



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



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

Spring 1997

Shakespeare's Disgrace

*Is this the key to identifying
and understanding the poet?*

by Joseph Sobran

Do Shakespeare's *Sonnets* refer to real people, events, experiences, and emotions? Or are they mere "literary exercises" about fictional characters, in which even the narrator is not to be literally identified with the author? Or are such questions, as the scholar Samuel Schoenbaum held, "unanswerable."

Those three questions amount to a brief history of scholarly interpretation of the *Sonnets*. It used to be assumed that the poems were more or less literal accounts of the poet's relations with the mysterious pair, the Fair Youth and the Dark Mistress, and that it was at least possible that these murky figures might be identified as real denizens of Elizabethan England. Let us call this the Realist view.

On their face, the *Sonnets* bespeak real and often painful emotions the Youth and the Mistress cause the poet. But the *Sonnets* proved very hard to fit into the accepted life of Shakespeare of Stratford.

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Meet the New Bard

*From the Concordia University campus in Oregon, to
the Oxford Week festivities in California, plus new books,
new spokesmen and more, the debate heats up*

By Mark Anderson



Charles Burford receives an honorary resolution on the floor of the California State Legislature. Pictured left to right are Joseph Sobran, Charles Burford, Assemblyman Richard Floyd (D-Long Beach), and Katherine Chiljan (page 8).



Dr. Johnnie Dreissner, Provost at Concordia University, welcomes one and all to the first Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference on the University campus as Dr. Daniel Wright (l) watches. The event marks the first time the authorship debate has been accorded such an honored position at any campus (page 9).

For all the heated accusations he faced, you'd think he was a slash-and-burn corporate raider on the rampage or a revolutionary scheming the overthrow of some third-world despot. In reality, all he did was plan an academic conference.

This past January, Prof. Daniel Wright got the green light to organize the First Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Ore., where he's chair of the English department. Wright sent an announcement to the moderator of the Internet's worldwide Shakespeare discussion group and was told to take his Call for Papers elsewhere. That was the first sign of trouble.

"I fail to see the value of such a service if topics as cen-

(Cont'd on page 10)

Two Tales of Our Times

Actor Sir Derek Jacobi comes out for Oxford in the Washington Times, while the New York Times covers Shakespeare (again) and misses the story (again)

The last week of a busy month of April saw several perspectives on how the authorship story is covered in the media.

In *The Washington Times*, British actor Sir Derek Jacobi was quoted in an April 25th interview as "being very beguiled by the Earl of Oxford theory."

The Washington Times article included a photo whose caption read "Although he will be honored by the Shakespeare Guild and Library, Sir Derek Jacobi doubts that Shakespeare wrote the works credited to him. He thinks Earl Edward de Vere [sic] was the plays' author."

The relevant section of the story reads:

Patrons of the Folger Library and the Shakespeare Guild may find it interesting to quiz Mr. Jacobi about his skepticism on the subject of the Bard of Avon. While acknowledging that disputes about the factual identity of William Shakespeare 'are almost certain to remain debatable and unanswerable,' he admits to being 'very beguiled by the Earl of Oxford theory.'

'I agreed to put my name to a school of thought [the Shakespeare Oxford Society petition] that maintains that the earl, Edward de Vere,

was the author of the plays,' he says.

Mr. Jacobi explains his heresy by asking rhetorically, 'Where did this Shakespeare come from? Where did all that knowledge and eloquence and truth come from?'

In his estimation, de Vere seems the plausible candidate. 'I am highly suspicious of that gentleman from Stratford on Avon,' he says. 'I'm pretty convinced our playwright wasn't that fellow. This opinion is very unpopular with the good burghers of Stratford, I realize, but they also make their living on the legend of Shakespeare's local origins. I don't think it was him.'

Meanwhile, just three days earlier (April 22nd), *The New York Times* ran a Shakespeare feature story ("After Four Centuries, Still Gaining Devotees") in which *The Times* managed, once again, to miss the story.

Their story focused on Shakespeare studies in colleges and universities, and noted that, despite a recent report about a decline in Shakespeare course requirement for English majors, Shakespeare classes at many schools were actually overflowing: "Shakespeare is thriving," observed Barbara Mowat, the outgoing SAA president.

"Shakespeare is a big tent," Prof. David Bevington (U. Chicago) is quoted as saying. "[Shakespeare study] responds to every kind of post-modern question...to all the theorists." Stephen Greenblatt (editor of the new *Norton Shakespeare*) remarks: "Shakespeare is around not because of the conspiracies of professors, but because he is incontestably wonderful."

Theorists? Conspiracies? So, then, what did the article have to say about the burgeoning authorship debate of the last 10-15 years? The answer is: nothing. We can only guess that means it "isn't news," or as we said last summer about another *New York Times* Shakespeare feature (Summer 1996 *Newsletter*), maybe it just isn't news that "fits."

Society member Alice Lundskow wrote *The Times* a letter on April 24th in which she chided the paper for "its haughty and unswerving avoidance of the vital and valid Shakespeare identity issue," noting that the "rousing interest in the proposal that 'Shake-speare' was a pseudonym flourishes internationally in sectors of academe, the media, [and] on the Internet, urged on by newly-prospering interest groups [such as] the Shakespeare Oxford Society."

True words indeed. Just ask Sir Derek Jacobi, or readers of the "other" *Times*.

Seattle Conference Planning in Place

Plans for the 21st Annual Conference in Seattle (Oct. 9-12) are nearly all set as we go to press. The initial mailing to Society members is scheduled for mid-June, and all members should have received it by the time they receive the Spring 1997 *Newsletter*.

The scheduled speakers are Joseph Sobran, Michael York and Charles Burford. There will be a Thursday night debate, a panel on promoting the authorship issue, and a reprise of last year's highly successful Teacher's Workshop.

A full preview of the Conference will appear in the Summer *Newsletter* (to be mailed September 1st). Contact Chairperson Frances Howard-Snyder with any Conference questions: (360)435-9141 (h) or (360)650-4865 (o). Contact Stephanie Hughes about papers: (503)246-3934.

Fundraising

Fundraising for 1997 has already seen nearly \$15,000 raised for the general operating budget. However, still more is needed to maintain the momentum built up in the past two years with the revised newsletter and Internet Home Page, plus our efforts to launch a new publication, *The Oxfordian*, and to establish the library as a resource available to all members. Therefore a key new initiative has taken place this year.

A new foundation, the Shakespeare De Vere Foundation, has been created in Los Angeles through the efforts of new Board member Grant Gifford, working with Randall Sherman, Charles Burford and Sally Mosher. The five Foundation Board members are Charles Burford, Randall Sherman, Sally Mosher, Grant Gifford and Dennis Slattery.

This new foundation, as is set forth in its bylaws, will be exclusively dedicated to fund-

ing individual research grants, scholarships, and special Shakespeare Oxford Society projects. The Shakespeare De Vere Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation whose funds will be managed by a professional investment consulting firm in L.A. A more complete and detailed explanation of the Foundation's mission and structure will be provided to the membership by President Randall Sherman by the time of the Seattle Conference.

Among the first projects for which dedicated funding will be sought later this year is the Home Page on the Internet, *The Oxfordian*, the Library, and a special fund to help Charles Boyle and his family with all the uninsured expenses related to his illness and his recovery (e.g. a computer that can convert the spoken word into written text).

Charles Burford resigns as Society President; Randall Sherman elected to complete his term

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. At the regularly scheduled spring meeting of the Board of Trustees (held in conjunction with the Oxford Day Banquet on April 18th) several major changes in the operations of the Society for the remainder of 1997 took place.

First, Charles Burford announced that he was resigning as President to return to London to accept a position with the College of Arms. Randall Sherman was elected as President for the balance of Charles' term. Aaron Tatum was elected first vice-president, and Charles Boyle remains as second vice-president.

In addition, four new members were elected to the Board of Trustees to complete the terms of the four Trustees who resigned from the Board at Minneapolis last fall.

These four new Trustees are: Grant Gifford (Los Angeles Calif.), Walter Hurst (Sacramento, Calif.), Mildred Sexton (St. Louis, Missouri), and Elliott Stone (Boston, Mass.).



Outgoing Society President Charles Burford congratulates his successor Randall Sherman during Oxford Week in San Francisco.

President's Letter

By Randall Sherman

First let me acknowledge the unique contribution Charles Burford has made to the Society and the Oxfordian cause in general over the last six years. Whatever the political disputes that may have arisen during this time, his remarkable oratory skills and powers of perception cannot be matched. Moreover, his commitment and passion have advanced the authorship cause incalculably by elevating the intellectual level of the debate, and establishing badly needed credibility. He has championed the subject with a style and class that have never before existed.

So I will miss Charles as a colleague and friend. I hope that his new home in London will not prove to be too far from us, and I trust he will continue to participate in Society business—even on a remote basis.

Additionally, I am grateful to the Board of Trustees who chose to elect me as the new SOS President and entrusted me with their leadership. As such, I intend for this to be a very active, working Board—with committees, responsibilities and tasks.

In writing this President's letter to the membership, I want to emphasize the ideas that I have nurtured for many years on this subject, because it is my belief that the new SOS strategy must be a marketing strategy, and that we must "report his cause aright to the unsatisfied." The unsatisfied are the millions of people who know, or need to know, of this egregious error in history. The truth of Edward de Vere is too vital and

relevant to lie hidden from the world any longer.

However, I should first provide a little background about myself. I originate from Texas, but later grew up in Boulder, Colorado where I attended high school and the university. I spent two years living in Bath, England and traveling throughout Europe, which made an indelible impression on me. When I returned to the US, I completed a BS in astrophysics and an MS in electrical engineering. I also matriculated with an MBA from Edinburgh, Scotland.

This education brought me to Silicon Valley's high technology industries, where I now work and have been involved in several start-up companies. I mention this because launching new companies and products, as well as developing corporate marketing strategies, is analogous to the kind of missionary work needed by the Oxford movement today. Specific skills such as raising capital, motivating key talent, targeting select customer market segments, and overcoming competitive pressures are critical in making a successful enterprise. Today, I earn a living by providing these professional services to firms worldwide, and believe I can apply these skills constructively to the SOS. (For those interested, please see my web page at: www.best.com/~newven)

Charles Burford once made the alarming statement that "enough circumstantial evidence exists today to prove the Oxford case." He has remarked that what is lacking in the authorship

Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow

As you are all doubtless aware by now, I have resigned as President of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and returned to England to take up a position at the College of Arms in the City of London. I have remained on the Board, however, as I plan to return to the States twice a year to attend the trustee meetings and give the occasional lecture. To this end, I certainly hope to be with you all in Seattle.

It has been a privilege to serve the Society as lecturer, trustee and, finally, President and I fully intend to remain an active partisan of our cause. Six years is a long time to spend in the Oxfordian trenches and, truth to tell, I am looking forward to a rest from it all. I had begun to hear too much of the ideologue's boring edge to my lectures. That said, reading and thinking about Shakespeare will continue to be an important, indeed necessary, part of my life, and I hope to be able to build up my understanding of the philosophy of the plays to a higher level.

The Society is very fortunate that I am passing the presidential baton to Randall Sherman, whose vision, commitment and administrative skills will do much to prune our tangled garden and ensure its healthy growth in future years. His creation of "Oxford Week" in San Francisco was a triumph, and I have every confidence that he can repeat this sort of success inside the Society. We owe it to the cause to give him our unconditional support.

Should any of you wish to write to me in England, my address is: 4 Sherwood Avenue, South Woodford, London, E18. 1PB Great Britain.

Charles Burford

(Continued on page 13)

Sobran (Continued from page 1)

In the mid-nineteenth century some commentators, uneasy with the Realist view, countered with what might be called the Fictional view of the *Sonnets*. The *Sonnets* became, for this school of thought, mere "poetical exercises," in which Shakespeare wrote under an "assumed character" that was not his own.

But the Fictional view was hard to sustain too. After all, the *Sonnets* are unsatisfying as a story; they lack adequate exposition, to say the least; and they show none of Shakespeare's genius for vivid characterization. This gave rise, in the mid-twentieth century, to a compromise, which might be called the Agnostic view: we don't know and will never know whether, or to what extent, the *Sonnets* were rooted in the poet's real experience, so we may as well ignore all that and read them purely as poetry. This has become the prevalent view among the mainstream Shakespeare scholars, many of whom are downright scornful of attempts to glean biographical information from the *Sonnets*. W.H. Auden, for one, has censured such attempts as "idle curiosity."

Recently, however, a fourth view has been asserted: the Homosexual view. Its most powerful advocate is Joseph Pequigney, whose 1985 book *Such Is My Love* has already exerted considerable influence. Pequigney argues that the poet's love for the Youth is unmistakably homoerotic, and that only prudery has prevented mainstream scholars from acknowledging what should be obvious.

Just as the Agnostic view was a variant of the Fictional view, the Homosexual view can be seen as a return to the Realist view. Since no Elizabethan poet would be likely to feign homosexual love—sodomy was considered an abomination and a capital crime—we can presume that if Pequigney is right, the poet is hinting at biographical information of startling implication.

Pequigney's book has a certain air of advocacy and special pleading, but his argument is essentially sound and, I would say, undeniable. It should be compelling even to people who don't welcome his conclusion. After all, the poet makes it clear enough that he has committed adultery, and we accept this not because we approve of adultery but because the evidence is simply

indisputable. In the realm of historical fact, the central question is always, What happened? The historian who is indifferent to morality is a bad man. But the historian who lets his moral views decide questions of fact is a bad historian.

The redoubtable Charlton Ogburn now objects to the Homosexual view as "slander"; but, in his book *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, he acknowledged that the question of the poet's homosexuality "has always been the main issue" about the *Sonnets*. Though he proposed an alternative theory—that the poet was actually writing to his son—he admitted frankly: "The reader will be justified in deeming my answer too ingenious by half."

"The mainstream scholars' long and inconclusive debate about the Sonnets' factuality parallels the authorship debate they regard as benighted."

The *Sonnets* contain history. To that extent the Realist view is right. I believe that the Homosexual view is also right, though not in the way Pequigney assumes. He argues that the Youth, though a real person, could not have been the Earl of Southampton, the favorite candidate among the Realist commentators, on grounds that Shakespeare could not have addressed a nobleman in such amorous terms. He has a point.

But if the Youth was the Earl of Southampton, it follows that the poet could not have been the mainstream scholars' "Shakespeare of Stratford." It could well have been Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

The mainstream scholars' long and inconclusive debate about the *Sonnets*' factuality parallels the authorship debate they regard as benighted. The parallel is no coincidence. The debate is generated precisely by the assumption—shared by the Realist, Fictional, Agnostic, and Homosexual schools—that the poet can only have been "Shakespeare of Stratford." If we remove that assumption, most of the vexing data fall into place with surprising simplicity.

The first 17 Youth Sonnets urge a handsome young man to marry, not so much to preserve his line (though this is fleetingly

mentioned) as to propagate his own personal beauty. The Realist scholars have usually taken this to mean that Shakespeare had somehow been engaged to help persuade the young Southampton to marry at a time when Lord Burghley was pressing him to accept a match with his granddaughter, Elizabeth Vere. The young earl, still in his teens, was reluctant. The poet sweetly chides him, arguing that he has a duty to beget a son, in much the same terms that Venus lectures Adonis in the long poem dedicated to Southampton.

Oxford, of course, was Burghley's son-in-law and Elizabeth Vere's father. He was perfectly situated to join the campaign to drag the young man to the altar. If he was the author of the *Sonnets*, we can reasonably infer from his lyrical response to the young man's beauty that he had fallen in love with Southampton himself. This is the key to the otherwise inexplicable line in Sonnet 10: "Make thee another self, for love of me." In begetting a son by Elizabeth Vere, Southampton would create a blood-link between Oxford and himself. Coming from a common poet, the line would be absurd. Noblemen didn't beget sons for love of the poets they patronized.

Even after the subject of procreation is dropped, the poet remains in love with the Youth, promising to immortalize him in his verse: "Your monument shall be my gentle verse" (81). The chief arguments of the *Sonnets* are strikingly adumbrated in Oxford's 1573 letter to Thomas Bedingfield, printed as a preface to Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comfort*. Just as the *Sonnets* argue that the Youth has no right to withhold his beauty from the world, Oxford argues that Bedingfield has no right to withhold his book from his countrymen; just as the *Sonnets* promise that they will be the Youth's eternal "monument," Oxford assures Bedingfield that his book will be a "monument" after Bedingfield himself is "dead and gone." Oxford even anticipates the language and imagery of the *Sonnets*. Compare "Thou art the grave where buried love cloth live" (31) with Oxford's gentle charge that Bedingfield seems determined to "bury and insevil your work in the grave of oblivion." (Further parallels are cited in my book *Alias Shakespeare*.)

It is further proof of the Realist view, by

the way, that the poet never names the Youth, even after promising to make his name immortal. This would surely be a strange way to treat an imaginary character!

Apparently a long, sometimes turbulent affair ensued between the poet and Southampton. The poet is clearly in love with the Youth in an erotic sense. He is fascinated by his physical beauty. He is obsessed with him. He idealizes him. He is jealous of him. He suffers during his absence. He speaks of "pleasure," "desire," and "appetite," likens the Youth to "food," and even praises the odor of his breath. There are anxieties of infidelity on both sides. And of course the poet is inspired by the Youth to write some of the most eloquent love poetry in the language. This is something more than ordinary male camaraderie. At every point the poet seems to resemble Oxford rather than the Shakespeare of the mainstream scholars. The poet is decidedly older than the Youth; he constantly contrasts their ages. The Youth is, of course, young, a "boy." The poet is "old," "beated and chopped with tanned antiquity," bearing "lines and wrinkles," in "age's steepy night." He looks at the past with regret and to the future with the sense that his death is not far off. Time is running out for him. He likens himself to "a decrepit father" who "takes delight" in the Youth as in his "child" (37), implying a gap of a generation. Again this fits Oxford (who was twenty-three years older than Southampton) but not the scholars' Shakespeare (who was only nine years older).

The poet's forwardness with the Youth is good evidence that he was of the same rank. He woos him boldly; he calls him "thou"; he addresses him as "my love," never "my lord"; he even jokes about his genitals (20). These would be amazing liberties from a commoner to a lord, but not from one lord to another. The poet feels free to scold the Youth. He says, in a tense moment, that "we must not be foes" (40), which would also be slightly grotesque coming from a commoner to a lord who would have little to fear from a poet's enmity. Even when the poet is abject, he is not deferential in a social sense. He speaks of "possessing" (and losing) the Youth (87) and likens himself to a "deceived husband"—more evidence that there was no gap of rank between them.

When the poet says, "I may not evermore acknowledge thee," it is a strain to imagine a commoner speaking to a lord: the prerogative would be entirely on the other side.

The mainstream scholars have never given due attention to one of the most important motifs of the Sonnets: the poet's disgrace. The reason for this neglect is probably that it puzzles them. Nothing in the standard life of Shakespeare suggests notoriety at any time. But the poet himself refers to it in a dozen of the Sonnets, from 25 to 121, in such emphatic terms as "disgrace," "outcast," "bewailed guilt," "shame," "blots," "vulgar scandal," and "vile esteemed." He implies that he is well known, as Oxford indeed was. He hopes only for the relief of

"At every point the poet seems to resemble Oxford rather than the Shakespeare of the mainstream scholars."

an obscure grave:

My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor
you. (72)

Oxford, of course, had lived a scandalous life. In 1584 a social inferior, Thomas Vavasor, could taunt him about "thy decayed reputation." (The most stinging word was "thy.")

Sonnet 121 hints that the poet's scandal was sexual. He speaks angrily but guardedly about others' gossip about his "frailties" and "sportive blood." Whatever this was, it was more scandalous than adultery, about which the Mistress Sonnets are explicit and jaunty. The poet is no prude, but he shies away from mentioning the specific charge against him. Was it homosexuality, or even pedophilia? In 1580 three of Oxford's enemies discussed whether to accuse him of "pederastism." One said he couldn't attest it, but another accused him of "buggering" servant boys, whom he named. This may have been pure slander; many of the charges the three made were preposterous lies, and nothing seems to have come of this one. Yet even a calumny may point to a perceived vulnerability. And Sonnet 121 sounds as if

the poet was fighting off some such rumor about himself.

The poet fears that his unnamed disgrace will also rub off on the Youth. Sonnet 36 is devoted to this apprehension—"Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame." What kind of disgrace is so contagious? A reputation for sodomy certainly would have been. The poet also repeats his anxiety about shaming the Youth along with himself. This puts the famous Sonnet 71 in a new light: the poet cautions the Youth against mourning for him after his death,

Lest the wise world should look into
your mean,
And mock you with me after I have
gone.

He can hardly mean that the "wise world" mocks people merely for grieving at the death of friends. More likely he means that if the Youth is observed mourning for him, sophisticated society will draw certain conclusions about their relationship—and that those conclusions may be warranted.

Such utterances are baffling if we imagine them coming from the Shakespeare of the mainstream scholars, who reduce them to bland "universal" or "poetic" truths, rather than specific intimations about real individuals. But if I am right, they tell us a great deal about Oxford and Southampton. Much more may be gleaned from later Sonnets, where the poet first frets about losing the Youth, then confesses and tries to excuse his own infidelity. (Again, a fuller treatment will be found in my book.)

For now we may note a couple of other details. In two of the Sonnets, 37 and 89, the poet refers to himself as "lame." Mainstream scholars are at a loss to explain this; most of them surmise that it is "figurative." But in a letter to Burghley dated March 25, 1595, Oxford wryly refers to himself as "a lame man," and other letters use the word "lame" similarly. Whatever he and the poet mean by it, they both use the same word. Surely few poets have described themselves as "lame," figuratively or otherwise.

Finally, many Oxfordians have noted the odd first line of Sonnet 125: "Were't aught to me I bore the canopy . . ." Yet once more, the mainstream scholarship has no good explanation. But the line could well

(Continued on page 6)

Commentary

Reinventing the Professoriate:

Sobran's Alias Shakespeare, Multiculturalism, and the Anxiety of Amateur Influence

by Roger Stritmatter

In 1924, four years after the publication of John Thomas Looney's *'Shakespeare' Identified*, the late E.K. Chambers delivered the annual Shakespeare Lecture to the assembled dignitaries of the British Academy. His title was "The disintegration of Shakespeare," and his target—though he disdained to actually name, let alone do battle against them—were those "small minds" who, because they "failed to comprehend" the "greatness and variability" of Shakespeare, were led to endorse the heresy of "an alternative author, preferably an aristocrat."

Joe Sobran (*Alias Shakespeare*, Free Press, 1997) is not the first writer to defect from carrying the burden of the English Upper class by coming out of the closet as one of those much-despised "small minds"—John Thomas Looney, Charlton Ogburn, Sigmund Freud, Disraeli or Walt Whitman, to name only a few—with the audacity to declare skepticism, or even open apostasy, regarding modernity's sacred foundation myth of the bourgeois Shakespeare. Judging by the splenetic redbaiting of reviewers like Paul Cantor in the *Weekly Standard* (for whom Sobran has defected to the "camp

of today's multiculturalists" and "Marxists" who believe that "authors are captives of the class into which they were born"), or the fulsome question-begging of Jonathan Bate in the *Wall Street Journal* (for whom "the frustrating thing about William Shakespeare is that his life was so mundane"), Sobran's book is destined to leave a serious mark on the history of the controversy toward which Chambers nodded in imperious disdain in 1924.

This label of Oxfordians as multiculturalists, disguised as dead white men but secretly in conspiratorial league with the forces of intellectual anarchy and social disorder is surely among the most intriguing of recent turns in the authorship controversy, particularly when considered in light of the traditional political affiliations of a heretic such as Sobran, who once wrote for William F. Buckley's *National Review* and is still a noted neo-conservative columnist. The persistency of such efforts to staunch the flow of blood from the Stratfordian body-politic with the band-aid of emotionally charged labels which beg the questions they affect to answer is a clue to the deeper cultural dynamics of the authorship contro-

versy; Sobran has made the key 'move' of stepping outside of the Company Town of Stratford-on-Avon and flaunting his common sense "Marxist" belief that all writers, consciously or otherwise, say something about their own inevitably specific, embodied lives when they put pen to paper, no matter how exalted or universal their aspirations may be.

Did Professor Cantor even read Sobran's book? Apparently, no more closely or judiciously than he has read *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. How else could it be that he attacks Sobran for reprising Shakespeare's oft-alleged medieval mentality while blithely ignoring the inescapable conundrum which Sobran has deposited at the doorstep of lifelong inhabitants of #3 Henley Street, Stratford-on-Avon?

"Whoever Shakespeare was," writes Sobran, "he seems to have taken little interest in the sort of self-made man his champions suppose him to have been." Sobran might be guilty of the sin of litotes here, but if so that's just what makes Cantor's failure to acknowledge the point at issue all the more intellectually scandalous. Winston Churchill at least had the integrity to re-

Sobran (Continued from page 5)

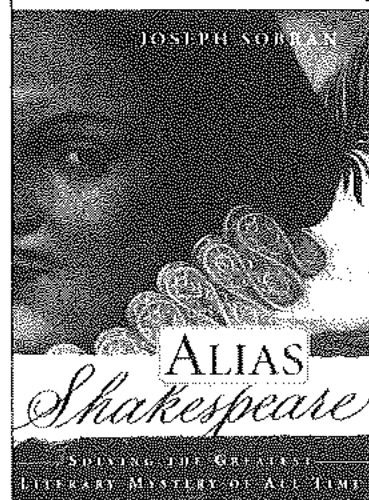
refer to a courtier's function on solemn state occasions of helping carry the royal canopy over the monarch. As Lord Great Chamberlain and a leading courtier, Oxford was prominent at such occasions.

In sum, Oxford closely fits the profile of the poet. He is of the right age; he is of equal rank with the noble Youth. He knew both Burghley and Southampton; and his own daughter was the center of their tussle over marriage. He was first a brilliant courtier and, later in life, a notorious figure, apparently all but ostracized at court; his scandals included rumors of sexual deviancy. He was in some sense lame. By the 1590s he had good reason to feel what the poet of the *Sonnets* so deeply feels: that time is running out, and that his name has been irreparably ruined.

Not one of these things can be said with warrant about the Shakespeare the mainstream scholars have constructed from a few old documents and the claims of the First Folio. The prima facie case for his authorship collapses against the self-revelations of the *Sonnets*.

"Provocatively separating William Shakespeare of Stratford from William Shakespeare the playwright, Sobran demonstrates that neither one could have been the other."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)



The most irresistible case yet made for Edward de Vere. Compelling new evidence includes a groundbreaking reading of the sonnets as well as a detailed analysis of de Vere's letters and poetry.

"The best book ever written on the subject."

—*The American Spectator*

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spond to the artistic chutzpah of his unreliable propagandist Leslie Howard, who defected from the E.K. Chambers cult in his classic anti-Nazi film *Pimpernel Smith*, by admitting that he didn't like his national myths tampered with. If the culture-at-large expects professors of 'Shakesperotics' (to use Gary Taylor's delightful term) like Paul Cantor to make significant intellectual distinctions, or openly admit the limitations and paradoxes, not to say contradictions, of their own historically, administratively, and psychologically overdetermined positions, they will be sorely disappointed.

By definition, a great artist is someone capable of endowing the particulars of a lived human experience with 'universal' value and significance. To accuse Joe Sobran of practicing Marxism because he grasps this fundamental human fact is no argument; it's a pic-in-your-face for a man with the chutzpah to leave a dull party which should have ended four hours ago. It just won't cut the mustard with the intellectual elite of the nation. That Cantor should feel compelled to revive such a red herring testifies to the complicated, intrinsically political character of the authorship landscape: now that Oxfordians have dowsed the most flaming examples of what former Folger Education Director Richmond Crinkley called the "bizarre mutant racism" of Shakespeare orthodoxy, they must endure a new round of only slightly more dignified labels (take your pick): "Marxists" (the conservative kind) "Romantics" (the deadbeat Dad kind) "Multiculturalists" (the Anglo-Saxon kind) or "Freudians" (of the Leslie Howard variety).

Such labels, of course, primarily express the confused mental state of their authors; by the same token, they should not be entirely ignored as clues to the larger yet barely perceived philosophical implications of the authorship controversy. Sobran does a masterful job of defending the virtues of amateurs and cranks who understand that "a priceless gem may be found in a pile of intellectual rubbish." He wins points here precisely because the proverb has a specific range of applications to the "Stratfordian" tradition which his more pedantic reviewers have not yet grasped.

On the other hand, Cantor scores back when he quotes Sobran's slip that "Elizabethans weren't curious about authors" and

then drives home the rhetorical rejoinder "why [then]...is it strange that Shakespeare's death in Stratford failed to provoke any reaction in London?" Behind this confrontation lurks the haunting presence of an assemblage of inescapable but all-too-often invisible questions concerning the relationship between generic principle and local fact.

One may grant Sobran that in the 16th century the genre of literary biography, which we moderns now take for granted, was still in embryonic form; Plutarch includes no authors; Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* had only appeared in 1550; short character sketches of Chaucer and other classic writers were just starting to be appended to English issues of their Collected Works in the 1590's.

On the other hand, Edmund Spenser's 1599 funeral was attended by the spectacle of his literary colleagues mournfully casting their pens into his grave; when Shakespeare Folio editor Jonson kicked the bucket in 1637, thirty of his distinguished friends commemorated their loss in a published festschrift.

In contrast to such signs of early-modern anxiety about authorship, the total absence of any public recognition of Shakespeare's 1616 death, particularly when weighed in light of all the other pieces "missing" from the orthodox jigsaw puzzle (or "rigged", like the 1623 Folio and the Stratford monument), does indeed seem a relevant piece of anti-Stratfordian gossip. Perhaps Cantor responds so vigorously on this point because he knows, in his heart of hearts, that there is something more than a little strange about the deadly silence which ensued in 1616 at the death of literature's greatest....um, gull.

At the risk of distracting a popular audience, Sobran would have been on safer territory to tell, and insist upon, a more complicated story about Elizabethan authors. Contrary to Sobran's very "Stratfordian" assertion, Elizabethans were indeed deeply fascinated with the problem of authorship, if for no other reason than that knowing an author's identity (if not his name, rank and serial number) helped a reader to frame and decode a fictional work. Unfortunately, Sobran gets off on the wrong

foot on this subject and never recovers his balance. Indeed, his further proviso that "drama...was public and self-explanatory" and "nobody sought hidden depths in it," displays a truly astonishing and dangerously superficial awareness of the vast science of Renaissance interpretation.

Contrary to the impression Sobran affects, Elizabethans, even readers and writers of plays, were deeply immersed in the theory and practice of the transfer of meaning. This subject is brilliantly treated in Marion Trousdale's *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians* but remains, unfortunately, a *terra incognita* for most Oxfordians.

Orthodox reviewers like Jonathan Bate understand the principle, but don't have a clue about how to apply it to the complex articulations of the Shakespearean aesthetic. They lack the appropriate local frame of authorship; Sobran, by contrast, has the local frame but is missing the larger cultural picture, treated by Trousdale and others, within which it's embedded. He needs to hit the books again on this subject if he expects to hold his own in future debates.

These points aside, however, it must be said that there are, on balance, considerable strengths in Sobran's work.

Alias Shakespeare does a superlative job of compressing many of the most compelling arguments for Oxford's authorship into the span of a few pages. For the first time, the compelling stylometric links between Oxford's poems and correspondence, first exposed by other scholars (prominently William P. Fowler), are made known for a wide audience. Sobran prints a new, revised and expanded selection of Oxford's juvenile lyrics, updated since J.T. Looney's own edition of the poems (c. 1920).

Sobran's critique of the conventional chronology in his chapter, "1604: The Critical Year," seems to have left a serious dent in the Stratfordian armor. In his jaundiced review of *Alias Shakespeare* for *New York Press Books and Publishers*, William Monihan goes so far as to claim that "the chief disfigurement of reason in Elizabethan scholarship comes from dating 'systems' based on the Stationer's Register....common in all sorts of Shakespeare studies....it bespeaks a total lack of understanding of the way literature circulated (i.e. in manuscript for years or months before publication) in

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Oxford Week spreads the word

Hundreds participate in San Francisco, Sacramento events

by Katherine Chiljan and Walter Hurst

After months of tireless effort and enthusiastic support, the Horatio Society successfully pulled off "Oxford Week" in San Francisco.

Strategically planned for the traditional Shakespeare birth week, its object was, of course, to get out the Oxfordian message through radio, TV and lectures featuring Charles Burford and Joseph Sobran.

Events kicked off on Sunday, April 20th with a reception for Burford and an official unveiling of the newly discovered portrait of the Earl of Oxford by Katherine Chiljan. Bay Area Oxfordians and others from Los Angeles and Sacramento attended the wine and hors d'oeuvres SOS benefit. After the unveiling, Katherine spoke about the portrait's provenance, and Burford gave his reasons why he believed the portrait was indeed of Edward de Vere.

The first day began with an early morning reception/continental breakfast at a local restaurant across from the State Capitol Building, hosted by Assembly Member Richard Floyd. Many legislators and lobbyists were on hand for this informal event, and Burford was presented with the first of two legislative resolutions in his honor. After the reception, the entire party (with the exception of newly-elected Society Trustee Wally Hurst, who is not allowed on the floor of either house because he is a lobbyist) was escorted to a front-row seat on the floor of the California Senate. Senator Ray Haynes introduced Joseph Sobran and Senator Quentin Kopp made a stirring speech introducing Burford and presenting him with a Senate resolution honoring his visit to California's Capitol. The party was then whisked across the beautifully restored Rotunda to the California State Assembly, where assembly Member Floyd introduced Burford and Assembly Member Tom McClintock introduced Sobran. Burford then taped a 30-minute interview with a local television station.

Later that afternoon, Joe Sobran went to a book-signing at a local bookstore, signing all the books they had for him and necessitating a frenzied search for more. Burford, meanwhile, was off to tape a debate with a professor from California State University, Sacramento for the local National Public Radio affiliate station. We have it on good authority that the professor began the debate pledging her undying acceptance of the Stratford man as the author, and by the end of the debate was heard to be saying things such as "...the author, whoever he was" and asking questions of Burford regarding the authorship issue! At a local professional theater co-owned by the

Busfield brothers, Tim and Buck (you may recall Tim Busfield from several movies and the hit series *Thirtysomething*) we were allowed the use of their entire theater for a presentation by Sobran and Burford on the authorship issue. Thanks in large part to advance publicity and a large article in the only major metropolitan daily's Sunday entertainment section, the theater was almost full by the time Joe Sobran was introduced. He spoke eloquently on the authorship issue, concentrating on the *Sonnets*, and received several questions and warm applause when he was finished. After a short break, Charles Burford took the stage and gave an excellent presentation.

After he completed his lecture, the questions were fired fast and furious at him, but he handled them all with grace and dignity—and continued to educate those present with a display of the depth and breadth of his knowledge of the plays and sonnets by the world's greatest author. After the questions, he stayed behind for all who wished to shake his hand or greet him. Our day done, all of us (including several audience members!) retired to the largest English pub in Sacramento, the Fox and Goose, for much-needed refreshments, toasting the success of the day. There was animated discussion, camaraderie, and fellowship in abundance for all present.

On Tuesday, the day started early once again for the group. Burford and Sobran made two co-presentations at Rio Americano High School beginning at eight o'clock that morning, reaching over 100 appreciative students with their efforts and being rewarded with several cogent questions by their audiences at this prestigious Sacramento area high school. In the afternoon, Sobran had to get a column finished, so Burford spoke by himself at Sacramento City College, whose theater program is responsible for producing the highly successful "Shakespeare in the Park" series every summer. Dozens of students from the English, drama and debate sections leaned heavily on every word he said. It was a fantastic lecture, and the students (and their instructors) were very impressed. After a substantial question and answer period, the professor in charge sadly announced that the class period(s) allotted were over. Sobran later appeared on a Bay Area radio program (from Sacramento by phone), and we all joined up at Elanore Wootton's home, which she and her husband Bill graciously offered to us for a reception and a delicious dinner.

Following the Sacramento events, the schedule returned to San Francisco on Wednesday, April 23rd, the traditional Shakespeare birthday.

Burford talked authorship to his fellow countrymen and Anglophiles at the English Speaking Union; the luncheon-lecture was held at the Olympic Club in San Francisco. Hours later, he was the featured speaker at the prestigious Commonwealth Club, where typical speakers are world leaders. Joe Sobran opened for Charles with smooth voice and wit, reiterating points from his newly published book, *Alias Shakespeare*.

Later that day Burford was interviewed at the *San Francisco Chronicle* by Jerry Carroll for an article which made the front page of the paper's entertainment section: a large color photo of Charles was juxtaposed with the dust-jacket picture of Oxford from Sobran's new book. Also interviewed for the article was Prof. Alan Nelson of U.C. Berkeley, who was quoted as being "loaded for bear" for the authorship debate with Charles, which took place the next day.

Over 80 students gathered at the Cal Berkeley campus for the debate, moderated by Randall Sherman. Burford spoke first, and was his usual erudite self, emphasizing that Oxford was satirizing Queen Elizabeth's court. Nelson denied that was true, except possibly in *Midsummer's Night Dream*, which had Burford laughing: "The Queen falls in love with an ass?" he asked.

Nelson's strategy was to list facts proving that Shaxper was a real person (who denies that?) and give another list of facts showing that Oxford (and his father too) was a nasty person (which disqualifies him for the authorship?). Boasting his expert status in paleography, Nelson also stated that Shaxper's "shaky" signatures indicated a literary hand, and that Oxford's poetry and spelling were atrocious. Burford responded that Spencer wrote that Oxford was "dear to the Muses," so who's the better authority, Edmund Spencer or Alan Nelson? For those who are not already aware, Prof. Nelson has made detailed transcriptions of all of Oxford's surviving letters and makes them available on the Internet. He is also working on a new biography of Oxford, the first since B.M. Ward's excellent 1928 work. Nelson reports he's gotten as far as 1578—we wonder which year he will finally utter, "Is't real that I see?"

During the week, Burford gave a live interview on radio station KZON in Napa, as did Joe Sobran on the Michael Savage Show (KSFO) in San Francisco. Sobran also made a book-signing appearance at Borders Bookstore on Union Square. Oxford Week concluded on Friday evening with a speech by Burford at the St. Francis' Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Afterwards Horatio Society members let loose at a closing celebration party at Randall Sherman's home. All kudos to Charles, Joe and Randall for gracefully enduring an exhausting but productive week.

Beyond getting the word out to thousands of people, both in person and through the media,

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First Ever

Concordia University opens the Academic Door to Oxford

by Stephanie Hughes

The first weekend in April saw an important event in Oxfordian studies as the First Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference was held at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. This is the first time an accredited institution of higher learning has opened its doors to a full-scale annual conference. The organizer of the symposium, Dr. Daniel Wright, head of Concordia's English Department, feels it is of utmost importance to bring the issue of Oxford's candidacy for author of the Shakespeare canon before the academic community, which until now has remained firmly entrenched against any who would dare to question the Stratford myth.

It is altogether appropriate that it should be at Concordia, a Lutheran university, that this intensely controversial topic has been brought forward for discussion, since it was in the atmosphere of the so-called New Learning which was stimulated by Martin Luther's great religious reformation, that Edward de Vere received the education that, we believe, gave him the tools to create the works of Shakespeare.

Concordia's provost, Dr. Johnnie Driessner, welcomed the conference-goers



Dr. Daniel Wright, Chairman of the Department of English at Concordia University, has dared to tread where no English Department head has tread before.

on Friday morning, saying: "Concordia counts it as an honor to provide the academic context for this conference. We feel that it lives out the fundamental goal of the University, and that is to nurture an environment in which the pursuit of truth is pro-

tected. In fact it is commitment to the quest for truth that most fully articulates the essence of a learning community. Concordia nests that quest for truth in a series of values. They are the values of justice, of humility, and of service, and I would encourage those same values to you. We believe that the quest for truth only achieves its highest estate when it's housed in those values. I pray that you enjoy your quest..., [and] wish blessings on the discourse of the conference."

Our "quest for truth" opened with enthusiastic letters from Charlton Ogburn and Charles Burford, followed over the course of the three days of the conference by two films, two panel discussions, and papers by Dr. Wright, Roger Stritmatter, Mildred Sexton, Col. Jack Shuttleworth, Stephanie Hughes, Dr. Frances Howard-Snyder, Elisabeth Sears, and Mark Anderson. Excellent papers were read as well by two Concordia students, Charlotte Evensen, an English major from Kenya, and Victoria Kramer, a Secondary Ed-Language Arts major, both now well-informed and highly articulate promoters of the Oxfordian hypothesis. A teachers' workshop run by Mildred Sexton and a theater workshop put on by a local director, Connor Kerns, and two of his actors, were important additions to the program.

The pleasant campus, the wonderful weather, and the meal together in downtown Portland promoted an atmosphere of intense discussion and camaraderie. Please mark your calendars for the first weekend in April, 1998, when the Second Annual Edward de Vere symposium will take place. Dr. Wright will have full information available well in advance, with nearby hotel accommodations and car rental options in place. (Concordia is only about five minutes from the airport.) Portland is a delightful city, known for its clean streets, its pleasant residents, excellent coffee, and the world-renowned Powell's Bookstore. While most of the northern U.S. is still gray, brown, and shivering, Portland in early April is already green and blooming. This annual conference promises to become an event of great importance to the cause of Oxfordian scholarship.

Vero Nihil Verius

Second Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference
Concordia University
April 2nd to 5th, 1998

Dedicated to the scholarly advancement of studies in the literary works of Edward de Vere, Viscount Bolebec, Lord Great Chamberlain of England, and the seventeenth Earl of Oxford
—better known by his nom de plume:

William Shakespeare

For more information and registration forms, contact the English Department Chair and Director of the Edward de Vere Studies Conference, Dr. Daniel Wright

Concordia University, 2811 NE Holman, Portland OR 97211
(503)288-9371

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tral to the discussion of Shakespeare as the authorship of the works is forbidden by executive fiat," Wright replied to the discussion group's moderator. "What are you afraid of learning or allowing others to learn? Please unsubscribe me. I have no place among such closed minds as yours."

By the time the conference began on April 4th, English professors from around the country were sending Wright vitriolic messages that consisted of "spitefulness mingled with astonishment," as Wright now recalls.

"It's like the Catholic Church refusing to look through Galileo's telescope," said Prof. Jack Shuttleworth, head of the English department at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. "They believe what they believe, and they don't want to hear or see anything that might shake their faith."

This view has been confirmed yet again in 1997 as the pressure increases on a beleaguered establishment, with new books and new converts on the authorship popping up regularly.

This pressure was never more visible than in a busy month of April, which witnessed not only the De Vere Studies Conference in Oregon, but also the first "Oxford Week" in California, where hundreds if not thousands were exposed to the authorship debate all week through lectures, interviews, radio and newspaper coverage featuring Joe Sobran and Charles Burford; events even included a proclamation on the floor of the California State Legislature.

One of the reviews of Sobran's new book aptly represents how some are handling the pressure: "Most of the trauma about Shakespeare's identity is the sovereign creation of unfortunates who do not know how art or talent operates," wrote the anti-Oxfordian critic in *The New York Press* in April. "It's imaginative writers who understand imaginative writing best and are most fit to write about it. Otherwise you've got giftless cranks and hooligans betting their hats that hawks are handsaws."

Yet the sound and fury only appears to have attracted the attention of more curious onlookers, wondering what the ruckus is about. The mainstream media are certainly catching on. With new Shakespeare authorship books on the stands and new high-

profile advocates for the Earl of Oxford coming out of the closet seemingly every month, one is led to marvel, at the very least, at the currency of the Oxford movement.

Noted Shakespearean actor John Gielgud has come out as "very sympathetic to the Oxfordian cause," according to the *London Daily Mail*. Mark Rylance, artistic director of the new Globe Theater in London, made his Oxfordian leanings public in the past year. Stage and screen actors Michael York and Derek Jacobi have also begun advocating the case for Oxford. And in an interview with *Attitude* magazine in 1995, film actor Keanu Reeves said the project he'd most want to work on now is a life-story of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare. (Do we see a "Bill

"The strongest link in the Oxfordian chain is that Edward de Vere was the author of the Sonnets."

and Ed's Excellent Adventure" in the offing?).

Two of the most recent books (John Michel's *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* and Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare*) have brought the central focus of the debate on an area that deserves close attention—those enigmatic poems of 12-14 lines each, the *Sonnets*.

Not only have they been admired for their beauty and eloquence but also for their mystery. No text in English literature seems to have inspired as much sleuthing and shoe-leather scholarship as have the 154 numbered poems that first appeared in 1609 under the title SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS.

Bloodhounds, start your engines.

Sonnet Detectives at Work

As John Michell writes in his recent book *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (Thames & Hudson), the Oxfordian solution to the "Mr. W.H." puzzle shows the power of examining Shakespearean enigmas with the Earl of Oxford in mind. "The strongest link in the Oxfordian chain is that Edward de Vere was the author of the *Sonnets*," Michell writes. "In contrast, their conventional attribution

to William Shakspeare [i.e. Shakespeare of Stratford] is weak, largely derived from the title under which they were published."

As Michell points out, just the words "ever-living" in the dedication allude to an author other than Shakespeare of Stratford. That is, almost universally Elizabethan writers used "ever-living" to apply to the deceased. (Oxford had died five years before the publication of the *Sonnets*; Shakespeare of Stratford lived for another seven years afterwards.)

Michell goes on to finger his Mr. W.H.—the manuscript buyer William Hall, who was based in the London borough of Hackney. And unlike other W.H. candidates, William Hall as the "only begetter" fits the profile given in the dedication. It explains how the manuscript got to Thomas Thorpe. It even explains why the *Sonnets* came out in 1609.

Hall certainly had the means, motive and opportunity. Hall lived and worked, often in collaboration with Thorpe, in the region of London where Oxford spent his final years. At one point, Hall even acquired manuscripts from Oxford's next-door neighbor and sold the papers to the same printer who eventually published the *Sonnets*. Soon after Hall was married in 1608, Oxford's widow sold the house where she and her late husband had lived during the height of "Shakespeare's" productivity.

"They are not the sort of poems by which a widow would care to remember her husband, so Hall was allowed to take them," Michell speculates. "Perhaps they were thrown out, no one thinking that they might fall into the hands of an opportunist publisher... In wishing him 'all happiness and that eternity promised by our ever-living poet,' the publisher was congratulating the begetter on his recent marriage and wishing him the benefit of offspring."

In fact, the publication history of the entire Shakespeare canon jibes with the above scenario. That is, new Shakespeare works come out from the early 1590s until 1603—the year before Oxford died. After that point, nothing new appears in print until years after even Shakespeare of Stratford had died. With one exception. There's a burst of new publications during the time Oxford's widow was in the process of relocating (1608-09), when the *Sonnets* and three

plays appear for the first time.

So, then, are the *Sonnets* the ace in the hole for Oxfordians? Or just more opportunity for derision?

Enter Joseph Sobran. He's seen both sides of the authorship battles over the past 10 years.

In 1985, when he was a staffer for the *National Review*, he was assigned Charlton Ogburn's definitive Oxfordian work *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* to review. "I thought I'd take this book apart," he now recalls.

Sobran grew up immersed in the plays and poems of Shakespeare and had originally planned to dedicate his life to Shakespeare scholarship. "I went into college knowing more about the text of Shakespeare than did some of my professors. They even got into the habit of calling on me in class to verify quotes and facts," he says. "I was really gung-ho. But I never got into authorship. I was told all along that that was just the stuff of nutty Bacon-lovers."

Sobran's plans to dismiss Ogburn's work offhand, however, were scuttled by a minor difficulty. Ogburn made too convincing a case to be ignored. As Sobran read more, he began to realize that, as he puts it, "I couldn't just dismiss it. I got into the second half of the book, and by then I was saying to myself, 'My God, this is the guy I've been reading all my life.'" Sobran's review ended up being nothing like he'd planned. "Now it all made sense," he says. "The works had a new significance to them. I still wasn't 100 percent convinced, but I wasn't resisting the idea either. I had lingering doubts because I had to arrange so much mental furniture."

After more than a decade of reading, researching and writing on the authorship controversy, Sobran has come out with his own summary of the case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare. This Spring saw the publication of Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time* (Free Press). The book provides the best introductory overview to date of the Oxfordian case. He reprints part of a chapter from Mark Twain's classic Shakespearean authorship diatribe *Is Shakespeare Dead?* and goes on to give a brief sketch of the life of the Earl of Oxford. His best stuff, though, comes when he talks about the *Sonnets*.

Sobran begins with the argument that

the *Sonnets* are the closest we have to Shakespeare's autobiography. By itself, that argument is nothing new. For generations, leading Stratfordian critics such as E.K. Chambers, John Dover Wilson, C.S. Lewis, A.L. Rowse and Robert Giroux have argued for the inherently autobiographical nature of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Sobran, however, goes on to assert that the *Sonnets* don't fit anything we know about Shakespeare of Stratford—whose entire collection of original papers, manuscripts and letters consists of six signatures on legal documents written by other people. But the *Sonnets* do fit Oxford's life with remarkable detail. The first 126 poems weave a single narrative addressed to a young man generally agreed

"Sobran's plan to dismiss Ogburn's work...were scuttled by a minor difficulty. Ogburn made too convincing a case to be ignored."

to be Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton. The remainder, as covered by Ogburn, address a mysterious (what else?) figure often referred to as the "dark lady."

"The two chief Stratfordian schools of thought on the *Sonnets* have had to argue negatively," Sobran says. "They're either saying it's fiction because it doesn't work as autobiography, or they're saying it's autobiography because it doesn't work as fiction. They have to argue out of the defects of the other. The way out of the dilemma is to ask whose autobiography are they?" (For a closer look at Sobran's analysis, see his article "Shakespeare's Disgrace" on page 1.)

In addition to the *Sonnets*, there is a second piece of what Sobran considers to be key evidence—writing in the first person that reveals the mental and stylistic unity of Oxford and the author Shakespeare. This is the 1573 preface to Thomas Bedingfield's translation of a collection of writings by the Italian philosopher, mathematician and poet Girolamo Cardano—a collection, incidentally, suspected by several prominent Stratfordian scholars to be the book described to Polonius in *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2. ("Words, words, words ... The satirical

slave says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber or plum-tree gum ...")

"[Oxford's] 1573 prefatory letter to Thomas Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comfort*, written when he was twenty-three, employs much the same style of argument, imagery, and general vocabulary of the *Sonnets*, with a density that rules out any likelihood of coincidence," Sobran writes in *Alias Shakespeare*.

The self-portrait that emerges from the *Sonnets* and the Bedingfield letter," Sobran said, "shifts the burden of proof to those who would deny it."

What Does It Matter?

Of course, it is often argued, no matter who put pen to paper, the only thing that matters is that we have the works themselves. And other than changing the name on the title page, authorship doesn't matter a whit.

"That's like saying you admire a child, but it's no consequence who their parents are," Wright countered. "To say that authorship is of no consequence is to evade the responsibility that is solemnly embraced with respect to every other canon... You would never say that about Charles Dickens. The anguish of his personal life is important to examining the artistry of his works."

"The meaning of the plays and poems is vastly enhanced when you know the true author," Wright added.

Related to this is the problem of motive for assuming the pseudonym in the first place. Oxfordians often point out that writing plays and poems was considered beneath the station of nobility, so the publication of courtier poets' works was almost always posthumous, if it was done at all. And that's fine, perhaps, for a decade or two. But that doesn't buy 400 years.

Instead, two schools of thought have emerged. One has it that Oxford—an on-again-off-again favorite of Queen Elizabeth's—skewered the power brokers of the Elizabethan state and revealed the true colors of "Good Queen Bess" all too boldly. The contemporary events, personalities and situations that he satirized were too scandalous and politically compromis-

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ing to be credited to an acknowledged insider.

The other holds the personal rather than political was the reason for concealment. Namely, it posits that the author was concealing homosexual relations with another member of the court.

Sobran opts for the personal.

The original title of Sobran's book was "Outing Shakespeare." As the name implies, Sobran argues Oxford was homosexual or bisexual. (Probably the latter, if anything, since Oxford had six children by two marriages and at least one extramarital affair—with a raven-haired lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth, suspected of being Oxford's "dark lady.")

The shame spoken of in the *Sonnets*, Sobran claims, is in part due to the stigma attached to what he argues was a love affair with the Earl of Southampton. "Several years ago, I ran across a copy of Joseph Pequigney's book *Such is My Love*, which argues that the *Sonnets* are homosexual love poems," Sobran recalled. "I had a hard enough time seeing that Shakespeare was a nobleman. But I read the book, and it was the Ogburn thing all over again. Here's why he talks so much about disgrace. Here's why Oxford, apart from being a nobleman, would hide his authorship."

Whether personal, political or a mixture of both, the Shakespeare canon with Oxford as author becomes history's greatest example of "art made tongue-tied by authority (66)." "Thence comes it," Sonnet 111 states, "that my name receives a brand."

Academy Fight Song

The authority Shakespeare writes about may have been political. But the authority controlling Shakespeare's works today emanates from ivy-covered halls. "William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the plays, and that's a matter of historical record," Prof. Alan H. Nelson of the University of California, Berkeley said in a recent interview. "The only way to dispute that statement is to dismiss the historical record."

Nelson has been studying the authorship controversy and the Earl of Oxford since 1993, uncovering new letters and facts about Oxford's life. Nelson is "quite certain"

that Oxford was not the pen behind Shakespeare. "The evidence is that there is no relation between his life and the publication history of the plays, his letters show a lack of a full command of English and his poems are mediocre to middling," Nelson argued.

Indeed, a visit to Nelson's Home Page on the Internet shows that though Oxford was not guilty of the crime of writing Shakespeare, he was guilty of many lesser shortcomings that Nelson has extensively cataloged. "Oxford dedicated his ten months in Italy primarily to sexual adventure," "Oxford abdicated responsibility at the time of the Spanish Armada" and "Oxford was considered by the wags of his time a 'dead-beat dad'" are a few of the proclamations to

"The authority Shakespeare writes about may have been political ... the authority controlling Shakespeare's works today emanates from ivy-covered halls."

be found on Nelson's page—reading like it was ripped directly from the front pages of an Elizabethan edition of the *New York Post*.

"Oxford's clear pedophilia does make a better case for his authorship of the *Sonnets*," Nelson conceded.

Perhaps Nelson's most prominent anti-Oxfordian argument—he's certainly gained notoriety in Oxfordian circles for this claim—is that Oxford's spelling habits disqualify him as a potential author of the Shakespeare canon.

"Some of Oxford's spelling variants are so egregious that it puts him out of the ballpark," Nelson stated. "Here are two examples. He spells 'ought' as 'ofte,' and he spells 'Wivenhoe' as 'Wiuenghole'... He just didn't hear English phonemically the way well-educated people did."

Failing the Spelling Bee and the Miss Congeniality Contest, it seems, does result in expulsion from some authorship schools. (Other schools have less stringent admission guidelines, requiring the applicant only to sign his name a half dozen times.)

Nelson's interest in Oxford aside, most Stratfordian scholars don't even bother with the dissident movement. "The typical response is to pay it no attention," said

English professor David Richardson of Cleveland State University. "They deem it beneath observation."

However, some members of the orthodoxy do fuel the anti-orthodox cause—whether they know it or not. British Shakespeare professor Eric Sams, for instance, maintains the Stratford party line but also claims things Oxfordians have been saying for decades. In his 1995 book *The Real Shakespeare: Retrieving the Early Years, 1564-1594* (Yale University Press), Sams argues that the author evinces too much knowledge of the law to not have had legal training. (After receiving degrees at both Cambridge and Oxford, the Earl of Oxford studied law at Gray's Inn at age 17. On the other hand, considering there's no proof that he had any formal education, Shakespeare of Stratford is country miles away from law school.)

Sams also points to a productive writing career in the 1580s, with the author turning out early versions of *Hamlet*, *Taming of the Shrew* and *King John*. The problem for Sams is there's no evidence of Shakespeare of Stratford's presence in London—where these plays were published and performed—until the early 1590s. Yet, Oxfordians have long been contending that the canon as a whole is dated too late. No source material for the plays can be pinpointed to anything after 1603, but many of the publications, events and characters date some plays' origins back to the 1570s and 80s, when Oxford was a leading light in Elizabethan court and cultural life.

Other professors take an agnostic approach to the authorship question. English Prof. David Richardson has taught a class on the authorship controversy at Cleveland State University for the past seven semesters.

"Like everyone else, I grew up Stratfordian," Richardson said. "And without looking at the data I was confident I could say it was just a lunatic fringe movement."

However, after a colleague lent him Ogburn's book he read it and, as he put it, "I couldn't put it down. It was a great detective story." Richardson has inspired mostly ire from his colleagues, but with few exceptions the students love the challenge. "We go from a topic of no interest to most of them," he said, "to one of meaning and great passion."

A few even fly their Oxfordian colors

proudly. Col. Shuttleworth has taught the Air Force Academy's Shakespeare class for 22 years. Since reading Ogburn twelve years ago, he's been integrating Oxfordian materials into the class. "Usually the reaction I get is, 'Why didn't somebody tell me this before? This makes so much sense,'" Shuttleworth said. "It certainly illuminates the plays more than the vacuous, nonexistent author."

Since so much of Shakespeare of Stratford's life—education, experience, knowledge, reading, even writing ability—has to be assumed, Shuttleworth likens the Stratford story to the martini lover who asks the bartender just to wave the vermouth bottle over his glass. "The dry martini school of education permeates the Stratford myth," he said. "Shakespeare didn't have to have learning, instruction, exposure to French or Italian. Just wave the books at him. Miraculously he absorbs it all."

Unlike academics who may hold doubts

but also face the tenure gauntlet, Shuttleworth has the security to make pronouncements like the above. "I'm old and established enough in my profession that I'm not at risk for the Stratford mafia," he joked.

When word got out about the de Vere Studies Conference, Wright didn't exactly find a horse's head in his bed. But he's heard enough derision to last a horse's lifetime.

"The Stratfordians are clearly irritated," Wright observed. "They are at a woeful loss because they have no foundation for response. Any rational examination of the facts yields the judgment that the Shakespeare canon could indeed have been written by Oxford. It's not a matter of ideology. It's simple common sense."

(This article was first published in the Valley Advocate (western Massachusetts) on May 29, 1997. It has been edited for publication in the Newsletter with the author's permission. Ed.)

Oxford Week (Continued from page 8)

perhaps the best accomplishment of Oxford Week was the bonding that occurred with Bay Area Oxfordians. A core group of Society members (Ramon Jimenez, Scott Fanning, Claire LePelle, Sandy Hochberg, Dr. Ed Spencer, Wally and Marie Hurst) worked closely together for months to make these events happen. Five members donated money to offset expenses, and David Hicks generously hosted a party as a special thanks for all our efforts. This group effort, plus the socializing after each event, made our members more fervent than ever for achieving Oxfordian justice.

James Liu, though, had another reason. Liu, a Stanford University librarian, had phoned a Stanford professor during preparations for Oxford Week to let him know that an Oxfordian speaker was coming to town. Cutting him off within seconds, the professor cried, "Call the abnormal psych department!"

The only way Oxfordians can conquer such prejudice is by developing a sense of community and directing it toward organized activism—doing things like "Oxford Week."

Sherman (Continued from page 3)

issue is the necessary marketing, promotion and publicity to the outside world. So it seems obvious to me that what the Society needs is a well planned, strategic marketing plan to communicate this information to the public at large. It is my professional belief that the world will come to accept the Oxfordian point of view if this information is presented in the right way. Part of our problem is that we have been marketing it to the wrong audience (university professors) who have the least interest to change (i.e., they are the most satisfied with their product and are resistant to the so-called "switching costs"). We must now direct our attention and communication efforts towards those who we can successfully influence, thus gradually enlarging "market share" and overall organizational success. With each step, new capital and human resources become available, momentum and power is increased, and the chances of success multiply.

A fully developed marketing plan was conceived for the Society and presented to the Board of Trustees last year. The plan describes the steps, methods, strategies and costs for marketing the Oxfordian message. These are the same techniques used by many successful products and companies today, and my experience has shown that they can also be successful for the Oxfordian paradigm. As I stated in an earlier article, paradigm shifts can either evolve gradually over time, or they can be accelerated through specific marketing and mass communications techniques.

A primary ingredient to the success of the

strategic plan will be money. Therefore, one of my highest priorities during the next year will be to focus on fundraising (see the related article on page 2 about fundraising and the new Shakespeare De Vere Foundation). Fundraising will link expenditures to specific programs that are designed to produce measurable results. In this way, patrons can see a direct relationship between their contributions and progress of specific programs that they may want to sponsor. A summary of the strategic plan will be presented to members at the Seattle Conference. However, the details of specific programs will only be explained to serious contributors who want to sponsor the Society in its fundraising goals.

Subsequently, many SOS members can expect to hear from me directly in the near future as I plan to solicit their support—i.e., financial, professional, and moral. Please feel free to contact me to discuss how you might offer assistance.

Membership growth will be another important area of focus. I believe we can only realize our larger goals through Society growth and size. To this end, I plan to promote growth through individual Society chapters and a "grass roots" approach throughout many US cities. At the Seattle conference, there will be a Society "Chapter Workshop" designed to assist members in meeting and promoting Oxfordian goals, education and involvement in their cities. To this end, a "start up kit" which will guide area leaders in establishing various education and outreach programs (as well as social activities) to spread the word on the authorship question has been devel-

oped. Katherine Chiljan will lead our promotional efforts in this area.

A third area of focus will be involvement. I believe that everyone has some valuable experience, talent or skill to offer to the Society. This vast potential has been laying dormant for far too long and the time has come to mobilize these energies into specific programs. Towards this end, I expect many new leaders to emerge from our activities over the next year. Therefore, it is critical that people look into themselves and find their unique gift that will help advance the cause. Feel free to contact your local area leader or me to discuss any ideas for participation.

I would like to close by saying that I have not accepted the position of President for social or political reasons. I am a pragmatic individual who could easily apply these same energies to a new high-tech start-up venture. Yet, I believe that the Oxfordian movement is a worthy goal—one that will yield many benefits to those who are prepared to make the effort. I also want to stress that it is simply too much work to engage in a leadership role for an effort that might fail. I am not interested in wasting people's time or money in a frivolous manner.

Therefore, I am determined that my efforts will succeed and I ask the same commitment of every other Oxfordian. I can only promise you that the journey will be as rewarding as the final goal.

And like the baseless fabric of this vision...we are such stuff as dreams are made on.

The Tempest

The Oxford Street Players

At Lesley College in Cambridge (Mass.) students are learning a new Shakespeare

by Dr. Anne Elezabeth Pluto



Dr. Anne Pluto

In Spring 1990, as I finished my third year teaching at Lesley College, I became increasingly interested in the challenge of teaching Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Unlike my efforts in English Composition and other Humanities "core courses" I found a certain frustration in Shakespeare—it wasn't enough just to read Shakespeare. Shakespeare was drama, living language, and needed a stage.

Therefore I offered to resurrect the "Plays of Shakespeare" course, and at the same time also requested it be taught in Welch Auditorium. We weren't performing, but we could use the stage. That same semester the instructor for "Modern American Drama" (Beverly Creasey, who is also an Oxfordian) brought in Society trustee Charles Boyle as a guest speaker. Boyle's subject was the Shakespeare Authorship controversy. He was very passionate and compelling and I became very interested in the possibility that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford was the author of Shakespeare's plays.

In Fall 1990 I taught the Shakespeare course again. I invited Charles Boyle to come in and give the same lecture. One of the students, Lisa "Riz" Risley, was mesmerized by the Oxford story and theory.

The following spring, with the support of Dr. Stephen Trainor, Boyle was hired to direct *Twelfth Night*, and Lisa Risley was cast as Sir Toby Belch while doubling as Assistant Director. Risley christened the group the Oxford Street Players of Lesley College, as the College is bounded on its east side by Oxford Street, a fitting bit of serendipity for the new company. Although my involvement was minimal, I was very proud of all the work that Charles, Lisa and the actors did. It was a good show. Unfortunately, the audiences were small.

For everyone involved, it was an experience

to work on a Shakespeare production from the Oxfordian point of view. Boyle emphasized character in his direction, and made it clear how Feste was the key to the play. Graduate student Kim Polman's Feste was memorable, and her rendition of the song at the end did establish that it was Feste's play. Several of the Lesley faculty who took in the performance remarked how surprised they were that undergraduate women could put on a show that made the play so interesting. It was clear the college was ready for a theatre, and that they seemed open to Oxfordian interpretation. Unfortunately, due to varied work commitments and schedules, the theatre was dark the following year.

However, in the Fall of 1993, with Risley back at Lesley, efforts were begun again to resurrect and make permanent the Oxford Street Players. It was decided that I would be the producer while also teaching the play production course, and Risley would direct the play. (She had directed a successful gender switched version of *Taming of the Shrew* at UMass the previous year.) We chose to put on *Merchant of Venice*, set in the 1940's.

The hard work of our college-wide cast and crew paid off. While our run was only one weekend long, all four performances were packed. Shakespeare had made his way back to Lesley College; we were determined he stay there.

That same spring I began a year long sabbatical to pursue theatre training and was accepted into the June 1993 Intensive Workshop and Summer Training Institute at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, MA. A major part of my training was Linklater Voice work (developed by Oxfordian Kristen Linklater). The other aspects of the training included: text, stage combat, movement and Medieval/Renaissance dance. It was difficult; I had left the theatre at the age of 16. I worked very hard on my final scene: Angelo and Isabella—the rape scene in *Measure for Measure*. After the workshop ended, I moved onto the next phase, the Summer Training Institute, where I was played an Amazon/

Fairy in Tina Packer's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the young Earl of Rutland and Henry VI in the *Henry VI* Chronicles.

Returning to Boston in early September, I was cast as Fabiana in Charles Boyle's Ever Theatre production of *Twelfth Night*, and began studying voice with Kristen Linklater. Boyle told the cast how his being an Oxfordian would impact our *Twelfth Night*. For the most part, the actors were not interested and resented playing the characters as representations of 16th century people. Directors and actors have very complicated relationships with intricate responses to each other. This was evident with Boyle, the Oxfordian director (who made it clear where he stood) and our cast, some of whom were Shakespearean actors working in the "mainstream." Things got interesting.

During the rehearsal process the actor playing Feste could not get into the mode that Boyle was seeking, and in one or two other cases tension arose between the director and cast. As the actor playing a cross-gendered Fabian (Fabiana), I witnessed these dissensions, and noted myself that if both actors and directors are neither respectful nor open to suggestions from either side the director's vision will not come through.

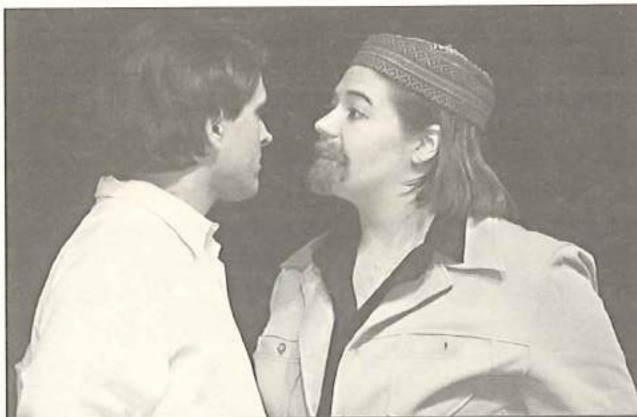
What moved me the most in this conflict was that playing Shakespeare was indeed about speaking the truth and being in the moment. Although that had been part of my summer experience at Shakespeare & Company, my three months with the Ever Theatre had a even greater impact on me. I was anxious to explore this meeting of the truth and the present, especially since the truth on the authorship question remains veiled. I soon got my chance.

In the Spring 1994 I returned to Lesley, to direct my first Shakespeare play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and set it in the 1950's. Since then I have directed three other plays for the Oxford Street Players: *Twelfth Night (fever)* — set in the 1970's, *Romeo and Juliet* — set in the 1930's, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* — set in the 1960's. The Oxford Street Players are now an institution at Lesley College.

While the first production by Charles Boyle in 1991 was all female, I have directed my productions with male and female casts, but continue to experiment with gender switches for some roles, the most recent being *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Both Valentine and Proteus were played by young women, although they played them as men. I did change Don Antonio into Dona Antonia, Panthino into Panthina, and Speed was played as a woman. Obviously these switches changed the relationships between the characters. Proteus reacted differently to a widowed mother than he would have to a father. Making Panthina his sister instead of a servant brought up how Dona Antonia's treatment of her daughter was different from that of her son. It also gave Panthina a strong reason to want Proteus sent to Milan. A female Speed created a sexual tension for Launce that made their scenes together charged. By having young women take on the roles of men a further exploration of the human psyche occurs. They ask more questions of the men in their lives and gain a deeper understanding into the motivations of the opposite sex.

I have designed a Drama Minor, and we are in the talking stages of expansion to a Drama Major. I have a modest budget and hire a Linklater Voice Teacher, Fight Choreographer, Music Director, Costume Designer, and Lighting Designer. The students may participate in the production for credit; 90% of the cast and crew take the "Play Production: Shakespeare" course. We are a college-wide theatre; everyone and anyone is welcome to audition or request to work on tech. Lisa Risley has been involved in each of the productions; she has acted, designed costumes and scenery, and this year joined me as Teaching Assistant for the Play Production course as well as Design Area Head. I could not have built this company without her.

I joined the Shakespeare Oxford Society several years ago and consider myself a serious Oxfordian; the "Troublesome Questions" from the SOS brochure appear in each of our playbills along with my director's notes which explain anything Oxfordian. However, I have found that the best vehicle



In a scene from Twelfth Night (fever), Jodilyn Campbell (Feste) fools with Joe Johnson (Sebastian).

for approaching the authorship question with my student actors and my audience is through humor.

In mounting the plays themselves I have usually tried to add some overt message about the "true" author, usually through an additional character or a visual pun. For *Merry Wives*, I created a character of Eddie de Vere, local piano player and also directed the Latin Lesson between young William Page and Parson Hugh as my Oxfordian message. We created a mask from the Martin Droeshout engraving with which William covered his face each time he heard, "William, hold up your head." In *Twelfth Night (fever)* I staged a beauty pageant, with Olivia as the reigning Miss Illyria. Our 14 beauty contestants each recited a line from Sonnet 65 after she reached the stage. Olivia appeared as soon as they finished and became the embodiment of the sonnet, the queen. In the *Romeo and Juliet* program, my notes included a reference to Richard Rowe's lecture on Oxford and Italy at the 1994 Carmel Conference. His findings on *Romeo and Juliet* inspired me to direct that very difficult play. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* had a comic Oxfordian twist. The Duke of Milan metamorphosed into Eduardo Deverio, (with de Vere's crest hung as part of the scenery) the hottest fashion designer in 1960's Italy. The result was fabulous. Turning the duke into a fictional version of de Vere gave me the latitude in which to discuss the Elizabethan world and the players on its stage. My ultimate goal is not to convert my students into Oxfordians, but to make them aware that they can and

should question everything.

I have also updated all of the settings, but this is as much, if not more, for financial reasons (renaissance costuming is quite expensive) than for "accessibility" or aesthetic reasons. (I'm hoping that next spring's production will be a period piece.) And with all the recent Shakespeare movies in the past few years, updating the time and place has been more the norm than the exception. Updating can bring student actors closer to the text and has helped them to see Shakespeare as I do—the universal poet who tells

all our stories.

Through the generosity of the Society I have been able to start a good Oxfordian collection in the Ludke Library. I have used Richard Whalen's book, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*, in my Shakespeare course. As a director I give lectures on the authorship question and who the characters may possibly represent among the realm of historical people, but have never asked an actor to be Edward de Vere, Queen Elizabeth, or William Cecil. That information is only there to help the actor find his character. My students have responded with great openness.

My Humanities Division colleagues are not all as generous, since the myth of the middle class genius persists, but my own persistence has paid off. One of my colleagues, an ardent Stratfordian teaching the Junior Methodology course, began her most recent class with the Authorship question. The students were required to debate both sides. She brought me in as a guest speaker. I did not hesitate to confess my Oxfordian status, but encouraged the class to be open in their research. Later one of my stage managers, taking that course, informed me that most of the class ended up fledgling Oxfordians. It is not only Shakespeare who has come to Lesley and is staying, but the Earl of Oxford as well.

Next Spring we will present either *Comedy of Errors* or *Measure for Measure*. The Oxford Street Players accept tax-deductible donations of clothing and props, or books for the Eleanor Ludke Library at Lesley College. Please feel free to call me at (617) 349-8948.

Oxfordian News

10th Annual Oxford Day Banquet Held in Cambridge, Mass. New Chapter takes off in Sacramento following Oxford Week

California

In **Sacramento** the first meeting of the newly formed Sacramento chapter drew 24 interested Shakespeareans and Oxfordians. The chapter was born out of all the activities leading up to "Oxford Week" in northern California, and was organized by Wally Hurst, a Trustee of the Society.

Among those attending the first meeting were three professors and four high school teachers, all of whom now call themselves confirmed Oxfordians.

For their next meeting in June a special guest lecturer, Mr. Jack Lynn, has accepted an invitation. Lynn was once a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company and as an instructor in drama has counted among his students Anthony Hopkins, Ian Oglivy, Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman. Lynn describes himself as "agnostic" on the authorship, but is always willing to share his insights on the plays and how to read them with an interested audience.

Massachusetts

In **Cambridge** the 10th Annual Oxford Day Banquet was held on April 18th at the Harvard Faculty Club. Approximately 50 Oxfordians attended to see and hear Charles Boyle make his first public appearance since his stroke in Minneapolis last fall, and to enjoy Charles Burford's talk on King Lear.

Since the spring Society Board meeting was also being held in conjunction with the banquet, the guest list included Randall Sherman from California, Aaron Tatum from Tennessee, and Lydia Bronte and Michael Pisapia from New York.

Charles Boyle spoke briefly, welcoming everyone to the event he started "way back" in 1988, and then introducing Charles Burford. Boyle had been making much progress in his recovery from last fall's stroke, and it was a pleasurable sight for



Charles Burford, his wife Louise and Charles Boyle enjoy a moment at the farewell party for the Burfords, held two weeks after the 10th Annual Oxford Day Banquet in Cambridge.

everyone in attendance to see him back in action on the issue that he has cared about and worked hard on for nearly 20 years.

Washington D.C.

Past Society President Richard Whalen and newly-elected Trustee Elliott Stone attended the Annual SAA Conference held in late March in **Washington, D.C.** Since no Society members were presenting seminar papers this year, the large Society presence of the past few years was absent. We will, however, be back next year.

One event of interest for Oxfordians was a talk given by Hardy Cook, the editor/moderator of SHAKSPER, the Global Electronic Shakespeare Conference. In reviewing his tenure as editor he touched upon the events of 1994, when the authorship debate broke out and slowly escalated into an all-out flame war by the end of the year. It was then that Cook banned any further authorship discussion on SHAKSPER.

He told his SAA audience that "I tried to be patient ...but after a while I deemed, as a responsible Shakespearean firmly ensconced in academia, that I could no longer tolerate the misleading, conspiracy-laden ramblings and banned further discussion on the topic."

Part of the fallout from these events in 1994 was the establishment later in 1995 of the Usenet newsgroup, **humanities.lit.**

authors.shakespeare, which came about primarily through the efforts of Society member Marty Hyatt. Authorship is a regular topic on this group.

However, as Dr. Daniel Wright of Concordia University found out earlier this year, the effect of the SHAKSPER banishment has extended, several years later, to Cook's refusal even to carry a notice about the first Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia.

Another event of interest to Oxfordians also took place in Washington recently. On April 24th Irv Matus (author of *Shakespeare IN FACT*) gave a talk at the Library of Congress entitled "Why There Is a Shakespeare Authorship Question."

Among the arguments he presented in claiming that there really is no authorship question was a direct rebuttal to one of the chief criticisms of his book, mainly that he failed to address the numerous connections between Oxford's life and the plays. In this regard he singled out Roger Stritmatter's analysis of *Hamlet* for particular scrutiny. After challenging some familiar points (i.e. he claims that a majority of scholars today *reject* seeing Polonius as a caricature of Lord Burghley), he reached a conclusion that seems to be a new part of the Stratfordian defense strategy for the 90's.

In short, Matus argued that Oxfordians diminish *Hamlet* by positing Oxford as the author and "would have it that the heart of the play is a trail of bread crumbs leading to its author and his personal peevishness with the court of Elizabeth." He further emphasized this point by noting that Hamlet never uses the first person "I" in "To be or not to be", which means (Matus said) that Hamlet is not speaking of himself alone at all, but rather is pondering the question of why people (mankind?) endure "the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to."

Which, then, only leads us to wonder, "Can anyone be the author of *Hamlet*?"

England

The authorship debate held at the Theatre Royal in Bath, Somerset on May 23rd was a rousing success. Nearly 300 were in attendance for the all day event, sponsored by an Oxfordian member of the theatre. The debate was not simply Oxfordian vs. Stratford, but also included Baconians and Marlovians. The show of hands vote at the end of the day had Shaksper of Stratford winning a narrow victory, but coming in at under 50% of the total vote. Edward de Vere was the clear winner among the various claimants.

Among the Shakespeare Oxford Society members on hand were Charles Burford debating the Oxfordian case, and Allan Hovey, Trudy Atkins, Jerry Downs and Wayne Shore. Verily Anderson and Christopher Dams of the De Vere Society were also on hand, along with a number of other members of the De Vere Society.

A full report on the event will appear in the Summer Newsletter.

We recently received a subscription inquiry from England that was not just your usual inquiry. It was from the Parish Council at Castle Hedingham.

Having had the loan of your publication, the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, I am writing on behalf of my Parish Council, to enquire if there is Corporate Membership available to an organization such as ourselves.

Living and being the local authority for the village we feel it is important that we should keep ourselves informed of any developments that arise, especially in relation to the increasing popularity of the Oxfordian theory, which we are convinced is the correct one.

However as you will doubtless appreciate, for Castle Hedingham to become a second Stratford upon Avon would be disastrous if it happened 'overnight'. Accordingly we hope that by keeping in touch with your Society we will be able to plan ahead, and meet the obvious development that will take place in an orderly fashion, which will be to everyone's advantage.

Awaiting your reply with interest, I remain,

Yours faithfully,

J.B. Buckley
Chairman
Castle Hedingham Parish Council
13 April 1997

John Louth Reports:

Gad's Hill, Gadshill, Gads Hill: "Readers of Shakespeare," writes Charlton Ogburn (p. 528, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*) "know the episode from Act II, Scene 2 of *Henry the Fourth, Part One*, in which Falstaff and three of Prince Hal's other companions of the Boar's-Head Tavern hold up and rob some travelers bearing 'money of the King's ... on the way to the King's exchequer' along the highway near Gad's Hill." (Gadshill also is the name of one of Prince Henry's trio, the one who goads Falstaff into offering his version of the event to the patrons of the Boar's Head Tavern.)

That highway is the identical road stretching between Rochester and Gravesend along which occurred an actual robbery staged as a prank, but still very much like the one described in *1 Henry IV*. The holdup outraged William Lord Burghley, under whose wing the Gad's Hill robbers' friend Edward de Vere was assigned as ward.

In May of 1573 a letter to Lord Burghley (from two of de Vere's former employees) accused de Vere the 17th Earl of Oxford and three of his men of once ambushing the travelers. The caper was somewhat frightening in that it was pulled off with gunshots fired from "calivers charged with bullets..." The letter identifies Oxford "to be thought of [as] procurer of that which is done." After the mock attack, the perpetrators "mounted on horseback and fled towards London."

The importance of recreating on stage a like prank is that Shakespeare—if he were the commoner from Warwickshire—took some heavy chances. After all, how smart was it to insert in a play an actual event starring one of Queen Elizabeth's favorite bad boys, the Earl of Oxford? Now if, as it fully appears, Oxford wrote the plays attributed to Shakespeare one can see the queen and right-hand man Burghley once again finding some reason or reasons to overlook it; but if the commoner from Stratford had created the play and the scene...?

Well, there it would have been, a prank robbery instigated by one of Elizabeth's nobility presented as public theater for all to see and, worst of all, written by a plebeian. Many in the audience—London, big as it was for the time, had a population of only a bit more than a couple hundred thousand—had to be aware of the rumors of the real identities of characters mimicked rumors of in the play. When the quality of the "friendliness" between Oxford and Queen Elizabeth is considered it would be understatement to say Elizabeth would have been upset by the Stratford man's effrontery.

The queen was consistent in the matter of demanding proper respect for rank, at one point in the 1560s decreeing that proletariat and others

wearing clothing beyond their actual should be punished. Not to be forgotten in this respect is that the queen could become downright nasty with commoners who tried to tread on important ground. In the late 1570s did not a street tract—decrying the queen's prospective marriage to Alencon the Frenchman—arouse her to order the royal axman to chop off author John Stubbs' right hand?

So the possibility of the lad from Stratford playwriting about a serious prank committed by one of Elizabeth's favorite courtiers is slim if not nonexistent. However, that would not have been an impediment to the Earl of Oxford in his role as Shakespeare, especially in light of the annual but unexplained thousand pounds paid for almost two decades by the queen's treasurer (James I continued the practice) to Oxford. If, as surmised, the money was paid the Earl for service to the crown by way of writing stage plays containing propaganda for domestic consumption, Queen Liz could have accepted the mockery as only a joke on Oxford himself and not the nobility he represented.

Further complicating the incident as a report issuing from the hand of the Stratford man is the fact that it appeared in another historical play not created in the working time-frame of his life. "The episode," writes Charlton Ogburn [*TMWS*, p. 529], "had previously appeared in the play's precursor, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, probably Oxford's first venture in historical drama." Earlier in his book, Mr. Ogburn states:

As B. M. Ward maintained in 1928, the anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* probably was Vere's first attempt to dramatize the life of the monarch, who, in much expanded and improved versions, would disport with the high spirits of youth as Prince Hal in the two parts of *King Henry the Fourth* and with manly majesty wear the crown in *King Henry the Fifth*. I think there can be little doubt of this.

An historical footnote regarding Gad's Hill is that Charles Dickens built a house only a few paces distant from where the altercation occurred. One hundred years later, Edward Vandiver, Jr. ("Dickens' Knowledge of Shakespeare [sic]," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, XXI, London: 1946) wrote this about Gad's Hill and Dickens the Bardolator:

During his disastrous first trip to America in 1842, ... Dickens carried a copy of Shakespeare and called it "an unspeakable source of delight." He lived his last years at [the] house at Gads Hill (the scene of Falstaff's "robbery") and he was proud of its Shakespearean associations.

Shakespeare, Oxford and Du Bartas: A Follow-up

by James Fitzgerald

Several readers of "Shakespeare, Oxford, and Du Bartas" (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Winter 1997) have asked me to expand on what being the "Voice" of Du Bartas actually means—which I shall be pleased to undertake

But I should first like to correct an error of fact in that article. The Bacon at Bordeaux to whom Du Bartas wrote in 1584 was Anthony, the brother of Francis. Susan Snyder (Du Bartas' biographer) writes: "The letter ... was surely written to Anthony Bacon and not to Francis, who was busy at the time pursuing his political career in England." Of course, the significance of the consanguinity between Oxford and his cousins Bacon does not change.

Regarding the great Calliopean responsibility of being the "Voice of Du Bartas," I recur to Sidney Lee, who declares that "the honors which Shakespeare's generation paid [Du Bartas] excelled those which were be-

stowed on any other foreign contemporary." As for Sylvester's stewardship, we have the scarcely veiled testimony of Oxford's eulogy, and the insight of Andy Hannas that "Oxford no doubt had cringed" when he read Sylvester's version of Du Bartas—"hence his mordant praise."

In the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* article I advanced the notion that the literary influences of Du Bartas and "Shakespeare" were potentially mutual. However, if forced to choose, I would have to suppose that the influence went from Du Bartas to "the Voice of Du Bartas", i.e. Oxford-Shakespeare.

Only Du Bartas was publicly available in an era of primitive communication. Relatedly, A. H. Upham reports that "there is abundant evidence that, prior to the appearance of Sylvester's translation and independent of his influence, the literary men of England were entirely familiar with

this French master."

Zealots may bristle that I would have the lesser lead the greater. *Mais non, les fanatiques!* See it rather as the mined and the miner. Du Bartas discoursed on everything under the sun. What Oxford did was to mine this mother lode and smelt it into the English treasures of his mind.

But let us look at two such extractions by "Shakespeare" to illustrate this point. I am indebted in the following observations to the fascinating and immensely useful article "Shakespeare's French Fruits" by J. W. Lever, in *Shakespeare Survey*, 1953.

First, in the box below, is one of the more striking examples considered by Lever. Note especially how the meter and poetry of the original French becomes entirely lost in the translation. Then compare this translation by John Eliot to the transformation that Shakespeare performs in his "sceptured isle" speech from *Richard II*.

The Voice of Du Bartas?

"It is the occupational disease of source-hunters to see a bear in every bush," warns J. W. Lever in his article "Shakespeare's French Fruits" (*Shakespeare Survey*, 1953): "[However,] all that Du Bartas said in praise of France might be applied with advantage to England ... As for the 'pearl of rich European bounds' (O perle de l'Europe!)—how much more aptly could a jewel metaphor be applied to one's own island country! And so, in our view, the France of Du Bartas became Shakespeare's 'This England' [emphasis added]."

O mille et mille fois terre heureuse et feconde!
O perle de l'Europe! o paradis du monde!
France je te salue, o mere des guerriers,
Qui jadis ont plante leurs triomphans lauriers
Sur les rives d'Euphrate, et sanglante leur glaive
Ou la torche du jour et se couche et se leve;
Mere de tant d'ouvriers qui d'un hardy bon-heur
Taschant comme obscurir de nature l'honneur;
Mere de tant d'esprits qui de scavoir espuisent
Egypte, Grece, Rome, et sur les doctes luisent
Comme un jaune esclattant sur les palles couleurs,
Sur les Phebus, et sa fleur sur les fleurs.

(2nd Week, 2nd Day, II, 709-20)

O Fruitfull France! most happie Land, happie
and happie thrice!
O pearle of rich European bounds! O earthly
Paradise!
All haile sweet soile! O France the mother of
many conquering knights,
Who planted once their glorious standards
like triumphing wights
Upon the banks of Euphrates where Titan
day-torch bright
Riseth, and bloodie swords unsheathed where
Phoebus drouns his light,
The mother of many Artist-hands whose
workmanship most rare
Dimmes Natures workes, and with her fairest
flowers cloth compare
The nurse of many learned wits who fetch their
skill divine
From Rome from Greece, from Aegypt farre,
and ore the learnedst shine,
As doth the glymmering-Crimsin-dye over the
darkest gray:
Titan ore starres, or Phoebus flowers ore mari-
golds in May.
(II, 709-20; translated by John Eliot, 1592)

This royal throne of kings, this sceptured isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world
This precious stone set in the silver sea...
...This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this
England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed, and famous for their birth.

(*Richard II*, II, i, 40-6, 50-2)

Another similar example involves images of the "lark" and Joshua Sylvester's 1605 translation. First, consider these four Bartassian lines of infinite, onomatopoeic charm (followed by Sylvester's translation):

La gentile Alouette avec son tyre-lire
Tire l'yre a l'ire & tiri-tyrant vire
Vers la voute du Ciel, puis son vol vers
celieu
Vire, & desire dire, adieu Dieu, adieu
Dieu.

(*1st Week, 5th Day*, II, 615-18)

The prettie Larke, climbing the Welkin cleere,
Chaunts with a cheere, heere peere-I neere
my Deere;
Then stooping thence (seeming her fall to
rew)
Adiew (she saith) adiew, Deere, Deere adiew.
(II, 615-18, trans. by Joshua Sylvester)

"Beside this," remarks Lever, "we set three familiar Shakespearean allusions to the lark":

I'll say yon gray is not the morning's
eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's
brow;
Nor that is not the lark whose notes do
beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our
heads.
(*Romeo and Juliet*, III, v, 19-22)

Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's
gate.

(Sonnet 29, 10-2)

The lark that tirra-lirra chants.
(*Winter's Tale*, IV, iii, 9)

If I might put my own oar in the water at this point, consider this line (853) from *Venus and Adonis*: "Lo, here the gentle lark, (weary of rest)." Looking back to "La gentile Alouette," we see "La" echoed in "Lo," and duplicate six-syllable blocks of sound.

In all then, the similarities, as Lever considered in 1953, are intriguing, and may well represent an area of Shakespeare studies worthy of much future research and study.

And this is especially so if one posits that Oxford, the self-declared "Voice of Du Bartas," is indeed "Shakespeare."

Book Reviews

Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays.
Edited by Felicia Hardison Londre. (Garland Publishing, 1997) 476 pages.

By Richard F. Whalen

Students of *Love's Labour's Lost*—a life-long challenge—will find this volume of more than fifty essays and performance reviews indispensable. It's the ninth in Garland's series on each of Shakespeare's plays. The editors are eminent Shakespearean scholars; they include Stanley Wells (*Twelfth Night*), who was also editor of the Oxford edition of the collected works.

Oxfordians will especially appreciate the accomplishment of the editor, Felicia Londre, a former trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and a lecturer in academia on the evidence for Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare. She is Curators' Professor of Theater at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the author of many books and articles.

The collection opens with a short poem (1598) by Robert Tofte about a performance he saw with his girlfriend and a short note (1604) by Walter Cope asking Lord Cranborne if the play, recommended by Burbage, should be performed for Queen Anne at Southampton's place or Cranborne's.

There are notes and essays by Coleridge, Hazlitt, Pater and Samuel Johnson. Oscar Campbell, in his article (1925), reviews Abel Lefranc's proposal of the court of Navarre as the setting. Bobbyann Rosen, now known as Anne Barton, contributes an early article (1953). Later essays are by John Dover Wilson, Alfred Harbage, Stanley Wells, and Meredith Anne Skura. The final quarter of the book is devoted to the play in performance, with reviews by G.B. Shaw (the actors didn't get the jokes), Peter Brook, Clive Barnes and Londre.

Londre supplied the lengthy introduction, in which she describes the principal evidence in the play for Oxford's authorship. The in-jokes, personal references and depictions of manners make it a "virtual certainty" that the author was an "intimate of the court." A reference to fireworks

recalls the fireworks display that Oxford arranged for the queen. "Ever" seems to be a pun on his family name.

The play reflects the Euphuism fad of fancy talk that was at its height in 1578—when Will Shakspeare of Stratford was fourteen. While noting that many leading Shakespeareans "still adhere to the traditional claim" for Will Shakspeare, Londre suggests "that responsible scholars now acknowledge at least that there are grounds for continuing investigation of the [authorship] issue from both the so-called Stratfordian and Oxfordian points of view and that keeping the issue open to objective scholarly debate can illuminate many facets of the Shakespeare canon."

In an article on the Elizabethan view of foreigners, Londre also quotes Lefranc on Navarre, and she settles on 1578 as the probable date of composition, with later revisions. And it was "unquestionably" written from a courtly perspective. The perplexing Don Armado gets special attention since critics have seen him as standing for various historical personages. He is seen by Oxfordians, says Londre, "as one facet of the probable author of the play, Edward de Vere."

The editor and publisher of the series have evidently designed it primarily for academic libraries; this volume is printed on "acid-free, 250-year-life" paper and is priced at \$85 a copy. Most libraries will undoubtedly add it to their Shakespeare shelves. Oxfordians who really love *Love's Labour's Lost* (as does Londre) may well find it worth the money. Garland will take credit card orders at (800)627-6273.

Our review of Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare* will appear in the Summer 1997 Newsletter.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an article by Sobran on the key thesis to his book (page 1), and some related commentary by Roger Strimatter on both the book and several early reviews of it (page 6).

Also, Mark Anderson ("Meet the New Bard," page 1) discusses *Alias* and quotes from his interview with Sobran.

Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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Shakespeare Oxford Society

The newsletter welcomes articles, essays, commentary,
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should be reasonably concise and, when appropriate,
validated by peer review. The views expressed by
contributors do not necessarily reflect those of
the Society as a literary and educational organization.

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From the Editor:

Thanks Charles

As everyone knows by now, Charles Burford has resigned as President of the Society to accept a position in London with the College of Arms. He remains on the Board of Trustees, and through the miracle of the Internet and email, remains in close contact with us in putting together the newsletter.

It was not an easy decision for him to leave this position with all that has occurred in the past eighteen months, but with a family to consider it was certainly the correct one.

I have only come to know Charles well as we worked together under some incredible circumstances in our endeavor to accomplish what a number of Society members had been seeking for years—the professionalization of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. We believe that we have made great strides in this endeavor, though there is still much to do.

The role that Charles Burford has played in the growth of the Society in the 90's and in the increasing visibility and popularity of the authorship question cannot be underestimated. During the six years that Charles resided in this country, he has traveled to every region, giving hundreds of talks and lectures, participating in many debates, and giving many interviews with all the media—print, TV, and radio. His energy throughout these years was remarkable, and as anyone who has attended one of his talks and seen him in action knows, he has a special mastery of both the Shakespeare Canon and the intricacies of the authorship debate.

For me, the most memorable event during this period came in April 1996 at the joint World Shakespeare Congress and Shakespeare Association of America Conference in Los Angeles. The SOS Board was all there for its semiannual meeting and a special reception was being sponsored by the Society, with the World Congress

and SAA attendees invited. Charles Burford was one of the featured speakers. Some of us were concerned about how many mainstream Shakespeareans would turn out for this event, held as it were in the “belly of the beast.”

But we needn't have worried, as the two rooms set aside for us were packed. I learned later that one distinguished Stratfordian remarked how he always liked to hear Burford talk on Shakespeare. And Burford was, of course, excellent, eloquent and controversial.

It may not be clear to all our members the important role Burford played in revitalizing the newsletter and assuring the quality of the first five issues. It was his initiative in summer 1995 that resulted in an invitation to me to take on this task, and I can assure one and all that it has only been possible for us to do as much as we have because we had Charles Burford as a co-editor, a genuine perfectionist and an excellent writer who not only noticed (and cared about) the finer points of punctuation and layout, but who in proofreading an article could just as matter-of-factly notice some fine point of Latin grammar in a citation as well as he could spot the run-of-the-mill typo.

Charles will be participating in the Seattle Conference this Fall, and expects to be coming back to the States at least twice a year, corresponding with our annual Conferences in the Fall and the semiannual Board meetings in the Spring.

As he told me in our last get-together before he boarded the flight to London on May 8th, “I’ll be involved with Shakespeare and the authorship issue the rest of my life. I know that.”

It is to all our benefit that Charles Burford has been with us in this struggle, and that he will remain an active member of our Board and our Society—even at such a long distance—is good news for all of us.

Writing “Writing History”

“I don’t care what they say about me, just spell my name right.” This old saw, first spoken by we’re not sure who, is just another way of saying controversy isn’t necessarily bad.

So we can only guess that we’ve arrived with our Winter 1997 issue, because things were certainly being said, although all anyone had to worry about spelling was “The Editors.”

But now, in just the past few weeks, we have learned from Roger Stritmatter that there is a rumor circulating that he wrote the entire article. So Roger, who whole-heartedly concurred with the article, did think it would be in order for us

to set the record straight. And we agree. Several others have also recently asked us to clarify this.

So... “The Editors” are Charles Boyle, William Boyle and Charles Burford. And since Charles’ stroke in Minneapolis, it was mostly just William Boyle and Charles Burford.

This generic byline was only attached to lead stories where everyone contributed as we worked together and freely exchanged ideas and information. In the end no single byline would have been in order, and we decided against any multiple bylines.

Hence, “The Editors.”

Letters:

To the Editors:

As early as 1903, an anonymous Cambridge scholar and Baconite noted the Du Bartas connection with Shakespeare's image of the horse in *Venus and Adonis*, which was borrowed word for word from the Du Bartas French original. The anonymous scholar notes that "Bacon could do this [translate from the French] easily, as the perfect French scholar; but whether the Stratford man could is very doubtful." Mr. Fitzgerald himself points to the fact that Bacon and Du Bartas exchanged correspondence in September of 1584. Hopefully, he will be able to uncover tangible evidence connecting Oxford to Du Bartas other than the Joshua Sylvester commendation if he hopes to use the Du Bartas connection as evidence of Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare plays.

For those interested the relevant reference comes from *Is it Shakespeare? The Great Question of Elizabethan Literature. Answered in the Light of The New Revelations and Important Contemporary Evidence Hitherto Unnoticed by a Graduate of Cambridge* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1903) pages 77-8.

Dana E. Benjamin
Marlene Z. Benjamin
Auroa OH
21 April 1997

(See page 18 for a follow-up story on "Shakespeare, Oxford and Du Bartas." -Ed)

To the Editor

Your article on "Writing History" (Winter 1997), signed by the editors, seems to have missed the point of Diana Price's critique in *The Elizabethan Review* of the Prince Tudor theory as presented by Elisabeth Sears in *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose* (1991).

The editors take Price to task for holding documentary evidence superior to interpretive evidence. But Sears states in the first two sentences of her introduction that "most of the history presented in this book is based on documented facts....Most of the circumstantial evidence is derived from the Shakespeare works and particularly from the sonnets." And indeed her book uses historical documents extensively to argue that Oxford and Queen Elizabeth were the parents of the third earl of Southampton.

In *The Elizabethan Review* (Autumn 1996) Diana Price acknowledges the force of the literary interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays; she says the Tudor Prince proponents quote them "to excellent effect." Her article, however, was directed at Sears's account and interpretation of the history, that is, her "documented facts."

Your readers may want to keep an open mind on the Prince Tudor controversy. The theory does explain many otherwise puzzling passages in Shakespeare; but the question at hand seems to be: Do the documented facts of history permit (if not confirm) impregnation of the queen by Oxford, pregnancy at the right time by the highly visible queen and the unpublicized birth of a son who then became Southampton? Sears

says yes; Price says no, not yet. It's a fascinating question, one that demands the highest level of scholarly research and interpretation, historical as well as literary.

Richard F. Whalen
Truro MA
7 May 1997

To the Editor:

Besides believing that Edward de Vere is probably the person most responsible for the works of Shakespeare, I am interested in his place in history. Since first learning about him about ten years ago, I have suspected that he was the son of Elizabeth I and that his great tragedy in his own mind was that he would not be king. The "News from England" (Winter 1997) article tells us that a growing number of Oxfordians share the belief that Oxford was Elizabeth's son. If you are counting, count me among these. This, along with my reading that the young man in the Sonnets is a lover, not a son, rather rules the Prince Tudor theory out of my personal beliefs, though I do try to keep an open mind. That Elizabeth had a son and later had a son to this son, and the two sons became lovers is rather too complex and unconventional even for a Renaissance court—even for the plot of a Shakespeare play.

I am determined to keep an open mind and not fall into the Stratfordian trap of dogma. I agree with the letters of Stephanie Hughes (Fall 1996) and Grace Cali (Winter 1997). I, too, am uncomfortable with the statement of purpose, which seems to have made a sizable leap of faith from the stated purpose of the group when founded.

My own feelings on the authorship question can respect and accommodate diverse and seemingly contradictory evidence and theories. I see Oxford as responsible for producing plays, which may have remained fairly fluid works in progress for some time, partly worked out on stage. He was the creative, moving, cohesive force, and most of the ideas and language were his. But others may have contributed, just as artists will work in the studio of a major artist under his name. Shakespeare could have been both a convenient collective name for the

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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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Letters (Continued from page 21)

group and a logical pseudonym for its leader. Even that infamous "Stratford Man" may have put in a word here and there, spoken, I suppose, as his literacy has been called into doubt. If Oxford really died in 1604, his son-in-law Derby probably collected, edited, and perhaps added some material to the plays and would deserve much of the credit for making them a unified body of literature, though I would still call Oxford Shakespeare.

Needless to say, this is all based on interpretive, not documentary, evidence, not to say intuition, common sense, and an open mind. In the meantime, thank you for giving me such fascinating reading material in the newsletter. In my relatively short time as a member, I have not always been sure with which warring faction I disagree most. But, in truth, I have enjoyed the battle.

Patricia Shirley
Altoona PA
24 April 1997

To the Editor:

Mark Anderson and I both appreciated Charlton Ogburn's kind compliments regarding Mark's update on our de Vere Bible study.

Charlton's letter raises the pertinent question of the significance of the footnote from *II Philippians* reprinted in Mark's article; and therein, of course, lies an instructive story with three short but sweet chapters in it. When I first found that Portia's lines did not refer to *Matthew 5:16*, as all previous students of the problem had supposed, I had no idea that this finding was freighted with further logical implications.

Only with some further investigation did I discover that Portia's "good deed" in a "naughty world" follows wording peculiar to the Geneva translation marked in de Vere's Bible. This second finding now served to prove that not only was Shakespeare remembering *Philippians 2:15* when he composed Portia's speech—he must also have been remembering the Geneva, and only the Geneva translation, marked in the de Vere Bible.

This second finding resulted from my curiosity about the source of Nasheeb Shaheen's publication of the correct solu-

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The Blue Boar

Books and Publications

Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time. By Joseph Sobran. Item SP 7 \$25.00

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.

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

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published in 1980's by Stephanie Caruana. Item SP2 \$20.00

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Letters (Continued from page 22)

tion to this problem in his 1993 book, *Biblical Allusions in Shakespeare's Comedies*, since I had previously communicated my discovery to him but was not acknowledged in the book.

Finally, our third finding related to this matter of variant translations came many months later during the preparations for Mark's article reporting on our 1996 Conference lecture, when I happened to notice that the Genevan note (1) attached to *Philippians 2:16* calls the "sons of god" mentioned in 2:15 "they which in the night set forthe a candle to give light to others" (Genevan 1570; italics added).

Since the only case for the earlier theory that Portia's pretext was *Matthew* was the explicit mention of a "candle" and "candlestick" in *Matthew 5:15* (Genevan 1570), this footnote under *Philippians 2:16* supplies an additional element confirming the inspirational primacy of *Philippians 2:15* in Shakespeare's imagination.

Would I argue that, while composing *The Merchant of Venice*, our author didn't also have in mind the *Matthew 5:15-16* moral about "not hiding your candle under a bushel?" Of course not. A candle, after all, is a candle. In both gospel verses, the

candle signifies the righteousness of persons whose moral purpose sets them at odds with things "as they are" in the transitory world of illusions.

For Shakespeare, a candle is the light of holy inspiration that comes from direct contact with the universe of God's mind. The candle image thus belongs to what Professor Herbert Coursen has termed Shakespeare's "great theme—the discrepancy between appearance and reality."

Portia's candle throws a light on the details which restore equity to justice, just as Oxfordian attention to the details of the text will restore equity and mercy to de Vere's story.

Roger Stritmatter
Northampton MA
22 May 1997

To the Editor:

Is it possible to proffer an alternative view of Branagh's *Hamlet*? (*Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Winter 1997) Having taken a group of fifty-seven 16-18 year olds to see it, and found them 100% attentive and ready to discuss it in an enlightening way afterwards, I feel there is much to praise in it.

Firstly, to claim such attention from their age range over 242 minutes was a success. The film buffs recognised the big names (and were amused by Emma Thompson's absence). The Film Studies students discussed close ups, zoom shoots, angle of shots and special effects—and yes, they panned the indifferent music, particularly at the beginning of the play. The contact lens wearers speculated on the Ghost's eyes, the Phantom of the Opera ones sighed over the chandelier, but they had all been gripped by the play. And they laughed at Osric/Robin Williams.

Secondly, while they did think Branagh fancied himself in bed with Kate Winslett, they liked the suggestion. If Hamlet and Ophelia were lovers, how much worse for her were Laertes' warning words, how much more difficult for her, torn between her lover and her father, how much sharper Hamlet's condemnation and "Get thee to a nunnery"/brothel lines are. Her anguish at her betrayed lover stabbing her demanding father they found convincing; this is the stuff madness is made of. And exactly how "brotherly" was Laertes to Ophelia? There was something rather suggestive there, they thought.

Thirdly, they had already debated
(Continued on page 24)

Join the Shakespeare Oxford Society

If this newsletter has found its way into your hands, and you're not already a member of the Society, why not consider joining us in this intriguing, exciting adventure in search of the true story behind the Shakespeare mystery? While the Shakespeare Oxford Society is certainly committed to the proposition that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is the true Shakespeare, there is much that remains to be learned about the whole secretive world of Elizabethan politics and about how the Shakespeare authorship ruse came into being, and even more importantly, what it means for us today in the 20th Century as we complete our fourth century of living in a Western World that was created during the Elizabethan era.

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Gertrude's duplicity in her husband's murder. Suddenly here was a confident Claudius (they liked his disconcerting resemblance to his nephew/son) sharing a strong physical attraction with Gertrude at the beginning. But after Hamlet's appeal to his mother Gertrude becomes physically distant. Repulsed? We thought so. We liked that.

Fourthly, although older audiences remembering Olivier might feel Branagh out-Oliviered Olivier, the young audience liked Branagh's abrupt assumption of his antic disposition. A reluctant avenger, one of them said, but he wasn't spineless.

Of course, the staff commented on a host of different points. Too much Fortinbras, but what an advertisement for the Duke of Marlborough and Blenheim Palace! Those hills in Denmark? Never! An American accent for 'Something is ra'en in the state of Denmark'—ouch! (Sorry.) Grave-digger—wonderful! And so on.

As an Oxfordian I thought the Hamlet/Ophelia relationship particularly poignant. How torn Anne Cecil must have been, if indeed De Vere was Hamlet and Cecil Polonius. What did the emphasis on 'drabbing' in the Polonius and Reynaldo

scene suggest about Cecil? And what about the irony of Hamlet/De Vere skewering Claudius/Derek Jacobi, patron of the De Vere society here in England? Delicious!

We felt this film was a spectacle, an intelligent reading of the play; it gave space for an impressive number of cameo roles, it was stimulating, and it was worth sharing. Shakespeareans, Oxfordians, Baconians and Marlovians must be pleased with this playwright's high profile!

We all have our own Hamlets, but an old play thus produced, that can hold its own against the myriad entertainments our teenagers have today, is a success.

E.M. Jolly
Southampton, England
5 May 1997

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Stritmatter (Continued from page 7)
the period."

This is a backhanded compliment to Sobran for having effectively besieged, if not demolished, many of orthodoxy's chronological presumptions. Of course, Monihan can't admit this — 'twould be a sin against Stratford. Instead he attacks as naively empiricist the entire "forensic" tradition of sleuthing about Shakespeare in the Stationer's Register, or elsewhere (a tradition to which Sobran's book, in a certain sense, belongs).

Of course, his critique misses Sobran's book by half a continent at least. It boomerangs against E.K. Chambers, Schoenbaum, and other architects of the Stratfordian chronology on which the majority of Monihan's orthodox colleagues still depend to fend off the anxiety provoked by Oxford's ghost.

Alias Shakespeare is a beautifully designed and illustrated, competitively priced book, pleasant to read and chock-full of provocative insight. It should make a fabulous stocking stuffer for your favorite "doubting" Stratfordian.

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