



The Shakespeare OXFORD Newsletter



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

Summer 2001

Virtue Rewarded

The premise of *The
Reign of King Edward III*

By Dr. Richard Desper

The Second Edition of *The Riverside Shakespeare*¹ includes the play *The Reign of King Edward the Third*, of which the editors (G. Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobin) remark: "... a history play now generally accepted as, at least in part, by Shakespeare."

First published in 1595 with anonymous authorship, Tobin further argues

... If Shakespeare had not written at least some of *Edward III* ... he certainly should have. All those plays about the politics of the reigns of Edward's descendants, from Richard II to Henry VIII... cry out for some analogous dramatic treatment of the founding father and his rule.

Whatever the outcome of the debate of the authorship of *Edward III*, the play warrants examination by dint of its place in Elizabethan drama.

In his book *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri² focuses his attention on a play's premise. Although the playwright should never mention the premise explicitly in the dialogue of the play, the audience must know, at play's end, what the message is, and (according to Egri) the play must prove that message. The premise should be a simple declarative statement, a single clause that distills the essence of action of the play. For *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, the premise is "Great love defies even death," while for *MacBeth*, it is "Ruthless ambition leads to its own destruction."

For *Edward III*, the premise is a recur-
(cont'd on p. 12)

Stratford Man Discredited In Top History Magazine

By Richard Whalen

In a major break in the ranks of historians, the cover article in the August 2001 issue of *History Today*, which calls itself "the world's leading history magazine," lays out at great length the case against the Stratford man and for the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of the works of Shakespeare.

The 4,500-word article in *History Today* is especially significant because historians usually decline to address the authorship issue, leaving it to the English professors and not encroaching on their turf. The article was written by William Rubinstein, professor of modern history at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He begins with these words:

"William Shakespeare may well have been the greatest man England has ever produced, but he is also one of the most elusive. Virtually everything known of the facts of his life seems to belie the transcendent genius of his plays and poems."

Professor Rubinstein's article shows that he has read widely and thoughtfully in the non-Stratfordian and Oxfordian literature, although he cites none.

As might be expected, he is appropriately skeptical of Stratfordian claims. Noting the immense erudition and life experience demonstrated in the plays and poems, he finds these manifestations "utterly incongruous—indeed, inexplicable—in a

poorly educated country actor." And he continues:

"It is this incredible incongruity which has led so many to question whether the Stratford man wrote the plays attributed to him—not, as is often alleged by orthodox

scholars, snobbery on the part of proponents of other writers, who allegedly insist that only a nobleman could have been England's national poet, not a commoner of humble background."

Had the plays and poems been written anonymously, he says, it seems likely that no one today would contend that the Stratford man wrote them and that Oxford would be the leading candidate for their authorship. Oxford's biography, he says, "appears almost too good to be true."

For Rubinstein, the *Sonnets* provide the most convincing evidence, but he also notes that Oxfordians have postulated many links to Oxford in Shakespeare's plays, especially *Hamlet*.

He cites the allegedly post-1604 plays as "the most formidable" obstacle to Oxford's candidacy, overlooking the crucial distinction between the first appearance of some of the plays after 1604 and the actual date of composition. "Mainstream chronologies," he says, put as many as ten plays, as well as the *Sonnets*, after 1604. He adds immediately, however, that Oxfordians

(cont'd on back page)



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Beard of Avon puts the Shakespeare authorship question center stage



To my surprised delight, Amy Freed's *The Beard of Avon* is an excellent play, funny, exceptionally well-written, and in the hands of director David Emmes and the actors of the South Coast Repertory Theatre (Costa Mesa, CA), thoroughly enjoyable. Freed was commissioned to write the play by the South Coast Rep, and what a good job she did! Of course, this is not the story as we who know and love Oxford (we do love him, don't we?) would see him portrayed, but it's all in fun and it does show Oxford, though portrayed as a rascal, as the author. Well, mostly the author.

Freed's Shakspeare, played by Douglass Weston, is a gifted but frustrated fish out of water in his country home town. Once in London, he gets bit parts with Hemmings and Condell, which leads to him ghostwriting for Oxford, played by Mark Harelik with

superb panache and an elegant wig. Unfortunately, Freed could not come up with a better end to the story than the deaths of Oxford and Shakspeare. (Alas, no matter how it's played, Death just isn't funny.) But the audience seemed to love it and it's going on to engagements in San Francisco, Seattle and Chicago. If you happen to be in any of these cities while it's playing, by all means see it.

The fact that the authorship issue is continually gaining more attention and understanding is reflected in the play's program, which devoted a two-page spread to "The Stage in the Elizabethan Age," another spread to excerpts from Mark Twain's "Is Shakespeare Dead?", and a final page to "Who Wrote Shakespeare?", featuring quotes from Caroline Spurgeon, Dickens, Virginia Woolf and Harold Bloom. That's five magazine-sized pages of information and quotes that go home with everyone that gets a program. [*The Beard of Avon* opens at Seattle Rep Nov. 5; it will make its San Francisco debut at A.C.T., January 10, 2002, and at Chicago's Goodman Theatre April 19 - ed.] (SHH)

...and speaking of Stratford, here's what Henry James's brother once had to say

Fairly well known is Henry James's skepticism about the Stratford man as the alleged author of the works of Shakespeare. Less well known is the skepticism of his brother, the philosopher and psychologist, William James.

Henry wrote to a friend in 1903: "I am 'sort of haunted' by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world." In the same year, he published "The Birthplace," a satire on the humbug perpetrated in Stratford to maintain the illusion that the poet-dramatist was born there.

William James had written the year before from England to Charles Eliot Norton, the American literary editor and Harvard lecturer: "We went to Stratford for the first

time. The absolute extermination and obliteration of every record of Shakespeare save a few sordid material details, and the general suggestion of narrowness and niggardliness which ancient Stratford makes, taken in comparison with the way in which the spiritual quantity 'Shakespeare' has mingled into the soul of the world, was most uncanny, and I feel ready to believe in almost any mythical story of the authorship.

"In fact a visit to Stratford now seems to me the strongest appeal a Baconian can make."

Twenty years later he might have described a visit to Stratford as the strongest appeal an Oxfordian could make to reject the Stratford Man as the author. (RFW)

"Her warbling sting" — music, not malady

Refuting Alan Nelson's thesis on Nathaniel Baxter's 1606 poem

By Frank M. Davis, M.D.

Most Oxfordians are familiar with this acrostic poem by Nathaniel Baxter (see inset) that was dedicated to Oxford's daughter, Susan de Vere Montgomery. The poem was included in Sidney's *Ourania* of 1606 that was dedicated to Philip Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke. In the Spring 1995 *Newsletter of the Shakespeare Oxford Society*, Prof. Alan Nelson wrote an interesting article titled "Oxford in Venice: New Light on an Old Question." The article dealt with the interpretation of the Baxter poem; Nelson's thesis was that the poem stated to Oxford's daughter that her father had been infected with syphilis while traveling in Italy. Professor Nelson has listed this same thesis on his web site, but modifying "syphilis" to "some type of venereal disease" as infected by an Italian prostitute. Nelson supports his thesis on syphilis by using the letter that Oxford wrote to Burghley about being sick while he was in Venice, Charles Arundel's desperate 1580 remark that Oxford "hathe a yerelie celebracion of the Neapolitan maladye," and Nelson's own interpretation of the second stanza of this poem.

In this poem, Oxford is obviously the "Prince" and the "Albanian dignitie," as correctly identified by Nelson. The first stanza is clear and simple as Baxter honors Oxford by referring to him as a prince and mentions his ring engraved with his motto, and stating Oxford was traveling Venice with fashionable gentlemen before Susan was born. Baxter's third stanza is clear enough: because of Oxford's involvement with Italian activities, Queen Elizabeth recalled him home to Susan's mother, Anne, eventually resulting in Susan's birth. The problem comes with Professor Nelson's interpretation of the second stanza. The following is quoted from Nelson's website:

By way of explanation it should be noted

that "Hopping Helena" is a circumlocution for "prostitute"—perhaps based on the fact that many Venetian courtesans were in fact named

accusations about a noble having venereal disease would be even more likely to cause problems in the 17th century than it would today. Peter also points out that none of the numerous "grotesque" charges Arundel made against Oxford were taken very seriously. Peter then goes on to note that in John Florio's dictionary, "elena" (which is masculine for elena-Helena) is defined as "Deadly-dwale" that in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is belladonna. Belladonna is atropine, a common drug used medically today. It is poisonous only in quite large doses. Peter presumes "Hopping Helena" refers to an arrow poisoned with belladonna, singing (warbling) as it flies through the air, "bearing its poisoned sting." In my opinion, this would be an improbable, if not impossible, way to be poisoned by belladonna.

Then in the Summer 1995 *SOS Newsletter*, Editor Morse

Johnson restated the poison theory of Moore. But Dr. Gregg Horne gave his own theory in this same issue, proposing that "warbling sting" represented the bite of the *Anopheles* mosquito that transmits malaria. He reported that the *Encyclopedia Britannica* surprisingly stated that it was an old popular belief that malaria and mosquitoes were connected but this attracted little attention. I find it difficult to accept that Baxter had knowledge of this relationship over 300 years before it was proven.

Proposed solution

The key words to define in the second stanza are "Hopping Helena," "warbling," "sting," "infested," and "poisoned." I find that Nelson's correlation of "Hopping Helena" to "Jumping Judy" is interesting but does not credibly support the thesis that both are circumlocutions of "prostitute."

(cont'd on p. 4)

To the Right Noble, and Honorable Lady Susan Vera Montgomriana.

V *Aliant whilome the Prince that bare this Mot,*
E *Ngraued round about his golden ring:*
R *Oaming in VENICE ere thou wast begot,*
A* *Mong the Gallants of th'Italian spring.*

N *Euer omitting what might pastime bring,*
I *Talian sports, and Syrens Melodie:*
H *Opping Helena with her warbling sting,*
I *Nfested th'Albanian dignitie,*
L *Ike as they poysoned all Italie.*

V *Igilant then th'eternal majestie*
E *Nthraled soules to free from infamie:*
R *Emembering thy sacred virginie,*
I *Nduced vs to make speedie repaire,*
V *Nto thy mother euverlasting faire,*
S *O did this Prince begette thee debonaire.*

"Helena." Similarly, a Cambridge prostitute of the time (1620) was nicknamed "Jumping Judy." The "sting" with which this generic prostitute infected the Albanian (Baxter's poetic term for "British") dignity or nobility, was presumably some kind of venereal disease.

Previous Oxfordian Responses

Other Oxfordians before me have seen objections to Nelson's thesis, questioning why Baxter would make such a charge to Oxford's daughter. In the same Spring 1995 issue of the *Newsletter* can be found the first Oxfordian response by Peter Moore. Peter did a good job of researching the relative "rarity" of syphilis reported at the time, the exception being in the very poor parishes. He also answers Nelson's plea not to apply modern "political correctness" to the 17th Century. I would agree with Peter that a man of Baxter's lower status making such

Warbling (cont'd from p. 3)

The Cambridge prostitute came along 14 years after the poem was printed, even if Baxter did know about her.

Also, the Cambridge prostitute was named "Juda." Whereas the name "Judy" is associated with a contemptuous or de-meaning connotation according to the *OED*, no such connotation is given to "Helena." Helena (or Elena) was a common name in Italy at the time, and I have no doubt that some courtesans were in fact named Helena. I suggest that in this acrostic poem "Helena" was used as an alliteration for



"Hopping"—Baxter had to begin the line with an "H" so he could not say "Dancing Diana" or such. I simply disagree with Professor Nelson that "Jumping Judy" represents "strong evidence" for the meaning of "Hopping Helena."

Although "Infested" can mean "infected," it does not normally, and it more likely here means "afflicted." "Poysoned" here means "corrupted," not inoculated with poison or syphilis. Certainly *all Italy* was not infected with syphilis or poison!

Now for the resolution of the most important words of the second stanza: "warbling" and "sting." By simply referring to the *OED* we find that "warbling" can only refer to music or a sound with a TREMOLO (vibrato) effect. We find that sting can refer to a pole or staff, an act of being stung or pain received by such an act.

However, there is also mention in the *OED* of the "sting-grace," which refers to a grace note played on the lute. This grace note has a tremolo effect! This evidence led me to obtain the opinion of an expert in early music, Dr. Jeffery Kite-Powell at Florida State University.

Dr. Kite-Powell was sent the poem with-

out any information concerning the different interpretations previously presented. I asked him only if he thought the poem could be referring to a musical term. The following is part of Dr. Kite-Powell's response:

"...the context [of the poem] makes it abundantly clear that the writer is referring to the lute vibrato common at the time."

Dr. Kite-Powell also provided several references regarding the sting grace note played on the lute. The lute was the most popular instrument of this period in Italy. According to Dr. Kite-Powell, "There were many references to vibrato during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so the concept was clearly in place." The following is a quote that was taken from a 17th Century book on music that clearly describes the sting grace note played on the lute:

The sting [vibrato] is another very Neat, and Pritty Grace; (But not Modish [on the lute] in These Days)...first strike your Note, and so soon as it is struck, hold your Finger (but not too hard) stopt upon the Place, (letting your Thumb loose) and wave your Hand (Exactly) downwards, and upwards, several Times, from the Nut to the Bridge; by which Motion, your Finger will draw, or stretch the String a little upwards, and downwards, so as to make the Sound seem to Swell.—Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument*, 1676

I believe it is quite clear that Baxter was noting that Oxford had become enamoured with Italian ways and pastimes including sports, songs, dancing and music. Oxford's adoption of Italian dress and mannerisms was something that was particularly disliked by many of his countrymen. The disdain that the English had for these Italian customs is well documented in Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641*. It was likely for these reasons that Queen Elizabeth called him home (according to Baxter).

I find no credible evidence in this poem that Baxter intended to inform Oxford's daughter that her father had been infected with syphilis or any venereal disease while cavorting with prostitutes in Italy.

Here is the important second stanza again followed by my interpretation:

Never omitting what pastime bring,

Italian sports, and Syrens Melodie:
Hopping Helena with her warbling sting,
Infested th' Albanian dignitie,
Like as they poysoned all Italie.

My interpretation:

Oxford never avoided what pastimes brought,
Including Italian sports, enchanting songs:
Dancing girls playing the warbling sting (on the lute),

These things captivated him,
Just as they corrupted all Italy.

The meaning is quite clear and simple. There is no intention to be disrespectful or insulting to the Countess of Montgomery, Oxford's daughter. Even if "Hopping Helena" should refer to a courtesan, as Nelson maintains, the poem still does not mean that Oxford was infected with a venereal disease. It is the meaning of "warbling" that has to be interpreted, and I can think of no way that a vibrato musical sound can relate to infection of a venereal disease.

I would hope that Professor Nelson will concede to my interpretation (and that of Professor Kite-Powell, I might add) and remove or correct his statement regarding this poem and venereal disease from his web site. Unfortunately, thus far, Nelson has not changed his position.

*I suspect that this is a misprint somewhere along the line. The motto, of course, is VERQ, not VERA. It should be noted that an old way to spell "among" was "omong." This would have correctly spelled Oxford's motto. It has been noted that Susan, of course, is female and would require a feminine ending, however the motto was Oxford's.

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Reviews of Journals

An obscure legal point in *Hamlet*, and news from the De Vere Society

By Richard F. Whalen

Hamlet's Thwarted Inheritance

In a two-part article in recent issues of *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, a retired lawyer argues that references and allusions to British property law and inheritance pervade *Hamlet*, giving the play a radical new and deeper interpretation. Not incidentally, it also implies an author—and an audience—well versed in obscure and complex aspects of the law of inheritance.

The article, which appears in the Fall 2000 and Winter 2000-2001 issues of the Stratfordian newsletter from Iona College, is entitled "An Unrecognized Theme in *Hamlet*: Lost Inheritance and Claudius's Marriage to Gertrude." The author is J. Anthony Burton of Amherst, Massachusetts, a lawyer who researches aspects of law found in Shakespeare's works. He told this reviewer that he is "a true believer in the thematic coherence of Shakespeare," especially in legal matters.

Burton notes that scholars have long recognized that the gravedigger's scene is a parody of the legal reasoning in a 1564 lawsuit known as *Hales v. Pettit*. Ignored, he says, "is a consistent and coherent pattern of legal illusions to defeated expectations of inheritance, which applies to every major character," *Hamlet*, of course, but even *Fortinbras*.

The key, he suggests, is the early description of Gertrude as a "jointress" (I.ii.9), a term that appears nowhere else in Shakespeare. At issue "is the remarkable power vested in Gertrude as a widow, either to preserve or destroy her son's inheritance, or deliver it wholly into the hands of Claudius." Burton shows how this point of law, which he calls "Hamlet's predicament," pervades the play and partially explains *Hamlet's* notorious indecision.

"Faced with total disinheritance," says Burton, "Hamlet makes no secret of his displeasure and his plea of poverty: 'Beggard that I am, I am even poor in thanks.'" This is only one of several allusions to his poverty and to his potential loss of property rights depending on what Gertrude does.

She is in direct control over the hopes of Claudius and Hamlet. So Hamlet sees Claudius's offense in terms of property rights, not royal power, according to Burton. Another aspect of the law provides that if Claudius and Gertrude have an heir it would assure Claudius control over Gertrude's property for life and leave Hamlet propertyless.

At one point, Burton asks two questions: "But what made this 30-year-old law report important enough for anyone in his audience under the age of fifty to recognize and appreciate his parody? And how would Shakespeare know of it unless it were still being discussed?" His answer, which he does not elucidate, is that the court in *Hales v. Pettit* ruled that "in the case of simultaneous claims by the monarch and a subject, the monarch prevails." Claudius wins and Hamlet loses because Gertrude held the right of jointress following Hamlet senior's death.

Hamlet dominates the Fall 2000 issue, which includes a review of John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius* (no mention of jointress), a critique of Kenneth Branagh's 2-hour version of his 4-hour *Hamlet* (he should have eliminated the flashcuts), a review of *Shakespeare on Screen: An International Filmography and Videography* (750 entries!), a review of Simon Russell Beale's portrayal of Hamlet (a family drama with Hamlet as a "nice guy"), a report of a talk by the Stratfordian biographer Anthony Holden at the Players in New York City (he defends Shakespeare as the author; what else could he do?), and a visit to present-day Elsinore (unremarkable).

The De Vere Society Newsletter

The characters Melicertus and Puntarvolo each represent a different view of the 17th Earl of Oxford, according to two articles in the April/May issue of the *De Vere Society Newsletter*.

Robert Detobel argues at length that

Robert Greene and Henry Chettle used the "silver-tongued" Melicertus (or Melicert) to represent Oxford in their works. In his article, R.C.W. Malim proposes that Puntarvolo with his boar crest is a caricature of Oxford in Ben Jonson's *Everyman Out of His Humour*.

In the lead article, David Roper decodes a cryptogram he finds in the inscription of the Stratford monument, "Stay passenger..." that says "I am Vere."

Daphne Pearson's article, entitled "What do we know of Oxford who only Oxford know? Oxford in historical context," fills in the "background history" to his life, concluding with his landless state in his later years. Dr. Pearson, editor of the newsletter, recently received her doctorate degree from Sheffield University.

The newsletter also reported the death in April of Shirley Skinner-Young of Hedingham, formerly of Chatham, Massachusetts. Lee Young, as she called herself, was an ardent Oxfordian and an active member of the Cape Cod chapter of the Shakespeare Oxford Society. She moved to an antique cottage in Hedingham several years ago with plans for a study center and a library for her many books and graphics works. She died at a hospice near Hedingham after a long illness.

Stylometrics, chronograms and plagiarism are discussed in articles in the July issue of the *De Vere Society Newsletter*.

Wayne Shore of San Antonio, Texas, who has a doctorate in statistics, suggests that stylometrics will not add to the similarities already found between Oxford's poetry and the works of Shakespeare. Stylometrics is the study of comparative word usage and frequency to identify the author of anonymous or pseudonymous writings. In fact, Shore notes, in general, similarities are not enough; one must demonstrate the absence of differences.

Two authors offer evidence that early Shakespeare plays were written before the Stratford man was old enough to write them.

(cont'd on p. 6)

Peacham used the letters to date the drawing and dialogue from scenes in *Titus Andronicus*. Roper reads the letters as 1575, thus dating the play before that year and during the years when Will Shakspeare of Stratford was not yet a teenager. The dating of this document will be debated between Roper and Prof. Alan Nelson at the 25th Annual SOS Conference in Carmel.

Richard Malim finds references to plagiarism in Thomas Nashe's preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* that suggest not only that in 1588 Oxford gave up writing for a time but that he had by that time produced a number of plays—was too young to have written them.

Philip Johnson finds many similarities between John Lyly's *Endimion* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and concludes that in writing the first version of *Much Ado* in the late 1580s for a wide audience Oxford used "successful material he was familiar with (and may have helped write) from the earlier, but recent, specialized comedy [*Endimion*] designed for a court audience."

Dr. Paul Hemenway Altrocchi of Old Lyme, Connecticut, uses his medical skills to identify 21 "clearly deliberate 'mistakes,'" anatomical and otherwise, in the engraving of Will Shakspeare in the First Folio collection of the plays of Shakespeare. "The sum-total of deliberate flaws by Martin Droeshout," he says, "makes the case for an imposter...very strong indeed."

Eddi Jolly and Patrick O'Brien list the books in the library of Sir Thomas Smith, Oxford's first tutor, that were sources for Shakespeare's works. Jolly then teamed with Philip Johnson to review Katherine Duncan-Jones's *Ungentle Shakespeare*, finding some new notions about Sir William Dethick, Garter King of Arms, but also much speculation and tenuous links she finds between the Stratford man and Shakespeare's works.

British reviewers greeted the book with a "storm of apathy" and scorn for her speculations, according to the newsletter's "Sene and Hearde" column. (See also Richard Whalen's review of *Ungentle Shakespeare* on page 15.)

Membership in the De Vere Society grew seven percent in the past year to 190, with almost a third in the United States.

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In the next issue:

"Advances in the Hamlet Cosmic Allegory" by Peter Usher, Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at Penn State University, "Authorial Rights in Shakespeare's Time" by Robert Detobel, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of Law: a History of the Arguments" by Mark Alexander, "We Must Speak by the Card or Equivocation will Undo Us: the Oxford-Howard Controversy of 1580-81" by Richard Desper.

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The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth - Key to the Authorship Question?

By Ramón Jiménez

The First of a 3-part series on the Henry Trilogy

Numerous scholars have wondered about the earliest products of Shakespeare's pen. Although the progression of plays reveals an increasing fluency of language and mastery of dramatic technique, even the earliest display a high level of sophistication in these areas. Where, then, are the playwright's earliest writings? And where are his first attempts to put a dramatic story on paper?

The anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* has such similarities in terms of plot, characters, language, and historical background with Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Parts I and II* and *Henry V* that it is reasonable to inquire if it were his first attempt to dramatize the life of England's fourth and fifth Henrys. Yet no scholar made a serious attempt to identify the author of this old play and to assess its relationship to the Shakespearean trilogy until 1928, when the Oxfordian B. M. Ward asserted that it was written by Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and that it was Shakespeare's principal source.¹ Although he was careful not to claim that Oxford was Shakespeare, Ward was received just like every other bearer of an unorthodox message about the man from Stratford. First he was ridiculed; then he was ignored.

To answer the question of this article's title I will address three separate questions about *Famous Victories*: Did the author of the Shakespeare canon write it? Can Edward de Vere be shown to have written it? When was it written?

The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, Containing the Honourable Battell of Agin-court, was registered in 1594, and published by Thomas Creed in 1598—in both cases without an author's name.² The single copy of this edition that has survived comprises about sixteen hundred lines of prose, divided by later editors into twenty scenes that alternate roughly between historical exposition and comic relief. It takes

place during the same time period, and includes many of the same incidents and characters, as the Shakespearean plays *Henry IV, Part One*, *Henry IV, Part Two*, and *Henry V*.

The play has a poor reputation among literary scholars. It has been described as "crude," "primitive," "almost imbecilic," a "decrepit pot-boiler," and as "a medley of nonsense and ribaldry."³ One of the most

production.

The second is that it was by another playwright, and was a source for Shakespeare's Henry trilogy. The third is that Shakespeare wrote it himself, and later expanded it into his trilogy.

The first claim—that it was derived from Shakespeare's trilogy ("a piracy of the loose type") is the phrase speeches, such as that by Henry V that begins "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more," and many memorable comic lines, such as Falstaff's "The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life." Why would any playwright or editor discard these gems, and replace them with the plain, mostly unmetrical prose of *Famous Victories*?

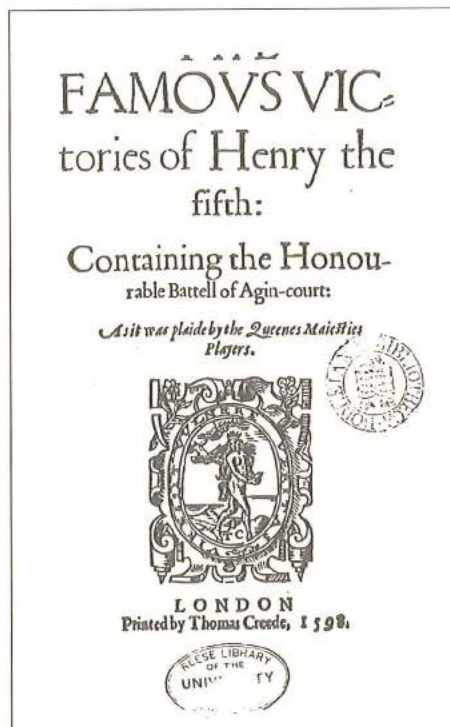
Why would any playwright discard Sir John Falstaff, the most famous comic character in the canon, and diffuse him into two or three unmemorable comics in *Famous Victories*? How credible is it that a memorial reconstruction or a playhouse piracy of any of the Henry plays, or even of a more complete *Famous Victories*, would fail to include Falstaff or the pedantic Welshman Fluellen?

Most orthodox scholars agree that *Famous Victories* was by another playwright, and was a source for Shakespeare's Henry trilogy, but they differ widely about how much Shakespeare used it. Some say his use was minor, and that his principal source was Rafael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which was published in 1577 and reissued in an expanded version in 1587.⁶ Others, such as Geoffrey Bullough, say his debt was substantial,⁷ and J. Dover Wilson wrote that "a very intimate connection of some kind exists between Shakespeare's plays and this old text."⁸ Let us look at the nature of that connection.

Striking Similarities between *Famous Victories* and the Henry Plays

The events depicted in *Famous Victories*

(cont'd on p. 8)



Title page of first edition of *Famous Victories*

succinct judgments is by J. A. Symonds, who called it "a piece of uncouth, but honest old English upholstery."⁴

Uncouth upholstery or not, the close relationship between *Famous Victories* and the Shakespearean trilogy has been observed and debated for more than two hundred years. There are roughly three opinions:

The first is that *Famous Victories* was itself derived from Shakespeare's trilogy—either by a memorial reconstruction, or by deliberate abridgement or "dumbing down" for the public theater, or for a provincial

Famous Victories (cont'd from p. 7)

neatly bracket those of Shakespeare's Henry trilogy. The first scene of *Famous Victories* matches the second scene of *Henry IV, Part I*, and the last scene of *Famous Victories*, in which King Henry woos the French Princess Katherine, matches the last scene in *Henry V*, in which he does the same thing. The fifty-seven scenes in the Henry plays are a logical expansion of the twenty scenes in *Famous Victories*. Thus the anonymous play might be seen as a rudimentary skeleton within the full body of the trilogy.

In 1954, C. A. Greer published a short essay in which he detailed Shakespeare's debt to *Famous Victories*.⁹ He cited fifteen plot elements that occur in both the anonymous play and in the Henry trilogy. Here are some examples: the robbery of the King's receivers; the meeting of the robbers in an Eastcheap Tavern; the reconciliation of the newly crowned King Henry V with the Chief Justice; the new King's rejection of his comic friends; the gift of tennis balls from the Dolphin; Pistol's encounter with a French soldier (Dericke's in *Famous Victories*). Not only are all fifteen plot elements common to *Famous Victories* and the Henry plays, they all occur in the same order.

Greer also listed forty-two specific details of action and characterization that occur both in *Famous Victories* and in Shakespeare's trilogy. For example: the total of ten comic characters in each—six who are partially duplicated and four who are exactly duplicated; Gad's Hill as the name of both a robber and the place of robbery; the reference to Prince Hal boxing the ear of the Chief Justice (dramatized in *Famous Victories* and referred to in *Henry IV, Part I*); Prince Hal's theft of the crown at his father's deathbed; the arrogance of the French in saying that Englishmen cannot fight without beef. Again, not only are all forty-two specific details common to both, they occur in the same order. In fact, there is not a single scene in *Famous Victories* that is not repeated in the Shakespeare plays.

In addition to the above similarities, there are several incidents and passages of dialogue attributed to historical characters in Shakespeare's Henry trilogy for which there is little or no evidence in the more than twenty historical chronicles available in the middle years of Elizabeth's reign.¹⁰ However, many of them appear in *Famous*

Victories—the most notable being the scene in which Henry woos the French princess Katherine at the end of *Henry V*.

Lastly, the author of *Famous Victories* introduced the dramatic device of alternat-

*"There is not a single
scene in Famous Victories
that is not repeated in the
Shakespeare plays.
...This is not indebtedness.
This is ownership."*

ing comic scenes with those depicting characters from English history, a technique duplicated in the Shakespeare trilogy.¹¹ This is not indebtedness. This is ownership.

The third opinion about the relationship between *Famous Victories* and the trilogy is that Shakespeare wrote the anonymous play first, and then expanded it into his *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays.

In 1961 the orthodox scholar Seymour Pitcher, an English professor at the State University of New York, published an entire book to support the claim that in writing his Henry trilogy Shakespeare used *Famous Victories* "ingeniously" and "instinctively." "He knew it by heart, by total assimilation"—because he wrote it himself.¹²

To Greer's catalogue of similarities Pitcher added his own list of elements of plot, characterization, and language in *Famous Victories* that recur in other Shakespeare plays. The character of the stubborn porter, for instance, appears again in *Comedy of Errors*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Macbeth*. The idea of the dagger as a proof of remorse shows up again in *Julius Caesar*, *Cymbeline*, and *Richard III*. Prince Hal's condescending banter with the coy Princess Katherine, whom he calls Kate, is repeated by several Shakespearean characters, notably Hotspur, Petruchio, and Dumaine in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The exchange of identities by which Derick and John Cobbler pretend to be Prince Hal and the Chief Justice in *Famous Victories* is another Shakespearean trademark—the play within the play. This particular scene is duplicated in Act II of *Henry IV, Part I*. There are numerous other ex-

amples.¹³

In an article published even before Ward's study, James Monaghan found the origins of Falstaff, Shakespeare's most celebrated comic figure, in two characters in *Famous Victories*—Sir John Oldcastle and Derick the Clown, especially the latter.¹⁴ He concluded: "A superficial examination of the two plays [*Famous Victories* and *Henry IV, Part I*] will show that in each we have a swaggering soldier, in service against his will, aggressive when his enemies are unarmed, and running away when they are armed; in each he is a coward, braggart, glutton, thief, rogue, clown and parasite; in each he has the same monumental unblushing effrontery and loves a jest even at his own expense."¹⁵ He might have added that in each play the swaggering soldier is a companion of Prince Hal, and tends to lead him into misbehavior.

Any objective and unbiased scholar reviewing these similarities would have to agree that there is overwhelming internal evidence that the author of the Shakespeare canon wrote *Famous Victories*. But other than Pitcher, and the freethinking critic Eric Sams, no orthodox Shakespearean scholars accept this attribution. In *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, Irving Ribner wrote that "the suggestion . . . that the play represents an early work by William Shakespeare need scarcely be taken seriously."¹⁶ Samuel Schoenbaum called it "a preposterous thesis."¹⁷

The circumstances of the play's printing are little help in determining who wrote it. Although Thomas Creed printed *Famous Victories* in 1598 without an author's name, and in the same year put Shakespeare's name on a *Richard III* quarto, his reliability for correctly assigning authorship is poor. In the decade after 1594 he printed several Shakespeare plays anonymously, including *Romeo and Juliet*, and in 1605 attached Shakespeare's name to *The London Prodigal*.¹⁸ By 1598 half a dozen Shakespeare plays had been printed anonymously, including *The History of Henry IV*, and it was not until that same year that any play appeared with Shakespeare's name on it.

In 1920 H. D. Sykes suggested that Samuel Rowley, a dramatist who emerged only in the late 1590s, had written *Famous*

(cont'd on p. 9)

Famous Victories (cont'd from p. 8)

Victories.¹⁹ Sykes based his case largely on stylistic grounds, and on the coincidence that a play about Henry VIII with a clown in it was published in 1605 with Rowley's name as author. There is no other evidence to connect *Famous Victories* with Rowley, who was apparently born about 1574.

Alice-Lyle Scoufos, in her valuable study *Shakespeare's Typological Satire*, suggested that the author of *Famous Victories* was Henry Evans, a Welshman who was intermittently a manager of boys' playing companies—including the one patronized by the Earl of Oxford—between 1583 and 1608.²⁰ But there is nothing to connect Evans with the play, and no evidence that he ever wrote anything.

Evidence of De Vere's Authorship

The second question to be answered is: Can it be shown that Edward de Vere wrote *Famous Victories*? Since the appearance of B. M. Ward's article in 1928, most Oxfordians have asserted that de Vere wrote the anonymous play, and later expanded it into the Henry trilogy. Ward offered the following evidence:

The playing company named on the title page of *Famous Victories*, The Queen's Men, had a connection with the Earl of Oxford. When the company was assembled in 1583, leading players were taken from three or four existing companies that had all recently appeared at Court, including one sponsored by the Earl of Oxford.²¹

The notorious prank robbery at Gad's Hill is the first comic incident in both *Famous Victories*, and Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*. The difference is that in the former play Prince Hal has just participated in the robbery, but in the Shakespeare play he only robs the robbers, and then promises to pay back the money. The incident is ultimately based on a passage in *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth*, an anonymous biography written in 1513. According to the account in this manuscript, Prince Hal and his "younge Lords and gentlemen would await in disguised aray for his own receiuers, and distres them of theire money," which he later restored to them.²² The playwright of *Famous Victories* crystallized this vague reference into a single robbery at a particular place - Gad's Hill in Kent—and on a particular date—"the 20th

day of May last past, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our sovereign lord King Henry the Fourth,"²³ that is, in 1413. As Ward first pointed out, the date is spurious, Henry IV having died in March of 1413.

But if the date is spurious, the incident itself has a striking counterpart. Among the letters surviving in the Elizabethan State Papers is one dated May, 1573 from two servants of Elizabeth's Treasurer, Lord Burghley, complaining to him that they have been ambushed and shot at by three men in the employ of the Earl of Oxford.²⁴ Thus the incident is strongly associated with the Earl, and it is fair to conjecture that it was he who transported it from 1573 to 1413, and used it to dramatize the tradition of Prince Hal's youthful misbehavior. Did Edward de Vere pick a non-existent date in the reign of Henry IV to signal that he was referring to his own escapade? In fact, is it not reasonable to suggest that De Vere actually got the idea for the robbery from his reading of the anonymous manuscript, which was also used by De Vere's contemporaries, John Stow and Rafael Holinshed?²⁵

The third, and most telling, piece of evidence supporting the claim of Oxford's authorship is the treatment of the obscure Richard de Vere, Eleventh Earl of Oxford, who died at the age of thirty-one or two, and has never even merited an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Nor do the English chroniclers of the reigns of Henry IV and V mention the Eleventh Earl, except to say that he was present with Henry V at Agincourt.

But in *Famous Victories* the Eleventh Earl of Oxford is everywhere. He is one of the main characters in the play, and speaks eighteen times in seven scenes, more than any other historical character except the Lord Chief Justice and the two Henrys. He is the first historical character to speak,

except for Prince Hal, and he speaks only to Henry IV or to Prince Hal, who is crowned King between the eighth and ninth scenes. More than that, in the anonymous play Richard de Vere has been elevated to the place of Henry IV's principal counselor, even though the chronicles record that the King's counselors were the Earls of Exeter and Westmoreland, and the Duke of York. *Famous Victories* depicts the Eleventh Earl of Oxford in five separate incidents in which he is shown to be generous, wise, informative, and brave. For instance, in the ninth scene he puts into Richard de Vere's mouth the advice that the new King Henry V ignore the threat from Scotland and lead his troops into France. This was in fact the advice that Henry V took, but in the chronicle sources it comes from the Earl of Exeter.

On the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, Oxford asks the King for command of the vanguard, but it has been promised to the Duke of York.

On the morning of the battle, Oxford brings information to the King about the number of French facing him, and a few moments later volunteers to take charge of the archers whom the King has ordered to plant sharpened stakes in the ground to break the French cavalry charge. (The English were badly outnumbered, and military historians agree that this was the key to their victory.) To this request, Henry V replies, "With all my heart, my good Lord of Oxford. And go and provide quickly."

Whoever wrote the play was a good friend of the House of De Vere.

There is no surviving documentation for these incidents, but it is conceivable that Edward de Vere relied on family records or recollections about the Eleventh Earl. Or he may have made them up.

Although all these references to the Earl of Oxford are absent from the Shakespearean trilogy, Daniel Wright has shown that several De Veres have promi-



(cont'd on p. 10)

Famous Victories (cont'd from p. 9)

nent and flattering roles in other Shakespearean histories, some of them also undeserved, or at least unhistorical.²⁶ And it is logical that such a partiality on the part of De Vere would be strongest in his earliest play. We know that he wrote plays, and good ones. In 1598 Francis Meres asserted that Oxford was among the best comic playwrights.²⁷ This evidence connects Edward de Vere more closely to *Famous Victories* than to any other dramatic work.

Tarlton's death a clue for dating

The third question to be considered is the play's composition date. That the play was at least ten years old when it was published is attested by clear documentary evidence that the comic actor Richard Tarlton, who died in September 1588, played the role of the Clown.²⁸ His fellow actor, William Knell, who played Prince Hal in the same production, died in June 1587.²⁹ This makes it nearly certain that the play was written no later than the previous year.

Additional evidence supporting an early date is the fact that the commonly accepted sources of the play—Holinshed's *Chronicles*, in either edition, 1577 or 1587, and John Stow's *Chronicles of England*, of 1580—are entirely unnecessary as sources of the historical events depicted. All the historical incidents in *Famous Victories*, and even their particular details, can be found in Edward Hall's *The Union Of The Two Noble And Illustre Famelies Of Lancastre And Yorke*, published in 1548, or in earlier chronicles.³⁰ And in many cases they are closer to Hall than to Holinshed. Evidence that both Hall's work and another early chronicle, Robert Fabyan's *New Chronicles of England and France*, printed in 1516, were probably available to Oxford in the library of his boyhood tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, in the years before 1562 has been provided by Stephanie Hughes.³¹

Thus, it is a reasonable inference that the play was written before the first edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* in 1577.

Those familiar with Oxford's biography will recall that in the summer of 1574, after repeated futile requests to the Queen for permission to travel abroad, he made an impetuous dash to the Continent—from which he was ignominiously fetched back

to England by her emissary, Thomas Bedingfield. We are entitled to speculate, as did B.M. Ward more than 70 years ago, that it was the young Oxford, perhaps anxious to regain Elizabeth's favor after this rash act, who whipped up a clever and patriotic entertainment for her about a young Prince who misbehaved, repented, and later led his country's army to a famous victory.

Ward suggested that the play was performed at Court later that year, during the Christmas season. On the basis of this evidence—all in print forty to eighty years ago—it is clear that *Famous Victories* should no longer be regarded as a famous mystery. It is not an adaptation; it is not a memorial reconstruction, and it is not a playhouse piracy.

It is, rather, the first attempt at a history play by a very young nobleman who had only Latin classics and a few crude models in English to guide him. It is time we gave *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* its proper place in Elizabethan drama—one of the earliest English history plays, and the first play by the man who eventually produced its finest examples—Edward de Vere.

Notes

1. B. M. Ward, "The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth: Its Place in Elizabethan Dramatic Literature," *Review of English Studies*, IV, July, 1928, pp. 270-94.

2. E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare, Facts and Problems*, Oxford, 1930, v. I, p. 383.

3. Edward Capell, quoted in F. A. Hopkinson (ed.) *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, Quarto of 1617*, 1896.

4. J. A. Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama*, London, 1967, p. 378.

5. A. S. Cairncross, *The Problem of Hamlet: A Solution*, London, 1936, p. 143. For the view that the published text was a "memorial reconstruction" of two other plays about Henry IV and V, see J. D. Wilson, "The Origins and Development of Shakespeare's Henry IV," *The Library*, 4th Ser., v. 26, #1, June, 1945, pp. 9-10.

6. Chambers, op. cit., pp. 383, 395; also J. J. Norwich, *Shakespeare's Kings*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1999, p. 139.

7. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative & Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, New York, 1957-75, v. 4, pp. 167-68.

8. Wilson, op. cit., p. 3.

9. Clayton A. Greer, "Shakespeare's Use of 'The Famous Victories of Henry V'," *Notes & Queries*, June, 1954, pp. 238-41.

10. Gary Taylor describes several of them on p. 28 of his edition of *Henry V*, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, Oxford, 1982.

11. Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, New York, rev. ed., 1965, pp. 70-1.

12. Seymour M. Pitcher, *The Case for Shakespeare's Authorship of "The Famous Victories"*, New York, 1961, pp. 6, 182-3.

13. Ibid. pp. 94-103.

14. James Monaghan, "Falstaff and his Forebears," *Studies in Philology*, 18 (1921) pp. 353-61.

15. Ibid. p. 358.

16. Ribner, op. cit., p. 68.

17. Samuel Schoenbaum, *Internal Evidence & Elizabethan Dramatic Authorship*, Northwestern University Press, 1966, p. 167.

18. O. J. Campbell (ed.), *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, New York, 1966 ed., p. 155.

19. H. D. Sykes, *The Authorship of 'The Taming of a Shrew,' 'The Famous Victories of Henry V' and the Additions to Marlowe's 'Faustus,'* London, 1920, p. 16.

20. Alice-Lyle Scoufos, *Shakespeare's Typological Satire*, Athens, Ohio, 1979, p. 179.

21. Chambers, op. cit. p. 28. See also his *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 5.

22. C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth*, Oxford, 1911, p. 17.

23. In Pitcher's text of *The Famous Victories*, op. cit. p. 24 (scene four, lines 21-3).

24. Ward, op. cit., quotes the entire letter on pp. 285-86.

25. C. L. Kingsford, "The Early Biographies of Henry V," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910), p. 71-74.

26. Dan Wright, "'Ver-y Interesting': Shakespeare's treatment of the earls of Oxford in the history plays," *SOS Newsletter*, Spring 2000.

27. Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury*, 1598. Arthur Freeman, 1973.

28. The evidence consists of a passage from Tarlton's Jests (1611), describing his role as the Clown. Quoted by Pitcher, op. cit. p. 180-1.

29. Alan and Victoria Palmer, *Who's Who in Shakespeare's England*, New York, 1981, p. 140.

30. Ward, op. cit., pp. 280-1, 287.

31. Private communication from Hughes. Both books appear on an inventory of the library of Sir Thomas Smith, with whom Edward de Vere lived from 1556 to 1562.

Oxfordian News

Hughes at Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable; Prof. Londre presents Oxford at Shakespere Festival; Oxford as Shakespeare on stage in London

California

On June 9, at the **Beverly Hills** Public Library, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, editor of *THE OXFORDIAN*, provided the members of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable with some new thoughts on the subject of Shakespeare's Dark Lady. Building on her article in the Fall, 2000 *SOS Newsletter*, Hughes carried the discussion past the facts as she gave them in the article to a closer look at Oxford's life and how and why he might have become involved with Emilia Bassano Lanier, the mistress of Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain and patron of Shakespeare's company.

Hughes explained how the various communities involved in the story, Oxford, Emilia, the Court community, the publisher of the Sonnets, the Earl of Southampton, even Shakspeare, were connected, through the connecting point of "Shakespeare's Sonnets." For a copy of her lecture, post her at hopkinshughes@home.com.

Missouri

Theatergoers at the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival this summer could hardly escape hearing about the 17th Earl of Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare's works.

Professor Felicia Londre, who has lectured to theater professionals and academics world-wide on Oxford as Shakespeare, carried the Oxfordian proposition to **Kansas City** audiences in print, over the airwaves and in person at the festival here.

Londre, curators' professor of theater at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, is also dramaturge of the festival. She wrote the program notes for the festival's two plays, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*; and an interview with her on the authorship question made the front page of the arts section of the *The Kansas City Star* on Sunday, June 17.

Before performances, Londre presented the case for Oxford as evidenced in the



Stephanie Hopkins Hughes with Carol Sue Lipman, co-director of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, at the Beverly Hills Library, June 9.

plays, particularly *Twelfth Night*. Her audiences ranged from 30 to 100 for almost two weeks. As it happens, the second two weeks of lectures on the two plays were given by one of her former students, Philip Blue Owl Hooser, a Native American, who also noted the case that could be made for Oxford as the author.

Londre's radio interview came midway through the festival, when she was joined by Gene Friedman, the festival's resident scenic designer, on 710 Talk Radio for a 45-minute discussion of the authorship question.

While preparing her festival lectures, Londre explored the correspondences between Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Philip Sidney and between Prospero and John Dee. Teaching duties and lecture travels permitting, she plans to expand her interpretations for a conference paper or article.

Professor Londre, who is on the editorial board of *The Oxfordian*, has written or edited ten books and published numerous articles. She is a board member of the College of Fellows of the American Theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and is past president of the American Theatre and Drama Society. In August, she received the outstanding teacher award of the Association for Theater in Higher Education at its annual conference in Chicago.

Dr. Londre was introduced as a "Renaissance woman of the theater" whose

talents and energy seem to know no bounds and whose widespread interests include eager debates on the Shakespeare authorship issue. She received a standing ovation when she received the award.

In her acceptance speech, she thanked her mentors, colleagues and students, including mention of the Chicago Oxford Society, whose president, Marion Buckley, and treasurer, Bill Farina, were in the audience.

England

A new play about De Vere is now due for production in London by De Vere Society member Sally Hazelton Llewellyn. "Edward's Presents" tells the background story of Shakespeare's Sonnets and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on the assumption that Edward de Vere was the author. This will be the first play about Oxford on a London public stage and will be directed by Ruth Carney, who is a seasoned director of Shakespeare. The play has received enthusiastic responses from theater professionals. "An accomplished and entertaining piece with an involved story and rounded characterisation ... the language fluent and progressive in terms of the narrative" (Paines Plough); "humorous and confidently written" (Writernet); "Highly competent ... Visually stimulating ... The writer is definitely someone to keep an eye on" (Soho Theatre).

In July the play was successfully workshopped at the Grace Theatre. The plan now is to produce the play in spring next year, but this depends on raising more funds. If you'd like to support the production financially, or to get more information, contact either Hazelton Llewellyn (hazeltonsally@hotmail.com) or Ruth Carney (carneyruth@hotmail.com).

Employing a sort of Socratic dialogue, Edward Holmes of **County Durham**, a former teacher and theater researcher, presents the case for the 17th Earl of Oxford as

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Edward III (cont'd from page one)

ring theme, "Virtue is rewarded."

Edward III harks back to a Golden Age in English history, particularly as viewed from the Tudor era. It is a mirror held up to Elizabethan England showing an age in which life was good, and events smiled upon the English scene. A predominant theme of the play is that of integrity, and in particular, of righteousness, and of the keeping of oaths. The implication is that the happiness, the prosperity, and the glory of this age flowed as a result of the virtue inherent in public life in those days, both the personal and moral virtue (albeit a tested virtue) of the king, and the chivalric virtue of his son and heir, Prince Edward. While containing a strong element of the morality play, the characters, rather than being archetypes, are drawn in greater depth and detail than one usually finds in a morality play.

If virtue is to be rewarded, and the story is to be interesting, there must be some conflict. In *Edward III*, that conflict takes place within the character of the king himself. The leading character, King Edward III, is presented as a good king and a great leader of men, although one of—as we would put it in these days—definite vulnerability. This comes to the fore early in the play when, while preparing to invade France to claim³ the French throne, he rouses himself to thwart the invasion of David II, King of Scotland and ally to the French. In doing so he raises the siege of Roxborough Castle, rescuing its brave defender, the Countess of Salisbury, from a dire fate. As the countess greets the king and welcomes him with proper respect and gratitude, Edward is struck by what Mario Puzo calls "The Thunderbolt." It is love, or at the very least, lust at first sight. In the king's own words:

K. Edw. She is grown more fairer far since I came hither, / Her voice more silver every word than other, / Her wit more fluent. What a strange discourse / Unfolded she of David and his Scots! / 'Even thus,' quoth she, 'he spake,'—and thus spoke broad /

With epithets and accents of the Scot, / But somewhat better than the Scot could speak: / 'And thus,' quoth she, - and answer'd then herself; / For who could speak like her? But she herself / Breathes from the wall an angel's note from heaven / Of sweet defiance to her barbarous foes, / When she would talk of peace, methinks her tongue / Commanded war to prison; when of war, / It waken'd Caesar from his Roman grave / To hear war beautified by her discourse. / Wisdom is foolishness but in her tongue, /



The Earl of Oxford (believed by some to be depicted here as part of the procession of the Order of the Garter) was never elected to the Order.

Beauty a slander but in her fair face: / There is no summer but in her cheerful looks, / Nor frosty winter but in her disdain.

(II.i.25-43)

The king is immediately struck by the lady's charm, grace, and beauty, so much so that he quickly undertakes to gain her as a lover. To overcome her refusal, he mounts a campaign in military fashion. He declares his passion for her, entreats her with fair words:

K. Edw. ...a king doth dote on thee: / Say that within thy power it doth lie / To make him happy, and that thou hast sworn / To give him all the joy within thy power. / Do this, and tell me when I shall be happy. (II.i.212-216)

He also invokes his authority as her sovereign and her duty as a subject, to

which the countess counters:

Count. But that your lips were sacred, my lord, / You would profane the holy name of love. / That love you offer me you cannot give, / For Caesar owes that tribute to his queen; / That love you beg of me I cannot give, / For Sarah owes that duty⁴ to her lord. (II.i.249-254)

The King's obsession over the Countess is such that he then seeks out the assistance of her father, the Earl of Warwick, in his suit.

K. Edw. And therefore, Warwick, if thou art thyself / The lord and master of thy word and oath, / Go to thy daughter, and in my behalf / Command her, woo her, win her any ways / To be my mistress and my secret love. / I will not stand to hear thee make reply: / Thy oath break hers, or let thy sovereign die.⁵

(II.i.340-346)

Warwick is in a quandary, in that the King's fair words and arguments prior to this point have boxed him in. He has led Warwick to volunteer to accept his own harm for the King's good, whether it be death by sword, or by the loss or bruising of his (Warwick's) honor. Here the theme of the keeping of oaths becomes most prominent:

K. Edw. What wilt thou say to one that breaks an oath? / *War.* That he has broken his faith with God and man, / And from them both stands excommunicate.

(II.i.331-334)

Warwick expresses his quandary thusly:

War. O doting King! O detestable office! / Well may I tempt myself to wrong myself, / When he hath sworn me by the name of God / To break a vow made by the name of God. / ... I'll keep mine oath, / And to my daughter make a recantation / Of all the virtue I have preach'd to her: / I'll say, she must forget her husband, Salisbury, / If she remember to embrace the King; / I'll say, an oath may easily be broken, / But not so easily pardon'd, being broken; / I'll say, it is

true charity to love, / But not true love to be so charitable; / I'll say, his greatness may bear out the shame, / But not his kingdom can buy out the sin ... (II.i.347-364)

Warwick's speech points up the equivocation⁶ very prominent in this episode. Warwick's lines contrast the appearance of good: "It is true charity to love" with the actual good: "But not true love to be so charitable." Again, the dichotomy: "An oath may easily be broken" vs. "But not so easily pardon'd, being broken," also "His greatness may bear out the shame" vs. "His kingdom can (not) buy out the sin." In each case, he offers the argument to use to persuade his daughter to the King's will, and contrasts it with what he would say from his own heart if not constrained by duty to King Edward.

Warwick then entreats his daughter in the King's behalf, only to be rebuffed:

War. The King's great name will temper thy misdeeds, / And give the bitter potion of reproach / A sug'red, sweet, and most delicious taste / ... / Thus have I, in his Majesty's behalf, / Apparell'd sin in virtuous sentences, / And dwell upon thy answer in his suit.

Count. Unnatural besiege! Woe me unhappy, / To have escap'd the danger of my foes, / And to be ten times worse invir'd by friends! / ... / No, let me die, if his too boist'rous will / Will have it so, before I will consent / To be an actor in his graceless lust.

War. Why now thou speak'st as I would have thee speak, / And mark how I unsay the words again: / An honorable grave is more esteem'd / Than the polluted closet of a king; / The greater man, the greater is the thing, / Be it good or bad, that he shall undertake ... (II.i.404-435)

The Countess then encounters the King and finds a path of virtue through the snares before her:

Count. My father, on his blessing hath commanded —

K. Edw. That thou shalt yield to me.

Count. Ay, dear my liege, your due. / ... / Keep but thy word, great King, and I am thine. / Stand where thou dost: I'll part a little from thee — / And see how I will yield me to thy hands.

[Turning suddenly upon him and showing two daggers]

Here by my side hang my wedding knives: / Take thou the one, and with it kill thy Queen, / And learn by me to find her where she lies; / And with this other I'll dispatch my love, / Which now lies fast asleep within my heart. / When they are gone, then I'll consent to love.

(II.ii.123-127)

With this confrontation, the King sees the foolishness of his suit and hails the virtue of the Countess:

K. Edw. Even by that power I swear, that gives me now / The power to be ashamed of myself, / I never mean to part my lips again / In any words that tends to such a suit. / Arise, true English lady, whom our isle / May better boast of than ever Roman might / ... / Arise, and be my fault thy honor's fame, / Which after-ages shall enrich thee with.

(II.ii.189-198)

In the final three acts, the action proceeds to France, where King Edward's military efforts, along with those of his son Edward, the Black Prince, are crowned with success. Chivalric virtue, exemplified by a commitment to the value of keeping one's oath, are prominent in the events of these campaigns, which are somewhat abbreviated by the playwright in comparison to actual history. The virtue of mercy is portrayed in the well-known episode of the Burghers of Calais. The city refuses to yield to King Edward, hoping for relief from the French King John. Eventually compelled to surrender, King Edward names his terms: he will spare the rest of Calais if six prominent citizens come forth with nooses in place around their necks. His Queen, Philippe, persuades him to relent and spare the six. Philippe argues in terms reminiscent of the clemency of Henry V at Harfleur (*Henry V*, III.iii.51-58):

Q. Phil. And kings approach the nearest unto God / By giving life and safety unto men. / As thou intendest to be King of France, / So let her people live to call thee King.

(V.i.41-44)

In the end, King John of France is brought in as captive by the Black Prince, and his crown placed (for the moment) in the hands

of King Edward. This marks the zenith of English success in the Hundred Years' War, with King John led off to English captivity to languish for years while a suitable ransom is negotiated.⁷

Edward III was published in quarto in 1596 by Cuthbert Burby, who later published quartos of *Love's Labour's Lost* (1598) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1599). After a second quarto publication in 1599, *Edward III* was no longer produced or printed. One explanation for its disappearance after its original popularity is in its "bitterly satirical presentation of King David [II] of Scotland ... while in the last scene ... King David is led prisoner on the state."⁸ With the coronation of King James I in 1603, such a portrayal of one of his ancestors would have been rather politically incorrect. Tobin⁹ offers this as a possible scenario for exclusion of *Edward III* from the First Folio of 1623, and notes that a later catalogue of Rogers and Ley (1656) ascribed it to "Shakespeare." However, Rogers and Ley also assigned Marlowe's *Edward II* to "Shakespeare" as well, an identification not generally credited. If the play were of "Shakespearean" (read: Oxfordian) origin, promoting it after 1603 might have been viewed as imprudent, since that King renewed Lord Oxford's 1000 pounds per annum stipend from the Crown shortly after ascending the throne.

Missing history

Edward III suffers a serious omission: a milestone of his reign was his institution of the Knights of the Garter. This organization has achieved a predominant position in English history as the most prestigious order of knighthood in England, if not in all of Europe. The initials "K.G." after one's name confers a level of prestige without equal. How could the playwright leave out mention of the founding of the Knights of the Garter?

If one may offer a modest suggestion, perhaps the subject was a point of melancholy for the author. One notes that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was nominated numerous times to be a Knight of the Garter, but never elected.

While this omission may reflect some-

(cont'd on p. 14)

Edward III (cont'd from p. 13)

thing of the playwright's personal feelings, one may ask whether the play reflects in a broader sense his comment on his own times. It may well be that *Edward III* offers a remarkable contrast to the atmosphere of the Elizabethan court, just as it does to the court of Edward's successor, Richard II.¹⁰

Under Edward III (as shown in the play) one's word, one's veracity, was of utmost importance. On the word of the French Dauphin, for instance, the Earl of Salisbury is released from captivity and given warrant of safety, honored even by King John (IV.v.56-109), to cross France to the English post at Calais and freedom. In contrast, the administration of Queen Elizabeth I was marked by duplicity and mendacity, and Lord Burghley (portrayed in *Hamlet* as Polonius) was foremost in such manipulative behavior. His handling of the Court of Wards enriched himself at the expense of minors falling under his control, including the Earls of Oxford, Rutland, and Southampton.

In Oxford's case his good title to Havering manor was denied by Queen Elizabeth, being confirmed only after her death. The Tudor monarchs were a law unto themselves, and woe betide anyone, common or noble, who crossed one of them. Oxford himself had to be circumspect in expressing himself in these matters.

Thus there is a great irony in the entire theme of *Edward III* which—intended or not—made its point to Elizabethans. Perhaps this is why the play was kept wrapped in anonymity and allowed only two printings¹¹ in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

Notes

1. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd Ed., G. Blakemore Evans/ J.J.M. Tobin, Eds, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1997, pp. 1732-74.
2. *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, Lajos Egri, 1960, ch. 1, pp. 1-31.
3. Edward's claim is through his mother, the French princess Isabel, queen to King Edward II, daughter-in-law to King Edward I ("Longshanks") of *Braveheart* fame.
4. Biblical allusion to 1 Peter 3:5-6, "... even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him husband ..." from Tobin's footnote in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Second Edition, p. 1743.
5. The King has declared that he will die if his passion for the Countess is not consummated.
6. The issue of *equivocation* is one that the present author has recently discussed at the 5th Annual

Edward De Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University, Portland, Oregon. A more comprehensive version of my Portland paper focusing on *equivocation* will appear in a future issue of *The Oxfordian*.

7. This episode of the captivity of King John (Jean) is treated most delightfully by Verily Anderson in *The De Veres of Castle Hedingham*, pp. 62-66. At one point King John was exchanged for some forty princely and noble hostages while his enormous ransom was to be paid in installments. Then, amazingly, King John returned to captivity of his own volition in exchange for the hostages. King John had a terminal illness and died within three months, to be buried at St. Paul's with much of his ransom still unpaid.
8. Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare's Garter Plays: "Edward III" to "Merry Wives of Windsor,"* 1994, pp. 117-118.
9. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd Ed., p. 1732.
10. The deficiencies in virtue of King Richard II are extensively portrayed in the anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock* as well as in the Shakespearean play *Richard II*.
11. History has recorded Queen Elizabeth's outburst "Do ye not know, I am Richard II?" at the time of the Essex Rebellion. She was sensitive to a possible analogy being drawn between herself and the ill-fated 13th Century king.

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Book Review

Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life. By Katherine Duncan-Jones. (London: The Arden Shakespeare, an imprint of Thomson Learning, 2001.)

By Richard F. Whalen

Infuriatingly indecisive, Katherine Duncan-Jones once again indulges her penchant for rampant speculation, this time in her biography of the man she thinks wrote the works of Shakespeare.

For a leading Shakespearean scholar at Oxford University, she is surprisingly uncertain about the life of Will Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon. The result is a biography that holds the reader's interest mainly to see what speculations she will tentatively advance. Inevitably, the image of the Stratford man, which she must try to inflate into the great poet/dramatist, remains an elusive shadow.

In the end, and after all her speculations, she confesses her disappointment in any biography of the Stratford man as the author. Admittedly, this makes her book hardly worth reviewing, except as a cautionary tale about biographical disappointment. In fact, the author herself all but admits that her own book is not worth reading.

The title itself is misleading. There is nothing "ungentle" about her Shakespeare, although she struggles to find something seriously bad about him. In this, she fails. Her subject remains the familiar non-entity that all his biographers have struggled to transform into the poet/dramatist. He's just an ordinary guy with no discernable talent for writing.

The worst that Duncan-Jones can tease from the meager biographical facts to make him ungentle are minor character flaws: He may have had "uncontrollable surges of testosterone" in adolescence. He may have suffered because he paid highly for a coat-of-arms, which many probably knew to be of doubtful legitimacy. He may have been bi-sexual. "Perhaps," she writes, in a typical passage, "Shakespeare's 'love' for his young patron [Southampton] was distant and formal...Perhaps, on the other hand, it was not."

Worst of all in her view, he may have been stingy. She laments that the ungentle character of her Shakespeare is most clearly visible in his reluctance "to divert much, if any, of his considerable wealth towards charitable, neighborly or altruistic ends." He established no scholarships; he set up no charitable foundations; he left nothing

***"It is entirely because
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to know something
also about his life.
But this will inevitably
disappoint. It's far
better not to read
yet another biography,
but to 'read him.'"***

for the poor but a token bequest of ten pounds. He wasn't a nice guy! And he died apparently angry and depressed, perhaps of syphilis. Or maybe not.

The title also misleads when it promises "Scenes from His Life." The reader will be hard-pressed to find any such scenes. Duncan-Jones suggests that he may have gotten fat in old age. He may have gone to London to see plays. He may have taken to drink. The rampant speculations may drive her readers to drink.

The two greatest conundrums for Stratfordians are (perhaps) the "mundane inconsequence" (Schoenbaum's words) of the biographical facts and the significance of Shakespeare's sonnets. In her 1997 edition of the sonnets, Duncan-Jones piled

conjecture upon conjecture in her attempt to understand how the sonnets reached print and what they mean. (See review in the spring 1998 newsletter.) Her multiple conjectures foreshadowed her almost total reliance on speculation in this biography.

Tellingly, Duncan-Jones betrays her uneasiness about the authorship controversy by devoting the opening sentence of her book to dismissing it. "There is no need to doubt," she writes, "whether a grammar-school boy from Stratford-upon-Avon could grow up to write great, and enduring, plays and poems." (At least, she thinks her readers are aware of the controversy.) But that's the last the reader hears about whether the poet/dramatist was the Stratford grammar-school boy or not. As do all other Stratfordian biographers, she dwells almost exclusively on the "historical and cultural world within which Shakespeare lived and wrote." She ignores the authorship controversy and even seems to take pains to avoid any mention of Edward de Vere, the 17th earl of Oxford. She mentions his daughters, Elizabeth and Bridget, in passing, but they are identified only as Lord Burghley's granddaughters.

Oxfordians can take comfort that even with all the conjecture in her biography of the Stratford man he still resembles closely the mundane man seen by non-Stratfordians—and even by those Stratfordians who eschew romanticizing him. He is the ordinary Stratford merchant, tax evader, money lender and hanger-on in the London theaters who shows no literary proclivities.

Oxfordians can applaud her closing words. In her final sentences on the last page of the book, she recommends that readers of her biography can avoid (further?) disappointment by not reading any more biographies of the Stratford man:

"It is entirely because of what we have encountered in Shakespeare's plays, poems and sonnets that we are curious to know something also about his life. But this will inevitably disappoint. It's far better not to read yet another biography, but to 'read him.'"

Would that she had given the reader this advice in the opening lines of her book.

Column
The Paradigm Shift
 Mark K. Anderson

Introducing “phorionymous”; more on Batillus

The Name Game

On Nov. 25, 1987, The American University hosted a moot court debate on the “Shake-speare” question that has been widely chronicled—in these pages, among others. The title of this forum summarizes the way the issue is often framed: “Shake-speare: Author or Pseudonym?” But how accurate is it to portray the authorship question as such?

One of the first things a person learns when they discover Edward de Vere is how widespread the use of pen-names is throughout literary history. Probe an author’s biography and, surprisingly often, you’ll find they took a pseudonym sometime during their career. Not just the lifers like “Mark Twain,” “George Eliot” and “Voltaire”—but also Alfred Lord Tennyson and Herman Melville and Charlotte and Anne Brontë.

The argument for De Vere, of course, goes that it would not be at all unusual if he had published under a pseudonym like “William Shake-speare.” But something that’s all too often overlooked—and this writer’s prose is as guilty as anyone else’s—is the fact that “Shake-speare” actually went the next step beyond pseudonyms. He used the services of a front man. The scenario is actually closer to the story of Harold Prince in the 1975 movie *The Front*—wherein Woody Allen poses as the screenwriter for several blacklisted scribblers in the 1950s and early ‘60s—than it is to Sam Clemens’ situation.

Oddly enough, so far as I’ve been able to determine, there is no word in the English language to describe when an author takes both a pen-name and a front-man. “Cryptonym” comes closest, which the *OED* defines as “private or secret name.” But “cryptonym” could cover a host of sins, not just this as-yet-unnamed authorial gambit.

So it was that earlier this year a colleague and I plundered the Greek dictionaries at a local library. Our charge: Forge a new word that would accurately describe the kind of name Shake-speare actually took. We came across eight possibilities, from the absurdly tongue-twisting to the more pronounceable options. For the sake

of completeness, here are the candidates, in descending order of complexity:

metalambanomenonym (“name taken in exchange”)
diakehremenonym (“borrowed name”)
anairemenonym (“taken-over name”)
daneismatonym (“loan name”)
sylamenonym (“looted name”)
pogononym (“beard name”)
phorionym (“secretly stolen name”)
skionym (“shadow name”)

The first two must certainly be disqualified on the grounds of silliness, and the following three are probably still beyond the bounds of reasonable verbal demands. “Beard name” is too idiomatic. So this narrows the field to two finalists.

In the end, “phorionym” made the best impression, since its root—according to Lidell and Scott’s *Greek Dictionary*—means “stolen” with the metaphorical connotation of “secret” or “clandestine.” “Shadow,” on the other hand, has no such baggage and could even be construed to describe the more general category already covered by “pseudonym.”

So this is my suggestion, then, for that category of author that includes William Shakspeare, Terence (if the scuttlebutt is to be believed) and Harold Prince: They are all fronts in a scheme of *phorionymous* authorship. Some may, of course, object that “phorionym” is too pedantic or off-putting. Or perhaps that the word “front-man” works just fine. (The latter doesn’t convert to an adjective, however. I don’t think I would ever want to use the word “front-manymous” in a sentence.)

I do wonder, though, if there’s *some* word out there that can be used to convey the idea of “pseudonym plus warm body.” Whether it’s “phorionym”/“phorionymous” or perhaps some less foreign neologism that makes the idea more accessible. I leave it up to the readers of this newsletter. Suggestions, anyone?

“Batillus” and Thy Stratford Moniment?

In a previous column, I followed up on

Diana Price’s discovery of a trail of Elizabethan allusions to the Roman identity thief “Batillus.” Elizabethan authors speak knowingly about this “obscure”—as I previously called him—Augustinian figure. And, almost certainly, these writers use Batillus’s story to parallel that of a contemporary identity thief hailing from Stratford-upon-Avon.

But where, if Batillus is so obscure, did authors and readers learn about who he was?

In fact, “obscure” may not be such an appropriate term to describe our Roman impostor: It turns out that Batillus’ tale was all over England.

The 1573 edition of Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne’s *Aeneid* contains a biographical sketch of Virgil. In it, readers learn that Virgil had posted lyrics that Caesar Augustus liked. Caesar asked who wrote them. “At length when none came,” the biography says, “Bathyllus an indifferent good poet, ascribed them unto himself, and was therefore encouraged, and rewarded by Caesar... [and] Bathyllus for a time was all the jestingstocke of the whole citie of Rome.” (*The Whole XII Bookes of the Aeneidos of Virgill*. London, 1573 iv; STC 24801)

Just how widespread was this book? In the words of Renaissance scholar Steven Lally, “No translation of the *Aeneid* was as widely read during the English Renaissance. ... The *Aeneid* of the English Renaissance, then, was the *Aeneid* of Phaer and Twyne.” (*The Aeneid of Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne*, 1987. xii.)

So although the name Batillus may draw blank stares today, we can see how for anyone who had been schooled in the standard Elizabethan edition of Virgil, Batillus was certainly one of the best figures in history to speak about William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon—that impostor posing as a great author.

Perhaps this is the sly double-meaning behind the Stratford monument’s otherwise odd statement that Shake-speare was a “Virgil for art.”

*Tekastiaks and Andrew Hammas
 contributed to this report.*

Letters

To the Editor:

I am gratified for the attention to detail manifested in Jim Fitzgerald's commentary on my *Minerva Britannia* article, which quite properly focuses attention on several issues of translation. All students of the authorship question will miss Jim's probing scholarship, keen wit, and large knowledge of the Latin language and other subjects.

In response to Jim's letter, although I must plead guilty to some minor liberties of interpretation, such as supplying my own original translation of the Latin excerpt from Peacham's long introductory poem, including interpolation of a verb not given in the Latin reprinted in the article, and translating the perfect form "vidi" from emblem 142 in the present tense, Jim's other criticisms seem to me to be strained or incorrect.

I will focus in this letter only on the most important of these. I must strenuously disagree that the word "ingenio" in the title page motto "ingenio vivitur"—the dative or ablative form of the neuter noun, ingenium—cannot correctly be translated as the English word, "wit." Although the most common lexical definition of ingenium refers to "innate talent," wit is a correct, well-attested translation of this Latin word. Andrews' *Copious and Critical Latin-English Lexicon*, for instance, lists the definition "an invention, a clever thought." Terence in the Hecyra has the relevant phrase "ingenio suo vivere" (5.4.20)—a direct analogy to the English proverbial phrase, "to live by his wits." *Cassel's English-Latin Dictionary* lists "ingenium" as the first, most probable, Latin synonym for

the English word, wit. Finally, perhaps the best conceivable authority, the *Dictionarium Latino-Barbarum* (Anonymous, 1676), defines ingenium as "the nature, quality, or disposition of a thing or person: also, fancy, invention, judgement, capacity, apprehension." The same source defines the adverb ingeniose as "wittily, ingeniously."

Fitzgerald's point about the voice of the form vivitur and the consequent subject of the verb's action involves complex issues of philosophy which his reductive focus on grammar does not acknowledge. While I certainly defer to his expertise about the history of the middle voice in Latin, it is obvious to any native speaker of English that "he is lived" cannot be an accurate translation of the passage in question. It is clear, in fact, that the verb must be translated either in the active voice, as "he lives," or in the English middle voice, "is caused to live." This leaves us with the critical question of whether, as Fitzgerald maintains, the presence of the middle voice invalidates my inference that Henry Peacham's intent, in excerpting this passage, was to bring into focus the active agency of the reader to employ his or her wit to cause the hidden person to "live." It should be emphasized that nothing in my article would be changed if Fitzgerald is correct in seeking to limit the reference of ingenium to the subject of the verb; however, several points not mentioned in my original article in fact argue in favor of this interpretation. First, there is the matter of the middle voice in Latin—a middle or passive voice often takes an ablative of the agent or instrument. For example, the line "redditur arboribus florens revirentibus aetas," which is based on the same grammatical structure as the lines

from Peacham, should be "the flowering age is brought back to life by revivifying flowers." On this grammatical basis alone, the Latin student should favor the translation "by the wit of another he is caused to live" over "by his own wit he is caused to live."

However, compelling comparative evidence also attests that my translation is correct. Peacham's quotation is an excerpt from a long, pseudo-Virgilian elegy written for the famous patron of Virgil and Horace, Maecenas (the complete poem can be read at geocities.com/Athens/Forum/6946/literature/elegiae_maecenatem.html). The couplet reads "Marmora Maeonii vincunt monumenta libelli; Vivitur ingenio, caetera mortis erunt." This couplet, perhaps in part because the intrinsic ambiguity of the grammatical forms involved in the first line involves so many intriguing possible variations of translation, was frequently cited in Renaissance texts. One translation, published in 1641 in a curious volume of epigrams and jests titled *Witt's Recreations*, reads:

The Muses works stone monuments out-
last;
'Tis wit keeps life, all else death will down
cast.

Roger Stritmatter
Northampton, Massachusetts
July 20, 2001

To the Editor:

I have just finished reading Diana Price's new book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, and I wanted to recommend it to all fellow members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society.

This book puts to rest completely and forever the absurd notion that William Shakspeare of Stratford could possibly have written the magnificent body of literature attributed to William Shakespeare. She accomplishes this with a careful and thorough analysis of all the documents and references in existence that refer to Shakspeare, including a thorough dissection of Groatsworth of Wit, the First Folio, and an intensive examination of all Stratford-based records. The Stratfordians are correct in one sense: a lot is known about this man, but what they don't acknowledge is that there is a complete and unprecedented lack of any *literary* references to him. The Shakspeare who

(cont'd on p. 18)

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Letters (cont'd from p. 17)

emerges from this critical analysis is hardly the Poetic Genius of the Ages that we know as William Shakespeare, but rather a mundane, frugal, materialistic entrepreneur and upstart—the real *Johannes Factotum* described in *Groatsworth*. Read Ms. Price's summation of the character of William Shakspeare after reviewing all documentary evidence:

Shakspeare is an entrepreneur who exploits anyone and everyone, including writers. He brokers plays and clothes, cuts all kinds of business deals, and arranges loans at interest. He patches together plays, produces, corrupt or vulgarized texts, and pilfers others. *Shakspeare is also a Battillus to a few courtier writers who sell their written works to him, provided they remain anonymous* [emphasis added]. Despite some of his shady dealings, he is able to operate successfully for many years because it suits those who need his services, whether as a Battillus, paymaster, broker, or moneylender

Shakspeare was lampooned early in his career as a miserly Ant, greedy for gain, and his documentary records are consistent with that portrayal. Ms. Price concludes that Shakspeare is not a viable authorship candidate and if he were discovered today as a new contender, his candidacy would not be taken seriously. She also concludes that, "when the hard evidence is examined, what emerges is an overwhelming weight of probability that William Shakspeare of Stratford did not write the plays of 'William Shakespeare,' and an equally overwhelming weight of probability that a Gentleman of rank did." [emphasis added]

However, it is at this point in the book that it becomes a disappointment to Oxfordians. Having brilliantly destroyed the case for Shakspeare and concluding that a man of rank is the real author, she seems totally oblivious to the well-developed and substantiated case for Edward De Vere. Astonishingly, she writes:

Shakespeare's chroniclers should be able to write a biography that has a rational relationship to the literary output of the man. The fact that biographers have failed after countless attempts strongly suggests that they are writing about the wrong man. *It is a pity that no comparable efforts have been expended to find the foot that fits the literary glass slipper* [emphasis added] ... A biography of Shakespeare whose life

(cont'd on p.19)

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Letters (cont'd from p. 18)

story meshes with the Shakespearean literature is bound to be more illuminating than the litany of property transactions sandwiched in between the writing of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. How exciting it would be if we knew something about Shakespeare's personality, his relationships, his loves, his demons, and his Muses.

Earth to Ms. Price! It's been done! Ever hear of *The Star of England*, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, or *Alias Shakespeare*? How about *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harper's Weekly*? How could a movement of this magnitude that has succeeded in making the case for Edward de Vere so magnificently and to such critical acclaim over so many years totally bypass an accomplished author and literary investigator like Ms. Price? May I kindly suggest that someone from the Shakespeare Oxford Society membership committee contact this woman forthwith?

Despite this obvious and glaring shortcoming, I heartily recommend this book. It should be in the bookcase of every Oxfordian.

Dr. Gary Livacari
Park Ridge, Illinois
25 May 2001

To the Editor:

Paul Altrocchi's book *Most Greatly Lived* may turn out to be the most important book, most greatly written, that I have come across. It may become as important a work for the Shakespeare authorship, and the history of Tudor England, as *I Claudius* has been for Roman studies. Although not written with the personal pronoun I as Robert Graves' had used for his great historical novel, *Lived* is written as if the author was Oxford himself telling his own story. I believe the most important goal of a biography, or historical novel is to bring life to the subject under study and to make the person understandable to the reader.

Altrocchi's novel achieves this and much more. I read the book from cover to cover for my first reading. The drama was intense and filled with suspense. The contrasts and conflicts among the principal parties—Queen Elizabeth, Lord Burghley and Edward de Vere—demonstrate the author's ability to portray the kind of persons Shakespeare, Edward de Vere, wrote about. Dr. Altrocchi has presented Oxford in an eminently sane light, a truly great man, who reacted positively to life's depredations, misfortunes, and the tyrants around him,

such as Burghley. Readers of the Shakespeare works may now understand for the first time that the plays were written by a real person about real people.

In this book, Oxford is understandable, though Elizabeth—who appreciated Oxford and his literary and dramatic creations, encouraged him, sponsored him and saved him from losing his head literally—remains to me a great mystery. [While] *Most Greatly Lived* presents very readable and interesting profiles of other women in Oxford's life, I wonder ... whether Elizabeth could have been a lifetime "mother substitute" since I believe Oxford must have had motivation from a "great mother" somewhere in his life? This is another valuable thing an historic novel can accomplish. It can raise questions which may lead to further research.

Most Greatly Lived may not only intrigue those who have not yet examined the case for Oxford as the true author of the Shakespeare canon, but motivate people to read these works for the first time, with a new understanding.

Dr. Charles E. Harman
Brookings, Oregon
June 27, 2001

Join the Shakespeare Oxford Society

If this newsletter has found its way into your hands, and you're not already a member of our 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 21st Century as we begin our fifth century of living in a Western World that was created during the Elizabethan era.

Memberships in the US and Canada are: Students, Regular (\$15/\$25 overseas); Students, Sustaining (\$30/\$40 overseas); Regular (\$35/\$45 overseas); Family or Sustaining (\$50/\$60 overseas). Regular members receive the quarterly *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*; Sustaining or Family members receive both the *Newsletter* and the annual journal, *The Oxfordian*. All members receive a 10% discount on books and other merchandise sold through The Blue Boar. Our Home Page on the World Wide Web is located at: <http://www.shakespeare-oxford.com>

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News (cont'd from p. 11)

Shakespeare in his book *Discovering Shakespeare: A Handbook for Heretics*.

The dialogue is between Holmes, who takes the part of the pupil, and a tutor named Mycroft. Microft Books is also the publisher. In his preface to the 350-page book, Holmes reminds the readers "that these imagined conversations, which I will not dignify with the label 'Socratic dialogues,' constitute a device designed to permit some relaxation of style and tone; Mycroft (who is, after all, my 'alter ego') consumes fictitious cream-cakes but his information is authenticated. You should take him seriously." Holmes's alter ego is indeed well-read and well-versed in the arguments for Oxford as the author. The bibliography lists about two hundred authors, although neither Charlton Ogburn's major work nor Ruth Lloyd Miller's collected articles is mentioned.

On September 1, actor Kenneth Branagh was awarded an honorary degree from Birmingham University, which sponsors the Shakespeare Institute in **Stratford-upon-Avon**. Branagh was praised by Prof. Peter Holland, director of the Institute, saying that "Hollywood had forgotten all about Shakespeare before Kenneth Branagh."

Top History Mag (cont'd from front page)

claim that "no contemporary reference in any of 1603" and that all the post-1604 plays were written earlier and released after Oxford's death. So the obstacle is actually less formidable than he has asserted.

"But is there anything that actually ties Oxford to Shakespeare's plays?" he asks. In answer, he cites the report by Roger Stritmatter and Mark Anderson on an analysis of marked passages in Oxford's Bible at the Folger Shakespeare Library that turn up in Shakespeare's plays, "among them more than a hundred references that had not previously been noted by Shakespearean scholars but which are clearly or probably the sources of Shakespeare's phraseology."

In his conclusion, Rubinstein declares boldly that the non-Stratfordian position "is not at all absurd." Then, however, he retreats from the evidence he has been examining. He concludes that "most historians of Shakespeare will unquestionably continue to believe the orthodox view." (Note that it is their "belief," not their verdict on the evidence.)

Crucial, he says, is that the Stratford man's contemporaries took it for granted that he was the author—a statement that Oxfordians would vigorously contest. The authorship question, he says, is unlikely

ever to be settled comprehensively and may become more heated.

Although Oxfordians may not be elated by his conclusion, Rubinstein is the only history professor taking a hard look at the authorship question, finding merit in the debate and publishing his findings at length. Perhaps more history professors and graduate students in history departments will examine the merits of the case for Oxford. After all, the question of Shakespeare's identity is as much a question for history professors as for English professors.

Other mainstream press that have covered the Shakespeare authorship question in the past three years include *U.S. News and World Report* (July 24-31, 2000), which included a pro-Oxford article among their "Mysteries of History" cover story; *Harper's Weekly*, a cover story titled, "The Ghost of Shakespeare. Who, in Fact, was the Bard?," focusing exclusively on Oxford versus the Stratford Man; and a pro-Oxford article entitled, "Richard Malim on the Real Identity of the Briton of the Millennium" in *The Spectator* (January 9, 1999).

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