage during *The Mousetrap* or swinging from the chandeliers during the duel with Laertes) would not have mattered if there hadn't been a philosophical void at the heart of the production. But this film not only failed to tell a story, least of all de Vere's, it lacked any sort of unifying vision. As with Olivier's black and white production, whose gaudy heir this is, its most enduring legacy will doubtless be the insufferable vanity of its hero. Heart-warming though it is to see so much Shakespeare committed to screen, there does come a point when one is bound to cry "Hold! Enough!"

So where does Branagh go from here? Well, I myself think he's ready to tackle *Lear*. He certainly needs a heath to run about on to dissipate all that energy, and there were times during his *Hamlet* when I thought perhaps the lunatic king had been mistakenly conveyed to Elsinore.

History (Continued from page 7)

for although there is no direct documentary evidence to verify it, there is a good deal of anecdotal and circumstantial evidence.

In talking about the contradictions inherent in Jefferson's life, Burns was quoted as saying: "This guy could sit there and distill the essence of the Enlightenment into one remarkable sentence, and yet surrounding him are more than 200 human beings he never saw fit to free.... Jefferson is a convenient cipher because he is the author of our national creed. In many ways, he's the author of who we are."

It's a familiar phenomenon for students of the authorship question: the more of an icon someone becomes in his or her national culture, the greater seems to be the collective urge to turn that icon on a personal, human level into a cipher. It's happened to Shakspeare-as-Shakespeare, and now there

are those who wish to submit Oxford-as-Shakespeare to the same process.

Burns' concluding comment in the article was: "I make stories about our family drama; these are all our family members, and we don't get rid of our family members. But it's just as important to tell the truth."

While a documentary about an 18th-century American might seem out of place in our story about a 16th-century Englishman, it is clear that they are bound by a common thread. History is as much interpretation and story-telling as it is a laundry list of documented facts, and it is too early in the authorship debate for anyone to insist on a single interpretation of the facts in order to banish certain theories from further consideration.

In his book *The Shakespeare Controversy*, Warren Hope points out that when the true story of the authorship is known a

curious inversion will take place: cranks will become respected authorities and respected authorities will become mere cranks. He could have gone further and said that history will become fiction, and fiction will become history.

As Mark Anderson suggested in his Phaeton posts, we all have to be willing to confront this complex problem of fact and fiction, evidence and interpretation; otherwise, it might be in order to keep repeating the following mantra, rather like Dorothy before she returned to Kansas (or like some Oxfordians with one foot still planted in Stratford town):

"It's just a meaningless play, it's just a meaningless play, it's just a meaningless play..."

The Editors

Oxfordian News:

West Coast Plays Host: First Annual "Edward de Vere Studies Conference" in Oregon; First "Oxford Week" in San Francisco

California

In **San Francisco** the Horatio Society will be sponsoring *Oxford Week*, a celebration of Edward de Vere's birthday, during the week of April 20th. Society President Charles Burford will deliver several talks and participate in interviews over 7 days, along with Joseph Sobran, UC/Berkeley Prof. Alan Nelson and local media personalities.

Among the many daily activities during the week will be an introduction of *Oxford Week* from the floor of the California State Legislature on April 21st. The festivities will conclude on April 26th with *Shakespeare Appreciation Day*, which will feature a symposium on Shakespeare's contribution to the English language, and include several Stratfordians among those making presentations.

For further information, contact Randall Sherman at: (415)469-8100, or email: newvsn@best.com

Horatio Society member Katherine Chiljan wrote to us about a recent inquiry she made to curator Catharine MacLeod at the National Portrait Gallery regarding the Welbeck Abbey portrait of the Earl of Oxford, which is on loan to the NPG.

Katherine was inquiring whether de Vere's hand is shown in the full portrait (it is, and has a glove on it). However, she also explained that she was an Oxfordian and suggested that, as the movement is growing so rapidly, it might be a good idea to rehang the portrait in London, where thousands more visitors could view it. (It is currently on display at Montacute House in Somerset.)

MacLeod's reply left open the possibility that such a move might be considered by the NPG, and so Katherine has asked us to pass this thought along to our members. A letter-writing campaign from Society members to the National Portrait Gallery could help effect the desired change.

The address is: National Portrait Gallery, St. Martin's Place, London, WC2H 0HE, U.K.

At the January 25th meeting of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable in Los

Angeles, Diana Price presented a lecture on the "other" writers of the 1590's in London, with an eye toward establishing the paucity of biographical evidence for Shakespeare as compared with his literary colleagues. She drew heavily on material from her recently completed book, *Shakespeare: An Unauthorized Biography*.

The last 6 months have been quite busy for Price, who, in addition to this lecture, has also made her presence felt through her "Prince Tudor" article in the Autumn *Elizabethan Review*, and who was published in the Summer 1996 *Shakespeare Newsletter*, taking on the guru of the *Funeral Elegy*, Prof. Donald Foster, and his Shaxicon computer program.

Florida

Elizabethan Review editor Gary Goldstein is now living in **Boca Raton**, Florida, which was the return address on the mailing of the *Review* sent to all Society members last December.

Whether there are any plans and/or funds to mail future issues of the *Review* to all Society members is unknown. However, the President has notified Gary that the Board desires a formal request for permission to use the Society membership list for any future mailings.

Then the rest would be up to Gary and any benefactors who may wish to see the *Review* go to the whole membership of the Society on a regular basis. The more voices that are heard, the better for all of us.

Illinois

Constance Charles, of **Oak Park**, recently took in a viewing of *Hamlet* the old-fashioned way—a live performance at the Shakespeare Repertory Theatre in Chicago rather than Branagh's new film. She later wrote to our friend John Louthier that something she had never noticed before amazed her this time: a very direct name clue that occurs in Act I, Scene ii, 160-5.

When Hamlet first encounters Horatio, the exchange between the two is as follows:

Horatio: Hail to your lordship!

Hamlet: I am glad to see you well. Horatio, or I do forget myself.

Horatio: The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Hamlet: Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you...

When Newsletter editor Bill Boyle viewed the film in Boston, he had this line on his mind, and noticed something rather interesting in Branagh's delivery: a clear, unmistakable emphasis on the word "that". Thus Branagh's reading was: "Sir, my good friend, I'll change *that* name with you."

Massachusetts

At the February meeting of the Northeast Chapter Peter Kubaska made an interesting presentation on astronomical links in *Venus and Adonis*. He pointed out certain lines and words appearing at regular intervals in patterns which correspond to the cycles of the planet Venus, and which may help in determining when and why the poem was written.

Peter believes *Venus and Adonis* was originally written in the late 1580's and presented to Queen Elizabeth as part of the Armada victory celebrations. He is still working on this thesis, which for the moment he considers "not certain, but certainly interesting."

This talk was foreshadowed by an article in the *Boston Globe* two weeks earlier entitled "Hamlet in the Stars". The article was about Prof. Peter Usher of Penn State, whose thesis that Shakespeare's astronomical understanding forms a key part of the theme and structure of *Hamlet* was recently published in *Mercury* magazine.

Oregon

Dr. Daniel Wright, Chairman of the Department of English at Concordia University in **Portland**, has announced that he will be hosting the first annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference on his campus April 4th to 6th.

Dr. Wright recently reported on the

Phaeton discussion list that to date such familiar figures as Roger Stritmatter, Mark Anderson, Stephanie Hughes, Pidge Sexton, Carol Sue Lipman and Betty Sears are scheduled to present papers, in addition to Victoria Kramer, Col. Jack Shuttleworth, Charlotte Evans and Dr. Wright himself.

The three-day event will also have two panel discussions on the papers presented, and two workshops (one for actors and directors, the other for high school teachers.)

Dr. Wright made it clear that the reaction from his English Department colleagues has been favorable, while most of the expected flak has been coming from professors in other departments, such as History and Political Science.

This event is something of a landmark, as it is the first time such an authorship conference has ever been convened on campus by the Head of an English Department.

Australia

Graeme MacNeil, in Aitkenvale, Queensland, recently asked for permission to use some of the material from the Society's Home Page on a local network being set up in the school where he teaches, the Ryan Catholic Community School. We of course readily agreed.

Mr. MacNeil also relayed to us that his recent purchase of Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* from the Blue Boar was already paying dividends. A number of his friends have read it, he wrote. Many of them were quite "blown away" by the evidence presented and have become enthusiastic converts.

England

Society President Charles Burford will be among six panelists in "The Shakespeare Debate", to be held at the Theatre Royal Bath in Somerset on May 23rd. He will be joined by Marlovian Mrs. A.D. Wright and Baconian Peter Dawkins.

The Stratfordian side will include Prof. Stanley Wells, Michael Bogdanov, founder of the English Shakespeare Company, and Jonathan Bate, Head of English Literature at Liverpool University and the author of *Shakespeare and Ovid*, a book much talked about at last year's conference.

John Louther Reports:

Italy, Shakespeare's knowledge of:

I overtook, coming from Italy,
In Germany, a great and famous Earl
of England; the most goodly fashion'd man
I ever saw: from head to foot in form
Rare and most absolute; he had a face
Like one of the most ancient honor'd
Romans
From whence his noblest family was deriv'd;
He was besides of spirit passing great,
Valiant and learn'd, and liberal as the sun,
Spoke and writ sweetly, or of learned
subjects,
Or of the discipline of public weals;
And 'twas the Earl of Oxford.
(George Chapman (1559?-1634), *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, II.i.)

In the above passage spoken by Clermont in the play *Bussy D'Ambois*, George Chapman inadvertently confirms the record of Oxford's visits to the Continent, in particular, Italy. Note should be taken once again of the recurrence of a familiar pattern in what we know of Chapman and the mysterious "Shakespeare": the total absence of personal communication and mutual attribution in the common record of the two famous Elizabethans. Although Chapman addressed a number of his writings to a variety of playwrights and poets, he wrote none to Shakespeare.

On the topic of Chapman, Oscar James Campbell, a Stratfordian, has put on record a tiny hint of willingness to ponder the logic behind the theory of Oxford's pseudonymous role as the great playwright. "[O]f course, if Shakespeare was really Lord Oxford," Campbell writes "then Shakespeare and Chapman represented the opposing Protestant and Catholic points of view, and both Bussy and Feste were Oxford."

Another scholar - Professor Karl Elze - investigating the history of Shakespeare's knowledge of the Continent in his *Essays on Shakespeare* concludes that Shakespeare could not have attained his familiarity of Italy, its mores and language via books or hearsay. A portion of the evidence he submits deals with Shakespeare's personal visits to Italy and is founded on the inherent truth of the cognitive disparities between "genius" and "creativity". No matter how lively and creative the poetic imagination or how highly developed the power of intu-

ition, according to Elze these things cannot bestow upon the individual a knowledge of the facts. For such a knowledge can only be acquired by experience or else must be imparted by others.

Among the exemplars offered by Professor Elze is one centering on a word in the play *Merchant of Venice*: "it appears with certainty that Shakespeare possessed an extremely accurate memory of the Venetian locality, as witness his use of the term "tranext" (as printed in the folios and quartos, later emended to "traject") in Portia's order to her servant:

Bring them, I pray thee, with imagin'd speed
Unto the traject, to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice

(III, iv, 56-8)

"What visitors to Venice," Professor Elze asks, "do not here directly recognize the Venetian traghetto (tragetto)?" Elze proceeds to inform us that it is not an English word, "otherwise the poet would not have added the apposition 'to the common ferry,'" thus making the meaning clear to English audiences.

Adducing Shakespeare's unstrained use of Italian words and nuances ("laguna monda," "the Rialto," "Isola de Rialto" and "Ponto di Rialto"), the professor further provides a vivid reminder of the poet's firsthand awareness of the Gobbo di Rialto, a stone figure supporting the pillar-podium used for proclamations of the Republic's laws. Elze is not alone in seeing the litho-Gobbo as a likely source for the surname of Shylock's servant and clown, Launcelot Gobbo.

The professor nullifies the effort of a fellow academic - London University Professor J. Isaacs on BBC, November 10, 1966 - to accuse Shakespeare of "an unpardonable mistake" in *The Winter's Tale* when he characterizes the rare Italian master Julio Romano as a sculptor.

Professor Isaacs decreed that Shakespeare did not know that the 16th-century artist was a painter not a sculptor - either ignoring or not knowing of Professor Elze's source, a Latin epitaph on Julio Romano's tombstone in Mantua that documented sculpturing as his "chief excellence."

A New Portrait Comes to Light

By Katherine Chiljan

It is my great fortune and honor to have discovered what I believe is a new portrait of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Its official description is "Portrait of a Gentleman, English School, circa 1580," but the sitter is no ordinary gentleman. Similarity in facial features, coloring, dating and dress to Oxford's bona fide portraits, and finally, the provenance, strongly suggest that he is the subject. Those bona fide portraits are the Welbeck Abbey (actually a later copy of the 1575 lost original) and the one painted by Marcus Gheeraedts (circa 1586).

Circa 1580, Oxford was 30, an age the new sitter could certainly pass for. Oxford's portraits depict a man with curly auburn hair, a high forehead, long narrow nose, scant mustache/beard, long fingers, and a rosy complexion, all features of this sitter. The ears also match; only the sitter's eye color (blue-gray with hints of yellow) differs from the Welbeck and Gheeraedts, which have been described as hazel. The eyebrows in the Welbeck had been plucked thin, but were naturally thick as the Gheeraedts, and the new portrait, shows.

Many believe that Oxford was also the subject of Nicholas Hilliard's miniature, "Man Clasp[ing] a Hand from a Cloud" (1588), which not only resembles the new sitter, but has a similar nose, ear, curly reddish hair and fancy feathered hat.

Painted soon after the Welbeck, the new portrait has strikingly similar apparel: a doublet with horizontal lines, a black cloak draped over one shoulder, and a black hat with feathers and fancy buttons. Although the Welbeck and Gheeraedts portray Oxford in small ruffs, Gabriel Harvey wrote in 1580 that Oxford was wearing the wider French ruffs (in the poem, "Speculum Tuscanismi," or "The Mirror of Tuscanism", from *Three Proper and Witty Familiar Letters Lately Passed Between Two University Men*): "not a look but Tuscanish always ... French



Photo by Mike Agyan

Some of the key features from the portrait are the small distinctive lock of hair pulled down to the forehead and a rose tucked in the left ear. The fingers are characteristically long. The index finger ring has on it a bird, the letter "L" and a small raised dot after the "L".

Camarick ruffs, deep with a whiteness, starched to the purpose."

Oxford's "look" (i.e. clothing) was Tuscan/Italian. No doubt his wardrobe was well stocked with European garb after his extensive tour of the continent (1575-76). The Englishman in the new portrait favored the European look too.

The rich apparel and exotic features of this sitter are characteristic of a courtier. Sleeves of orange satin are worn with his green doublet, and the feather in his cap would have cost as much as one pound. The hilt of the dazzling sword is encrusted with over a hundred jewels. I have not yet found another example of the fanciful lock of hair brought down on the forehead or the rose in the ear. The Bastard Faulconbridge in *King John* (I,i,142) says, "in mine ear, I

durst not stick a rose, lest men should say, 'Look where three farthings goes!'" (In *This Star of England*, the Ogburns conjectured that the Bastard represented Oxford, and dated the play circa 1581.) According to *The Yale Shakespeare*, this was an allusion to the three-farthing coin, issued in 1561, which portrayed the Queen in profile with a rose behind the ear.

This sitter also shares Oxford's unique style of wearing a ring half way up the finger, as he did in the Gheeraedts; Henry VI also wore rings this way. The signet ring clearly depicts a long-necked bird, very possibly a swan. Did the sitter identify himself as a poet? Another interpretation could relate to Oxford's title of Lord Scales. According to Fairbairn's *Book of Crests of the Families of Great Britain*, Scales is represented by "a swan's head between two wings."

Finally, the provenance of the portrait: it was last owned by Lord Thurso of the Sinclair family, where it resided for several generations, though the identity of the sitter was never known. It was not, however, one of their family portraits. Combining through their genealogy in *Burke's Peerage*, I found one connection to

Oxford: his granddaughter, Anne Stanley (child of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby). She died in 1656; when her son, Charles, Earl of Ancrum, died in 1690 without male issue, his estate (and presumably his mother's) passed to his half-nephew, who had no de Vere blood at all. If this portrait was included in the estate, it could explain how its identity got lost.

Whoever this Englishman may be, he was rich, flamboyant, unconventional, and most likely a courtier. No documentation yet proves the portrait is of Oxford, but at this point, one de Vere connection figures in the provenance, as opposed to none at all, and in light of the correct dating, physical features and flair so strongly similar to our Edward, he is a very strong candidate.

Book Reviews:

Who Wrote Shakespeare? by John Michell
(London: Thames & Hudson, 1996)

By Roger Stritmatter

The dustjacket blurb on John Michell's *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* promises a book which "reads like a series of detective stories." Actually, a better metaphor for the book might be that of a sumptuous tour guide for visitors to the strange but wonderful country of authorship studies. Like a good tour guide, Michell's book is clearly written, elegantly illustrated, and surveys the relevant landscape with a perceptive eye for significant detail. Above all, however, Michell is fairminded and balanced—a virtue rarely found in the often sordid history of orthodoxy's contempt for anyone who questions the self-evident tautology that "Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare."

Unlike Ian Wilson's 1993 endorsement of orthodox pretensions, *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, or Irvin Matus' *Shakespeare, In Fact* (1994), Michell's survey of the authorship controversy is intelligent, fairminded, and substantially accurate. For authorship beginners, it's a great place to begin; for advanced students in search of a synoptic review which places present events in some historical perspective, the book contains a dazzling abundance of relevant but perhaps unexpected data compressed between the pages of a short book. Combined with one or more of the best Oxfordian texts (Ogburn's *Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984), Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* (1920), Hope and Holston's *The Shakespeare Controversy* (1993), or Richard Whalen's *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (1993)), Michell's book can be heartily recommended for beginner or advanced reader.

And yet, as a work of literary detection, Michell's book suffers from one paradoxical yet glaring fault. As a self-confessed "agnostic" in the authorship controversy, whose aim is to present the reader with an accurate survey of a complex and turbulent subject, Michell's narrative strategy is short on assessing motives and character as he gathers the evidence. He rarely probes the question of whether the facts are susceptible to a reconfiguration which will recon-

cile apparent contradictions, and he rarely considers the basic question of motive, either in relation to literary texts (how authorial motive becomes literary motif) or to the big political problem of the concealment of Shakespeare's identity, a problem with which any anti-Stratfordian theory must, sooner or later, come to grips.

Instead, he leads his readers on a leisurely tour over the hills and dales of Essex, Hertfordshire, and Warwickshire, exclaiming at each new discovery but missing the big picture. He bends over backwards to be fair in examining evidence for as many as six major suspects in the case (Shakespeare, Bacon, Oxford, William Stanley, Roger Manners, and Christopher Marlowe), but one never feels the pulse of the detective's enthusiasm for disentangling the superficial theories from those which lead forward to the case's solution. Correspondingly, Michell's method lays far too great an emphasis on the theme of the "writer who knew everything" and not enough on how Shakespeare made use of what he did know. The man behind the works, then, remains out of focus. The book's dustjacket displays the names of some 23 authorship "candidates" in blurry type—and that visual emblem testifies to the thematic vagueness with which the testimony of the plays and poems is linked to the life of any of the hypothetical authors.

This failure is most evident in the chapter on Bacon, in which a variety of "Baconian" facts are assembled but the Baconian theory itself is never subjected to critical review; nor are these facts considered in light of other possible theories, even when the same territory has been covered previously by Oxfordian scholars like Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn. In consequence, while Michell's chapter is superficially the most persuasive, it is also the most disappointing—or perhaps "aggravating" is a better word—to a reader who actually knows something about the history of the authorship controversy.

Such lapses, however, need not be taken too seriously as the book has many redeeming merits which go far to correct them and to justify its place in any serious library of authorship books. For example, Michell is

refreshingly sober on the entangled subject of "secret writing." While dispensing with much Baconian decipherment, he does validate the importance of encrypted secrets as a mode of Renaissance communication. "Elizabethan poets," writes Michell, "were often necessarily cryptic. Like all good writers under censorship, they developed a system of codes and allusions to communicate to knowing readers, and they enjoyed stretching their wits with literary puns and puzzles" (135). With this in mind, Michell goes to bat for the Latin acrostic on the title page of *Minerva Britannia* (1612) which, unscrambled, reads "tibi nom. de Vere" (thy name [is] de Vere).

In a theory which was new to this reviewer, Michell also explores the possible relevance of acrostics and anagrams to the curious typography and wording of Thomas Thorpe's dedication to the 1609 quarto of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. According to Michell, the phrase "OUR.EVER-LIVING." spells out the anagram variant of de Vere's motto, "NIL.VERO.VERIUS"—with only one letter's shift ("G" becomes "S"). Whether this theory is significant or not is perhaps less important than Michell's drawing attention to the dedication itself, which certainly invites acrostic deconstruction and reconfiguration of the sort he attempts.

As Michell argues, the cipher-mania of classical Baconians was based on a correct but misdirected intuition of the central role of codes, anagrams, puns and ciphers, not just in Elizabethan statecraft, but also in contemporary poetry and other arts of a Hermetic character. Renaissance poets and artists made a habit of commenting obliquely on *arcana imperia*—the secrets of state—to which they were privy. To consider Shakespeare's involvement in the same "imaginative conspiracy" to communicate obliquely to future readers is, then, hardly a novel proposition—however destabilizing it might seem in the face of orthodoxy's controlling presumption of the "dumb Bard".

To conclude, I recommend this book without reserve—not because it identifies the real author of Shakespeare's works, but because it makes an entertaining and lavishly illustrated survey of the relevant territory of authorship studies at large.

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

The newsletter welcomes articles, essays, commentary,
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validated by peer review. The views expressed by
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From the Editor:

Smoking Guns, Silver Bullets

It has become apparent to me over the years I've been involved in this debate that there are two principal methods of attack used by both sides (i.e. Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians), and I've come to characterize these in my own lexicon as the silver-bullet and smoking-gun methods. The first, which involves dealing a knockout blow to your opponent's theory, is principally used by Stratfordians, while the second, which is about establishing your own theory beyond all shadow of doubt, is necessarily the preserve of anti-Stratfordians.

The two methods, then, involve the presentation of evidence in such a way as to either prove or disprove a point of view beyond any reasonable doubt. Both these approaches, it seems to me, can result in foregone conclusions and thus, ultimately, a skewing of the evidence. And because this issue of ours is so emotional and so important, people seem more desperate than they might otherwise be to argue in absolute terms.

For Oxfordians, the most obvious manifestation of this method is the "chronology" argument made by Stratfordians. This is their favorite silver-bullet argument, whereby the heretics at the gate are disposed of with a single shot by proving that at least one Shakespeare work was written after Oxford's death in 1604, thereby conclusively disproving his claim. The *Funeral Elegy* story, as most anti-Stratfordians would probably agree, is a silver-bullet story pure and simple. The new *Riverside Shakespeare* has just been published, and *Funeral Elegy* is included. Bang! Bang! You're dead!

On the Internet these days another silver-bullet story is being constructed by Prof. Alan Nelson (of UC/Berkeley) as he continues his work on Edward de Vere's letters and publishes his results on his personal Home Page. His conclusion? He states that he has disqualified Oxford as a claimant based on the known spelling in his letters, which, when compared to Shakespeare's known spelling, completely and

permanently disqualifies him. (The matter of what is meant by "Shakespeare's known spelling" is a story for another day.)

In both the above cases everyone involved in the anti-Stratfordian or Oxfordian side of the debate clearly sees the dangers in such arguments i.e. the urge to dispose of one's opponent right now, once and for all, can lead to conclusions that force the evidence at hand to support foregone conclusions.

This is why it was most interesting, and indeed ironic, to read Diana Price's article in the *Autumn Elizabethan Review*, in which she attempted to deliver the death-blow to the so-called Prince Tudor theory. For as controversial as that theory is, it does have the merit of explaining the facts in a way that no other theory can (as Charlton Ogburn attested in his letter read at the Conference last October and reported in the Fall 1996 *Newsletter*).

So while Price's article was certainly well researched and offered new evidence which must now remain on the table and be considered in any future discussions, it is clearly of a piece with the *Funeral Elegy* story or Prof. Nelson's analysis of Oxford's spelling, i.e. it's a silver-bullet story, written by someone who has a clear agenda in mind at the outset, and whose conclusions are therefore arrived at in spite of the evidence. Most, if not all, of us would agree that this is the true story behind the *Funeral Elegy* and behind the "Oxford's spelling disqualifies him" story.

Further, an article which singles out just one individual proponent of a theory (in this case Betty Sears) for its harshest commentary, and which has clearly sidestepped some of the strongest evidence in favor of the Prince Tudor theory (that Oxford stopped using the so-called Crown signature upon Elizabeth's death, and that Southampton was imprisoned on the day of Oxford's death), thereby tips its hand as being a singled-minded attempt to dispose of one theory and its leading proponents rather than an open-minded attempt to understand it.

The Society's Membership List

The Board of Trustees would like to reaffirm for our members something that seems to have been forgotten in the last year. The membership list of the Society is copyrighted, a decision made by the Board of Trustees in 1994, and *cannot* be used by any member for the purposes of bulk or commercial mailings without the prior written consent of the Board.

The list is available to any member who asks for it, and members are certainly invited to use the list to contact other members in their region, or anywhere in the world.

But, as with any other organization, its uses are restricted. In particular, individuals who are not members of the Society have no rights to its use, and current members should not be passing on the list to non-members for their own private uses. No other organization we are aware of would tolerate such behavior.

We are confident that all our members understand and accept such provisions in the uses of a resource as valuable as the Shakespeare Oxford Society membership list.

Letters:

The Editor:

I was sorry to see the awful *Telegraph* article reprinted in your last *Newsletter*. The journalist Catherine Milner never spoke a word with me, and misquoted my friend Peter Dawkins most shamefully. While I am resigned to the Media's need for drama, and did not bother to redress the *Telegraph's* fantasy, I have more respect for your readers, and the Shakespeare Oxford Society, and would like to be truthfully represented in your Newsletter as having an open mind about the authorship.

As an actor my training is to look for the motivation necessary for any act. I find that the unfortunately limited evidence of the Stratfordian authorship theory seems to reveal little more than monetary motivation, and quite an extraordinarily mean one at that, in his retirement. It doesn't satisfy me.

I find the work of the Shakespeare Oxford Society reveals a character, in Edward de Vere, motivated to use the mask of drama to reveal the true identity and nature of his time, as only someone in his position would have known, and as was the well established habit so clearly demonstrated in *Hamlet*.

I find this same characteristic in the Bacon brothers, Francis and Anthony, with the added dimension of Francis's declaration as a young man that he would undertake such a project, and his love of philosophy that was married and demonstrated with nature often expressed through a classical fable [sic].

I cannot see how Oxford and Bacon were not involved in the creation of the works of Shakespeare, including the Globe Theatre, given the evidence collected so far, and the nature of the work itself, but it is still such a surprise to me when I encounter the intense resistance so many people have to any question of the Stratford man. Like the works of Shakespeare, it is obviously a story with a deeper meaning.

So it was doubly saddening to me to be represented in the *Telegraph* as an artistic director of the Globe with a hidden agenda of shattering people's truths. I don't believe truth enforces itself, but stands ready for those who care to take it, in freedom. As Oxford's likeness once said, "The readiness is all."

I applaud your ongoing research and enquiry into the mystery of the Shakespeare authorship. I have found it to be a most inspiring and helpful subject of study.

I hope your readers will feel most welcome to visit the Globe during its renaissance this summer with no fear that I intend to convince them of anything but the need for a heart of understanding.

yours most sincerely
from a many-sided round place,

Mark Rylance
Globe Theatre
London, England
31 December 1996

To the Editor:

On page 21 of the last *Newsletter* (Fall 1996) is a most thought-provoking letter by Stephanie Hughes. Every member would do well to read it again. I couldn't agree more that the purpose of our Society in positing Oxford as Shakespeare must be to present a hypothesis, not a "belief".

No matter how convinced we are individually of the bona fides of Edward de Vere, on the group level we can make it easier for the skeptics to consider addressing the issue seriously if we present it as a hypothesis.

Stephanie's own words put it well: "There are scholars of good will within the academic community, and they will not be won by polemics or leaps of faith, but they may very well be won by a request to consider an interesting possibility."

To this end, I would urge discussion among the members and the Board of Trustees to rethink the wording of our statement of purpose.

Grace Cali
Peterborough, NH
18 January 1997

To the Editor:

Mark Anderson's article on Shakespeare's Bible is terrific. I suppose Stratfordians will cling to the contention that the margins were trimmed and the notes inscribed before the Bible came into Oxford's possession, but, my stars, I should think they'd squirm—and worse—as the evidence continues to mount.

I was a little puzzled by the footnote to *Philippians*, twice referred to (whence came it?), while greatly relishing the hoisting of Prof. Shaheen by his heels: delicious!

And of course I am greatly impressed by the research and erudition that went into this. My congratulations and gratitude to Mr. Anderson and Mr. Stritmatter.

Charlton Ogburn, Jr.
Beaufort SC
30 January 1997

Subscriptions to the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* are included in membership dues in the Shakespeare Oxford Society, which are \$35 a year, or \$50 a year for a sustaining membership. Dues are \$15 a year for students and teachers. Dues and requests for membership should be sent to:

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The purpose of the Shakespeare Oxford Society is to establish Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604) as the true author of the Shakespeare works, to encourage a high level of scholarly research and publication, and to foster an enhanced appreciation and enjoyment of the poems and plays.

The Society was founded and incorporated in 1957 in the State of New York and was 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.

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De Vere Society (Continued from page 9)

extent, Shakespeare himself was the chronicler of the Elizabethan age, for it is fiction that serves the truth in a totalitarian state, not the official record. In effect, we have a stark choice: either we believe Shakespeare or we believe Bill Cecil.

In fact, the play of *Hamlet* is about this very conflict. Hamlet, the artist, is a truth-teller ("I know not 'seems'"), whereas his arch-antagonist Polonius is a propagandist ("the father of good news"). The official version is that Hamlet senior died of a snake-bite ("Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, / A serpent stung me...") and this no doubt was entered into the royal record at Elsinore. It is left up to art, in this case Hamlet's production of *The Mousetrap*, to give the true story, which is one of murder.

As the Ghost points out, whole nations can be deceived by propaganda (and, of course, succeeding generations):

..... the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abus'd... (1.v,36-8)

Burford said he found the dismissive and sarcastic attitude of the anti-Prince-Tudorites similar in tone to the one adopted by Stratfordians when denigrating the Oxfordian theory. But it isn't just their attitude that's similar, he claimed, it's also their thinking. For if the purpose of the Oxfordian movement is to substitute Edward de Vere for William Shakspeare and leave the rest of the Stratfordian world-view in place, then we're engaged in a meaningless exercise. If, on the other hand, the question of Shakespeare's identity is seen in the larger context of understanding the Elizabethan microcosm - its philosophy, government and art - then the authorship quest becomes meaningful and significant.

Ultimately, then, Burford exhorted his audience to enjoy the full complexity of the subject, and to be wary of accepting so-called historical facts at face value.

He ended with a quote from the Jesuit historian Francis Edwards, who was speaking on the GTE VisNet broadcast *Uncovering Shakespeare*. Edwards said:

Putting it baldly, an historian is a man who doesn't know what he's talking about. He only knows something about what other people once talked about.

The Blue Boar

Books and Publications

The de Veres of Castle Hedingham. A comprehensive biography of all 20 Earls of Oxford with emphasis on the 17th. By Verily Anderson. Item 122 \$35.00

The Elizabethan Review. A Scholarly Oxfordian Journal. Editor: Gary Goldstein. Two issues per year. Item 125 \$35.00 (individuals); \$45.00 (institutional, US); \$55 (overseas). Back issues are available directly from the publisher.

A Hawk from a Handsaw. A Student Guide to the Authorship Question. By Rollin de Vere. Item 129 \$10.00

The Man Who Was Shakespeare. By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. (94-pp summary of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*) Item SP5 \$5.95

The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality. Revised 2nd Edition. By Charlton Ogburn, Jr. Item 121 \$37.50

The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History (2nd edition). By Michael H. Hart. The entry for no.31 ("William Shakespeare" in the first edition) now reads "Edward de Vere, better known as 'William Shakespeare'." Item 128 \$18.95

Oxford's Revenge: Shakespeare's Dramatic Development from Agamemnon to Hamlet. By Stephanie Caruana and Elisabeth Sears. Item SP1. \$7.50

Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose. By Elisabeth Sears. Item SP3. \$12.50

The Shakespeare Controversy: An Analysis of the Claimants, their Champions & Detractors. Includes a Chronological Annotated Bibliography. By Warren Hope and Kim Holston. Item 124 \$25.00

"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. By J. Thomas Looney. Paperback facsimile reprint of the 1920 edition. Item SP4. \$20.00

Shakespeare: Who Was He? The Oxford Challenge to the Bard of Avon. By Richard Whalen. Item 123 \$19.95

Spear-Shaker Review. Set of the 5 issues published in 1980's by Stephanie Caruana. Item SP2 \$20.00

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Item 116 Wassail design. 24 cards, 24 envelopes. \$50.00

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Hughes (Continued from page 5)

close as they could by the partial disguising of the entire community in a Masque, which sought to create a fanciful "disguising" of all ranking members of the Court as some exotic community, such as a forest gathering of country swains and shepherdesses, a confluence of the forces of nature, a meeting of the gods and goddesses on Mt. Olympus, or of a fairy court ritual, with the monarch cast in some appropriately central and glamorous role.

Although there could never be a complete release from identity, nor a total social leveling, much of the pleasure of the Masque would come from a relative lessening of the tension created by rank, and the disguising of the community as a whole as something much different and much more pleasant than the nerve-wracking nightmare it must have been a great deal of the time. Thus the psychological needs met by the Court version of the revels differed in purpose from the country version only in degree.

That Shakespeare's comedies were written originally as Court entertainments seems obvious, since so many facets of the ancient revels cling to them, the wooded settings, the sticking up of poems on trees, the evocation of animal totems or folk gods and the spells used to constrain or evoke them

(Herne the Hunter, Bottom the ass, Sycorax and Caliban, Oberon and Titania, Puck, and Ariel), dancing and music. The tricks played on Malvolio by the revelers in *Twelfth Night*, and by Oberon and Puck on Titania and the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are simply glorified mummets pranks; and with both these plays the titles themselves make it abundantly clear for which of the seasonal festivals they were originally created.

Yet of all the devices of the revels used by Shakespeare, none does he use as much as disguising, chiefly women as boys, but also Falstaff as the Old Woman of Brainford and then as Herne the Hunter, Feste as Sir Topas, and so on. Although the gender reversal was used only in the comedies, in all his plays, again and again, for dramatic as well as comic purposes, he shows lords disguised as commoners. Possibly the oldest version of this play is the one he took from Ariosto (in *I Suppositi*, where it was in turn borrowed from the ancient Roman playwright Plautus) for the subplot of *Taming of the Shrew*, in which an aristocratic student exchanges identities with his manservant in order to get a job as a servant in the house of his beloved's father and thus be in a position to make love with her whenever he pleases, while the servant is required to take his place at school and to speak for him when

troubles arise with the neighbors (a plot not a whole lot different from one in which a Court writer exchanges identities with his servant so that he has the freedom to entertain his beloved audience, while the servant enacts the role of playwright and shareholder for legal purposes).

Thus we see that "mumming" and "disguising" were at the heart not only of the plays of Shakespeare, not only of all Tudor and Jacobean Court entertainment, but that they were the very heart and soul of the ancient revels themselves. And further that mumming, as a custom with the deepest of roots in the ancient sources of culture, authorized revenges on local miscreants by means of various tricks and exposes, as a holiday pastime permitted to all members of the community that were able to maintain an impenetrable disguise. Thus it appears that the use of any standing pseudonym or ploy that served to mask his identity, would have seemed perfectly within the bounds of ancient and honored custom to a nobleman who sought to delight some members of his community and punish others at festival time, which became, in the modern world to which Shakespeare helped give birth, anytime the trumpet sounded for a play.

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Elegy (Continued from page 3)

William Peter was not accorded burial.

Fifth: there are references to the Catholic religion of the departed, particularly 320: "...and he was friendship's rock". The word "rock" refers to *Matthew* 16, and to the "Thou art Peter" phrase which forms the basis for claims for Papal authority. For Campion, there is a specific connection: upon his return to England, on June 29th, 1580, the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, Campion preached on this text before a large audience in Lord Norrey's house. Continuing on this theme, in 321-2: "A rock of friendship figures in his name/Foreshowing what he was, and what should be". "Figures in his name" tells us to examine Campion's name for figurative content: Campion is the Champion, the Protector, the Defender of the Faith.

Sixth: there are references by the author of the *Elegy* to his own "youth". This hardly applies to the 47-year-old William Shaksper (of Stratford-upon-Avon) in 1612. On the other hand, Oxford was a youth of 16 at the time of the Royal visit to Oxford University, and only 31 years old at Campion's death.

With regards to Oxfordian authorship, Oxford's fall from favor (indeed banishment

from Court) in the time interval 1581-3, which includes the time of Campion's death, is in full accord with remarks (137-48, 565-72) of the author of the *Elegy* about himself. It is also consonant with certain Shakespearean *Sonnets* (33-8, 71-2, 111-2, 121) in which the poet refers to his own damaged reputation.

We of the Oxfordian persuasion need not fear the inclusion of the *Elegy* in the Shakespeare canon. It is not evidence of Stratfordian authorship. Far from it. In a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* (Feb. 9, 1996, pp. 25-6) Foster's chief supporter, Richard Abrams, wrote:

"The *Elegy* is unquestionably a difficult poem. It may be guilty of ...sameness, tediousness ...elaborate obscurities, the charge brought to bear not ...against the *Elegy*, but by Wordsworth against the *Sonnets*, which he ultimately came to read as the key with which Shakespeare unlocked his heart ...tedious and repetitious the *Elegy* may also be ...but the poem is not without its secrets, and it will not yield these up to careless reading."

With all respect to Professor Abrams, these words are particularly appropriate, not only in Abrams' context of establishing attribution of the *Elegy* to the author of the

Shakespeare canon, but also in establishing Edward de Vere as the actual identity of that author.

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