

# The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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

Summer 1997

## Column

### Beauty and the Paradigm

by Mark K. Anderson

Last year, I wrote an article for the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* on Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn's concept of "paradigm shifts" and the Oxfordian movement. ("A Little More Than Kuhn and Less Than Kind," *Newsletter*, Winter 1996.)

In the interim, the essay's reception outside the Oxfordian enclave has been delightfully mixed. It has been assigned reading lists in higher education, while in the Internet's online world, the Obfuscation Police were apparently called on to disperse the growing crowds around Kuhn's work.

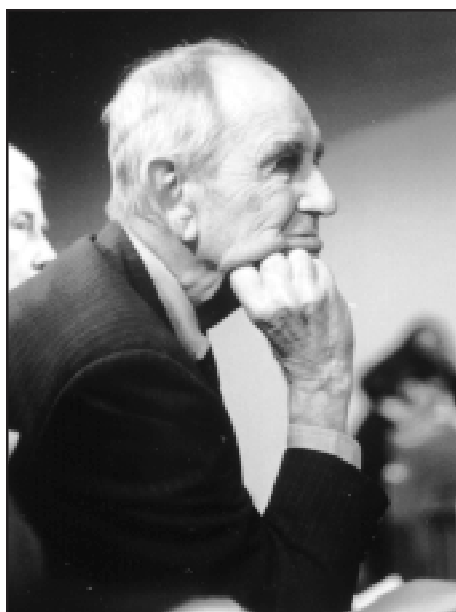
"Ever since Kuhn's book came out in the 1960s, every crackpot whose ideas are rejected by the establishment has piously declared that they represent a new 'paradigm,' and that the old guard is just clinging to their outmoded ideas because they can't see beyond the old paradigm," wrote Shakespeare Authorship Page co-manager David Kathman earlier this year. "This does not mean that everyone who invokes Kuhn is a crackpot, only that many of them are, and that just invoking Kuhn in favor of your cause doesn't mean a whole lot."

Online correspondent Caius Marcius went Kathman one better. He stated that the authorship controversy was about a "fact"—i.e. whether Oxford or Shakspere of Stratford was the author—and not a theory. Therefore Kuhn's findings were irrelevant to Oxfordianism. (Never mind that the same sleight-of-hand can be performed with Kuhn's own case study. Namely, the stir Copernicus caused was merely about a "fact"—i.e. whether the Sun or the Earth is at the center of the Solar System. *Argal* Kuhn's findings are irrelevant to Kuhn's data.)

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## The 1987 Moot Court Trial

*Ten Years later the Verdict is in:  
Edward de Vere and Oxfordians won*



*Charlton Ogburn listens intently as the Justices read their decisions at the Trial. Ogburn had been much distressed at how events unfolded 10 years ago, but today he agrees that it was, ultimately, a major victory for both himself and the cause.*

The events of September 25th-26th, 1987 in Washington DC should eventually be known as one of the true watershed moments in the history of the Shakespeare authorship debate.

First, there was the Moot Court Trial, held on Friday, September 25th, at American University, with three Justices of the United States Supreme Court presiding. This event attracted mainstream media coverage of the authorship debate such as had never been seen before in this century. And while the official result was a seemingly decisive 3-0 verdict for the Stratford actor, the true story from that day is that two of the three Justices presiding actually began a journey which eventually brought them to Oxford's doorstep in the 1990s (along with many hundreds of other former Stratfordians).

Meanwhile, at the 11th Annual Conference of the Shakespeare Oxford Society (held in conjunction with the Moot Court event), history was also being made. The turnout of new Society members from around the country, all gathered together for the Moot Court, resulted in well-attended morning and afternoon meetings on Saturday, September 26th, which in turn resulted in the near tripling of the size of the existing Board of Trustees (from 5 to 14 members), and the beginning of 10 tumultuous years of growth and change. (See page 9 for a separate story on the 11th Annual Conference.)

There are undoubtedly a number of our current members who first became aware of the authorship issue through publicity immediately surrounding the Moot Court, or six months later through the James Lardner article on the event in *The New Yorker* (April 11, 1988). This article, still only available to

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## Book Reviews in *The Washington Post*; Articles in academic journals

On Sunday, August 17th *The Washington Post* book section featured a major review of three of the most recent authorship books, all of them works that treat the issue seriously, and two of which openly declare for Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare.

The books reviewed were John Michell's *Who Wrote Shakespeare?*, Richard Whalen's *Shakespeare: Who Was He?*, and Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare*.

Reviewer Peter W. Dickson (a former CIA analyst) gives an excellent overview of the authorship landscape in the brief space allotted, noting especially how much the debate has heated up in the last ten years.

He recommends Michell's book for its overview of the debate, and notes in particular Michell's sympathies for the authorship claim of Mary Sidney (Countess of Pembroke), sister of Sir Phillip Sidney and mother of both of the earls to whom the *First Folio* is dedicated.

His comments on both Whalen and Sobran highlight the strengths of their presentations and so further the strength of de Vere as the leading authorship claimant.

Dickson concludes with commentary on the "particularly vexing question" of why the need for long-term secrecy? He introduces an interesting note based on his own research into a book on Christopher Columbus, namely that Columbus' family had also displayed a long-term need for secrecy.

The secret involved Columbus' Portuguese wife and her family's involvement in the Braganza conspiracy to murder the King of Portugal. The intriguing point here is, of course, how a family secret involving high-level politics can be kept secret if all the high-level parties involved see it as necessary.

Meanwhile, the authorship debate and related scholarship is also becoming a regular staple of academic journals as much as it now regularly appears in the popular media.

In *The Review of English Studies* (May 1997) Diana Price has published an article on the oft-debated matter of the famous Trinity Church monument of Shakespeare (Shaksper) and the equally famous Dugdale rendering of this monument as a man hold-

ing a sack. Price's position is that the monument was *never changed*, a thesis also presented by Jerry Downs and Barbara Westerfield at the 1994 SOS Conference in Carmel, Calif.

The article and this thesis were debated hotly over the summer on the Internet Oxfordian discussion group Phaeton. We will include a more detailed report on this debate in our next *Newsletter*.

Price has also been published in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* again, doing battle with Donald Foster over *Funeral Elegy*. (Richard Whalen reports on this at the end of his book review on page 17.)

It is of special interest how often authorship matters now appear in *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, for when the editorship first changed hands in 1993 new editor Thomas Pendleton canceled the Oxfordian page and indicated authorship merited no attention whatsoever in a mainstream publication such as *The Shakespeare Newsletter*.

Meanwhile, Gary Goldstein's *Elizabethan Review* has published in its latest issue (Spring 1997) David Kathman's "Why I Am Not an Oxfordian," a broadside against all Oxfordians, and in particular, Charlton Ogburn and his *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.

Kathman is a familiar name to those on the Internet, where he co-manages the Shakespeare Authorship Page and debates authorship regularly on the Usenet Shakespeare group.

While some Oxfordians have been surprised that this lengthy one-sided article was published by Goldstein, he has defended his decision in a letter to Ogburn by noting that it really represents progress, with the Academy engaging a leading Oxfordian in scholarly terms. Goldstein stated that the article advances the legitimacy of the authorship question, with an academic questioning [Oxfordian] evidence and challenging us to say otherwise.

"I do not see how a few minor errors on our part invalidates our mass of evidence," Goldstein wrote. "What Kathman has done is what no other academic has done: taken us seriously enough for a printed attack."

## Princess Diana, 1961-1997

Princess Diana, mother of a future king of England, died in an automobile accident in Paris on August 31st. The loss was one which literally shocked millions throughout the world.

Probably not all Society members are aware of several intriguing Shakespeare connections that had been part of the marriage of Prince Charles and Diana, and the naming of their two sons.

Diana was, among her many family ties, also in the line of descent from Edward de Vere (through Elizabeth Vere).

The young princes were both named with Shakespeare in mind. Prince William is named for William Shakespeare, and Prince Henry is named for Henry V.

## Interview with Ogburn completed

Society members Lisa Marie Wilson and Roger Stritmatter spent three days in Beaufort, SC, over Labor Day weekend interviewing Charlton Ogburn, Jr.

They report that all went very well, with Ogburn in great spirits throughout the three days. Eleven hours of videotape were recorded, and editing is already underway.

Lisa reports that the fundraising letter that members received in August did cover all travel and production expenses. However, still more is needed to complete post-production work. Donations through the Society are, of course, tax-deductible.

A trailer of highlights will be available for viewing at the Seattle Conference. Final versions of the tape will be available to Society members through the Blue Boar.

## New Fundraising Program Begins

On September 8th an exciting new fundraising initiative for the Society was established. The James S. Hardigg Fund-Matching Program will begin immediately, with Mr. Hardigg matching dollar for dollar (up to a limit of \$10,000 per year) any contributions made to the Society. There will be further details announced at Seattle.

## 21st Annual Conference in Seattle

Final plans for the 21st Annual Conference are in place. Registration begins Thursday afternoon, October 9th, in the Meany Towers Hotel in downtown Seattle. The formal Conference schedule concludes on Sunday, October 12th, with luncheon, although there will be a presentation later that afternoon on de Vere's Bible.

Featured guests this year will be Joseph Sobran (participating in the Thursday night debate), and British actor Michael York (performing a reading at the Saturday night Banquet).

Sobran (*Alias Shakespeare*) and Felicia Londre (editor of *Love's Labors Lost: Critical Essays*) will sign books in downtown Seattle Thursday morning, after which there will be a Press Conference for both authors and Society representatives held in the Meany Towers Hotel during the afternoon.

Thursday evening, in what has become a staple of each year's Conference, a debate will take place. This year will see Joseph Sobran and Peter Moore take on UC/Berkeley's Prof. Alan Nelson. Prof. Nelson can bring a second if he wishes, but the latest word is that he will go it alone.

Other major events for attendees to look forward to are a performance of *Cymbeline* on Friday evening, preceded by a presentation on its Oxfordian themes by Mildred Sexton. On Saturday morning Prof. David Richardson and Bob Barrett will present a Teachers' Workshop, while running con-

currently Stephanie Hughes and Dr. Daniel Wright will present a Researchers' Workshop.

This year's panel discussion (Friday afternoon, moderated by Walter Hurst) will be on the subject of how best to promote the authorship issue. And finally, on Sunday afternoon, Roger Stritmatter will do a presentation on his continuing research into Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible.

Society members may note that some of the major events at the 21st Annual Conference are a reprise of similar events in 1995 and 1996. This is no accident.

Rather, it reflects a decision to hold events at each year's Conference that lend themselves to local publicity. Events open to the public are an important part of attracting attention from the local media, which in turn will acquaint them with the basics of the authorship debate and the state of current research.

The day by day schedule follows (all events are scheduled for the Meany Hotel unless otherwise noted):

### Thursday

- 1:00- Registration begins
- 1:00- Press Conference
- 2:00- Board of Trustees meeting.
- 7:30- Debate, Peter Moore and Joseph Sobran vs. Alan H. Nelson

### Friday

- 9:30-11:45 Papers (Daniel Wright and Roger Stritmatter)

- 11:45-12:15 Highlights, Ogburn interview
- 12:15-1:30 Luncheon. Speaker, Bill Boyle, "Oxford on the Internet."
- 1:30-2:00 Q&A, Ogburn interview (Lisa Wilson)
- 2:00-3:30 Papers (Elisabeth Sears and Mark Anderson)
- 3:30-5:00 Promotions Panel (Walter Hurst)
- 5:00-5:45 Bar
- 5:45-7:30 Dinner
- 7:30-8:00 Presentation: "Relevance of *Cymbeline* to Oxford (Mildred Sexton)
- 8:00- *Cymbeline* (Green Stage).

### Saturday

- 9:30-10:30 Paper (Stephanie Hughes)
- 10:30-12:00 Teachers' workshop (Richardson and Barrett)
- 11:00-12:30 Researcher's workshop (Hughes and Wright).
- 12:00-2:00 Luncheon. Speaker, Christopher Dams.
- 2:30-3:30 Paper (Joseph Sobran)
- 3:30-5:30 General membership meeting.
- 6:00-7:00 Bar. Tom Berghan, Lutanist.
- 7:00- Banquet. Randall Sherman, "Strategic Visions" Presentation of awards.
- After dinner: Readings from Alan Hovey's *Aye! Shakespeare* by Michael York.

### Sunday

- 9:15-10:20 Papers (Scott Fanning and Edward Spencer).
- 10:40-11:40 Slide show, "Images of Oxford" (Katherine Chiljan)
- 12:15-1:30 Luncheon (Speaker TBA)
- 2:00-4:00 Roger Stritmatter, "Update on Oxford's Geneva Bible."
- 4:00- Board of Trustees meeting.

### Workshop Preview

## The Authorship Issue in the Classroom

University students continue to investigate the Shakespeare-Oxford authorship debate at Cleveland State University in Ohio. Professor David A. Richardson began using the topic for some of his CSU courses in Summer 1995 and reported on them at the SOS conference in Minneapolis last October. Since then he has taught the course four more times, with freshmen through graduate students, and introduced several new twists which he will present at the Seattle conference in October 1997.

Two related premises underlie each course where he requires students to alternate their positions, arguing one week for the traditional Stratford hypothesis and the next for Oxford.

First, his object is to *arrive as nearly as possible at the truth behind the issue*, not just victory in a specific debate. Humorous asides and witty retorts, for example, are engaging but often have little to do with the premise, methodology, or evidence of a claim. So students learn to see through smoke and mirrors to the issue at hand.

Likewise, heaps of facts and quotations from experts look impressive to the novice. But when students learn to recognize distortion or irrelevance, they can reject seemingly authoritative and intimidating materials for more pertinent evidence. The goal is something like the old adage, "It matters not whether you win or lose but how you play the game." This premise about truth

allows students to stop angling for the professor's view and start focussing on their own arguments.

The corollary premise is *fairness in argument*. It echoes the late Carl Sagan's senior seminar in Astronomy 490 at Cornell University (see *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* 1995: 435). Stressing written assignments and oral argumentation, he paired students for end-of-term debates and required that each "present the view of the opponent in a way that's satisfactory to the opponent—so the opponent will say, 'Yes, that's a fair presentation of my views.'" *Sic semper*, says Prof. Richardson of his classes, where civil discourse and the whole truth are the order of the day.

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# Shakespeare and the Fair Youth

by Charlton Ogburn, Jr.

Joseph Sobran is a man of brilliant intellect. The case for Oxford as Shakespeare cannot but be significantly advanced by his advocacy. The past spring will surely be remembered for having brought us not only Dr. Daniel Wright's "First Annual De Vere Studies Conference" at Concordia University but also *Alias Shakespeare*. Sobran's analysis of the *Sonnets* in the spring issue of the *Newsletter* is notably astute, especially in drawing for the first time the parallels between the *Sonnets* and the young De Vere's preface to Bedingfield's translation of *Cardanus Comfort*. There is, however, one enormous exception to the value of his treatment. He has put us to the necessity of rescuing Oxford from the charge of conducting a homosexual relationship with the young friend, certainly the Earl of Southampton. The charge is one that must fail upon examination.

If the poet's deep attachment to the young friend, common sense tells us that in addressing a sequence of sonnets to him, he would never have devoted the first 17 to urging the 20-year old to marry and thus terminate the relationship—write an absolute *finis* to it, unless we believe the bride would condone its continuation, of which she could hardly have failed to be aware. Further, Oxford would most assuredly never write a major work of English literature for all posterity—"as long as men can breathe, or eyes can see"—to be dedicated, we must believe, like the two long narrative poems, to "The Right Honourable Henry Wriothesley," if he had believed that it would give grounds for believing that he had tarred the young earl with the charge of sodomy. This was a monstrous wickedness indeed at the time, a crime even punishable by death, Sobran admits. But "After all," Sobran states, "the poet makes it clear that he had committed adultery." So why not sodomy and even "pederastism." Ye gods! The widest gulf separates the two. In support of his accusation, Sobran declares that "Oxford, of course, lived a scandalous life." In support of this slander he quotes Thomas Vavasor, brother of Anne, whom Oxford had got with child in by no means the last of her sexual foibles; it

was their uncle Thomas Knyvet who fell upon Oxford (or so I judge to have been the case) and wounded him, this being evidently the wound he would bear for life. What kind of witnesses are these for blackening Oxford's character?

Then there are Henry Howard and Charles Arundel whose treason Oxford exposed and who replied with a sheaf of accusations against him beginning "To record the vices of this monstrous earl were a labour without end" and going on to enumerate nearly all of which men are capable. They make a fine pair to quote in attestation of Oxford's pederasty.

A final thought on the subject: Had Oxford had homosexual impulses he would surely have betrayed them, even if inadvertently, in other poems and in his plays. Yet the only reference I can recall is its attribution to Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida*, when it is treated with disgust.

So why was Oxford in "disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," when "I all alone bewEEP my outcast state"? (29). He tells us: "Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there and made myself a motley to the view." (110) He chides Fortune

That did not better for my life provide  
Than public means that public manners  
breeds (111)

He has squandered his estates—not, of course, without Burghley's help—and must depend on the subsidy from the Queen. Moreover, he

... is shamed by that which I bring forth.  
And so should you, to love things nothing  
worth. (72)

Oxford has disgraced a family name as noble as any in England by writing for the stage, by playing "kingly parts in sport" himself under his pseudonym "Shakespeare" when otherwise he might have "been a companion for a king," and, doubtless worst of all, by associating with actors on their own level as Prince Hal with the patrons of the Boar's Head Tavern. When Oxford elicited laughter from the crowd on his appear-

ance in the entourage visiting Plymouth to honor the returned Walter Raleigh it was not because they had seen him pick up boys on the Embankment but because, surely his reputation from the theatre had preceded him, because of such antics as when he appeared riding a footcloth nag in parody of a French M'sieur. Oxford could not—thank heaven—help being what he was, and if he was abetted by a good sherris sack, what of it? But for a de Vere to have so betrayed his forebears as he saw himself doing under the compulsion of his genius, which habitually disclosed the world to him as a stage—it was a recurrent torture. At least he could warn his young friend not to love things nothing worth, Southampton being notoriously drawn to the theatre.

Finally, the poet explicitly rejects the sexual relationship with the young man in which Sobran finds the meaning of the sonnets addressed to him. Nature having fitted him "for women's pleasure," we read in Sonnet 20, "Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure." And I know of no indication that Oxford, favored a match between his daughter Elizabeth and Southampton. As is made clear in Sonnets 3 and 16, what is important—is the latter's marrying, not whom he marries.

We may ask, then, in conclusion, what was the relationship of the poet and the beloved youth? In Sonnet 37, quoted by Sobran, we read:

As a decrepit father takes delight  
To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite  
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.

Where is the parent who does not read that with a pang of recognition, or who does not know, with a full heart, what he meant in writing in Sonnet 96, "Thou being mine, mine is thy good report." "All through the *Sonnets*," A. L. Rowse observes, with surprising discernment, "there is a quasi-parental element." Then, in Sonnet 57, we find the poet addressing the youth as "my sovereign," "to whom in vassalage [going on to 261 thy merit hath my duty strongly knit." Having enlarged elsewhere on the reasons why I have felt, after long resistance, constrained to see in the *Sonnets* a father's devotion to a son of whom he had long been deprived and, further, a son whom he found

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# At The Bath Debate: The Case for Oxford

by Charles Burford

It would be futile to attempt a comprehensive statement of the Oxfordian case in 20 minutes. Instead I want to go to the heart of the authorship question itself - namely politics. For this is not a literary problem. If it was, it would have been resolved centuries ago and at little expense to anyone's ego or sense of self. Rather, the myth of William of Stratford is a cover story designed to conceal a dangerous political reality.

Shakespeare the author was given an identity transplant not only on account of his satirization of Court grandees (which were often devastating), but also because like Hamlet he was a political dissident who was profoundly opposed to the mercantile policies that Elizabeth and Cecil were developing as a foundation for the British Empire. These policies fostered a new Darwinian breed of professional politician (men like Edmund in *King Lear*), whose ambition and opportunism were the perfect and approved tools to achieve and maintain power. Elizabethan England was a secular and newly capitalist world, and material greed rather than spiritual endeavour became the engine of growth and change in Society - and thus it remains today.

As part of this process of change, the relationship between the monarch and his people lost its sacred, mystical force and became instead a matter for propaganda. Ritual was sacrificed to economic expediency, hierarchy usurped by the bureaucratic mentality and family allegiance transferred to the new centralized State. In effect, man became what he now delights in calling himself: a consumer. The unconscionable Edmund speaks for the new materialist philosophy when he says: "Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law/ My services are bound." Suddenly man was no longer a fallen angel; merely a clever beast.

As the political propagandists of the time were well aware, a secular society needs surrogate gods. The Church of England was essentially a political and secular body and, as its head, Elizabeth was transformed into a temporal and very English Virgin Mary, albeit with distinct pagan colouring (as Diana, Cynthia et al.). The creation of the

"Virgin Queen" as she was known remains an object lesson in political iconography. Unfortunately for Elizabeth, among those at Court who knew the private reality behind the public icon was a man who called himself William Shakespeare. His skilful and trenchant exposure of her in characters such as Gertrude, Cleopatra, Cressida and Titania precipitated the whole political crisis now known as the Shakespeare authorship question. Only today are historians beginning to realize that Elizabeth's virginity was political, not biological.

It wasn't just Elizabeth's honour and integrity that was at stake, it was that of the Church and the nation as a whole. It's only when the problem is seen in these terms that the vast intractability of the authorship problem begins to make sense.

Shakespeare's insistence upon degree or hierarchy is a reflection of his belief in man's essential divinity and the nobility of his destiny. To call it conservatism or snobbery is to completely misunderstand its spiritual bias. As Walt Whitman pointed out, Shakespeare's knowledge of the ways

and manners of the nobility is not a superficial or artificial matter, for his very mentality is that of one of the old feudal aristocracy. His obsession with honour and the ideals of chivalry and his overriding commitment to the spiritual quest have their roots in the mythology of the Grail knights, figures such as Lancelot, Perceval and Galahad. Prince Hal of *Henry IV* fame is the archetypal Grail knight who masters his own prodigality to become in the figure of King Henry V the redeemer of the Wasteland and the cultivator of "the world's best garden." This faith of Shakespeare's in an enlightened, and indeed chastened, nobility was no mere sham. It was so bred in the bone that it can be said without exaggeration that he was the shaman of his dwindling class. Throughout the plays he was to gather up its sorrows (like Lear weaving his crown of weeds) and the bonfire he made from them blazed a new trail through the darkness. Eventually, though, he came to speak for the whole of humanity and his quest assumed an almost messianic tone. Speaking through Hamlet, he announces: "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right."

Ultimately, then, it was because Shakespeare's works told of the folly and degrading consequences to humanity of the Cecilian government's mercantile, imperialist policies that Shakespeare was transformed from a visionary philosopher into the pudding-cheeked burgher of Stratford town. (Christ underwent a similar transformation at the hands of his earliest biographers.)

In addition to stressing the political importance of the issue, it's vital to convince people that Shakespeare was a man of flesh and blood, a fallible human being with beliefs, prejudices, a philosophy, a message. Contrary to popular mythology, Shakespeare was not a universal genius, an artist so superpure that he was able to dispense with the inconvenience of his own personality. Sadly, as a modern-day icon, all his vices are converted to virtues, and to such an extent that if Shakespeare was known to be illiterate, it would simply constitute further proof of his superhuman genius.

When one begins to appreciate Shakespeare as a real person with a specific background, education and experiences, it becomes evident that the plays are highly autobiographical. One also ceases to expect a

## The Bath Shakespeare Authorship Debate May 23rd, 1997 Bath Theatre Royal,

The *De Vere Society Newsletter* for June 1997 reports on the debate, which was actually a symposium rather than a debate. Each of the six participants (Prof. Stanley Wells, Prof. Jonathan Bate and Michael Bogdanov for the Stratford actor, Mrs. Dolly Wraight for Marlowe, Peter Dawkins for Bacon, Lord Charles Burford for Oxford) presented their views on the authorship, followed by questions from the floor and then a vote.

The results of the voting was: 70 for Shaksper of Stratford, 35 for Oxford, 30 for Marlowe, 20 for Bacon and 9 don't know.

There were no surprises in the various presentations, with the same familiar ground being covered by everyone. Charles Burford wrote the accompanying summary of his presentation.

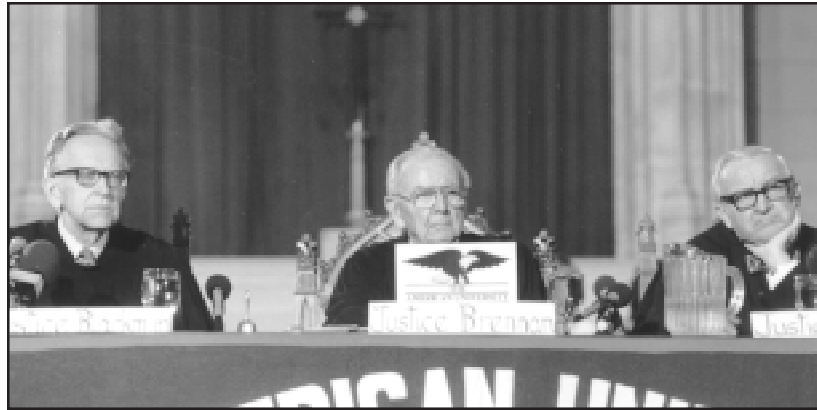
(Continued on page 12)

*Moot (Cont'd from page 1)*  
the public through your local library, is in itself something of a landmark, being both a brief survey of the debate and first-rate journalism in its coverage of the Moot Court, replete with many observations on the debate, its cast of characters, and interviews with some of the key players (e.g. Charlton Ogburn, the Millers, Gordon Cyr, the two counsels presenting evidence for the Stratford actor and Oxford, etc.)

Looking back on all this 10 years later it is clear how far the Oxfordian cause has come in so little time. What has also become clear over these same 10 years is that some key questions are still with us today, questions about how to debate the authorship issue, how to publicize it, how to deal with the inevitable controversies that come along with it (controversies both with our adversaries and among ourselves)—in short, questions over how, ultimately, to prevail.

Charlton Ogburn has said, in 1987 and still today, that he was against this idea all along, believing that a narrowly focused legal proceeding could never do justice to the debate. However, as Oxfordian David Lloyd Kreeger pressed ahead with his plans for the Trial, there was an understanding that the actual trial would be not so much a trial as a head to head comparison of the case for Oxford as presented in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, verses the case for the Stratford man as presented by his best advocate using the standard biographies and evidence.

Controversy first arose in the days before the Trial, when Ogburn got hold of James Boyle's brief on the case (Boyle was defending the Stratford man), and much to his horror found it to be page after page of what he considered to be boiler-plate Stratfordian arguments, combining the worst of such chestnuts as "All his contemporar-



*Justices Blackmun, Brennan and Stevens (left to right) listen intently to the presentations by James Boyle (for Stratford) and Peter Jaszi (for Oxford).*

### *Opinions of the Justices*

**Justice Brennan:** "So...my conclusion is that Oxford did not prove that he was the author of the plays"

**Justice Blackmun:** "I suppose that's the legal answer [Brennan's], whether it's the correct one causes me greater doubt than I think it does Justice Brennan."

**Justice Stevens:** "I am persuaded that if the author was not the man from Stratford, then there is a high probability that it was Edward de Vere."

ies knew Shakespeare wrote the works" to what Ogburn considered some egregious misrepresentations of what he had written in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.

In preparing this article, Ogburn shared with us some of the letters he wrote in the months after the Trial. His chief concern was that Boyle's entire brief felt to him as if it had been taken wholesale from some doctrinaire Stratfordian source, and Charlton more than once suggested to Boyle that he disassociate himself from such "slander." Boyle never responded to Ogburn's letters, but eventually, through a third party, Ogburn was assured that Boyle had indeed written the brief, and that he stood behind it.

A year later, however, Boyle did talk in print about the Trial, the authorship question, Oxfordians and Stratfordians in his article "The Search for an Author: Shakespeare and the Framers" *American University Law Review* 37:625 (1988).

In the article's first endnote Boyle *dedicates the entire article* to Samuel Schoenbaum, who, he says, allowed his

works *to be part of the record for the case* [i.e. the Moot Court], and further, who had recommended to Boyle "certain works on the subject." Boyle goes on to state "I commend Mr. Schoenbaum's beautifully written and charmingly humorous *Shakespeare's Lives* to the reader as an example of what Shakespearean scholarship should be like." Score one for the instincts of Charlton Ogburn.

There was more controversy on the day of the Trial. Justice William Brennan announced, in his opening comments, that the three-man Moot Court would follow more traditional legal proceedings, and that in the absence of a lower court ruling on this case (Shaksper vs. Oxford), Brennan ruled that the burden of proof was on the Oxfordians *both* to dismiss

the Stratford man, *and* to establish Oxford—all in 1 hour! No similar burden was placed on the Stratford side.

Brennan's surprising decision to place the entire burden on the Oxfordian side immediately illustrated what is probably *the* key issue in the authorship debate: to dispose or not to dispose of the Stratford man. Brennan stated that since his [Shaksper's] claim went unchallenged for two centuries, it carried with it the presumptive weight of the law and it would take a "preponderance" of the evidence to take the works away from him (not just "reasonable doubts"). Justice Blackmun remarked to Brennan that "he hadn't checked that with us [i.e. Blackmun and Stevens]." The exchange led to some laughter, but Charlton Ogburn was not one of those laughing.

With the burden of proof now totally on the Oxfordian side, the outcome of the Trial was a foregone conclusion. It also reinforced the importance of "disposing of the Stratford man" as a key issue whenever debating the authorship. Charlton Ogburn



is quoted in the *New Yorker* article as saying, "You can't get anywhere with Oxford unless you dispose of the Stratford man." He repeated this point almost verbatim it us in our recent talk with him. And it's easy to see why he feels this way. He cited in 1987 the experience of his parents with *This Star of England*, noting that "they made one terrible miscalculation. Until they got to the very last chapter, they didn't even mention the Stratford man."

The other key authorship issue that emerged during the proceedings can be summed up in one word: conspiracy. It is a word that neither Ogburn nor Society Vice-President Gordon Cyr is quoted as using in 1987, and in fact this word is completely absent from Lardner's *New Yorker* report, although in the course of the Trial it made several prominent appearances.

Indeed, one senses that this was both Ogburn's and Cyr's chief concern in the days before the Trial. As reported by Lardner, Cyr worried about such matters as how many Oxfordians would show up, whether "fringe elements" would be among them, and generally how to cope with all the publicity. "Cyr was expecting...more Oxfordians, perhaps, than have ever been assembled in one place," Lardner writes.

And in discussing what these "fringe elements" might bring up, Cyr stated that he had in mind such matters as the Ashbourne Portrait and the theory about Southampton's parentage. A strange pairing of concerns, it seems to some of us today.

For while the Southampton issue rages on even today as a central and important piece of the whole story (and one which can open up the Pandora's box of political conspiracy as part of the true story, Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare* notwithstanding), the Ashbourne Portrait story now seems more like an interesting sideshow. The story in 1987 that concerned Cyr was the Folger's



*The center of attention for the media were Honorary Society President Charlton Ogburn (r), and Society Executive Vice-President Gordon Cyr.*



*David Lloyd Kreeger, organizer of the Moot Court, accepts the crowd's applause as American University President Richard Berendzen looks on.*



*Charles Boyle (l) meets Charles Vere (r) for the first time as John Price (2nd from right) and Mrs. Irving Blatt look on.*

rejection of the underpainting of the portrait as being the lost Ketel portrait of Oxford. But today that seems about as insightful as their recent attempts to deflect interest in de Vere's *Geneva Bible* by claiming that Oxford didn't make the annotations.

Meanwhile, early on in the Moot Court proceedings, Justice Brennan brought home this second key issue when he told Jaszi that the entire authorship debate sounded to him like a "conspiracy theory," to which Jaszi immediately responded that a conspiracy was not necessary in a totalitarian society. This response sounds very much like what Charlton Ogburn has said for years, and which he repeated to us this year. "In a totalitarian society, it's not conspiracy," he stated. "Elizabeth's word was final." For

some Oxfordians in 1987 this tactic (i.e. not even using the word "conspiracy") seemed like a mistake, a matter of bobbing and weaving with our opponents rather than diving headlong into the seemingly unavoidable center of the issue. Somewhat later in our talk with Ogburn we returned to the subject of (if not just the word itself) "conspiracy," and he remarked that, "[for anyone] to say no to 'conspiracy' is naive; it's how the world works."

At the end of the day, Justice Stevens had the last word, and he did not pull back from using the dreaded "C" word. He first brought a smile to Ogburn's face when he remarked, "...I am persuaded that if the author is not the man from Stratford, then there is a high probability that it is Edward de Vere. I think his claim is by far the strongest of those that have been put forward."

A few moments later, however, he cut straight to the heart of the debate and to this primary tactical dilemma that comes with it. "I

would submit," he stated, "that, if their [Oxfordians'] thesis is sound, that one has to assume that the conspiracy—I would not hesitate to call it a 'conspiracy,' because there is nothing necessarily invidious about the desire to keep the true authorship secret—it would have to have been participated in by [Heminge and Condell and Digges and Jonson]...in my opinion the strongest theory of the case requires an assumption, for some reason we don't understand, that the Queen and her Prime Minister decided, 'We want this man to be writing plays under a pseudonym.'"

"Of course," he continued, "this thesis may be so improbable that it is not worth even thinking about; but I would think that the Oxfordians really have not yet put to-

*(Continued on page 8)*

*Moot Court* (Continued from page 7)

gether a concise, coherent theory that they are prepared to defend, in all respects.”

Stevens’ words were a fitting conclusion to the Trial, and they ring as true today as they did ten years ago. He has since written on the subject of the authorship (“The Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction”), clearly indicating his continuing interest and sympathies in the debate, while Blackmun has stated flatly (in the second edition of Ogburn’s *Mysterious William Shakespeare*) that he would “now [1992] vote for the Oxfordians.”

In the ten years since much has happened, and at the Society’s Annual Conferences in the late 1990’s there are regularly four to five times as many Oxfordians gathered together each year as the 1987 turnout that so concerned Gordon Cyr.

As for the aforementioned key issues, several interesting events have transpired. Charles Boyle left Washington with the clear idea that promoting Oxford rather than disposing of Stratford, or “butting his head against” Stratfordians as he has also put it, was the way to go. The following Spring he founded the Oxford Day Banquet in Boston to commemorate Oxford’s April birthday rather than Stratford’s traditional birthday, and began to talk more opening about the political dimensions of the issue, picking up on Justice Stevens’ remarks.

Charles Burford, who remarked right after the Trial that it was “not the ideal forum,” was still several years away from his stay in America and his speaking tour. However, Burford also came away with Stevens’ words on his mind, and today he states forthrightly that politics and political cover-up are the story. (See his article from the Bath debate on page 5 for an example of how he presents the authorship debate today.)

The continuing problem of identifying a unified authorship theory is probably best illustrated by the *Sonnets*, the subject of much analysis over the centuries, and in the last ten years the subject of two authorship analyses that reached quite different conclusions. Elisabeth Sears, in *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose* (1991), tells a story of high-stake politics, which is quite different from Sobran in *Alias Shakespeare* (1997) and his story of homosexual passion. Such publications demonstrate the power of ana-

lyzing the works themselves in telling the authorship story, even as Oxfordians may strongly disagree among themselves about which interpretation is closer to the truth, or even whether we can or should be using the works in searching for historical truth.

Meanwhile, there has clearly been no shortage of new research on all aspects of the vast, complex authorship landscape, and many Oxfordians over these past ten years have continued the other chief authorship mission, mainly “disposing of the Stratford man,” and/or establishing clear irrefutable links between Oxford and the Shakespeare Canon through research and analysis of surviving documents and archives, and re-examination of existing scholarship of the Elizabethan era and Shakespeare.

Ruth Loyd Miller’s legacy of historical research has continued and contributes to the overall weight of evidence in the case. Richard Roe has done much primary research on Oxford’s travels in Italy. And Charlton Ogburn himself has remained active despite health problems and, as his article in this newsletter shows (page 4), continues to stay right on the case.

Also during these last ten years we have witnessed William Plumer Fowler’s analysis of Oxford’s letters, Nina Green’s lexical analysis of Shakespeare and Oxford (published in her *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, along with many other detailed articles about Elizabethan works and documents), and more recently the aforementioned analysis by Sobran of Oxford’s poetry.

Roger Stritmatter’s study of Edward de Vere’s *Geneva Bible* at the Folger has probably been the biggest research story of the decade, and may yet yield a smoking gun of some sorts in the debate. There has also been Diana Price’s research appearing in several different mainstream publications, and even our Stratfordian friend Prof. Alan H. Nelson and his detailed work on transcribing and analyzing de Vere’s letters (plus discovering some new ones).

All this work in the past ten years has further contributed to our overall knowledge of Oxford’s life and his historic role in Elizabethan times.

And last, but certainly not least, mention must be made of the importance of publicizing the authorship debate, some-

thing which the Moot Court Trial contributed to greatly, and which was followed by the *Frontline* documentary (1989), the *Atlantic Monthly* cover story (1991), and such books as Richard Whalen’s *Shakespeare: Who Was He?* (1994). Now such efforts have taken on a whole new dimension with the phenomenon of the Internet. For here exists a venue where the debate can be experienced by thousands, and where there are no space or time limits for either presenting material or reaching a verdict.

On the Usenet Shakespeare discussion group, for example, the debate has ebbed and flowed over the past two years, and for anyone who has followed it there is little doubt that some minds will never be changed. But the debate on Usenet is *never over*, and exposure to the debate *does* attract attention, and in some cases *does* change minds.

What the Internet has already demonstrated is that publicity and exposure are as crucial a component of the debate as new research. Anywhere from 100-150 people a day now visit the Society’s Home Page, with at least several new Society memberships resulting each month. A “mainstream” authorship site was created just to counter this Oxfordian Internet presence. High school and college teachers now assign whole classes to visit Oxfordian and Stratfordian web sites and to debate and write about Shakespeare and the authorship question.

And the more people who do become aware that the authorship debate is serious and not frivolous, the greater the odds that sheer numbers alone may some day prevail over Stratford and Stratfordians. The Moot Court Trial was a major event in advancing such awareness, especially with two of the three Justices presiding eventually moving away from Stratford and towards Oxford, in effect reversing their own verdicts.

So it may be that Stratford’s Shaksper and his supporters will never be “officially” dislodged, neither by a smoking gun nor by a legal ruling. Instead, one by one future generations may simply—like Supreme Court Justices—leave Stratford, and soon all that will be left is a ghost town full of bewildered scholars, their legal claim to Stratford still firmly in hand, wondering what happened.

WBoyle

(Moot Court photos by William Boyle, ©1997)



Looking back

## 11th Annual Conference - 1987

*Moot Court Trial, Historic Business Meeting Launch Society into New Era*

(The following is adapted from the article by Gordon Cyr that appeared in the Fall 1987 Shakespeare Oxford Society Newsletter)

A sunlit autumn day ushered in the truly historic debate on the authorship of Shakespeare's works, held Friday, September 25th in the beautiful setting of the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., across the street from American University.

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

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

[At] the Saturday business meeting the following officers were reelected: Executive Vice-President, Gordon C. Cyr; Honorary President, Charlton Ogburn; Treasurer, Phillip Proulx; Secretary, Helen W. Cyr; Editor of the *Newsletter*, Morse Johnson. Also, a new post of Assistant Secretary was created, and Robert O'Brien was elected for this post.

It was also moved and seconded to create an



Shakespeare Newsletter editor Louis Marder (seated, holding pencil up) addressed a few words to Charlton Ogburn (standing, left), chiding him about the many "could have beens" or "should have beens" that appear in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. To which Ogburn replied, "And this is, of course, a procedure unknown to Stratfordian writers?"



Newsletter editor Morse Johnson spoke to members about his view of the Moot Court Trial.

Blatt (South), Stephanie Caruana (New York), Elisabeth Sears and Charles Boyle (New England).

In addition, the Executive Vice-President appointed two longtime members, Michael Steinbach and Russell des Cognets, to represent the West and Midwest respectively. It was [also] moved to make Lord Charles Vere of Hanworth both an Honorary Member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and an Honorary Member of the Board of Directors.

[After a talk by Ruth Loyd Miller] Charlton Ogburn...discussed briefly his "Afterthoughts on the Debate," [and then] left the floor open for attendees to give their own impressions. David Cavers, Fessenden Professor Emeritus of the

additional complement of directors, representative of the various regions of the U.S., who would constitute—along with the six elected officials mentioned—a Board of Directors who would meet annually.

Nominated and elected were Barbara Crowley (West), John Price (Midwest), Irving

Harvard Law School, felt that, judged as a debate, the proceeding favored Oxford, even though he understood the reasons for the legal ruling the justices rendered to the contrary. Another legal opinion was forthcoming from Morse Johnson, *Newsletter* editor, who felt that our side's attorney did not put the Stratfordian side on the defensive on the matter of the embarrassing silences among literary figures following Shakespeare's death. And Victor Crichton, a new member, said that the inadequacies of Justice Brennan's "ruling" could form the basis for an appeal. A more optimistic note was sounded

by Joseph Sobran, a writer for *National Review* and a recent convert to the Oxfordian cause, who said that the positive effects of the debate far outweighed the ruling against Oxford made by the three justices. "There is no such thing as bad publicity," said Sobran, pointing out that the justices effectively dismissed the other candidates for Shakespearean honors.

Recognition was given to our other distinguished journalist-guests at the conference, including (in addition to Mr. Sobran) Jim Lardner of *The New Yorker*, Charles Champlin of *The Los Angeles Times*, and Louis Marder of *The Shakespeare Newsletter*.

In the afternoon session, Lord Charles Vere of Harworth, our guest at the conference, discussed the De Vere Society which he had organized at Oxford University's Hertford College. He intends to make his De Vere Society the chief advocate for the Oxfordian theory in England, and he circulated an impressive list of guest speakers for his series of lectures currently going on.

Carole Sue Lipman was our next guest speaker. Ms. Lipman chairs southern California's Shakespearean Authorship Roundtable, [whose] members...consist of adherents on every side of the authorship, [with the] largest single group of Roundtable members [being] Oxfordians. Membership also includes Dr. Louis Marder and Thad Taylor (Stratfordians), the late Calvin Hoffman and Louis Ule (Marlovians), Elizabeth Wrigley (a "groupist") and George Eliot Sweet, promoter of Queen Elizabeth's candidacy.

Anderson (Continued from page 1)

Wrote Paul Crowley in frustration, “The difference in our positions about Shakespeare is so deep and extensive, and the gap is so unbridgeable that an invocation of Kuhnian paradigms is... entirely appropriate.”

Whatever one makes of the e-flak, it’s at least true that beneath all the garble, the naysayers have a basic point. Kuhn’s landmark study was the foundation upon which my article was based, and that study was nominally about an entirely different field from authorship research. There lies the nub.

Science is not literature, nor is the twain the ‘tother. The differences are obvious. But here is the point beyond which the naysayers do not go. Appreciating the less obvious similarities shared by all fields endeavoring to uncover objective truth stands to benefit any truth-seeker, no matter what their discipline. Archaeology or genetics, psycholinguistics or grain science: if the purpose is to gather empirical evidence and construct theories to best explain the evidence, then lessons drawn from one discipline stand to benefit another discipline.

Since literary studies has seen nothing like the Shakespeare authorship question in its two plus centuries of academic investiture, guidance from outside the field could be useful. And since literary studies provide only part of the tools necessary to do Oxfordian research—history, logic, philosophy, theology, rhetoric, classics and science constitute yet more components of the problem—guidance from outside the field is especially germane.

Multidisciplinary studies, after all, call for multidisciplinary solutions.

So it was that Kuhn offered an attractive foundation on which to build an investigation of the “Looney theory.” But it was only a starting point.

Where one turns from there is entirely up to the investigator. The history of history undoubtedly holds revelations for Oxfordians hunting for precedent and instructive analogies. The two millennia of changing tides in philosophy may likewise present opportunities to grapple with the Oxfordian theory’s place in the larger context of paradigm shifts.

However, one needn’t necessarily venture afield from Kuhn either. The sciences



Physicist Werner Heisenberg  
(1901-1976)

***“Beauty is the proper conformity of the parts to one another and to the whole.”***

are far from exhausted in teaching the patient authorship student how better to pursue her craft.

My own background before entering the authorship arena was in physics and astronomy. And as a discipline constantly turning up new empirical evidence, refining and even refuting itself, the physical sciences can provide helpful perspective to Oxfordians up to their neck in 400 year-old historical documents and 16th century drama and poetry.

Perhaps the most valuable thing I learned in my technical training was to appreciate beauty. (Yes, Virginia, beauty is admired and even valued by the pocket protector crowd.) Of course, the kind of beauty one experiences in the sciences is different in substance from the beauty found in a Miles Davis album or a poem by Shelley or a painting by Picasso.

The beauty to be found in a theory, equation or concept is no less profound, though. (And I must confess to a disposition to theoretical beauty beyond the scope of most physicists—I went to graduate school to study general relativity, that most impractical and jobless subfield of physics founded nearly entirely on aesthetic arguments.)

The beauty of a theory is, like all aesthetic judgments, ultimately in the beholder’s

eye. Fortunately, though, many great scientific minds have already put down what to their eyes constitutes absolute theoretical beauty.

And it only takes a few select words of advice to see the wisdom waiting to be tapped, for those willing to look.

### **“Truth and Beauty are all my argument”**

Werner Heisenberg is one of the founders of quantum physics. Heisenberg is perhaps best known for his formula codifying the inherent uncertainty found in measurements at the subatomic level—the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. And though he discovered the mechanism for nature’s eternal equivocations, Heisenberg was far from uncertain about the difference between ideas that worked and those that didn’t work.

In his essay “The Meaning of Beauty in the Exact Sciences,” Heisenberg crystallizes the notion remarkably when he notes, “beauty is the proper conformity of the parts to one another and to the whole.”

Like the *Sonnets* or the Bill of Rights, Heisenberg’s 15-word remark smacks of such precision that one could imagine less eloquent thinkers writing entire books without ever arriving at the core truth Heisenberg lighted upon.

Given Heisenberg’s working definition alone, then, one can begin to explore what is “beautiful” about the Oxfordian hypothesis, how one can further refine its beauty and how best to make that beauty evident to a world ignorant of its charms.

The question of what is “parts” and what is “whole” in Heisenberg’s terms immediately arises for one applying his dictum. The answer, it appears, can be found on more than one level.

Begin with the smallest unit of poetic and dramatic meaning, the individual word. At the microscopic level, Oxfordian and Stratfordian theories offer competing interpretations. Neither necessarily emerges as a clear winner in the war of exegeses.

When Hamlet calls Polonius a “fish-monger” (2, 2, 174), Oxfordians titter at the gall of the author to call his father-in-law a bawd. Stratfordians attempt to deny this interpretation, since there is no way a common playwright could so besmirch the memory of William Cecil, Lord Burghley and

escape with his head.

Ironically, the most topical gloss of “fish-monger” gives the usually topically-allergic orthodox scholars plausible deniability: Burghley introduced Civil Lent to England, requiring all citizens to eat fish on Fridays. In that sense, Hamlet could *perhaps* only be referring to Civil Lent, thus clearing him of slander in this case.

It’s a big perhaps, but so long as one doesn’t pull the lens back any further, it’s a perhaps that can join the 27,431 other perhapses that make up the Stratford burgher’s hypothesized literary biography.

As it happens, though, there are those today who have apparently had enough perhapses. In an amusing theoretical contortion, some of the less strategically-endowed Stratfordians have made the revisionist assertion that Polonius actually has nothing whatsoever to do with Burghley.

Say what you will about the notion’s patent absurdity—as Stratfordian scholar Lilian Winstanley wrote, “The resemblances [between Polonius and Burghley] are too great to be ascribed to any form of accident”—the plan does have immediate payoff.

Over the short-term, denying the canon’s most undeniable link to Oxford does undoubtedly buttress a few stone walls around Stratford, making the ramparts protecting, say, Hamnet Shakspeare’s crib more impermeable to heretical assaults. But ultimately it’s pure folly. Oxfordians should in fact encourage such scholarly denial as much as possible, since baggage of that heft being tossed overboard portends titanic things for the “S.S. Stratford.” (Could the cry “Abandon ship!” be far behind?)

Whatever Polonius or even Corambial position a Shakespeare scholar takes, though, the fact remains that when the facts remain at the single-word level, Oxfordians are implicitly ceding ground.

Focusing on microscopic details such as individual words, documents, records and facts plays to the Stratfordians’ advantage. When there is no big picture to confront, there is plenty of room for any authorship theory to roam. After he debated Prof. Alan Nelson (April 1997), Charles Burford remarked that Nelson evinced an almost talismanic worship of minutiae—and conversely an allergic aversion to the aggregate.

“I wanted to create a background against which Nelson’s comments would be heard for what they are: fragile, pedantic and artificial,” Burford wrote on the Phaeton online conference after the debate. “Of course, the cult of overspecialization in universities today (or ‘minutism’ as I call it) helps foster Nelson’s approach to Shakespeare. As long as he never steps back from his microscope and views every little detail of the age on a separate slide, he can live out his Stratford fetish. In that regard he’s a bit like the Lady of Shalott, weaving with the aid of a mirror. He may well be half sick of shadows for all we know, but Lancelot is going to have to sing mighty enticingly to break that mirror and force the professor’s confrontation with reality.”

So while there may be “beauty” at the level of the individual word, a debate waged solely on these grounds is probably not winnable for the heretic. “EVer”s and “truth”s may be authorial curios, but rhetorically they’re weak weaponry against a three century-old Stratfordian tradition of fetishistic devotion to the microscopic.

### Moving on up

The hierarchy of beauty, however, offers greater rewards the higher an Oxfordian dares to climb. At the next level of “parts” to “whole”—the sentence—one begins to see patterns of meaning emerging where the Stratford burgher’s advocates can only make collages of *OED* definitions.

In *Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, Ford—an autobiographical character embodying Oxford’s jealousies directed against his first wife circa 1576—has a few authorial moments to give a heretic pause.

In the play’s reconciliation scene, Falstaff—who joins Ford and Fenton as the play’s trio of authorial figures—realizes he’s been fooled once again.

The scene as a whole is very funny. Falstaff enters dressed as a stag, and most of the characters have an opportunity to mock him, mock others or mock themselves. Jokes rain from the sky like potatoes. And Ford has his share.

“I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass,” Falstaff says.

“Ay, and an ox too; both the proofs are extant,” replies Ford. (5, 5, 119-120)

Both lines read as if they should be followed with laughter. They’re set up like a comedic point-counterpoint, a parry followed by a riposte. Yet I saw a very funny production of *Merry Wives* several times this summer, and Ford’s line never got a laugh.

Immediately, of course, any blunderbuss who knows the author’s name can see the quickie joke in “Ox” Ford’s line. He’s filling in the blanks for those slowpokes who hadn’t quite figured out the whole story by now. Its meaning—which in this case translates to humor—is on a single-word level. Funny, but we can do better.

At the sentence level of meaning, then, the remark begs to be glossed. Why does Ford refer to “proofs” that are “extant”? Such quasi-legal words implore the reader to look outside the sentence for context.

At an earlier point in the play the Welsh parson Hugh Evans questions the school-boy William Page on his Latin. “What is ‘lapis,’ William?” He asks.

William responds, “A stone.”

“And what is ‘a stone,’ William?”

“A pebble.”

“No; it is ‘lapis.’ I pray you, remember in your prain.” (4, 1, 31-6)

Again, this scene has some funny moments—mostly due to Mistress Quickly’s malapropisms and misapprehensions. The above sentences, though, read like Ford’s laughless one-liner. They feel as though they should be around for a reason, but neither the scene nor the characters seem to want to provide it.

Here’s where context again needs to be introduced. And here’s where one can begin to see the next level of proper conformity of parts to one another and to the whole.

In his published letters, Gabriel Harvey audaciously referred to Oxford as “the ass”—obviously pejorative but perhaps also a reference to Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*.

Falstaff’s line, then, becomes both a contextual joke on his own buffoonery and a subtextual joke about his (i.e. the author’s) many sobriquets.

The “ox” gag continues on that theme.

Thomas Nashe’s *Strange News* (1592) contains a strange dedication to one “Master William Apis Lapis”—which Charles Wisner Barrell proved quite convincingly was Oxford (cf. *Shakespeare Fellowship*

(Continued on page 12)



*Burford (Continued from page 5)*

blind perfection from Shakespeare every time. Whoever he was, he must have undergone a rigorous literary apprenticeship which would have left a wealth of early verse in its wake. The fact that Oxford's early verse efforts, such as we have them, constitute the lost juvenilia of Shakespeare, is strong proof of his authorship.

As for Shakspeare, not only does his life not jibe with the works, it doesn't jibe with the dates of the works in as far as they are ascertainable from internal references. If we divide the possible dates of the works into three time blocks (A: pre-1590, B: 1590-1604 and C: post-1604), it is easy to demonstrate how fatal blocks A and C are for the Stratfordian theory of authorship, as well as block B if one reads the "Willy" passages in Spenser's *Teares of the Muses* (1591) as references to Shakespeare. Particularly devastating in Block A is Nashe's 1589 reference to *Hamlet*, while the dedication to *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in 1609, as well as the wilderness of quartos between 1604 and 1623, puts paid to Shakspeare post-1604. A study of the times makes it clear that Shakespeare's heyday was the 1580s and indeed Jonson in committing Shakespeare with his peers names three writers who all stopped writing (or indeed existing) in the early 1590s: Marlowe, Kyd and Lyly.

The following points were then made in laying out the case for Oxford:

1. It is legitimate to use the works as evidence.

2. The works demonstrate Shakespeare to have been a highly cultured, classically educated nobleman who had travelled on the Continent, most notably to France and Italy.

3. The most common protagonist in Shakespeare, and the likely type of the author himself, is the Court insider who is at the same time an outsider i.e. the alienated courtier, figures such as Jaques, Prince Hal, Edgar, Prospero, Troilus and Macbeth. The quintessence of this type is, however, Shakespeare's most famous hero, Hamlet. Shakespeare's own spiritual journey can be traced from the early characters such as Berowne through Romeo, Prince Hal and Hamlet to Lear and finally Prospero.

4. The play *Hamlet* tells Oxford's life story and gives us a clear insight into the sort of propaganda battle Shakespeare himself had to fight at the Court of Elizabeth and beyond. The official story (given out by the father of good news, Polonius) is that old King Hamlet died from a snakebite while sleeping in his orchard. Hamlet, his son, who like Troilus is truth's authentic author, uses his art, namely the theatre, to tell what really happened.

Through this device of "The Mousetrap" Shakespeare informs us of his artistic method and motive. Thus *Hamlet* itself is the "Mousetrap" for the Court of Gloriana, suitably baited to catch the conscience of the queen. It is made crystal clear that the plays are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time and are being used by Hamlet to "set right" the disjointed age.

5. The plays then are cover stories. They use allegory to steer criticisms of the government past the censor.

6. Oxford is the gateway to a true understanding of Shakespeare.

7. Oxford's life, writings and mentality all cohere to the letter with what the canon itself tells us of Shakespeare

*Anderson (Continued from page 11)*

*Quarterly* (Vol. 5, no. 4, p. 49, Oct. 1944)).

"Apis Lapis," as he argues, is a "stoned [castrated] bull" or "ox." So when Ford calls Falstaff an ox, he's not just playing the name game.

Ford's proof that Falstaff is an ox was recited by the schoolboy William in the previous act. So long as we remember in our "prain" that 'lapis' is stone, the author has given us enough information to get both the reference to and the substance of Nashe's bilingual joke. Of course, the absurdity is compounded by the fact that Ford is as much "ox" as Falstaff. Perhaps more so.

The irony is often rich when Shakespeare's authorial characters interact. Ford and Falstaff certainly provide the author ample opportunity to goof around with the very definition of self. Within the play, both characters are unique and distinct individuals. Yet as they acknowledge in the above exchange, their identities are only as different as the two nicknames for the same person. Now that's funny.

"The anchor is deep," to quote Nym. "Will that humor pass?"

*(In the next issue: Part II - "Beauty" in the higher realms)*

*(Note to our readers. With this two part essay Mark Anderson is commencing a new column for our Newsletter, to be called "The Paradigm Shift." It will be devoted to analysis of the authorship debate.)*

*Workshop Preview (Continued from page 3)*

Related to Richardson's assumptions is another that a student showed him as a good premise for a college education:

What democracy needs is vigorous public debate, not information. Of course, it needs information too, but the kind of information it needs can be generated only by debate. *We do not know what we need to know until we ask the right questions*, and we can identify the right questions only by subjecting our own ideas about the world to the test of public controversy. Information, usually seen as the precondition of debate, is better understood as its by-product. When we get into arguments that focus and fully engage our attention, we become avid seekers of relevant information. Otherwise we take in information passively—if we take it in at all. (Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and*

*the Betrayal of Democracy*, 1995: 162-63; emphasis added)

Each of these premises has influenced and informed Richardson's authorship classes at Cleveland State. Together they have led to new emphases on critical thinking, on team-teaching, on interviews with working scholars, on collaborative research and argumentation, on professional abstracting, on information technology and the World Wide Web, and on student presentations at scholarly conferences.

After thirty years of college teaching, Prof. Richardson reports that the authorship issue has revitalized his commitment to his students, to the classroom, and to Jeffersonian democracy. Like Marquis's Mehitabel, "there's a lot of life in the old [guy] yet." He will discuss his authorship classes and methods at a teachers' workshop at the SOS conference in Seattle.

*Ogburn (Continued from page 4)*

reason to acknowledge as his sovereign—and remember we are speaking of a poet embodying both surpassing emotion and the feudal tradition—I shall not take up space by rehearsing my argument here.

Let me, rather, join the reader in grateful congratulations to Joseph Sobran for his having shown incontrovertibly that the poet of the *Sonnets* cannot possibly have been a man still in his early thirties, newly arrived from the provinces and barred in the class-structured society of Elizabethan England from enjoying anything like the relationship with the sought-after young earl set forth in the *Sonnets*. Equally, we are in debt to Sobran for having, indeed, left no room for doubt that the poet was Edward de Vere.

# Music Reviews:

## Renaissance Music at Princely Courts of Europe

Rozmberk Consort Prague  
Supraphon Records 3194

## Live the Legend

The New World Renaissance Band  
Nightwatch Records 1001

by Philip Haldeman

Four centuries ago, life may have been simpler for some people, but not for musicians. When music became more and more secularized in the 1500s, an explosion of acoustical instruments, many newly invented, suffused Europe with an incredible variety of sound. The church had dominated musical progress for hundreds of years, emphasizing the human voice and, in England, making possible the ethereal compositions of Thomas Tallis and William Byrd. Byrd, in fact, was born just seven years before Edward de Vere, in 1543.

As in the past, the church remained central to the larger, more serious works of polyphony, but was limited by the obvious problem of themes (sorry, no passionate love songs in the cathedral) and the joys of dance. The variety of instruments that were popping up were thought by default to be inappropriate for church service. But the age of musical expression and invention had overrun all of Europe, and there was no stopping it. More and more, music was becoming part of everyday life, and musicians were not only expected to express the passions, regrets, heartaches, struggles, and foibles of everyday life, they were expected to express it with a wide variety of odd and cantankerous instruments that were extremely difficult to master.

For ordinary people in the heyday of the Renaissance, there were no radios, stereos, cassette decks, or walkmans available at the local electronics store, so one either had to hire someone who could play music or learn to play his own. Everyone taught their children to sing, and as the music-loving 16th century rolled along, a family might become a target of hostile gossip if it couldn't provide a voice or two for the madrigals that were churned out in almost top-fifty fash-

ion. In terms of the profession itself, hundreds of musicians and troubadours carried their sometimes odd instruments all over Europe, entertaining at court, in taverns, and in the town square. Everyone enjoyed music in England's Golden Age. Queen Elizabeth, ironically enough, was quite adept at playing a keyboard instrument known as "the virginal."

The two CDs named above represent two sides of the popular music of the time—one instrumental, the other vocal. Each in its own way is recommendable as a doorway into the Renaissance. The Rozmberk Consort Prague is an ensemble that takes its name from an original group that was active at various European courts between 1552 and 1602. The astonishing variety of skills and compositional forms on this excellent album bespeaks volumes of the complex musical life of the times. The types of instruments outnumber the players about 2-1. This tone-color zoo includes such animals as the cornet, booked harp, chamois horn, harpsichord, xylophone, string drum, bombard, bladder pipe, serpent, korbolt, rackett, and positive organ. Just to name a few. Missing is the twisting trombone-like instrument having my favorite name, the sackbutt. I gather the consort couldn't find a sackbutt player in time for the session; but nonetheless, the wonderful sounds that are reproduced clearly demonstrate just how delightful and full of rhythm this music was. The selections are mostly instrumental, but include a couple of vocals as well. They are programmed by country of origin and contain music by famous and not-so-famous composers such as John Dowland, Thomas Morley, Claude Gervaise, Hening Dedekind, Michael Praetorius, and even Henry VIII. The album is an excellent sampling of the music of Edward de Vere's day, and the clear resonance and rhythms of these remarkable instruments sound just great coming through any stereo system.

The second album, *Live the Legend*, is the first in a series by The New World Renaissance Band. This group, created by singer Owain Phyfe, has become a popular phenomenon that takes the music and lyrics of Renaissance times and, by not adhering to the strictures of "approved" style, brings

the full content and emotion of the compositions right into the lap of the 20th century. As one listener has raved of this album: "Passion and innocence, elegance and virtue, simplicity and intelligence mingle in a timeless alchemy of emotional relevance."

The beauty of the album is Phyfe's ability to sincerely communicate a set of songs, many of which lean toward lovely melancholy themes, in a fashion that is instantly recognizable. There is little feeling of historical distance in what he does, though he speaks of his career as "musical chivalry." With the exception of a vihuela (an early guitar) he uses modern instruments: recorders, a viola, cello, fiddle, and harp. Will purists object? Who cares? Phyfe is working with this wonderful material on his own terms (and in several languages), and the result is captivating. I'll admit that for someone used to listening to authentic renditions and what is assumed to be a more traditional delivery, it takes a little getting used to. In fact, I kept wracking my brain while listening for the first time, trying to recall which popular singer's voice Phyfe's reminded me of. It took me days to figure it out. (If you buy the album and guess who I mean, I'll respond at [haldeman@accessone.com](mailto:haldeman@accessone.com)).

Of course, no one really knows how this music sounded, or what kind of a voice was considered ideal. One shouldn't make too much of Phyfe's differing from traditional authenticity (the modern instruments, his delivery). In no way does he sound like a "pop" singer. He always uses the original lyrics; he has a smooth, finely textured, completely natural voice; and he simply allows the lyrics to breath in today's air, as if they might have been written last week. Thus he spookily reminds us that we all experience the same emotions as the denizens of four centuries ago. All the lyrics are printed in the booklet that comes with the disc.

I'd recommend either of these albums as a way of expanding one's aesthetic understanding of Shakespeare's time.

(Philip Haldeman is a reviewer of classical music for The American Record Guide.)

## Oxfordian News

# Students will debate authorship issue at Ball State University in October; Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable launches 12th year in Los Angeles

### California

In **Los Angeles** this fall The Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable will begin its 12th season of lectures and meetings.

This year the first lecture is scheduled for September 27th at the Beverly Hills Public Library where Steve Sohmer (Phd.), will speak on "Julius Caesar and the Julian Calendar."

Other scheduled talks include Richard Roe on "Discoveries in *Two Gentleman of Verona*," (November 15), Liam Sullivan on "Shakers of the Spear: A Group Theory," (January 24), James Riddell on "Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser" (March 28), and Dolly Wraight on "Marlowe and the *Sonnets*" (June 13).

### Colorado

**Denver's** Elizabeth Leigh recently reported on the Phaeton discussion group yet another instance of how the authorship question is popping up everywhere.

While watching the Showtime film *Elvis Meets Nixon*, Liz suddenly heard narrator Dick Cavett say, "The Earl of Oxford, writing under the pen-name William Shakespeare, described Elvis best: Heavy lies the head that wears the crown..."

Liz's comment on that was, "Wow." We agree.

### Indiana

At this year's gathering of the Committee for Ancient and Early Studies Conference (CAES) at **Ball State University**, October 17th-18th, several events of interest to Oxfordians will take place.

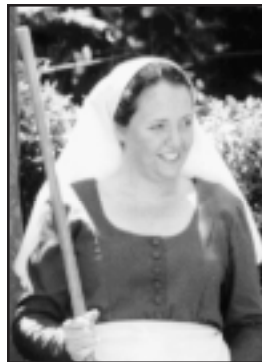
First, students from Cleveland State University and Ball State University will debate the authorship in a special panel arranged by Prof. David A. Richardson of Cleveland State. As our members know, Prof. Richardson has been using the authorship issue in his classroom the past two years to teach students as much as about *how* to debate an issue as about Shakespeare and

the authorship question and will be presenting a Teachers Workshop at the Seattle Conference (see page 3 of this newsletter for a brief story on Richardson's efforts).

A second event at the CAES Conference will be an appearance by Prof. Daniel Wright of Concordia University (Portland, OR). Prof. Wright will present a paper entitled, "A man is but what he knoweth: Why the Shakespeare Canon Cannot Be the Work of the Man From Stratford." Wright expects that this paper will draw some special attention from his fellow academics, just as his first Edward de Vere Studies Conference did last spring.

We will report on both the student debate and Prof. Wright's paper in our next issue.

### Massachusetts



Laura McDonnell as Mistress Quickly

The Hampshire Shakespeare Company in **Northampton**, founded and co-managed by SOS Board member Tim Holcomb, presented *Cymbeline* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for its Summer 1997 season.

Newsletter editor Bill Boyle and his brother Charles Boyle took in *Merry Wives* in late July, along with Northampton residents and Society members Roger Stritmatter, Sam Cherubin and Mark Anderson. Among the cast were Laura McDonnell and Stephen Eldridge, both company regulars and also SOS members.

The production was first-rate and enjoyed by all. However, for the Oxfordians involved in producing, performing or just being in the audience, the subject could not help but turn afterwards to the authorship

implications of the play.

Among several interesting moments later that evening was this: as Roger Stritmatter, Bill Boyle and Charles Boyle left the theatre grounds (after helping to put away all the chairs!), one of the cast members called over to Roger, "So, do you think a commoner wrote all this stuff?"

"Well, what do you think?" Roger called back.

"I don't think so," the actor responded.

Roger later remarked how interesting that little exchange actually was, since this particular actor has been mulling over the authorship question for some time, and now here he was, following just one more performance of one of Shakespeare's "lesser" plays, apparently letting it be known that "he had crossed the line."

Also of interest, in the *Merry Wives* program's actor biography section, Laura McDonnell dedicates the current season "of sweating and strutting" to "Queen Elizabeth I, the original Mistress Quickly, and to all the 'orphan heirs of fixed destiny' [a line Mistress Quickly speaks (Act V, scene v) while masquerading as the Fairy Queen]."

### Washington

The current issue of the **Washington State University** student publication *Klipsun* includes an authorship story by D. Eric Jones, "Fakespeare." Jones had been in touch with a number of Oxfordians around the country for several months, and also made good use of the information on the Internet Home Page.

The result is an interesting, engaging article about the authorship that is bound to attract some student attention, especially with the 21st Annual Conference in Seattle this October.

### Canada

At the Queen's Inn in **Stratford**, Ontario, tourists have been treated all summer to a special production put on by the local acting troupe. It's *The Trial of William Shake-*



peare by Joseph S. Ajlouny, with the subtitle "Did he or didn't he? You be the Jury."

Society members Norman and Margaret Robson (of North Palm Beach, Florida) were traveling in Canada and took in the show in July. They tell us that the play is "skewed to Shaksper of Stratford" and that in the vote at the end the Stratford actor always wins. But they also report that Society brochures were freely available to all attendees (the brochures were in low supply, and we sent along a resupply to the Inn.)

The Robsons said that they consider this a major step forward in that the play (performed 11 times a week) *does* tell folks that there *is* an authorship question. They also say that at the performance they attended they made their Oxfordian presence felt in the discussion period.

## England

Pre-production work for Michael Peer's documentary *The Shakespeare Conspiracy* was scheduled to begin in June 1997.

In the June 1997 *De Vere Society Newsletter* Peer reports briefly on the project, explaining how the financing through co-producers was finally put together—Austrian and French companies are in, but to his surprise four German companies declined to participate. He also reported that, while the BBC said no too, Laurence Rees (who runs *Timewatch*) did comment that he knew "it was basically the historic truth...but [he] simply did not dare broach the subject on British TV for fear of the consequences."

De Vere Society patron Sir Derek Jacobi will present and narrate the program, which promises to make it a notable addition to the growing body of work on the authorship question.

## Singapore

Yes, even in **Singapore!**

In Singapore Airline's magazine *Silver Kris* for June 1997 there appeared an article by Andy Ellis, "Who Was Willm Shakspr?"

The article focuses on the deficiencies in the Stratford story rather than promoting any one claimant (portraits of Marlowe, Bacon and Oxford are included).

Ellis concludes, "Speculation is what it can only ever be, until the day that unquestionable evidence comes to light."

# In the Authorship Debate, A Role for Theatres

by Alan J. Hovey

In a letter to Charlton Ogburn four years ago, I predicted the emergence of a brilliant young tenured professor who "would happily forsake the comfort of orthodoxy for the fame and excitement of placing himself on the crest of the wave and leading Academe out of the wilderness." Mr. Ogburn's response, generously ignoring the mixed metaphor, was: "Forget it!"

Little enough has happened since then to gainsay the skepticism. Dr. Daniel Wright's First Annual Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in April, reported in the last newsletter, may eventually be seen as a seminal event. But the "vitriolic messages" which that brave initiative provoked among "English professors from around the country," also noted in the newsletter, testify to the prospect of a long road and hard slogging in Academe. Oxfordians, watching their case continue to gain ground, have reason to remain confident that, sooner or later, a vast accretion of intellectual geology will collapse. But what agency will supply the critical mass? If not the professoriate, who?

Several developments suggest an answer to which Oxfordians might well give renewed, systematic attention—the theatre:

—In Bath, England, May 23, the Theatre Royal sponsored a public debate on the authorship question. Conceived by an Oxfordian patron of that theatre as a fundraising event, it drew a lively audience, and turned a profit. The only comparable events in the United States to date, so far as I am aware, took place under the auspices of the Washington Shakespeare Company and the North Carolina Shakespeare Theatre in, respectively, 1994 and 1990, both on the initiative of Oxfordian Trudy Atkins.

—At the most recent De Vere Society annual general meeting (London, Feb. 8, 1997) Mark Rylance, Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe discussed the authorship question. Rylance, an anti-Stratfordian who is uncommitted to any of the Stratfordian's rival claimants, inclines toward an authorial group in which he believes Oxford played an important part. Rylance said he hopes to organize an authorship conference during the off-season, and to

establish an authorship book section in the Globe shop. He is also holding at least one Oxfordian play at the Globe for possible future use. This is my one-man show *Aye, Shakespeare! The Dramatist Unmasked*, in which Edward de Vere tells the whole story from his point of view.

—Sir Derek Jacobi, preeminent Shakespearean actor and director, agreed recently to lend his name as Patron of the De Vere Society in England. Other theatre luminaries such as Michael York and Sir John Gielgud have also recently endorsed Oxford's claim, or the movement to reassess the authorship issue, or both.

—A handful of summer stock companies—Timothy Holcomb's Hampshire Shakespeare Company of Amherst, Stephen Moorer's Carmel Shakespeare Festival, Charles Boyle's Ever Theatre in Boston—continue to offer productions with Oxfordian insights.

—Amateur playwrights continue to turn out Oxfordian scripts and even manage occasionally to get them produced, e.g. Stephanie Caruana's *Edward Oxenford: Spearshaker* and Richard Desper's *Star-Crossed Lovers*.

Taken together, these circumstances define a large opportunity for Oxfordians to reach out to the public through theatre.

Theatre companies should be seen, I believe, as Oxfordian societies' most promising objective. They have large constituencies. They are apt to be more interested in the issue than other institutions, less invested in orthodoxy, more avant-garde-minded. They command the unique power of the stage. They can make unrivalled contributions to public education—not only through performances, but in conferences, workshops, staged readings, seasons' guides, program notes and the media coverage that attends such work. The pioneering work of the Millers in promoting Oxfordian playwriting could be revived under Society auspices.

Proposals seeking to address such possibilities should appeal to foundations and humanities endowments in the market for projects that manage to qualify as both innovative and respectable.

## Book Reviews:

**Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time.** By Joseph Sobran (Free Press, 1997) 311 pages.

by Charles Boyle

This is probably the most important publication since Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1984.

At two-hundred-twenty-three pages (plus appendices), it makes a most treasured source for finding out the bare bones of the Shakespeare debate. Nothing new has been discovered, but what Joseph Sobran has done is put the issue into a form that most people will find easy to digest in a few sittings. In just the first hundred pages he does all that needs to be done to put Shakespeare from Stratford in his place as nothing but a cardboard cutout. Obviously this is not the man who created the plays and poems of Shakespeare and for that alone Sobran should be congratulated. It has always been assumed that this person could not have written the plays, but Sobran has done more in less space to make it absolutely certain that this is not the author.

The playwright Shakespeare was a member of the nobility. That is what he thought about, that is what he wrote about. That is where he came from. And if we learned nothing else from this work, Sobran would still be a great Oxfordian. Indeed it is not even likely that such a person as Shakespeare could have written these works. It is not simply that he (Shakespeare) does not know what these works are about, he doesn't even *begin to know* what these works are about.

But Sobran does more than this. Putting aside the such claimants as Bacon and Marlowe in a couple of pages he then writes about the only person who could have been Shakespeare: Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. He shows how no one else had this man's gift for language and for making that language speak from its earliest sounds to its last incarnations.

The man who was Shakespeare is the voice and the experience of Edward de Vere. This is the man who lived among the nobility, which is surely where Shakespeare lived. This is the man about whom Walt Whitman

—the most common man in the English language—has said, “Only one of the ‘wolfish earls’ so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant and knower, might seem to the true author of these amazing works.”

Among several particularly good things about *Alias* are the appendices at the end where Sobran talks about Oxford's poetry (complete with side-by-side comparisons of the poems and Shakespeare's language), and about *The Funeral Elegy*, published in 1612. Professor Donald Foster has said this is a poem by Shakespeare, but it is most likely (if Shakespeare-Oxford's at all) a poem written 30 years before—when he was a young man—and has only recently been discovered. This is why it was published under the initials “W.S.,” because it is by Shakespeare, even though published after his recent death.

Another interesting section is Sobran's observation about the extent to which Shakespeare's reputation was that of a poet rather than a playwright from 1593 (*Venus and Adonis*) through 1609 (*Sonnets*), and into the next decade. Yet when the *Folio* is published (1623), it is Shakespeare the playwright being canonized, with no mention at all of his poetry or of Southampton, to whom the major poems had been dedicated. Sobran theorizes that this has to do with the controversial nature of the poetry itself and the relationship between the poet and the Fair Youth (Southampton)—i.e. homosexuality and disgrace.

Yet, on this final point (homosexuality and disgrace) it must be said that Sobran, contrary to his book's sub-title, has *not* solved the world's greatest literary mystery. In fact, as good as the first half of the book is in laying out the case against Stratford and for Oxford, when it comes to delivering on the promise of how the *Sonnets* reveal the homosexual relationship between the poet and the Fair Youth, Sobran seems to pull his punches. Chapter 9 (“The *Sonnets* Revisited”) is only six and one-half pages long, barely a third of the average length of all the other chapters in the book.

There are tantalizing hints throughout the book of some of the other theories that

have been put forward about the reasons for the cover-up. Several times Sobran mentions in passing the rumored relationship between Elizabeth and Oxford. Also, in the last chapter, while making the case for Shakespeare's being known primarily as a poet, the following poem (a 1600 poem by one John Lane) turns up:

When chaste Adonis came to man's estate  
Venus straight courted him with many  
a while  
Lucrece once seen, straight Tarquin  
laid a bait  
With foul incest [sic] her body to defile

What one can't help but notice first is that Sobran felt it necessary to add [sic] after the word “incest.” Yet he makes no further comment about what this contemporaneous poem may be saying, other than to note that it is one of many that identify Shakespeare with his nondramatic poems, not with his plays. This lack of comment certainly caught the attention of this reviewer. For incest is clearly another sexual activity fraught with *both* danger and disgrace.

However, Edward de Vere would not, I believe, be waylaid by a mere charge of incest. There was more to this man than that. A charge of incest alone would not have given him—undoubtedly the greatest playwright and poet in the English language—a reason to be unknown to everyone.

Something more was at stake, and about that Sobran and I disagree. I think Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth knew something of incest and the crown of England. Only this would have been enough to keep the author in the shadow all of these years.

But that is something that needs more space than this review can call for. *Alias Shakespeare* is still a major event in the field of authorship studies, and one of the few books around that will give more and more people a reason to look into the greatest mystery in the English language.

It gathers together in one simple volume all one needs to know to be convinced that Shakespeare is not some poor person from Stratford-on-Avon, but rather a major figure in the English aristocracy, writing about his world because he cannot do what he wants to do in real life.

**The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition.** Stephen Greenblatt, general editor (New York : W.W. Norton & Co., 1997) 3420 pages, \$45.00

**By Richard Whalen**

Of particular interest to Oxfordians in the *Norton Shakespeare* is how the authorship issue is handled by Professor Stephen Greenblatt in his general introduction. Greenblatt, who just moved from UC-Berkeley to Harvard, is a founder and the standard-bearer for the “new historicism” school of literary criticism. In contrast to the deconstructionist or multiculturalist approach, new historicists study literary works in their historical context. A writer’s works are seen as both influencing the times in which they were written and as a reflection of those times. Without too much exaggeration, Oxfordian scholars might be seen as *de facto* new historicists. Conversely, new historicists might be seen as scholars who should appreciate the historical arguments for Oxford as Shakespeare.

The *Norton Shakespeare* is the first new edition of the collected works in five years, and Greenblatt has chosen not to heap scorn on the anti-Stratfordians or challenge the evidence for Oxford in any detail. His relatively brief and benign treatment of the authorship issue seems to reflect a more cautious and less strident attitude among establishment scholars.

Greenblatt recognizes the problem with the Stratford man’s biography, but he comes up with an astonishing way to handle it: He goes to the extremes. First, he acknowledges the paucity of records that might give the Stratford man a literary life. Few personal documents survive, he says, that “give biographies of artists their appeal,” no diaries, no letters, no contemporary gossip, etc. What records have survived have “relatively little interest” in themselves but “have come to seem like precious relics.” These traces include “assessments, small fines, real estate deeds, minor actions in court to collect debts.” The problem with the biographical records, he concludes, “is not that they are few but that they are a bit dull.” He makes no serious attempt to turn the historical facts of the Stratford man’s life into the biography of the great poet and playwright.

This void, he notes quite correctly, is what inspired the anti-Stratfordians. So far, he sounds like some Stratfordian scholars, especially the late S. Schoenbaum.

Then comes the surprise. Moving to the other biographical extreme, Greenblatt gives full value to “biographical daydreams... imaginary portraits ...legends ...that fill the void.” He describes his approach as follows:

To integrate some of the *probable* circumstances of Shakespeare’s early years with the particular shape of the theatrical imagination associated with his name, let us *indulge* briefly in the *biographical daydreams* that modern scholarship is supposed to have rendered forever obsolete. The vignettes that follow are *conjectural*, but they may suggest ways in which his life as we know it found its way into his art. [Emphasis added.]

Even Schoenbaum, the dedicated Stratfordian biographer, would not have gone this far. Greenblatt then imagines at length Will Shakspeare watching his father in town council ceremonies and witnessing not only one of the Queen’s progresses but also a parliamentary election and even an exorcism. The problem with this methodology, of course, is that anyone can imagine all sorts of Elizabethan events into “Shakespeare’s” biography. Elizabethan historians must shudder at this possibility.

Greenblatt’s imaginary biography of Shakespeare is perhaps inevitable given what he finds in the works, namely an aristocrat. “The plays manifest” he says, “a profound fascination with the monarchy and with the ambitions of the aristocracy, but the fascination is never simply endorsement.” An Oxfordian could not have said it better. He also notes that Shakespeare’s characters “express deep reservations about the power of money.” Again, an observation at odds with the businessman biography of the Stratford man and the Stratfordian myth of the actor/playwright earning a small fortune at the Globe with his pen.

Unlike some of his predecessors, Greenblatt is calm about the anti-Stratfordians. He devotes only a paragraph to the authorship issue. On the positive side, he does note that several famous people, including Twain and Freud, “espoused the theories.” And he does concede that some scholars agree with the anti-

Stratfordians, although he backs into it by saying “though very few scholars have joined them.” His two-sentence refutation of the case for Oxford simply alleges (imagines?) the need for an “extraordinary conspiracy...of extreme implausibility” to hide the true author’s identity. The simpler and more historically appropriate explanation, of course, is that the earl of Oxford’s authorship of the works of Shakespeare was an open secret, known to those who cared but not to be publicly acknowledged.

Oxfordians will appreciate the cover illustration, *Fool’s Cap* (1620). It’s the bust of a fool or jester holding a scepter, but where the face should be there’s a map of the world (circa late 1500s.) In an interview, Greenblatt’s first comment was: “I bet you Oxfordians are happy we didn’t put one of those Shakespeare portraits on the cover.”

The *Norton Shakespeare* is one of three scholarly new editions of the collected works, all appearing within a few months of each other. Norton’s text is based on the 1988 “Oxford Shakespeare,” edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. The text is in single-column format but on Norton’s usual thin paper, a blessing for a tome of 3,420 pages. The other collected works that have been updated are Professor David Bevington’s edition from Harper Collins and the venerable *Riverside*, edited by Professor G. Blakemore Evans and the late Harry Levin of Harvard. Their biographies of the author, unchanged from previous editions, purvey the usual Stratfordian myth and portray the anti-Stratfordians in a way that Oxfordians probably have found quite objectionable but not hateful.

All three collected works, incidentally, now carry the poem *A Funeral Elegy to Master John Peter* by “W.S.,” who is supposed by Professor Donald W. Foster to be William Shakespeare. Many have doubted and disputed the attribution, notably Joseph Sobran and Diana Price. In the Norton volume Foster allows that the *Elegy* has, perhaps, received “more credit than it deserves.” Editors of the other volumes, perhaps having felt some pressure to include the controversial *Elegy* at the last minute, are less enthusiastic. Bevington’s last word on the matter is, “The attribution remains uncertain.”

Meanwhile, *The Shakespeare Newslet-*

(Continued on page 24)



Book Review/Commentary

## Shakespeare's Legal Appeal

Kill All the Lawyers? *seen through the prism of authorship*

by Roger Stritmatter

According to one prominent version of recent intellectual history, the outcome of the 1987 Moot Court Trial at which Supreme Court Justices Stevens, Blackmun and the late William Brennan heard arguments on the authorship controversy, was definitive. The Oxfordians, we are told, lost.

In fact, the reservations of Blackmun and Stevens at that time appear to have been considerable and—the point should not be lost in the Stratfordian spin cycle—cumulative. That is to say, two of America's most imminent Jurists began by considering the authorship controversy and concluded (some years later) by becoming *de facto* Oxfordians.

This should not be a complete surprise. Law and Shakespeare have apparently always gone hand in hand. Since its earliest surfacing in tracts such as the 1640 anti-Stratfordian parody *The Great Assizes Holden at Parnassus*, the rhetoric of authorship doubt has linked—implicitly or explicitly—the legal to the literary.

The interdependence of legal and literary authorship discourses may be a clue to understanding their cool reception among the tenured. Such a linkage is in itself clearly unacceptable to dominant Romantic presumptions such as Harold Bloom's "the autonomy of the aesthetic," a doctrine in which a fictional genre like a play can by definition have almost nothing in common with a legal brief such as Justice Stevens' own entertaining and (in places) profoundly ironic "Shakespeare Canon of Statutory Construction" (*Pennsylvania Law Review*, 1992), a legal opinion delivered in five acts expanding upon his remarks at the 1987 Moot Court Trial.

Indeed the deeply grained romanticism of much of 20th century Shakespeare studies with its ultimate dependence on mystical concepts like genius, can be read as a reaction against the appeal to reason which the best anti-Stratfordians, like good lawyers, have always made a major platform of their work. The question of how well Shakespeare understood the law is but one element in this fascinating and complex intellectual history.

For his part, Mark Twain could not recall testimony ("great testimony—imposing testimony—unanswerable and unattackable testimony") as to any of Shakespeare's hundred specialties, except for one: the law. Historically, lawyers such as George Greenwood—whose several anti-Stratfordian books (1908-1923) remain among the most persuasive works in the history of the controversy—have been closely associated with the anti-Stratfordian movement.

This association has, however, become more evident in the wake of the 1987 Moot Court Trial. In addition to Justice Stevens, Justices Blackmun, Powell and Kennedy have also been voicing doubts about the orthodox view of Shakespeare. Blackmun, writing to Charlton Ogburn Jr., declared that "The Oxfordians have presented a very strong almost fully convincing case for their point of view. The debate continues and it is well that it does. We need this enlightenment in these otherwise somewhat dismal days."

Therefore, it might seem that a book on Shakespeare and the law published in 1994 (Daniel Kornstein's *Kill All The Lawyers? Shakespeare's Legal Appeal*, reviewed in the Society's Autumn 1994 *Newsletter*) would want to make the most of the populist ferment about authorship represented in remarks such as Blackmun's. Instead, Daniel Kornstein's work is flawed by the systematic suppression of any mention of the authorship question.

Thus authorship surfaces in this book not as an intellectual question, but as a symptom of the Freudian return of the repressed, a return which is perhaps most urgently symbolized in the question named in the book's title. Kornstein's leading premise in *Kill all the Lawyers?* is that when Dick the Butcher cries amen to Jack Cade's proposal to make himself dictator of England (2 *H6*, 4.2), with his famous line, "the first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers," he may well be representing Shakespeare's *own view* of lawyers. This

is, he says, the "plain meaning of the line."

Indeed, Kornstein seems to feel that perhaps Shakespeare can only be defended by "lawyercide," hence the book's curious title. "Defended from what?" a naive reader might be tempted to ask. The question may be naive, but the answer comes only by reading between the lines of this curiously schizoid book on Shakespeare and the law.

In fact, Kornstein comments directly on Justice John Paul Stevens' contrary view of this same famous line, and the resulting attack is both mildly comical and yet quite revealing of how the great authorship divide affects any commentary on Shakespeare.

Stevens, writing an opinion in the case *Walters vs. The National Association of Radiation Survivors et alia* (fn, 24), states that Dick's line does *not* represent Shakespeare's own opinion about lawyers. Rather, Stevens held that a *careful reading of that text* will reveal Shakespeare insightfully realized that disposing of lawyers is a step in the direction of totalitarian government (emphasis added).

Kornstein, however, will have none of this. To him, Stevens's epistemological caution about not attributing the quotation to Shakespeare becomes a convenient pretext for the argument *ad hominem*: Stevens (says Kornstein) reacted to Dick's line the way one might expect all thin-skinned, oversensitive defense lawyers to react to it.

Now, this seems more like choice material for satire than an intellectual position anyone of Kornstein's considerable rhetorical talents should really wish to defend. Justice Stevens, a thin-skinned, oversensitive defense lawyer? Well, yes, that pretty much seems to be Kornstein's caricature of the man and, more to the point, his views.

**Authorship question inescapable**

To be fair, Kornstein does cite Justice Stevens 1992 essay on the authorship controversy. However, he characterizes it—without naming the title—as a law review article invoking *The Merchant of Venice* as support for strict justice yielding to equity. At best this is an amazingly narrow view of a complex opinion. A more cynical reading might consider the citation merely deceptive. At any rate, informed readers should not make the mistake of supposing that everything is what it seems to be in *Kill All*

*the Lawyers?*

While it has been rumored that Kornstein considered including a chapter on the authorship controversy in his book, from the point of view of intellectual history the book is but one chapter in the orthodox response to Ogburn and the other heretics. Hence Kornstein's analysis of the legal dimension of the plays (which is itself not without interest and insight) is haunted by the inevitably twofold Stratfordian project of: 1) casting doubt on the author's legal accomplishments and, 2) providing sufficient biographical matter to show that William of Stratford could very well have acquired those Shakespearean legal accoutrements which cannot be denied, even by Daniel Kornstein.

The Shakespeare whom Kornstein feels compelled to defend, if necessary by cleansing the republic of excess lawyers is—make no mistake about it—the Stratford straw man. A naive reader, however, may never recognize that Kornstein's own inflexibly orthodox premises have themselves been brought into question by his fellow lawyers; in such a context, the endorsement of killing lawyers has a chilling effect which is no less real just because it may not represent Kornstein's conscious intentions.

*Kill all the Lawyers?* is an unabashed appeal on behalf of William of Stratford as Shakespeare against the outrageous slings and arrows of anti-Stratfordian dissent. Much that might have been enlightening accordingly proves to be mere dismal business-as-usual, semantic shadowboxing with anti-Stratfordians, without doing them the simple dignity of naming them or responding to them on their own terms.

Kornstein systematically fails to engage the real intellectual problems posed by the existence of the authorship controversy, and frequently reiterates that Shakespeare, a bad or doubtful lawyer in his own right, must be defended (patronizingly) by critics like Kornstein—even, if necessary, by advancing Dick the Butcher and Lord Cade to the Supreme Court—from which they can soapbox about their social programs as if they were sound public policy.

What is missing is any awareness of the historically-inscribed paradox which lawyer/author Kornstein should be considering: the lawyers against whom he has taken up the banner of the Stratford legend are the same amateurs who, inspired by enthusiasm

and even, perhaps, by love, are challenging the assumptions of a distinctly professional cult of expertise for which Kornstein has become a prominent apologist.

Further, that Kornstein is out of step with the thinking of Supreme Court Justices is no credit to *Kill All the Lawyers?* It is a book written by a lawyer whose critical sensibilities have been dulled into awed submission by the shining credentials of his literary colleagues. The result is a version of literary principle which at its worst lapses into sublimely ridiculous phrases like the “plain meaning of the line” and at its best does little more than reiterate the obvious intellectual dilemma posed by the historical and cultural symbiosis which Kornstein astutely enough discerns between Shakespeare and the law, only then to place a distinctively Stratfordian spin on it.

#### **Can Shakespeare be understood without knowing the author?**

The confusion is not entirely a result of Kornstein's phobia towards authorship studies. As an enthusiastic newcomer to the rapidly expanding field of law and literature studies, Kornstein is much impressed by the doctrine of “reader-response” theory, which holds that the original intent of an author—in law or in literature—is less important than the emotional or intellectual uses which a contemporary reader may wish to apply to a work.

*Kill All the Lawyer's* glib position on authorship is intimately related to this theorem. As with most contemporary Stratfordians, the “reader-response” theory leaves Kornstein a convenient theoretical escape clause for denying that authorship matters at all. Thus, it doesn't matter who the author was, or what he intended—what really matters is how we modern readers chose to construe the meaning of his words.

There is no use embarking on an extended criticism of this theory, although the uses to which it seems destined to be put will almost certainly cause its originators (notably Stanley Fish) to wonder at what they have wrought. Kornstein's own feeble attempt to retrofit the words of Dick the Butcher to his contemporary ideological needs (slapping around lawyers who question the *bona fides* of the Stratford man) shows just how self-serving the doctrine can become in

misguided hands.

To conclude, one may note that Kornstein's sincere attempt to understand the legal themes of the Shakespeare canon (surely a worthwhile endeavor to which the author will, it is hoped, essay to make further and more sophisticated contributions) is flawed not only because the author fails to engage the authorship controversy itself, but also because he dismisses the sophisticated work of previous Shakespearean legal scholars such as Campbell (1859) Davis (1883) or White (1913) with a distinctly Cadean sneer towards the accomplishments of the past. Kornstein opts for the typically academic way out by identifying this earlier work as merely seeking to catalogue and explain—exhaustively and comprehensively—every technical legal reference in Shakespeare.

He fails to acknowledge that such an intellectual project was from its inception inseparable from the authorship question. An intellectual history of Shakespeare and the law *must* directly confront this relationship between text and motivating context, and this relationship can only be understood by knowing who the author really was.

The exploration of Shakespeare's legal thematics is inseparable from the matters of technical accuracy addressed by these earlier critics. For example, does specific terminology of law (or other disciplines) affect a reader's comprehension of the resolution of philosophical or dramatic cruxes in the text? Kornstein barely considers the problem. Instead he mistakenly accepts the 19th century view, common to both Baconians and Stratfordians (at least when they argued *qua* Stratfordians) that the question of Shakespeare's legal knowledge (i.e. how much he supposedly had) could be assessed without considerations of motive and theme. Kornstein avoids examining such knotty problems with whimsical appeals to liberate readers from the supposed tyranny of lawyers (i.e. let's kill 'em). The result is an odd misfit of competing claims lodged for different purposes at different places in Kornstein's book.

We read for example that the Bard wrote a history play four hundred years ago (*Richard II*), and we turn to it today as authority on the meaning of a constitutional right—an admission of the immense anxiety of influ-

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## From the Editor:

### So, What's the story?

In preparing this issue of the newsletter I found myself immersed in the debate as it unfolded ten years ago and the debate as it carries on today, in print (both popular media and academic journals), on the Internet, in television movies, among theatre professionals—seemingly everywhere.

One issue that has particularly caught my attention, and which I think raises an issue worthy of more detailed commentary among all Oxfordians, is touched upon by Society Trustee Elliott Stone in his letter on page 21.

Stone posits that journalism is mere story telling that must wait for scholarship to provide the story. This, it seems to me, is a variation on a more familiar dichotomy—that we must either win the authorship battle in Academe, with Oxfordian scholars besting Stratfordian scholars, or else we must win by spreading the word about the debate itself far and wide, thus prevailing over time through attrition, with Stratfordian scholars finding they have lost their audience.

In these past ten years the Oxfordian movement has grown considerably in overall public awareness and in increased membership enrollments in the SOS. Generally, for those people who do move beyond simply rejecting the authorship question out of hand, and who do start exploring the

issue in depth, that exploration inevitably leads to one simple, basic question: "What's the story?"

Hamlet first charged Horatio 400 years ago "to tell my story," and now, four centuries later, we find that one of our significant new friends in this common cause (Justice John Paul Stevens) concludes his summation at the 1987 Moot Court by telling Oxfordians that they had not yet come up with "a concise, coherent theory that they are prepared to defend in all respects."

Note that the Justice's call is not for new evidence, or even for a "smoking gun." It is a call for a theory that all Oxfordians are prepared to defend; or, in short, a story we can all defend. This is, of course, a classic case of "more easily said than done."

While most Oxfordians would willingly admit that *none of us* knows the whole story at this point in time, we do, nonetheless, need to be able to tell the world a story that is "concise and coherent."

At the Conference in Seattle this year there will be a special panel discussion on "Promoting the Authorship Issue." This is an ideal forum for discussing this most basic authorship issue (new research vs. publicity), and we hope that all those attending will be prepared to participate in searching for a theory which we can all defend.

## Correction

Within days of receiving the Spring 97 *Newsletter*, Jim Fitzgerald wrote to us taking exception to how his "Shakespeare, Oxford and Du Bartas" article had been edited.

In my role as editor I had made a significant change to his text and, in this instance, forgotten to check with the author.

So let us set the record straight. The final paragraph in the third column on page 18 should have been enclosed in brackets as containing the *editor's comments* on the

quality of the various poems in the box below, not the author's.

Jim also wrote that his concluding installment of the Du Bartas story was ready, "which will explore the momentous and hitherto unobserved linkage achieved by Ben Jonson (who else, right?) between Oxford, Joshua Sylvester, the *Divine Weeks*, and the *First Folio*, for the purpose of identifying Oxford as Shakespeare." We will publish this in the Fall 1997 *Newsletter*.

## Thanks, John Louthier

Beginning with this issue, John Louthier's column will no longer appear. John contacted us several months ago that he felt he could no longer keep up with everything he has to do these days, in

addition to some continuing health problems. Mark Anderson's new column will take its place.

Our thanks to John for all his help these past two years.



## Letters:

To the Editor:

We Oxfordians might easily be divided into two camps. One group calls for more scholarship, more research—an examination of the syntax, rhetoric, and style of the poetry and dramatic works to arrive at the culmination of our quest to prove the Oxfordian authorship. This group looks forward to a new generation of Shakespearean critics who will be fair-minded and non-homophobic, will take over the seats of the professors at the Folger and the college campuses (caught up as they are in the three-hundred-year-old spider webs of their own spinning), and will embrace Oxford as the true author of the Canon.

In the other camp we have our cheerleaders. They shout, “We have won! We have a hundred smoking guns! Our story is proven in print and on television! Forget the English professors—all we need is good publicists and spin control doctors! Funds must be found for more coffee mugs and bumper stickers! We will have victory when the talking heads of television proclaim it ours!”

The Shakespeare Oxford movement was blessed in its founding with several great scholars—men like J. Thomas Looney, William Fowler and Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn (Junior and Senior). True scholars, who made a thorough study of the texts and histories and acquired a wealth of knowledge that dealt with the attribution.

In the pages of the most recent *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, we find the other

group: the journalists. Journalists are individuals who have a story to tell. Journalists live in the pages of newspapers, on the screens of television sets, and in the radio waves of talk-show programs.

Joe Sobran is a journalist who has a story to tell. The story, we were originally led to believe, was the “Outing of Shakespeare” as Oxford the homosexual. At least, this is what Sobran told us at our last conference in Minnesota.

Alas, Sobran the journalist, in *Alias Shakespeare*, found himself obligated to set forth for the benefit of the “unwashed” the entire authorship debate.

Unfortunately for members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society who have read their Looney, their William Fowler and their Ogburn, and for Stratfordians who have worshipped at the feet of Sam Schoenbaum and countless others, we find ourselves retreading a well-travelled road. Almost all of Sobran’s book is a reprise of earlier theories and well-known ideas. He apparently decided that his task as a journalist was to recapitulate in 223 pages of easy-to-read large print what had taken Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, Sr. a monumental 1297 pages in *This Star of England*.

Those of us who had been thoroughly primed by Mr. Sobran at the Minnesota Conference were still waiting for the startling new discoveries and controversial, fascinating and rewarding details which were to be revealed in the author’s examination of the *Sonnets* as the autobiography of the Earl of Oxford as a sexually deviant personality.

The fact that the *Sonnets* could be subject to an autobiographical reading was first

put forth by Chalmers in 1797. In 1852, David Masson pointed out that “the sonnets of Shakespeare are and can possibly be nothing else than a poetical record of his (Shakespeare’s) own feelings and experiences.” Sobran’s argument in the book that “Oxford seems to match the author of the *Sonnets* in many details” is of course Looney’s and the Ogburn’s main argument.

Sobran goes on to claim that the Shakespeare of the *Sonnets* “had every reason to caution his young lover (Southampton) to be wary of associating with him since it would not be a good idea to be the known companion of a spendthrift eccentric or ordinary rake—a reputed homosexual, once accused of “buggering boys.”

To put it as crudely as Sam Schoenbaum did, “the notion that the ‘Burgher of Stratford’ might actually be ‘The Fornicator of Stageland’ was old material first set forth by Halliwell-Phillips in the 19th century.”

If the issue of sexuality, or rather homosexuality, was to be the “new scholarship” in *Alias Shakespeare*, why was there not a single word about it on either the front or back flaps of the book cover? Why does Charlton Ogburn’s index have two references under “homosexuality” and Sobran’s, none?

Sobran tells us that the ideas presented about the homosexual aspects of the *Sonnets* are not his own invention, but had been put “...most forcefully by Joseph Peguigney....in his book, *Such Is My Love*.... However, Peguigney assumes the traditional view of Shakespeare’s identity which leads him...to other wrong conclusions.”

Charlton Ogburn had covered this ground long before Mr. Peguigney. Ogburn made his position on the *Sonnets* quite clear: “Was it—and this has always been the main issue—homosexual?” Thus it appears that neither Sobran nor Peguigney have provided any new insights into this subject.

Sobran can be an engaging journalist. I found him to be far more amusing and creative in his “Sherlock Holmes” parody as an explication of one possible Oxfordian viewpoint in opposition to Donald Foster’s *Ellegy* by W.S. than in *Alias Shakespeare*.

Elliott Stone  
Boston MA  
5 August 1997

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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.

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Letters (Continued from page 21)

To the Editor:

Mark Anderson quotes Joe Sobran's book *Alias Shakespeare* as follows:

"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 assumes that the Bedingfield letter's 1573 diction and imagery match the *Sonnets* which he elsewhere asserts were written two decades later in the 1590s. Although there are early Sonnets that show a relationship with the Bedingfield letter, Oxford's style had changed by the 90s. His imagery was increasingly integrated with the text and the Sonnet structure was becoming more complex, though still adhering to the "Shakespeare/Surrey" Sonnet form.

If Sobran accepts the Bedingfield letter-style as proof of Oxford's poetry of the 1590s, he is a bit off the mark. The irony of Sobran's assumption is that the relationship he believes existed between Oxford and Southampton is negated by the non-existence (or neo-natal existence) of Southampton—born October 6, 1573.

It may be pertinent at this point to mention Dr. Paul Nelson's time-line graph of congruencies between Oxford's signed letters (including the Bedingfield letter) and the *Sonnets*. This provides clear evidence that the majority of Sonnets were written in the 1570s (though two appear in the 1560 time-frame). Relatively few sonnets show up in the 80s and 90s, but the graph peaks again after the turn of the century. It was this long process of maturation over a 40 year span that enabled Oxford to create that complex and poignant Sonnet 73 at the end of this life.

My own work on the development of Oxford's sonnet-style over his lifetime, presented as a paper at the 1995 Conference in Greensboro, NC, corroborates this view. Due to the lack of a loud speaker system for that particular presentation, only a handful of people sitting in the front row heard the evidence, which, in conjunction with Dr. Nelson's graphic time-line, presents a com-

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## The Blue Boar

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*Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time.* By Joseph Sobran. Item SP7. \$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).

*Freeing Shakespeare's Voice. The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text.* By Kristen Linklater. Of special interest is the last chapter, "Whose Voice?", in which Linklater acknowledges her Oxfordian beliefs. Item SP8 \$12.50

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

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*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

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*Letters (Continued from page 22)*

pletely different view of the *Sonnets*, and the creative process as well.

Elisabeth Sears  
Cambridge MA  
10 August 1997

To the Editor:

Katherine Chiljan is to be hugely congratulated on her perceptiveness and acquisition of the "Portrait of a Gentleman, English School, circa 1580" (page 18, Winter 1997 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*), now believed by many to be a portrait of Edward de Vere.

I am pleased to report that during a high-magnification examination of the portraitee's headgear, I revealed that the decorative adorning studs are in the distinct form of a symbolic five-pointed star. This appropriately chosen form of symbolism—so meaningful to Lord Oxford—was, I believe, more than a coincidence.

Derran K Charlton  
Dodsworth, United Kingdom  
16 June 1997

*Stritmatter (continued from page 19)*

ence which the Bard casts over the legal profession. We read that he has been cited or quoted by American courts more times than any other literary figure—placing this influence in comparative perspective.

But then, having acknowledged this extensive, sophisticated impact of Shakespeare within our legal culture, we are treated to the following bizarre scenario by way of explanation: Shakespeare probably used an easy and by now time-tested technique for assuring the accuracy of his legal references—he showed drafts of those legal allusions to lawyer friends who would correct any errors!

Surely something is wrong with this picture. It is like suggesting that Justice Stevens circulated his "Shakespeare Canon" essay to all the members of the editorial board of PMLA, just to check up on any loose literary screws which might be rattling around in the text before sending it on to *The Pennsylvania Law Review*. It doesn't match the matter to the man.

How accurately Shakespeare uses legal terminology cannot be assessed without simultaneously considering the motives—both of author and character—such usage illustrates. Contriving fanciful scenarios in which Shakespeare had his work vetted by

a professional lawyer in order to insure adherence to some abstract standard of correctness is no solution to this problem. Its just more special pleading from Stratford.

In fact, this observer believes that if the legal principles adumbrated by the Bard himself in a play such as *Measure for Measure* were actually applied by his readers, such readers would understand why Justice Stevens, in his "Shakespeare Canon" essay, places such distinctive emphasis on the theory that words—even a small word like "now"—can have consequences which are not immediately apparent.

### Knowing and Not Knowing

Admittedly such a belief is founded on the premise that Supreme Court Justices often know more than they can say, but this premise seems more secure than most of the speculations about authorship which sustain the narrative of *Kill all the Lawyers?*

Daniel Kornstein boldly endorses the fiction that his approach to Shakespeare is free of ideology, a statement with which I must beg to differ. *Kill all the Lawyers?* is an intrinsically ideological book; indeed Kornstein's contrary claim is merely a symptom of his own intellectual bondage to the

(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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*Whalen (Continued from page 17)*

*ter* carries in its Spring issue a long reply by Diana Price to Donald Foster's reply to her article that challenged Foster's article on his computer analysis of the *Elegy*, which, he says, attributes it to Shakespeare. The newsletter, which has more than two thousand subscribers, most of them college professors, has been quite open in recent years to anti-Stratfordian articles and letters. In the current issue one of the co-editors has a long article on Derek Jacobi's week-long visit with the Folger Shakespeare Library, and in it he notes in passing that the actor is quoted as saying he is convinced that the man from Stratford was not the playwright and that he is "beguiled by the earl of Oxford theory."

The other co-editor leads his review of a videotape on Shakespeare with the observation that it "provides a reasonably detailed biography that suggests the powerful impact of the Oxfordian thesis on such efforts. The Oxfordians have forced us to be far more cautious in what we assert as certain about the life of the man from Stratford." Naturally, he must add that in his view "biographical caution...leave(s) the man from Stratford in place as the author." Oxfordians

must be cautious, too; but there seem to be signs that serious, well-researched writings by non-Stratfordians and Oxfordians can find a place in the wide world of the Shakespeare academic establishment. Without being too optimistic, Oxfordians might see a glimmer of hope that biographical research will be cautious about the man from Stratford and include the possibility that Oxford is the true author of the works of Shakespeare.

*Strimatter (Continued from page 23)*

intellectual presumptions of the fundamentally ideological Shakespeare orthodoxy. Where, then, should one turn in attempting to assess the present state of the authorship controversy and its actual or potential relation to the burgeoning academic law and literature movement?

In his closing remarks at the 1987 Moot Court Justice Stevens admonished Oxfordians to find a concise, coherent theory of motive for concealment of Oxford's authorship. Stevens stressed the role of the monarch in bringing about what he later termed the imaginative conspiracy of the authorship hoax. The ploy, thought Stevens, could only have been the result of a command from the monarch; "The strongest

theory of the case requires an assumption for some reason we don't understand, that the Queen and the Prime Minister [i.e. Burleigh] decided we want this man to be writing plays under a pseudonym. And I will go no further."

Surely Stevens elliptical final remark, "And I will go no further" is a tip-off for an astute lawyer considering how to frame his appeal to the court of public opinion. While Daniel Kornstein, in his tendentious legal brief for the man from Stratford, knows less than he writes, Justice Stevens knows more than he says. For Stevens at least, the Virgin Queen is a co-conspirator in the Shakespeare question.

Readers seeking further clues to what Stevens knows should review the C-Span tape of the 1987 Moot Court (available from the C-Span Archives at Purdue University) and pay close attention to his few but pointed interrogatories to the lawyer for Oxford, Peter A. Jaszi.

This observer proposes that Stevens, the judge who will go no further, be cast as Duke Vincenzo in a forthcoming production of *Measure for Measure*.

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