



THE OXFORDIAN

The Annual Journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Society

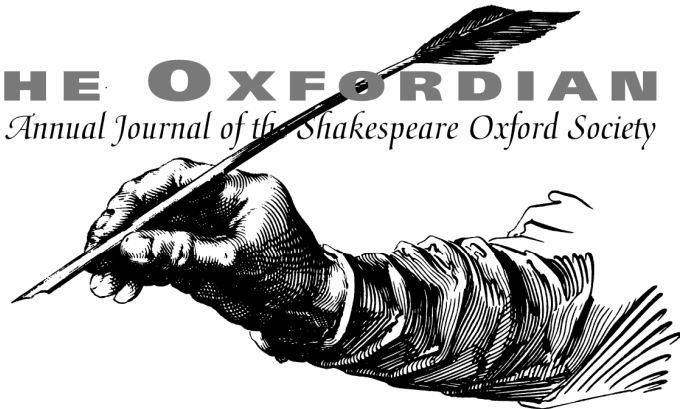


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**Annual Journal of
The Shakespeare
Oxford Fellowship**

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The Oxfordian Mind

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Introduction

The Oxfordian Mind

This special issue of *The Oxfordian* has a three-fold purpose. First, it serves as an historical anthology of some of the best essays and book chapters dealing with the difficult and contentious matter of Who Wrote Shakespeare? The intended audience includes conventional Shakespeare scholars, college students, and curious literary amateurs—anyone who has ever wondered whether there is validity to what seems at first blush a ridiculous proposition. That Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare is as surely established, one might say, as that *Huckleberry Finn* was written by Mark Twain.

A second audience is made up of so-called non- or anti-Stratfordians. The community is larger than one might expect and includes agnostics, Baconians, Marlovians, Derbyites, Florians, Sackvilleans and indeed a host of others, perhaps 50 or more, whose very plenitude muddies an otherwise reasonably clear pond. What's agreed is that William Shaksper or Shakspere of Stratford-Upon-Avon, as he mostly spelled his name, could never have authored the dramas and poetry attributed to him, given the village's educational and cultural limitations. But after that it's a free-for-all, with some individuals and sects—the religious analogy comes easily in the world of Bardolatry—reserving their most spiteful hisses for their intellectual allies rather than the common foe.

The third group comprises Oxfordians, who will now have at hand a convenient collection of classics, together with the most up-to-date work supporting Looney's inspired hypothesis. Entries published before 1920, the year of Looney's study, are obviously not by Oxfordians, though they have earned honorary inclusion because of the indispensable way they prepared the ground or supplied critical insights. Also reprinted are one or two overlooked gems, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's introduction to Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* (No. 3), and some new work, especially Alexander Waugh's examination of "the sweet swan of Avon" (No. 11), Roger Stritmatter's analysis of De Vere's bible (No. 9), and Robin Fox on Shakespeare's, that is Oxford's, grammar-school education (No. 10).

Bardolatry

The analogy with religion is unfortunately apt, especially among Stratfordians, the established interest. Nor will they brook dissent, as Rev. Paul Edmundson, a senior Shakespeare cleric and real-life Anglican priest, makes clear in his editorial contribution to their recent appeal to faith and authority, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (2013). The title itself is revealing. Shakespeare's plays and poems are treated as quasi-sacred texts with extensive commentary and exegesis subject to revision as the occasion serves. He has become more collaborative of late, explaining the extraordinary range of his knowledge and other authorship difficulties.¹ However, the point once made is set aside and the high-level exegesis continues unhindered.

The modern Bardic cult enjoys a holy city complete with birthplace, relics and a spurious narrative offered straight-face as the truth. The fact that it's all made up is unimportant: everything's

¹ Bate and Rasmussen (eds): *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays* (Palgrave 2013)

part of the religion and the magic stone must be touched or at least viewed. Fame and money have bought magnificent theatrical cathedrals, with regional chapels and festivals. Worshippers from all over the world make regular *hajj* to these big and little Meccas, usually during the summers.

But “if you want to argue with me,” said the atheist Voltaire, “you must define your terms.” Shakespeare’s priests and their acolytes are usually called Stratfordians because they hold that the traditional creation myth is true, despite the lack of particulars. Indeed, they go so far as to insist that Shakespeare is not to be understood without an appreciation of his birthplace, a proposition non-Stratfordians are ready to concede. Among the frustratingly ignored data are the extensive records of his business dealings in the town, grain hoarding and tax collecting (but avoiding his own), enclosing public lands, and even like Shylock lending money at usurious rates then ruthlessly pursuing his debtors in the courts. All this can be easily verified in the documents lovingly preserved in the Stratford Records Office, the undeniable real-life behaviors of someone completely at odds with the broad humanity of the man who could write

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop’d and window’d raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta’en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just

.—*King Lear* III. iv. 28–36

None of this fazes the hard-core fundamentalists who don’t want to be confused by the facts. They will assure you that the 13-year old Shaksper perforce dropped out of the Stratford Grammar school, presumably at the top of his class, with the equivalent education of a first-year modern college student. Yes, his command of Greek and Latin was that of a 21st-century Harvard sophomore: thus the young William Shaksper of Stratford village, population 1,500, ca. 1576.² We might add that remarkably enough his teachers observed nothing unusual about this, failed to recognize his world-class intellect and were unimpressed by his writing ability.

In fact nobody in Stratford remembered anything about the boy apart from the fact that he wanted to marry Anne Whately but got Anne Hathaway pregnant and so had to marry her. They had twins a few months later. Unsurprisingly, he ran off to London as soon as he could and when he died left her nothing in his will apart from his second-best bed, snigger. For some reason no one recalled that he’d been a popular poet and playwright in London who had actually performed before the queen, several times. Instead they made him a monument, as one of the town’s wealthiest men, holding a sack of grain.

The inflated claims for Stratford’s grammar school reflect the impact of Oxfordian research demonstrating beyond contention that the playwright was a highly educated man with an extraordinary knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics, and just about everything else. Jonson’s

² Carol Chillington Rutter, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, p. 134.

famous remark that he had small Latin and less Greek is unaccountably misleading. They try to explain his actual classical learning by speculating—for there is nothing in the record—that he may have spent some time in the army and/or navy, or worked as a law clerk, or perhaps as a “schoolmaster in the country.” Books and sailors interviewed in local taverns provided all the local details needed for his Italian plays, though why he chose to set so many in a country he had never visited is simply one of the mysteries of genius. Thus everything is satisfactorily accounted for.

Outside this tight, academic church, almost literally beyond the pale, are the anti- or non-Stratfordians, literary agnostics (and in some cases atheists) whose view is that someone other than the grain dealer from Stratford must be responsible. Such apostasy is severely punished, often by pay cuts or non-promotions/appointments or, in serious cases, actual expulsion from the groves of academe. Dissenters are held in the same hostile regard as Darwinians by religious fundamentalists.

A History of Doubt

As we have noted, questions about Shaksper’s authorship of the plays and poems existed from the first. Greene’s famous *Groatsworth of Witte* (1592) appears to accuse him of plagiarism, and Jonson’s celebrated 1623 dedication to the Folio is capable of more than one reading and some corrections of fact (see No. 11, below). Following the closure of the theaters in 1642 and the Great Fire of London 24 years later, which very likely destroyed valuable records, including perhaps forever-lost plays like *Cardenio* or *Loves Labours Won*, awareness and interest in his work faded. Both were famously revived in September 1769 by the actor David Garrick, who organized the first Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford, laying the foundation for his modern reputation.

The momentum was caught in 1778 when the scholar Edmund Malone, friend of Johnson, Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds, who painted his portrait in the English National Gallery, produced *An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in Which the Plays Attributed to Shakspeare Were Written*. Note the phrase, “the plays attributed to Shakespeare,” suggesting that the great man entertained some doubts about some of them himself. What’s wrong with *An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in Which the Plays of Shakspeare Were Written*? Malone’s influential study, which is still cited, included the poet’s first biography by drawing on the Works themselves. *An Attempt* was so successful and yet so full of evidentiary and logical holes that, as education and literacy spread, others began taking a fresh and skeptical look at the data. The results were so unsettling that the exercise is literally forbidden by today’s fundamentalists—we are not allowed to infer anything about Shakespeare from his works.³ He is unique among authors in this regard, cultural and personal contextualizing being a standard procedure among modern literary critics.

By the mid-19th century authorship skepticism was prominently on the table, especially in America. Nathaniel Hawthorne (No. 3) wrote a vigorous introduction to Delia Bacon’s pioneering *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded* (1857), and Walt Whitman opined that the Works were probably composed by one of the “wolfish earls” around Elizabeth—a prescient insight. Sir George Greenwood, in *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908) and Mark Twain (No. 4), with his magnificent and irresistible *Is Shakespeare Dead?* (1909), summed up the growing uncertainty. These agnostic classics bear reading even today.

³ James Shapiro: *Contested Will : Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (Simon & Schuster, 2010) p. 261ff.

The field was ready for a conqueror, and he appeared in the unlikely form of a vaguely eccentric schoolmaster with a funny name, John Thomas Looney. As a Shakespeare teacher he had gradually become convinced, along with Twain and others, that the standard model could not possibly be correct. There were too many anomalies and gaps and far too much willing suspension of disbelief on the part of those who adopted it.

Looney took a significant new step. He set the Shaksper hypothesis aside and instead asked himself who the author would need to be, as it were, to qualify as “Shakespeare.” If we look objectively at his Works, what do they tell us about him? That he was intelligent and poetically gifted?—of course, overwhelmingly so. Educated? For sure, and not ordinarily. He knew everything, and indeed more than he should, including heliocentrism, Marxist political economy, the circulation of the blood, Freudian slips, the Oedipus complex, Repetition Compulsion, and more.

Looney noted that none of these things was taught at the Stratford Grammar School. The playwright must therefore have been a mighty autodidact with access to a huge library or libraries, made repeatedly available to him some time after his arrival in London. But in late 16th-century England these were found only in the private collections of the high and mighty and there are no records, as there surely ought to be, of a common player being given the run of some great lord’s library over many years. The plays reveal that their author could read Latin and Greek fluently, spoke Italian, polite and demotic French, and also some Spanish. His historical research was extensive and thorough beyond any of his contemporaries—it has been described as “academic.” He knew the topography and architecture of northern Italy better than many of today’s Stratfordian scholars, was acquainted with war, the army and the navy (including shipwrecks), understood tournaments, chivalric challenges, and aristocratic sports and pastimes such as bowls, falconry and real (royal) tennis. This is not a game you learn by conversation. It is played literally in the “court” of a great house. One of the ways you score is by hitting the ball through an upper window. He knew how queens and kings and earls spoke to one another in public and, more revealingly, in private. He understood the way court politics and conspiracies went, and what were the subtle limits of familiar address between master, mistress and servant. He knew what a nurse might say to her princess and how her charge might respond. Above all, he was highly trained in the law.

Looney began looking around among Elizabethans for the individual these qualities implied. He even profiled him, like a modern-day detective. His “Shakespeare” had to be, among other things, a recognized poet and dramatist, and an obviously intelligent, educated and widely traveled man whose abilities were recognized by his peers. He moved easily in aristocratic circles, loved literature and especially the drama. He was Lancastrian in his politics, a wavering Catholic by religion and ambiguous about women, by which Looney meant, but could not say in 1920, that he was bi- or homosexual. Looney finally found his man in the seventeenth earl and published his results triumphantly in *‘Shakespeare’ Identified* (No. 5).

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Like modern Darwinians, Looney’s successors take his work only as a starting point. While all accept his broad hypothesis as correct, there is disagreement about many details. In the past century the theory has been modified and qualified, corrected and supplemented. There are minor schools, such as the so-called Prince Tudorites, who think (incorrectly, in our view) that Oxford and Elizabeth I were incestuous lovers and Henry Wriothesley their doubly incestuous issue. Un-

fortunately this was the melodramatic plot-line adopted in the movie *Anonymous*, which has done so much damage to the Oxfordian cause. It made for good theater but completely discredited the movement in the eyes of the curious: *Shakespeare in Love* comes across as more real.

In many ways Oxfordians are the last of the gentlemen scholars and ladies who graced the Victorian moment. Halliwell-Phillips was their prototype, the inspired amateur independently following his/her interests where they led and often coming up with extraordinary discoveries. Most Oxfordians are amateurs of this sort, self-taught literary scholars and critics, drawn largely from the professions—lawyers, doctors, sociologists, historians, physicists.

This has had plus and minus effects, since minds from other disciplines can be both untrained in literary theory, yet rigorously educated in their own profession's ways of thinking. While overlooking some things, they recognize anomalies, absences and implications beyond the abilities of most English professors, speaking as an English professor, with interesting results. One example, is A.J. Pointon's *The Man who was Never Shakespeare* (Parapress 2011), among the most neatly argued recent studies. The author is an engineer and physicist. Another is Robin Fox's *Shakespeare's Education* (Laugwitz Verlag, 2012). Fox is a prominent sociologist/anthropologist. (See No. 11).

Simply because they are literary amateurs, Oxfordians often take the research road less traveled, and make remarkable discoveries. A good example is Katherine Chiljan, whose *Shakespeare Suppressed* (2011) introduces readers to a variety of obscure and even forgotten texts capable of illuminating the general question and many of its particulars. Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Greenwood Press 2001, 2012) is perhaps the outstanding case of new and careful research with dramatic implications for authorship studies. Though she is not an Oxfordian, Price's work *in ipso* supports the hypothesis, demanding answers from the world of orthodox scholarship that it has yet to receive.

Oxfordianism's positives include its welcome capacity to force conventional scholars to re-examine their assumptions. Among them, as we've seen, is the matter of Shakespeare's education, his professionalism in legal matters and his detailed knowledge of Italy and all things Italian. There is now no gainsaying—though it continues to be gainsaid—that the author of *Othello* and the *Merchant* knew Venice at first hand. See Mark Anderson's *'Shakespeare' by Another Name* (Gotham Books 2005). As for his now-acknowledged education, modern students forget that for most of his post-Garrick career Shakespeare had small Latin, etc., and merely warbled his native woodnotes wild.

Another contested area forcefully revised by research outside the academies—for certain areas are literally no-go for ambitious young professors—is the dating and ordering of the plays and poems, still dominated by Malone. The question arose initially because Oxford died in 1604, thus seemingly disqualifying himself as the author of works written afterwards. But were they, and do we have correct dates for the rest? Current research suggests otherwise—*Hamlet*, for example, may have been written as early as 1589, shaking up the accepted chronology. Two outstanding Oxfordian books dealing with the question are Kevin Gilvary's *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* (Parapress 2010), and Roger Stritmatter's and Lynne Kositsky's *On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's The Tempest* (McFarland 2013). Both make it clear that Malone's 216-year-old account needs to be seriously revisited.

For all Oxfordianism's successes, there remain some stubbornly unresolved questions. The biggest is the matter of the author's pseudonym and the successful concealment of his identity for over 300 yeears. In two words, why and how? The "shame of print," which supposedly discouraged men of rank from writing for money, seems especially weak. One can hardly doubt that if the queen were delighted by one of his anonymous plays, her courtier and perhaps former lover Oxford might whisper the truth into her ear. Meres knew all about Oxford as a playwright.

One answer uncovered by Oxfordian research is that De Vere was indeed recognized by some as an unjustly overlooked genius. For example, George Puttenham remarked in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589)—

in Her Majesty's time...have sprung up another crew of Courtly makers, Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford.

—and Henry Peacham directly suggested in *Minerva Britannia* (1612) that De Vere had been a playwright of hidden identity. In 1622 he added in *The Compleat Gentleman*:

In the time of our late Queene Elizabeth, which was truly a golden age (for such a world of refined wits, and excellent spirits it produced, whose like are hardly to be hoped for, in any succeeding age) above others, who honoured Poesie with their pennes and practice (to omit her Majestie, who had a singular gift herein) were Edward Earle of Oxford, the Lord Buckhurst, Henry Lord Paget; our Phoenix, the noble Sir Philip Sidney, M. Edward Dyer, M. Edmund Spencer, M. Samuel Daniel, with sundry others: whom (together with those admirable wits, yet living, and so well knowne) not out of Envie, but to avoid tediousnesse I overpasse. Thus much of Poetrie.

This is highly suggestive, though in our view the question has not yet been satisfactorily resolved, and remains one of the growth areas in Oxfordian research.⁴ There is no substitute for scholarship. De Vere's case can only be made and won in the academies and according to their rules, lopsided and discouraging though they are. This means hard, consistent work, checking and re-checking the facts, documenting sources, paying attention to the laws of logic and evidence and taking principled stands when necessary. Arguments from authority—the Stratfordian way—are useless. The need is to reach out to serious Shakespeare scholars, convince them that there are difficulties worth examining and prizes, including one of the greatest, to be won.

This special issue of *The Oxfordian* is part of that outreach.

⁴ The SOF maintains a Research Grant Program supporting Oxfordian-related research. Applicants should contact John Hamill at hamillx@pacbell.net.

1. Robert Greene on Shakespeare's Plagiarism

1592

Greenes Groats-worth of Witte, bought with a million of Repentance (1592), a pamphlet purportedly written by the dramatist Robert Greene (1558-92), was most likely forged or edited by Henry Chettle (1564-1606), who arranged for its posthumous publication. The three base-minded men are usually identified as Marlowe, Peele and Nashe.¹ It is notable, however, that in *Palladis Tamia* (No. 2, below), Francis Meres remarks: "As Achilles tortured the deade bodie of Hector, and as Antonius, and his wife Fulvia tormented the livelesse corps of Cicero: so Gabriell Harvey hath shewed the same inhumanitie to Greene that lies full low in his grave."

Groatsworth's most famous passage has been endlessly read and ingeniously interpreted. Apart from its apparent reference to Shakespeare, called "Shake-scene" and supported by an ironical paraphrase from *3 Henry VI*, it is notable for the allegation that he is an "upstart crow" who has beautified himself in others feathers. One reading of this is that he is a plagiarist. The writer damns Shake-scene as an actor and a dramatist, a Jack of all Trades, who imagines he can write as well, and perhaps even better, than Greene and his fellow playwrights. He is ruthless and believes himself to be the only game in town.

Base-minded men all three of you, if by my miserie you be not warnd: for vnto none of you (like mee) sought those burres to cleaue: those Puppets (I meane) that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whom they all have beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all have beene be-holding, shall (were yee in that case that I am now) bee both at once of them forsaken? Yes trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Iohannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a country.

¹ D. Allen Carroll (ed.): *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (Binghamton, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994) pp. 84-85. Carroll cites W. B. Austin: 'A Computer-Aided Technique for Stylistic Discrimination: The Authorship of *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*' (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Bureau of Research, April, 1969) to show that *Groatsworth* was almost certainly written by Henry Chettle, a case also persuasively advanced by Diana Price: *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 28ff., and John Jowett: 'Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*,' *Proceedings of the Bibliographical Society of America* 87 (1993), pp. 453-86.

2. From Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia*

1598

Rev. Francis Meres (MA Cantab and Oxen) is famous for his *Palladis Tamia* (1598),¹ often described as a “commonplace book” or collection of useful quotes and information. The title is a nonsense Latin phrase, though *Palladis* vaguely translates as Athena (Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom) while all Latin words prefixed with *tam-* have the sense of *continuing, thus, ongoing*, etc. So *Wits Treasury* is both an approximate translation and a subtitle. While the book is what it says, an anthology, it may also be described as a middle-brow dissertation with a great number of examples and references. *Palladis Tamia*'s thesis is that in its writers and literary greatness England, especially under Elizabeth I of course, equals and even surpasses the glories of ancient Greece and Rome. Meres ensures that everything fits by listing numerous forced analogies:

As Greece had three Poets of great antiquity, Orpheus, Linus and Musaeus, and Italy other three auncient Poets, Livius Andronicus, Ennius and Plautus: so hath England three auncient Poets, Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate.

As Homer is reputed the Prince of Greek Poets; and Petrarch of Italian Poets: so Chaucer is accounted the God of English Poets.

As Homer was the first that adorned the Greek tongue with true quantity: so Piers Plowman was the first that observed the true quantitie of our verse without the curiositie of Rime.

Along with everyone else who ever shook an English quill, Meres mentions Shakespeare several times. He also offers an interestingly incomplete and ambiguous list of his works to 1598, including a still-undiscovered *Loves Labours Won* and *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, since ascribed by Vickers to George Peele.²

Even more intriguing, Meres has apparently heard of Shakespeare's private and as yet unpublished sonnets. These he remarkably describes as “sugred” and “privately circulated” among his “friends,” a phrase whose implications are rarely explored. Does Meres really know what he's talking about? The words “sugred” and “privately circulated” and “friends” hint both at the sonnets' literary quality and their quasi-public eroticism, which many, including myself, take to be bisexual. This applies whether one reads the collection as autobiographical or merely “literary” or some combination of the two (the likeliest explanation).

One hardly imagines however that the sweetest needed to be “privately circulated,” meaning scandalously, although apparently they were, unless they alluded to real people, meaning indi-

¹ *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury being the Second Part of Wits Common Wealth.* By Francis Meres Master of Artes of both Universities. (London: Cuthbert Burbie, 1598).

² See “King John,” by Michael Egan in Joseph Rosenblum, ed., *The Greenwood Companion to Shakespeare* (2005), Vol. 1, pp. 156-189.

viduals of social consequence. This strengthens the case for De Vere over the provincial actor and horse-holder.

The poems' subsequently pirated publication by Thomas Thorpe in 1607 under the title *Shakespeare's Sonnets* with a teasing dedication to a "Mr W.H.," described as their "onlie begetter," has fueled controversy ever since. The implications of Meres' testimony however are rarely factored in when the sonnets are discussed.

The oddness and unreliability of Meres's account of Shakespeare is underscored by his careless titling errors, e.g. *Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Gentlemen of Verona*, *Errors*. Meres mysteriously omits *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*, (later the three Henry VI plays), *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and, as I have argued, *1 Richard II*.³

Meres additionally notes that Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford, was an established playwright to be mentioned in the same breath as Shakespeare. This has given comfort and support to both sides of the authorship debate. On the one hand, Oxford is recognized as a dramatist, among the best for comedy, but on the other Meres clearly believes that Shakespeare is somebody else.

As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras: so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare, wites his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, &c.

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among ye English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, wites his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice*: for Tragedy his *Richard the 2*. *Richard the 3*. *Henry the 4*. *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

As Epilus Stolo said, that the Muses would speake with Plautus tongue, if they would speake Latin: so I say that the Muses would speake with Shakespeares fine filed phrase, if they would speake English. [...]

As Ovid saith of his worke; *Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira, nec ignis Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas*.⁴ And as Horace saith of his: *Exegi monumentaere perennius; Regalique; situ pyramidu altius; Quod non imber edax; Non Aquilo impotens possit diruere; aut*

³ Michael Egan: *The Tragedy of Richard II, Part One, A Newly Authenticated Play by William Shakespeare, Edited and Introduced with an Introduction and Variorum Notes* (2006).

⁴ The work shows that neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor even the gnawing tooth of Time itself. can wipe him out.

*innumerabilis annorum sfuga temporum*⁵: so say I severally of Sir Philip Sidneys, Spencers, Daniels, Draytons, Shakespeares, and Warners workes;

Non Iovis ira: imbres: Mars: ferrum; flamma, senectus,
 Hoc opus unda: ruēs: turbo: venena went.
 Et quanquam ad plucherrimum hoc opus euertendum tres illi Dii conspirabunt, Cronus, Vulcanus, & pater ipse gentis;
 Non tamen annorum series, non flamma, nec ensis,
 Aeternum potuit hoc abolere Decus.⁶

As Pindarus, Anacreon and Callimachus among the Greekes; and Horace and Catullus among the Latines are the best Lyrick Poets: so in this faculty the best among our Poets are Spencer (who excelleth in all kinds) Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare, Bretton.

As these Tragicke Poets flourished in Greece, Aeschylus, Euripedes, Sophocles, Alexander Aetolus, Achaeus Erithriaeus, Astydamos Atheniesis, Apollodorus Tarsensis, Nicomachus Phrygius, Thespis Atticus, and Timon Apolloniates; and these among the Latines, Accius, M. Attilius, Pomponius Secundus and Seneca: so these are our best for Tragedie, the Lorde Buckhurst, Doctor Leg of Cambridge, Doctor Edes of Oxforde, maister Edward Ferris, the Authour of the Mirrour for Magistrates, Marlow, Peele, Watson, Kid, Shakespeare, Drayton, Chapman, Decker, and Benjamin Johnson.

The best Poets for Comedy among the Greeks are these, Menander, Aristophanes, Eupolis Atheniensis, Alexis Terius, Nicostratus, Amipsias Atheniensis, Anaxedrides, Rhodius, Aristonymus, Archippus Atheniensis and Callias Atheniensis; and among the Latines, Plautus, Terence, Naeuius, Sext. Turpilius, Licinius Imbrex, and Virgilius Romanus: so the best for Comedy amongst us bee, Edward Earle of Oxforde, Doctor Gager of Oxforde, Maister Rowley once a rare Scholler of learned Pembroke Hall in Cambridge, Maister Edwardes one of her Majesties Chappell, eloquent and wittie John Lilly, Lodge, Gascoyne, Greene, Shakespeare, Thomas Nash, Thomas Heywood, Anthony Mundaye our best plotter, Chapman, Porter, Wilson, Hathway, and Henry Chettle.

5 The monuments I've raised will outlast kings and kingdoms, the pyramids, tempests, conquests, the countless succession of years and even the flight of Time itself.

6 Neither the wrath of Jove, the iron of Mars, nor fire, nor the force of the sea, nor the rush of people, even poison, can destroy this beautiful work. Nor can it be overthrown by the three gods working together, Cronus, Vulcan and the Father of Nations; nor years, nor flame, nor sword, can eradicate this Eternal Beauty. [Trans. by Michael Egan.]

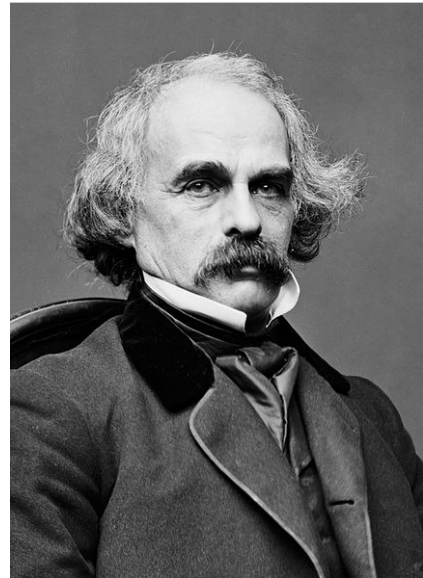
3. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Delia Bacon and Shakespeare

1857

In 1857 Nathaniel Hawthorne, then living in London, provided a Preface to Delia Bacon's *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded* (London: Groombridge Sons Paternoster Row. 1857 Ames Press New York). Disorganized and almost unreadable, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded* is sustained by its author's intellectual energy and infectious enthusiasm for her topic. Hawthorne's sympathetic account suggests that he was more than half persuaded by Bacon's argument that Shakespeare could not have been the author of the dramas attributed to him, and that they were more likely the work of a distinguished committee headed by Sir Francis Bacon (no relation).

Delia Salter Bacon (1811-1859) was "attractive, vivacious, and intellectual", and Hawthorne initially thought her work "brilliant."¹ It was largely due to his influence that *The Philosophy of Shakespeare's Plays Unfolded* was first published. After Bacon's death he spoke of her more skeptically, especially in "Reflections on a Gifted Woman," *The Atlantic Monthly*, (1883), republished in *Our Old Home* (1888).

The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded, long derided by conventional scholars, is now making something of a comeback, albeit unacknowledged: see Bate and Rasmussen: *William Shakespeare and Others / Collaborative Plays* (Palgrave Macmillan 2013).



Nathaniel Hawthorne 1804-1864

This Volume contains the argument, drawn from the Plays usually attributed to Shakspeare, in support of a theory which the author of it has demonstrated by historical evidences in another work. Having never read this historical demonstration (which remains still in manuscript, with the exception of a preliminary chapter, published long ago in an American periodical), I deem it necessary to cite the author's own account of it.

¹ "Delia Bacon: Hawthorne's Last Heroine," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 20.2 (Fall 1994): 1-10.

The Historical Part of this work (which was originally the principal part, and designed to furnish the historical key to the great Elizabethan writings), though now for a long time completed and ready for the press, and though repeated reference is made to it in this volume, is, for the most part, omitted here. It contains a true and before unwritten history, and it will yet, perhaps, be published as it stands; but the vivid and accumulating historic detail, with which more recent research tends to enrich the earlier statement, and disclosures which no invention could anticipate, are waiting now to be subjoined to it.

The INTERNAL EVIDENCE of the assumptions made at the outset is that which is chiefly relied on in the work now first presented on this subject to the public. The demonstration will be found complete on that ground; and on that ground alone the author is willing, and deliberately prefers, for the present, to rest it.

External evidence, of course, will not be wanting; there will be enough and to spare, if the demonstration here be correct. But the author of the discovery was not willing to rob the world of this great question; but wished rather to share with it the benefit which the true solution of the Problem offers—the solution prescribed by those who propounded it to the future. It seemed better to save to the world the power and beauty of this demonstration, its intellectual stimulus, its demand on the judgment. It seemed better, that the world should acquire it also in the form of criticism, instead of being stupified and overpowered with the mere force of an irresistible, external, historical proof. Persons incapable of appreciating any other kind of proof,—those who are capable of nothing that does not ‘directly fall under and strike *the senses*’ as Lord Bacon expresses it,—will have their time also; but it was proposed to present the subject first to minds of another order.

In the present volume, accordingly, the author applies herself to the demonstration and development of a system of philosophy, which has presented itself to her as underlying the superficial and ostensible text of Shakspeare’s plays. Traces of the same philosophy, too, she conceives herself to have found in the acknowledged works of Lord Bacon, and in those of other writers contemporary with him. All agree in one system; all these traces indicate a common understanding and unity of purpose in men among whom no brotherhood has hitherto been suspected, except as representatives of a grand and brilliant age, when the human intellect made a marked step in advance.

The author did not (as her own consciousness assures her) either construct or originally seek this new philosophy. In many respects, if I have rightly understood her, it was at variance with her pre-conceived opinions, whether ethical, religious, or political. She had been for years a student of Shakspeare, looking for nothing in his plays beyond what the world has agreed to find in them, when she began to see, under the surface, the gleam of this hidden treasure.

It was carefully hidden, indeed, yet not less carefully indicated, as with a pointed finger, by such marks and references as could not ultimately escape the notice of a subsequent age, which should be capable of profiting by the rich inheritance. So, too, in regard to Lord Bacon. The author of this volume had not sought to put any but the ordinary and obvious interpretation upon his works, nor to take any other view of his character than what accorded with the unanimous judgment upon it of all the generations since his epoch. But, as she penetrated more and more deeply into the plays, and became aware of those inner readings, she found herself compelled to turn back to the *Advancement of Learning* for information as to their plan and purport; and Lord Bacon’s Treatise failed not to give her what she sought; thus adding to the immortal dramas, in her idea, a far higher value than their warmest admirers had heretofore claimed for them. They filled out the scientific scheme which Bacon had planned, and which needed only these profound and vivid illustrations of human life and character to make it perfect. Finally, the author’s researches led her to a point where she found the plays claimed for Lord Bacon and his associates,—not in a way

that was meant to be intelligible in their own perilous times,—but in characters that only became legible, and illuminated, as it were, in the light of a subsequent period.

The reader will soon perceive that the new philosophy, as here demonstrated, was of a kind that no professor could have ventured openly to teach in the days of Elizabeth and James. The concluding chapter of the present work makes a powerful statement of the position which a man, conscious of great and noble aims, would then have occupied; and shows, too, how familiar the age was with all methods of secret communication, and of hiding thought beneath a masque of conceit or folly. Applicably to this subject, I quote a paragraph from a manuscript of the author's, not intended for present publication:

It was a time when authors, who treated of a scientific politics and of a scientific ethics internally connected with it, naturally preferred this more philosophic, symbolic method of indicating their connection with their writings, which would limit the indication to those who could pierce within the veil of a philosophic symbolism. It was the time when the cipher, in which one could write '*omnia per omnia*,' was in such request, and when 'wheel ciphers' and 'doubles' were thought not unworthy of philosophic notice. It was a time, too, when the phonographic art was cultivated, and put to other uses than at present, and when a *nom de plume* was required for other purposes than to serve as the refuge of an author's modesty, or vanity, or caprice. It was a time when puns, and charades, and enigmas, and anagrams, and monograms, and ciphers, and puzzles, were not good for sport and child's play merely; when they had need to be close; when they had need to be solvable, at least, only to those who *should* solve them. It was a time when all the latent capacities of the English language were put in requisition, and it was flashing and crackling, through all its lengths and breadths, with puns and quips, and conceits, and jokes, and satires, and inlined with philosophic secrets that opened down "into the bottom of a tomb"—that opened into the Tower—that opened on the scaffold and the block.'

I quote, likewise, another passage, because I think the reader will see in it the noble earnestness of the author's character, and may partly imagine the sacrifices which this research has cost her:-

The great secret of the Elizabethan age did not lie where any superficial research could ever have discovered it. It was not left within the range of any accidental disclosure. It did not lie on the surface of any Elizabethan document. The most diligent explorers of these documents, in two centuries and a quarter, had not found it. No faintest suspicion of it had ever crossed the mind of the most recent, and clear-sighted, and able investigator of the Baconian remains. It was buried in the lowest depths of the lowest deeps of the deep Elizabethan Art; that Art which no plummet, till now, has ever sounded. It was locked with its utmost reach of traditionary cunning. It was buried in the inmost recesses of the esoteric Elizabethan learning. It was tied with a knot that had passed the scrutiny and baffled the sword of an old, suspicious, dying, military government—a knot that none could cut—a knot that must be untied.

The great secret of the Elizabethan Age was inextricably reserved by the founders of a new learning, the prophetic and more nobly gifted minds of a new and nobler race of men, for a research that should test the mind of the discoverer, and frame and subordinate it to that so sleepless and indomitable purpose of the prophetic aspiration. It was "the device" by which they undertook to live again in the ages in which their achievements and triumphs were forecast, and to come forth and rule again, not in one mind, not in the few, not in the many, but in all. "For there is no throne like that throne in the thoughts of men," which the ambition of these men climbed and compassed.

The principal works of the Elizabethan Philosophy, those in which the new method of learning was practically applied to the noblest subjects, were presented to the world in the form of AN ENIGMA. It was a form well fitted to divert inquiry, and baffle even the research of the scholar for a time; but one calculated to provoke the philosophic curiosity, and one which would inevitably command a research that could end only with the true solution. That solution was reserved for one who would recognise, at last, in the disguise of the great impersonal teacher, the disguise of a new learning. It waited for the reader who

would observe, at last, those thick-strewn scientific clues, those thick-crowding enigmas, those perpetual beckonings from the “theatre” into the judicial palace of the mind. It was reserved for the student who would recognise, at last, the mind that was seeking so perseveringly to whisper its tale of outrage, and “the secrets it was forbid.” It waited for one who would answer, at last, that philosophic challenge, and say, “Go on, I’ll follow thee!” It was reserved for one who would count years as days, for the love of the truth it hid; who would never turn back on the long road of initiation, though all “THE IDOLS” must be left behind in its stages; who would never stop until it stopped in that new cave of Apollo, where the handwriting on the wall spells anew the old Delphic motto, and publishes the word that “unties the spell.”

On this object, which she conceives so loftily, the author has bestowed the solitary and self-sustained toil of many years. The volume now before the reader, together with the historical demonstration which it pre-supposes, is the product of a most faithful and conscientious labour, and a truly heroic devotion of intellect and heart. No man or woman has ever thought or written more sincerely than the author of this book. She has given nothing less than her life to the work. And, as if for the greater trial of her constancy, her theory was divulged, some time ago, in so partial and unsatisfactory a manner—with so exceedingly imperfect a statement of its claims—as to put her at great disadvantage before the world. A single article from her pen, purporting to be the first of a series, appeared in an American Magazine; but unexpected obstacles prevented the further publication in that form, after enough had been done to assail the prejudices of the public, but far too little to gain its sympathy. Another evil followed. An English writer (in a ‘Letter to the Earl of Ellesmere,’ published within a few months past) has thought it not inconsistent with the fair-play, on which his country prides itself, to take to himself this lady’s theory, and favour the public with it as his own original conception, without allusion to the author’s prior claim. In reference to this pamphlet, she generously says:

This has not been a selfish enterprise. It is not a personal concern. It is a discovery which belongs not to an individual, and not to a people. Its fields are wide enough and rich enough for us all; and he that has no work, and whoso will, let him come and labour in them. The field is the world’s; and the world’s work henceforth is in it. So that it be known in its real comprehension, in its true relations to the weal of the world, what matters it? So that the truth, which is dearer than all the rest—which abides with us when all others leave us, dearest then—so that the truth, which is neither yours nor mine, but yours *and* mine, be known, loved, honoured, emancipated, mitred, crowned, adored--_who_ loses anything, that does not find it.’ ‘And what matters it,’ says the philosophic wisdom, speaking in the abstract, ‘what name it is proclaimed in, and what letters of the alphabet we know it by?--what matter is it, so that they *spell* the name that is *good* for ALL, and *good* for *each*,’—for that is the REAL name here?

Speaking on the author’s behalf, however, I am not entitled to imitate her magnanimity; and, therefore, hope that the writer of the pamphlet will disclaim any purpose of assuming to himself, on the ground of a slight and superficial performance, the result which she has attained at the cost of many toils and sacrifices.

And now, at length, after many delays and discouragements, the work comes forth. It had been the author’s original purpose to publish it in America; for she wished her own country to have the glory of solving the enigma of those mighty dramas, and thus adding a new and higher value to the loftiest productions of the English mind. It seemed to her most fit and desirable, that America—having received so much from England, and returned so little—should do what remained to be done towards rendering this great legacy available, as its authors meant it to be, to all future time. This purpose was frustrated; and it will be seen in what spirit she acquiesces.

The author was forced to bring it back, and contribute it to the literature of the country from which it was derived, and to which it essentially and inseparably belongs. It was written, every word of it, on English ground, in the midst of the old familiar scenes and household names, that even in our nursery songs revive

the dear ancestral memories; those “royal pursuivants” with which our mother-land still follows and retakes her own. It was written in the land of our old kings and queens, and in the land of *our own* PHILOSOPHERS and POETS also. It was written on the spot where the works it unlocks were written, and in the perpetual presence of the English mind; the mind that spoke before in the cultured few, and that speaks to-day in the cultured many. And it is now at last, after so long a time—after all, as it should be—the English press that prints it. It is the scientific English press, with those old gags (wherewith our kings and queens sought to stop it, ere they knew what it was) champed asunder, ground to powder, and with its last Elizabethan shackle shaken off, that restores, “in a better hour,” the torn and garbled science committed to it, and gives back “the bread cast on its sure waters.”



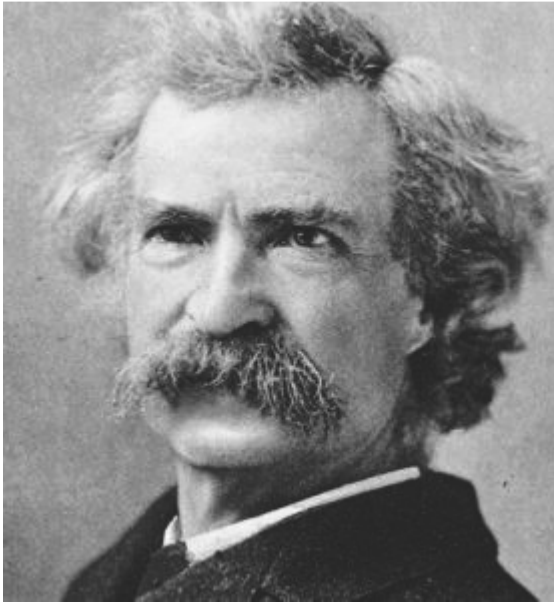
Delia Bacon 1811-1859

There remains little more for me to say. I am not the editor of this work; nor can I consider myself fairly entitled to the honor (which, if I deserved it, I should feel to be a very high as well as a perilous one) of seeing my name associated with the author's on the title-page. My object has been merely to speak a few words, which might, perhaps, serve the purpose of placing my countrywoman upon a ground of amicable understanding with the public. She has a vast preliminary difficulty to encounter. The first feeling of every reader must be one of absolute repugnance towards a person who seeks to tear out of the Anglo-Saxon heart the name which for ages it has held dearest, and to substitute another name, or names, to which the settled belief of the world has long assigned a very different position. What I claim for this work is, that the ability employed in its composition has been worthy of its great subject, and well employed for our intellectual interests, whatever judgment the public may pass upon the questions discussed.

And, after listening to the author's interpretation of the Plays, and seeing how wide a scope she assigns to them, how high a purpose, and what richness of inner meaning, the thoughtful reader will hardly return again—not wholly, at all events—to the common view of them and of their author. It is for the public to say whether my countrywoman has proved her theory. In the worst event, if she has failed, her failure will be more honorable than most people's triumphs; since it must fling upon the old tombstone, at Stratford-on-Avon, the noblest tributary wreath that has ever lain there.

4. Mark Twain and George Greenwood on Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Law

1909



Mark Twain 1835-1910

Mark Twain was a true author-skeptic, declaring that while he knew for certain that Shakespeare of Stratford had not written the plays and poems ascribed to him, he merely believed *faute de mieux* that Bacon was responsible. By the end he was as agnostic about Shakespeare as he was about God. “Who did write these Works, then? I wish I knew.”

Is Shakespeare Dead? was published in 1909, independent of the autobiography from which it was extracted, suggesting that Twain attached especial importance to it. Couched in his familiar joshing style, full of jokes and personal anecdotes, his objectives remain, as always, profoundly serious.¹ His references cut easily between his own experience as a man and literary professional and his evident familiarity with Shakespeare's works and, just as important, contemporary Shakespeare scho-

larship. He was an individual alive in his time, when thinking people were beginning to notice gaps and anomalies in all manner of traditional explanations, including the familiar Bardic story. Whitman in particular intuited the truth:

Conceiv'd out of the fullest heat and pulse of European feudalism—personifying in unparallell'd ways the mediaeval aristocracy, its towering spirit of ruthless and gigantic caste, with its own peculiar air of arrogance (no mere imitation)—only one of the “wolfish earls” so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant and knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works—works in some respects greater than anything else in recorded literature.²

Twain had recently been struck by the work of the well-known anti-Stratfordian, Sir George Greenwood, M.P. (1850-1928), and in particular his *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908). In the following extracts from Twain's book, chapters VII and VIII, Greenwood is quoted so ex-

¹A YouTube cult classic stars Keir Cutler hilariously performing *Is Shakespeare Dead?* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJ72Ew1ujlk>. For Twain's comedic seriousness, see Michael Egan: *Huckleberry Finn: Race, Class and Society* (Sussex UP, 1977).

²Walt Whitman: “What Lurks Behind Shakespeare's Historical Plays?” *November Boughs* (1889) p. 52

tensively in VIII that we may happily combine his work with Twain's for our own editorial purposes. Together they are symptomatic of a growing skepticism, especially among professional writers and intellectuals—substantial minds, such as Freud, Emerson and Henry James.³

Both Twain and Greenwood were particularly impressed by the intimate attorney-knowledge displayed by the author of *The Collected Works*. Not only did he possess a profound familiarity with Elizabethan precedents and court-room practice, but his language-use seemed distinctively molded by a lawyer's delight in puns, semantics, equivocation. When is a man not born of woman? Does Birnam Wood really move to Dunsinane?

Twain commonsensically draws on his own youthful experience as a Mississippi boatman, recalling how he slowly acquired the skills, oddities, short cuts and above all jargon of the trade, its boats-and-rope talk. It is here that Sam Clemens famously recounts the origins of his *nom-de-plume*, the cry "mark twain!" as the leadsman called two fathoms deep, measured on a marked rope.

Twain's point is that you don't pick up such language without personal experience, nor use it creatively and fluently unless its meanings and rhythms are already and readily accessible to your ear. As he was to steamboat talk, Twain argued, so Shakespeare was to Elizabethan law. The man had to have been a professional lawyer or at least one trained in the law.

Twain took the next logical step. Could Shaksper of Stratford, as he called him, have been that man? Was there any evidence in the record of his having attended law school, or spent any time around lawyers, indeed of any possibility at all of his acquiring the kind of forensic mental cast, those habits of mind and tongue, so evident in the Works?

Answering no, Twain is never more waspishly observant than when dismissing the speculation that Shaksper may have served as a lawyer's clerk. The supposed biography of the bladder-faced grain dealer in Trinity Church, he wrote, is nothing more than a few loose bones supported by gallons of speculative plaster-of-paris, like a reconstructed Brontosaurus in a museum.

If I had under my superintendence a controversy appointed to decide whether Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare or not, I believe I would place before the debaters only the one question, Was Shakespeare ever a practicing lawyer? and leave everything else out.

It is maintained that the man who wrote the plays was not merely myriad-minded, but also myriad-accomplished: that he not only knew some thousands of things about human life in all its shades and grades, and about the hundred arts and trades and crafts and professions which men busy themselves in, but that he could talk about the men and their grades and trades accurately, making no mistakes. Maybe it is so, but have the experts spoken, or is it only Tom, Dick, and

³ James even wrote a short story about it, "The Birthplace." The docent at Henley Street feels he can no longer lie about Shakespeare's phony birthplace and supposed biography.

Harry? Does the exhibit stand upon wide, and loose, and eloquent generalizing, which is not evidence, and not proof, or upon details, particulars, statistics, illustrations, demonstrations?

Experts of unchallengeable authority have testified definitely as to only one of Shakespeare's multifarious craft-equipments, so far as my recollections of Shakespeare-Bacon talk abide with me: his law-equipment. I do not remember that Wellington or Napoleon ever examined Shakespeare's battles and sieges and strategies, and then decided and established for good and all, that they were militarily flawless; I do not remember that any Nelson, or Drake or Cook ever examined his seamanship and said it showed profound and accurate familiarity with that art; I don't remember that any king or prince or duke has ever testified that Shakespeare was letter-perfect in his handling of royal court-manners and the talk and manners of aristocracies; I don't remember that any illustrious Latinist or Grecian or Frenchman or Spaniard or Italian has proclaimed him a past-master in those languages; I don't remember—well, I don't remember that there is testimony—great testimony—imposing testimony—unanswerable and unattackable testimony—as to any of Shakespeare's hundred specialties, except one: the law.

Other things change, with time, and the student cannot trace back with certainty the changes that various trades and their processes and technicalities have undergone in the long stretch of a century or two and find out what their processes and technicalities were in those early days, but with the law it is different: it is mile-stoned and documented all the way back, and the master of that wonderful trade, that complex and intricate trade, that awe-compelling trade, has competent ways of knowing whether Shakespeare-law is good law or not; and whether his law-court procedure is correct or not, and whether his legal shop-talk is the shop-talk of a veteran practitioner or only a machine-made counterfeit of it gathered from books and from occasional loiterings in Westminster.

Richard H. Dana served two years before the mast, and had every experience that falls to the lot of the sailor before the mast of our day. His sailor-talk flows from his pen with the sure touch and the ease and confidence of a person who has lived what he is talking about, not gathered it from books and random listenings. Hear him:

Having hove short, cast off the gaskets, and made the bunt of each sail fast by the jigger, with a man on each yard, at the word the whole canvas of the ship was loosed, and with the greatest rapidity possible everything was sheeted home and hoisted up, the anchor tripped and cat-headed, and the ship under headway.

Again:

The royal yards were all crossed at once, and royals and sky-sails set, and, as we had the wind free, the booms were run out, and all were aloft, active as cats, laying out on the yards and booms, reeving the studding-sail gear ; and sail after sail the captain piled upon her, until she was covered with canvas, her sails looking like a great white cloud resting upon a black speck.

Once more. A race in the Pacific:

Our antagonist was in her best trim. Being clear of the point, the breeze became stiff, and the royal-masts bent under our sails, but we would not take them in until we saw three boys spring into the rigging of the California; then they were all furled at once, but with orders to our boys to stay aloft at the top-gallant

mast-heads and loose them again at the word. It was my duty to furl the fore-royal; and while standing by to loose it again, I had a fine view of the scene. From where I stood, the two vessels seemed nothing but spars and sails, while their narrow decks, far below, slanting over by the force of the wind aloft, appeared hardly capable of supporting the great fabrics raised upon them. The California was to windward of us, and had every advantage; yet, while the breeze was stiff we held our own. As soon as it began to slacken she ranged a little ahead, and the order was given to loose the royals. In an instant the gaskets were off and the bunt dropped. "Sheet home the fore-royal!"—"Weather sheet's home!"—"Lee sheet's home!"—"Hoist away, sir!" is bawled from aloft. "Overhaul your clewlines!" shouts the mate. "Aye-aye, sir, all clear!"—"Taut leech! belay! Well the lee brace; haul taut to windward!" and the royals are set.

What would the captain of any sailing-vessel of our time say to that? He would say, "The man that wrote that didn't learn his trade out of a book, he has been there!" But would this same captain be competent to sit in judgment upon Shakespeare's seamanship, considering the changes in ships and ship-talk that have necessarily taken place, unrecorded, unremembered, and lost to history in the last three hundred years? It is my conviction that Shakespeare's sailor-talk would be Choctaw to him. For instance, from *The Tempest*:

Master. Boatswain!

Boatswain. Here, master; what cheer?

Master. Good, speak to the mariners: fall to't, yarely, or we run ourselves to ground; bestir, bestir!

[*Enter mariners.*]

Boatswain. Heigh, my hearts! cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master's whistle....Down with the topmast! yare! lower, lower! Bring her to try wi' the main course...Lay her a-hold, a-hold! Set her two courses. Off to sea again; lay her off.

That will do, for the present; let us yare a little, now, for a change.

If a man should write a book and in it make one of his characters say, "Here, devil, empty the quoins into the standing galley and the imposing stone into the hell-box; assemble the comps around the frisket and let them jeff for takes and be quick about it," I should recognize a mistake or two in the phrasing, and would know that the writer was only a printer theoretically, not practically.

I have been a quartz miner in the silver regions, a pretty hard life; I know all the palaver of that business: I know all about discovery claims and the subordinate claims; I know all about lodes, ledges, outcroppings, dips, spurs, angles, shafts, drifts, inclines, levels, tunnels, air-shafts, "horses," clay casings, granite casings; quartz mills and their batteries; arastras, and how to charge them with quicksilver and sulphate of copper; and how to clean them up, and how to reduce the resulting amalgam in the retorts, and how to cast the bullion into pigs; and finally I know how to screen tailings, and also how to hunt for something less robust to do, and find it. I know the argot of the quartz-mining and milling industry familiarly; and so whenever Bret Harte introduces that industry into a story, the first time one of his miners opens his mouth I recognize from his phrasing that Harte got the phrasing by listening like Shakespeare—I mean the Stratford one—not by experience. No one can talk the quartz dialect correctly without learning it with pick and shovel and drill and fuse.

I have been a surface-miner of gold and I know all its mysteries, and the dialect that belongs with them; and whenever Harte introduces that industry into a story I know by the phrasing of his characters that neither he nor they have ever served that trade.

I have been a “pocket” miner, a sort of gold mining not findable in any but one little spot in the world, so far as I know. I know how, with horn and water, to find the trail of a pocket and trace it step by step and stage by stage up the mountain to its source, and find the compact little nest of yellow metal reposing in its secret home under the ground. I know the language of that trade, that capricious trade, that fascinating buried treasure trade, and can catch any writer who tries to use it without having learned it by the sweat of his brow and the labor of his hands.

I know several other trades and the argot that goes with them ; and whenever a person tries to talk the talk peculiar to any of them without having learned it at its source I can trap him always before he gets far on his road.

And so, as I have already remarked, if I were required to superintend a Bacon- Shakespeare controversy, I would narrow the matter down to a single question — the only one, so far as the previous controversies have informed me, concerning which illustrious experts of unimpeachable competency have testified: Was the author of Shakespeare’s Works a lawyer?—a lawyer deeply read and of limitless experience? I would put aside the guesses, and surmises, and perhapses, and might-have-beens, and could-have-beens, and must-have-beens, and we-are-justified-in-presumings, and the rest of those vague specters and shadows and indefinitenesses, and stand or fall, win or lose, by the verdict rendered by the jury upon that single question. If the verdict was Yes, I should feel quite convinced that the Stratford Shakespeare, the actor, manager, and trader who died so obscure, so forgotten, so destitute of even village consequence that sixty years afterward no fellow-citizen and friend of his later days remembered to tell anything about him, did not write the Works.

Chapter XIII of *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* bears the heading “Shakespeare as a Lawyer,” and comprises some fifty pages of expert testimony, with comments thereon, and I will copy the first nine, as being sufficient all by themselves, as it seems to me, to settle the question which I have conceived to be the master-key to the Shakespeare-Bacon puzzle.

[Chapter Eight]

Shakespeare as a Lawyer ⁴

The Plays and Poems of Shakespeare supply ample evidence that their author not only had a very extensive and accurate knowledge of law, but that he was well acquainted with the manners and customs of members of the Inns of Court and with legal life generally.

While novelists and dramatists are constantly making mistakes as to the laws of marriage, of wills, and inheritance, to Shakespeare’s law, lavishly as he expounds it, there can neither be demurrer, nor bill of exceptions, nor writ of error.

Such was the testimony borne by one of the most distinguished lawyers of the nineteenth century who was raised to the high office of Lord Chief Justice in 1850, and subsequently became Lord

⁴ From Chapter XIII of *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. [Twain’s footnote.]

Chancellor. Its weight will, doubtless, be more appreciated by lawyers than by laymen, for only lawyers know how impossible it is for those who have not served an apprenticeship to the law to avoid displaying their ignorance if they venture to employ legal terms and to discuss legal doctrines. "There is nothing so dangerous," wrote Lord Campbell, "as for one not of the craft to tamper with our freemasonry." A layman is certain to betray himself by using some expression which a lawyer would never employ. Mr. Sidney Lee himself supplies us with an example of this. He writes (p. 164):

On February 15, 1609, Shakespeare...obtained judgment from a jury against Addenbroke for the payment of No. 6, and No. 1. 55. od. costs.

Now a lawyer would never have spoken of obtaining "judgment from a jury," for it is the function of a jury not to deliver judgment (which is the prerogative of the court), but to find a verdict on the facts. The error is, indeed, a venial one, but it is just one of those little things which at once enable a lawyer to know if the writer is a layman or "one of the craft."

But when a layman ventures to plunge deeply into legal subjects, he is naturally apt to make an exhibition of his incompetence. "Let a non-professional man, however acute," writes Lord Campbell again, "presume to talk law, or to draw illustrations from legal science in discussing other subjects, and he will speedily fall into laughable absurdity."

And what does the same high authority say about Shakespeare? He had "a deep technical knowledge of the law," and an easy familiarity with "some of the most abstruse proceedings in English jurisprudence." And again: "Whenever he indulges this propensity he uniformly lays down good law." Of *Henry IV*, Part 2, he says: "If Lord Eldon could be supposed to have written the play, I do not see how he could be chargeable with having forgotten any of his law while writing it." Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke speak of "the marvelous intimacy which he displays with legal terms, his frequent adoption of them in illustration, and his curiously-technical knowledge of their form and force."

Malone, himself a lawyer, wrote: "His knowledge of legal terms is not merely such as might be acquired by the casual observation of even his all-comprehending mind; it has the appearance of technical skill." Another lawyer and well-known Shakespearean, Richard Grant White, says:

No dramatist of the time, not even Beaumont, who was the younger son of a judge of the Common Pleas, and who after studying in the Inns of Court abandoned law for the drama, used legal phrases with Shakespeare's readiness and exactness. And the significance of this fact is heightened by another, that it is only to the language of the law that he exhibits this inclination. The phrases peculiar to other occupations serve him on rare occasions by way of description, comparison or illustration, generally when something in the scene suggests them, but legal phrases flow from his pen as part of his vocabulary, and parcel of his thought. Take the word 'purchase' for instance, which, in ordinary use, means to acquire by giving value, but applies in law to all legal modes of obtaining property except by inheritance or descent, and in this peculiar sense the word occurs five times in Shakespeare's thirty-four plays, and only in one single instance in the fifty-four plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. It has been suggested that it was in attendance upon the courts in London that he picked up his legal vocabulary. But this supposition not only fails to account for Shakespeare's peculiar freedom and exactness in the use of that phraseology, it does not even place him in the way of learning those terms his use of which is most remarkable, which are not such as he would have heard at ordinary proceedings at nisi prius, but such as refer to the tenure or transfer of real property, 'fine and recovery,' 'statutes merchant,' 'purchase,' 'indenture,' 'tenure,' 'double voucher,' 'fee simple,' 'fee

farm,' 'remainder,' 'reversion,' 'forfeiture,' etc. This conveyancer's jargon could not have been picked up by hanging round the courts of law in London two hundred and fifty years ago, when suits as to the title of real property were comparatively rare. And beside, Shakespeare uses his law just as freely in his first plays, written in his first London years, as in those produced at a later period. Just as exactly, too; for the correctness and propriety with which these terms are introduced have compelled the admiration of a Chief Justice and a Lord Chancellor.'

Senator Davis wrote:

We seem to have something more than a sciolist's temerity of indulgence in the terms of an unfamiliar art. No legal solecisms will be found. The abstrusest elements of the common law are impressed into a disciplined service. Over and over again, where such knowledge is unexampled in writers unlearned in the law, Shakespeare appears in perfect possession of it. In the law of real property, its rules of tenure and descents, its entails, its fines and recoveries, their vouchers and double vouchers, in the procedure of the Courts, the method of bringing writs and arrests, the nature of actions, the rules of pleading, the law of escapes and of contempt of court, in the principles of evidence, both technical and philosophical, in the distinction between the temporal and spiritual tribunals, in the law of attainder and forfeiture, in the requisites of a valid marriage, in the presumption of legitimacy, in the learning of the law of prerogative, in the inalienable character of the Crown, this mastership appears with surprising authority.

To all this testimony (and there is much more which I have not cited) may now be added that of a great lawyer of our own times, viz., Sir James Plaisted Wilde, Q.C. 1855, created a Baron of the Exchequer in 1860, promoted to the post of Judge-Ordinary and Judge of the Courts of Probate and Divorce in 1863, and better known to the world as Lord Penzance, to which dignity he was raised in 1869. Lord Penzance, as all lawyers know, and as the late Mr. Inderwick, K.C., has testified, was one of the first legal authorities of his day, famous for his "remarkable grasp of legal principles," ' and " endowed by nature with a remarkable facility for marshalling facts, and for a clear expression of his views."

Lord Penzance speaks of Shakespeare's

perfect familiarity with not only the principles, axioms, and maxims, but the technicalities of English law, a knowledge so perfect and intimate that he was never incorrect and never at fault. ... The mode in which this knowledge was pressed into service on all occasions to express his meaning and illustrate his thoughts, was quite unexampled. He seems to have had a special pleasure in his complete and ready mastership of it in all its branches. As manifested in the plays, this legal knowledge and learning had therefore a special character which places it on a wholly different footing from the rest of the multifarious knowledge which is exhibited in page after page of the plays. At every turn and point at which the author required a metaphor, simile, or illustration, his mind ever turned first to the law. He seems almost to have thought in legal phrases, the commonest of legal expressions were ever at the end of his pen in description or illustration. That he should have descanted in lawyer language when he had a forensic subject in hand, such as Shylock's bond, was to be expected, but the knowledge of law in 'Shakespeare' was exhibited in a far different manner: it protruded itself on all occasions, appropriate or inappropriate, and mingled itself with strains of thought widely divergent from forensic subjects.

Again:

To acquire a perfect familiarity with legal principles, and an accurate and ready use of the technical terms and phrases not only of the conveyancer's office but of the pleader's chambers and the Courts at Westminster, nothing short of employment in some career involving constant contact with legal questions and

general legal work would be requisite. But a continuous employment involves the element of time, and time was just what the manager of two theatres had not at his disposal. In what portion of Shakespeare's (i.e. Shakspeare's) career would it be possible to point out that time could be found for the interposition of a legal employment in the chambers or offices of practising lawyers?

Stratfordians, as is well known, casting about for some possible explanation of Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of law, have made the suggestion that Shakespeare might, conceivably, have been a clerk in an attorney's office before he came to London. Mr. Collier wrote to Lord Campbell to ask his opinion as to the probability of this being true. His answer was as follows:

You require us to believe implicitly a fact, of which, if true, positive and irrefragable evidence in his own handwriting might have been forthcoming to establish it. Not having been actually enrolled as an attorney, neither the records of the local court at Stratford nor of the superior Courts at Westminster would present his name as being concerned in any suit as an attorney, but it might reasonably have been expected that there would be deeds or wills witnessed by him still extant, and after a very diligent search none such can be discovered.

Upon this Lord Penzance comments:

It cannot be doubted that Lord Campbell was right in this. No young man could have been at work in an attorney's office without being called upon continually to act as a witness, and in many other ways leaving traces of his work and name." There is not a single fact or incident in all that is known of Shakespeare, even by rumor or tradition, which supports this notion of a clerkship. And after much argument and surmise which has been indulged in on this subject, we may, I think, safely put the notion on one side, for no less an authority than Mr. Grant White says finally that the idea of his having been clerk to an attorney has been "blown to pieces."

It is altogether characteristic of Mr. Churton Collins that he, nevertheless, adopts this exploded myth:

That Shakespeare was in early life employed as a clerk in an attorney's office, may be correct. At Stratford there was by royal charter a Court of Record sitting every fortnight, with six attorneys, beside the town clerk, belonging to it, and it is certainly not straining probability to suppose that the young Shakespeare may have had employment in one of them. There is, it is true, no tradition to this effect, but such traditions as we have about Shakespeare's occupation between the time of leaving school and going to London are so loose and baseless that no confidence can be placed in them. It is, to say the least, more probable that he was in an attorney's office than that he was a butcher killing calves 'in a high style,' and making speeches over them.

This is a charming specimen of Stratfordian argument. There is, as we have seen, a very old tradition that Shakespeare was a butcher's apprentice. John Dowdall, who made a tour in Warwickshire in 1693, testifies to it as coming from the old clerk who showed him over the church, and it is unhesitatingly accepted as true by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps. (Vol. I, p. 11, and see Vol. II, p. 71, 72.) Mr. Sidney Lee sees nothing improbable in it, and it is supported by Aubrey, who must have written his account some time before 1680, when his manuscript was completed. Of the attorney's-clerk hypothesis, on the other hand, there is not the faintest vestige of a tradition. It has been evolved out of the fertile imaginations of embarrassed Stratfordians, seeking for some explanation of the Stratford rustic's marvelous acquaintance with law and legal terms and legal life. But Mr. Churton Collins has not the least hesitation in throwing over the tradition which has the warrant of antiquity and setting up in its stead this ridiculous invention, for which not only is

there no shred of positive evidence, but which, as Lord Campbell and Lord Penzance point out, is really put out of court by the negative evidence, since “no young man could have been at work in an attorney’s office without being called upon continually to act as a witness, and in many other ways leaving traces of his work and name.”

And as Mr. Edwards further points out, since the day when Lord Campbell’s book was published (between forty and fifty years ago), “every old deed or will, to say nothing of other legal papers, dated during the period of William Shakespeare’s youth, has been scrutinized over half a dozen shires, and not one signature of the young man has been found.”

Moreover, if Shakespeare had served as clerk in an attorney’s office it is clear that he must have so served for a considerable period in order to have gained (if indeed it is credible that he could have so gained) his remarkable knowledge of law. Can we then for a moment believe that, if this had been so, tradition would have been absolutely silent on the matter? That Dowdall’s old clerk, over eighty years of age, should have never heard of it (though he was sure enough about the butcher’s apprentice), and that all the other ancient witnesses should be in similar ignorance!

But such are the methods of Stratfordian controversy. Tradition is to be scouted when it is found inconvenient, but cited as irrefragable truth when it suits the case. Shakespeare of Stratford was the author of the Plays and Poems, but the author of the Plays and Poems could not have been a butcher’s apprentice. Away, therefore, with tradition. But the author of the Plays and Poems must have had a very large and a very accurate knowledge of the law. Therefore, Shakespeare of Stratford must have been an attorney’s clerk! The method is simplicity itself. By similar reasoning Shakespeare has been made a country schoolmaster, a soldier, a physician, a printer, and a good many other things beside, according to the inclination and the exigencies of the commentator. It would not be in the least surprising to find that he was studying Latin as a schoolmaster and law in an attorney’s office at the same time.

However, we must do Mr. Collins the justice of saying that he has fully recognized, what is indeed tolerably obvious, that Shakespeare must have had a sound legal training. “It may, of course, be urged,” he writes,

that Shakespeare’s knowledge of medicine, and particularly that branch of it which related to morbid psychology, is equally remarkable, and that no one has ever contended that he was a physician. [Here Mr. Collins is wrong; that contention also has been put forward.] It may be urged that his acquaintance with the technicalities of other crafts and callings, notably of marine and military affairs, was also extraordinary, and yet no one has suspected him of being a sailor or a soldier. [Wrong again. Why even Messrs. Garnett and Gosse “suspect” that he was a soldier!] This may be conceded, but the concession hardly furnishes an analogy. To these and all other subjects he recurs occasionally, and in season, but with reminiscences of the law his memory, as is abundantly clear, was simply saturated. In season and out of season now in manifest, now in recondite application, he presses it into the service of expression and illustration. At least a third of his myriad metaphors are derived from it. It would indeed be difficult to find a single act in any of his dramas, nay, in some of them a single scene, the diction and imagery of which is not colored by it.

Much of his law may have been acquired from three books easily accessible to him, namely Tottell’s *Precedents* (1572), Pulton’s *Statutes* (1578), and Fraunce’s *Lawier’s Logike* (1588), works with which he certainly seems to have been familiar; but much of it could only have come from one who had an intimate acquaintance with legal proceedings. We quite agree with Mr. Castle that Shakespeare’s legal knowledge

is not what could have been picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance at the Courts, at a Pleader's Chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the Bench and Bar.

This is excellent. But what is Mr. Collins' explanation?

Perhaps the simplest solution of the problem is to accept the hypothesis that in early life he was in an attorney's office, that he there contracted a love for the law which never left him, that as a young man in London he continued to study or dabble in it for his amusement, to stroll in leisure hours into the Courts, and to frequent the society of lawyers. On no other supposition is it possible to explain the attraction which the law evidently had for him, and his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tripping.

A lame conclusion. "No other supposition," indeed! Yes, there is another, and a very obvious supposition, namely, that Shakespeare was himself a lawyer, well versed in his trade, versed in all the ways of the courts, and living in close intimacy with judges and members of the Inns of Court.

One is, of course, thankful that Mr. Collins has appreciated the fact that Shakespeare must have had a sound legal training, but I may be forgiven if I do not attach quite so much importance to his pronouncements on this branch of the subject as to those of Malone, Lord Campbell, Judge Holmes, Mr. Castle, K.C., Lord Penzance, Mr. Grant White, and other lawyers, who have expressed their opinion on the matter of Shakespeare's legal acquirements. . . .

Here it may, perhaps, be worth while to quote again from Lord Penzance's book as to the suggestion that Shakespeare had somehow or other managed "to acquire a perfect familiarity with legal principles, and an accurate and ready use of the technical terms and phrases, not only of the conveyancer's office, but of the pleader's chambers and the courts at Westminster." This, as Lord Penzance points out, "would require nothing short of employment in some career involving constant contact with legal questions and general legal work." But "in what portion of Shakespeare's career would it be possible to point out that time could be found for the interposition of a legal employment in the chambers or offices of practising lawyers? ... It is beyond doubt that at an early period he was called upon to abandon his attendance at school and assist his father, and was soon after, at the age of sixteen, bound apprentice to a trade. While under the obligation of this bond he could not have pursued any other employment. Then he leaves Stratford and comes to London. He has to provide himself with the means of a livelihood, and this he did in some capacity at the theatre. No one doubts that. The holding of horses is scouted by many, and perhaps with justice, as being unlikely and certainly unproved; but whatever the nature of his employment was at the theatre, there is hardly room for the belief that it could have been other than continuous, for his progress there was so rapid. Ere long he had been taken into the company as an actor, and was soon spoken of as a "Johannes Factotum." His rapid accumulation of wealth speaks volumes for the constancy and activity of his services. One fails to see when there could be a break in the current of his life at this period of it, giving room or opportunity for legal or indeed any other employment.

"In 1589," says Knight, "we have undeniable evidence that he had not only a casual engagement, was not only a salaried servant, as many players were, but was a shareholder in the company of the Queen's players with other shareholders below him on the list."

This (1589) would be within two years after his arrival in London, which is placed by White and Halliwell-Phillipps about the year 1587. The difficulty in supposing that, starting with a state of ignorance in 1587, when he is supposed to have come to London, he was induced to enter upon a course of most extended study and mental culture, is almost insuperable. Still it was physically possible, provided always that he could have had access to the needful books. But this legal training seems to me to stand on a different footing. It is not only unaccountable and incredible, but it is actually negated by the known facts of his career.

Lord Penzance refers to the fact that “by 1592 (according to the best authority, Mr. Grant White) several of the plays had been written. *The Comedy of Errors* in 1589, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in 1589, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in 1589 or 1590, and so forth, and then asks,

with this catalogue of dramatic work on hand...was it possible that he could have taken a leading part in the management and conduct of two theatres and, if Mr. Phillipps is to be relied upon, taken his share in the performances of the provincial tours of his company, and at the same time devoted himself to the study of the law in all its branches so efficiently as to make himself complete master of its principles and practice, and saturate his mind with all its most technical terms?

I have cited this passage from Lord Penzance’s book, because it lay before me, and I had already quoted from it on the matter of Shakespeare’s legal knowledge; but other writers have still better set forth the insuperable difficulties, as they seem to me, which beset the idea that Shakespeare might have found time in some unknown period of early life, amid multifarious other occupations, for the study of classics, literature and law, to say nothing of languages and a few other matters. Lord Penzance further asks his readers:

Did you ever meet with or hear of an instance in which a young man in this country gave himself up to legal studies and engaged in legal employments, which is the only way of becoming familiar with the technicalities of practice, unless with the view of practicing in that profession? I do not believe that it would be easy, or indeed possible, to produce an instance in which the law has been seriously studied in all its branches, except as a qualification for practice in the legal profession.

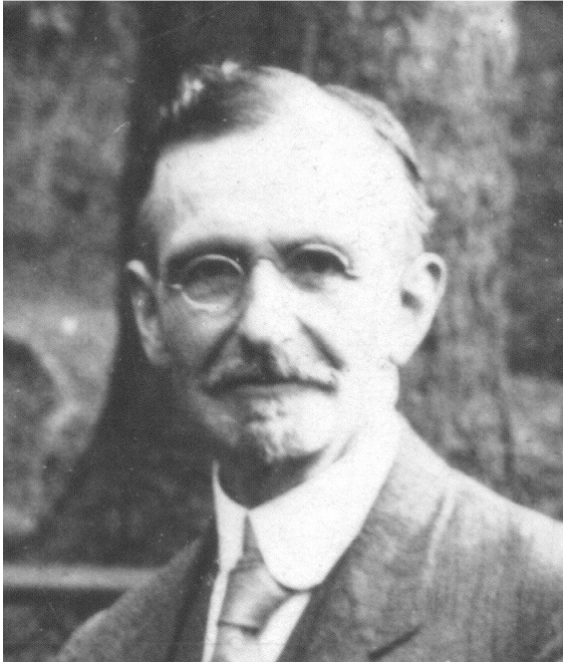
This testimony is so strong, so direct, so authoritative; and so uncheapened, unwatered by guesses, and surmises, and maybe-so’s, and might-have-beens, and could-have-beens, and must-have-beens, and the rest of that ton of plaster-of-paris out of which the biographers have built the colossal brontosaurus which goes by the Stratford actor’s name, that it quite convinces me that the man who wrote Shakespeare’s Works knew all about law and lawyers. Also, that that man could not have been the Stratford Shakespeare—and wasn’t.

Who did write these Works, then?

I wish I knew.

5. J. Thomas Looney Discovers Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford

1920



J.T. Looney 1870-1944

J. Thomas Looney's *'Shakespeare' Identified in Edward De Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. (London: C. Palmer, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1920) is the founding document of the modern Oxfor-dian movement. While there is no ignoring the author's Manx name, and no conventional scholar ever does, it is no more wry than Freud (joy) or Newton (a fig) or Marilyn vos Savant (world's highest IQ).

Looney's story, 1870-1944, is well known. As a Shakespeare teacher he gradually became convinced, like Twain (No. 4, above), that the Works' traditional creation myth could not withstand examination. In 1922 he joined with Sir George Greenwood (also 4) to establish The Shakespeare Fellowship. Through it Looney acquired a number of fellow-travelers and supporters, among them Sigmund Freud himself.¹

Two other supporters, Percy Allen and B. M. Ward, later developed the so-called "Prince Tudor" theory, which, in its most elaborate form claims that Oxford was "really" Queen Elizabeth I's secret son by Seymour, and that later he, meaning Oxford, had an incestuous relationship with her too. The result was Henry Wriothesley, or the "Mr W.H" of the sonnets (an unproved assertion rarely queried). In order to protect his son's life following his criminal involvement in the Essex rebellion of 1601, Oxford, that is, Shakespeare, agreed to have his authorship of the world's greatest dramatic poetry concealed forever.

¹ Freud: "I no longer believe that William Shakespeare the actor from Stratford was the author of the works that have been ascribed to him."— *Autobiographical Study* (1927), 130. "It is undeniably painful to all of us that even now we do not know who was the author of the Comedies, Tragedies and Sonnets of Shakespeare, whether it was in fact the untutored son of the provincial citizen of Stratford, who attained a modest position as an actor in London"— Speech accepting the Goethe Prize, 1930. (Schoenbaum: *Shakespeare's Lives* (1970) 609.

Most Oxfordians reject this ridiculous and completely undocumented soap opera but its adherents persist, as they have a right to do. They point to the Sonnets which, if read their way, are not about homosexual feelings at all, but the love of a noble father protecting his son's claim to the throne. The notion was given some currency by the recent historically ludicrous movie, *Anonymous* (2012-13).

We may note that Looney himself was strongly opposed to the "Prince Tudor" notion. It was "extravagant & improbable" and "likely to bring the whole cause into ridicule." These observations have proved to be uncomfortably prophetic.

Looney's historic insight was that, given the evidence, the conclusion that the Stratford grain-dealer wrote the plays was a giant *non sequitur*, a syllogism desperately searching for real-world premises. The Works clearly implied a writer of uncommon intelligence, vast education and social experience. He was a continental traveler (especially in Italy), and a scholar of considerable classical learning (including much Latin and more Greek and even demotic French). A first-rate historian, he meticulously read the sources available to him, refracted through his evident familiarity with Elizabeth I's court and its politics. He appears experienced in aristocratic ways and pastimes, including war in all its shades, from cowardice and treachery to heroism. He knows all about settling an iron harness on ones back, and being hoist upon a charger, and shields, and weaponry, and tournaments, and trials by combat. He knows about aristocratic pastimes such as bowls, falconry, royal tennis and music played upon rare instruments. He has had some military experience on both land and sea, and knows the law like a professional. He was a recognized poet with connections to the drama.

Looney set Shaksper aside and looked for a contemporary candidate who fit these criteria. He found who was looking for in Edward de Vere, the seventeenth earl of Oxford.

The following extracts from '*Shakespeare' Identified* are Chapter IV, "The Author—Special Characteristics," Chapter VI, "The Conditions Fulfilled," and Chapter VIII, "Conclusion."



**Edward de Vere
Seventeenth Earl of Oxford
1550-1604**

Chapter IV The Author—Special Characteristics

Our object in the last chapter being to form a conception of some of the broader features of the life and character of Shakespeare,² our present object must be to view the writings at closer quarters, and with greater attention to details so as to deduce, if possible, some of his more distinctive characteristics.

It is hardly necessary to insist at the present day that Shakespeare has preserved for all time, in living human characters, much of what was best worth remembering and retaining in the social relationship of the Feudal order of the Middle Ages. Whatever conclusion we may have to come to about his religion, it is undeniable that, from the social and political point of view, Shakespeare is essentially a medievalist. The following sentence from Carlyle may be taken as representative of much that might be quoted from several writers bearing in the same direction:

As Dante the Italian man was sent into our world to embody musically the Religion of the Middle Ages, the Religion of our Modern Europe, its Inner Life; so Shakespeare we may say embodies for us the Outer Life of our Europe as developed then, its chivalries, courtesies, humours, ambitions, what practical way of thinking, acting, looking at the world, men then had.

When, therefore, we find that the great Shakespearean plays were written at a time when men were reveling in what they considered to be a newly-found liberation from Medievalism, it is evident that Shakespeare was one whose sympathies, and probably his antecedents, linked him on more closely to the old order than to the new: not the kind of man we should expect to rise from the lower middle-class population of the towns. Whether as a lord or a dependent we should expect to find him one who saw life habitually from the standpoint of Feudal relationships in which he had been born and bred: and in view of what has been said of his education it would, of course, be as lord rather than as a dependent that we should expect to meet him.

It might be, however, that he was only linked to Feudalism by cherished family traditions; a surviving representative, maybe, of some decayed family. A close inspection of his work, however, reveals a more intimate personal connection with aristocracy than would be furnished by mere family tradition. Kings and queens, earls and countesses, knights and ladies move on and off his stage "as to the manner born." They are no mere tinsel models representing mechanically the class to which they belong, but living men and women. It is rather his ordinary "citizens", that are the automata walking woodenly on to the stage to speak for their class. His "lower-orders" never display that virile dignity and largeness of character which poets like Burns, who know the class from within, portray in their writings. Even Scott comes much nearer to truth in this matter than does Shakespeare. It is, therefore, not merely his power of representing royalty and the nobility in vital, passionate characters, but his failure to do the same in respect to other classes that marks

² Listed under fn 3 below.—Ed.

Shakespeare as a member of the higher aristocracy. The defects of the playwright become in this instance more illuminating and instructive than do his qualities. Genius may undoubtedly enable a man to represent with some fidelity classes to which he does not belong; it will hardly at the same time weaken his power of representing truly his own class. In a great dramatic artist we demand universality of power within his province; but he shows that catholicity, not by representing human society in all its forms and phases, but by depicting our common human nature in the entire range of its multiple and complex forces; and he does this best when he shows us that human nature at work in the classes with which he is most intimate. The suggestion of an aristocratic author for the plays is, therefore, the simple common sense of the situation, and is no more in opposition to modern democratic tendencies, as one writer loosely hints, than the belief that William Shakspeare was indebted to aristocratic patrons and participated in the enclosure of common lands.

An aristocratic outlook upon life marks the plays of other dramatists of the time besides Shakespeare. These were known, however, in most cases to have been university men, with a pronounced contempt for the particular class to which William Shakspeare of Stratford belonged. It is a curious fact, however, that a writer like Creizenach, who seems never to doubt the Stratfordian view, nevertheless recognizes that "Shakespeare" was more purely and truly aristocratic in his outlook than were the others. In a word, the plays which are recognized as having the most distinct marks of aristocracy about them, are supposed to have been produced by the playwright furthest removed from aristocracy in his origin and antecedents.

We feel entitled, therefore, to claim for Shakespeare high social rank, and even a close proximity to royalty itself.

Assuming him to have been an Englishman of the higher aristocracy, we turn now to these parts of his writings that may be said to deal with his own phase of life, namely, his English historical plays, to seek for distinctive traces of position and personality. Putting aside the greater part of the plays *Henry VI*, parts 1 and 2, as not being from Shakespeare's pen, and also the first acts of *Henry VI*, part 3, for the same reason, we may say that he deals mainly with the troubled period between the upheaval in the reign of Richard II and the ending of the Wars of the Roses by the downfall of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. The outstanding feature of this work is his pronounced sympathy with the Lancastrian cause. Even the play of *Richard II*, which shows a measure of sympathy with the king whom the Lancastrians ousted, is full of Lancastrian partialities.

"Shakespeare" had no sympathy with revolutionary movements and the overturning of established governments. Usurpation of sovereignty would, therefore, be repugnant to him, and his aversion is forcibly expressed in the play; but Henry of Lancaster is represented as merely concerned with claiming his rights, desiring to uphold the authority of the crown, but driven by the injustice and perversity of Richard into an antagonism he strove to avoid. Finally, it is the erratic willfulness of the king, coupled with Henry's belief that the king had voluntarily abdicated, that induces Bolingbroke to accept the throne. In a word, the play of *Richard II* is a kind of dramatic *apologia* for the Lancastrians. Then comes the glorification of Prince Hal, "Shakespeare's" historic hero. Henry VI is the victim of misfortunes and machinations, and is handled with great tenderness, and respect. The play of *Richard III* lays bare the internal discord of the Yorkist faction, the downfall and destruction of the Yorkist arch-villain, and the triumph of Henry Richmond, the representative of the House of Lancaster, who had received the nomination and benediction of

Henry VI. We might naturally expect, therefore, to find Shakespeare a member of some family with distinct Lancastrian leanings.

Having turned our attention to the different classes of plays, we are again faced with the question of his Italianism. Not only are we impressed by the large number of plays with an Italian setting or derived from Italian sources, but we feel that these plays carry us to Italy in a way that "Hamlet" never succeeds in carrying us to Denmark, nor his French plays in carrying us to France. Even in *Hamlet* he seems almost to go out of his way to drag in a reference to Italy. Those who know Italy and are familiar with the *Merchant of Venice* tell us that there are clear indications that Shakespeare knew Venice and Milan personally. However that may be, it is impossible for those who have had, at any time, an interest in nothing more than the language and literature of Italy, to resist the feeling that there is thrown about these plays an Italian atmosphere suggestive of one who knew and felt attracted towards the country. Everything bespeaks an Italian enthusiast.

Going still more closely into detail, it has often been observed that Shakespeare's interest in animals is seldom that of the naturalist, almost invariably that of the sportsman; and some of the supporters of the Stratfordian tradition have sought to establish a connection between this fact and the poaching of William Shakspeare. When, however, we look closely into the references, we are struck with his easy familiarity with all the terms relating to the chase. Take Shakespeare's entire sportsman's vocabulary, find out the precise significance of each unusual term, and the reader will probably get a more distinct vision of the sporting pastimes of the aristocracy of that day than he would get in any other way. Add to this all the varied vocabulary relating to hawks and falconry, observe the insistence with which similes, metaphors and illustrations drawn from the chase and hawking appear throughout his work, and it becomes, impossible to resist the belief that he was a man who had at one time found his recreation and delight in these aristocratic pastimes.

His keen susceptibility to the influence of music is another characteristic that frequently meets us; and most people will agree that the whole range of English literature may be searched in vain for passages that more accurately or more fittingly describe the charm and power of music than do certain lines in the pages of Shakespeare. The entire passage on music in the final act of *Merchant of Venice* beginning "Look how the floor of heaven," right on to the closing words, "Let no such man be trusted," is itself music, and is probably as grand pæon in honor of music as can be found in any language.

Nothing could well be clearer in itself, nor more at variance with what is known of the man William Shakspeare than the dramatist's attitude towards money. It is the man who lends money gratis, and so "pulls down the rate of usance" in Venice, that is the hero of the play just mentioned. His friend is the incorrigible spendthrift and borrower Bassanio, who has "disabled his estate by showing a more swelling port than his faint means would grant continuance," and who at last repairs his broken fortunes by marriage. Almost every reference to money and purses is of the loosest description, and, by implication, teach an improvidence that would soon involve any man's financial affairs in complete chaos. It is the arch-villain, Iago, who urges "put money in thy purse," and the contemptible politician, Polonius, who gives the careful advice "neither a borrower nor a lender be"; whilst the money-grubbing Shylock, hoist with his own petard, is the villain whose circumvention seems to fill the writer with an absolute joy.

It ought not to surprise us if the author himself turned out to be one who had felt the grip of the money-lender, rather than a man like the Stratford Shakspeare, who, after he had himself become prosperous, prosecuted others for the recovery of petty sums.

Of the Stratford man, Pope asserts that “Gain not glory winged his roving flight.” And Sir Sidney Lee amplifies this by saying that “his literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters.” Yet in one of his early plays (*Henry IV*, part 2) “Shakespeare” expresses himself thus:

How quickly nature falls into revolt
 When gold becomes her object.
 For this the foolish over-careful fathers
 Have broke their sleep with thoughts, their brains with care,
 Their bones with industry;
 For this they have engrossed and piled up
 The canker'd heaps of strange achieved gold.

From its setting the passage is evidently the expression of the writer's own thought rather than an element of the dramatization.

Finally we have, again in an early play, his great hero of tragic love, Romeo, exclaiming:

There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,
 Doing more murders in this loathsome world
 Than these poor compounds.

In a word, the Stratfordian view requires us to write our great dramatist down as a hypocrite. The attitude of William Shakspeare to money matters may have had about it all the “sobriety of personal aims and sanity of mental attitude” claimed for it. In which case, the more clearly he had represented his own attitude in his works the greater would have been their fidelity to objective fact. Money is a social institution, created by the genius of the human race to facilitate the conduct of life; and, under normal conditions, it is entitled to proper attention and respect. Under given conditions, however, it may so imperil the highest human interests, as to justify an intense reaction against it, and even to call for repudiation and contempt from those moral guides, amongst whom we include the great poets, who are concerned with the higher creations of man's intellectual and moral nature. Such, we judge, was the dramatist's attitude to money.

The points treated so far have been somewhat on the surface; and most, if not all, might be found adequately supported by other writers. There are, however, two other matters on which it would be well to have Shakespeare's attitude defined, if such were possible, before proceeding to the next stage of the enquiry. These are his mental attitude towards Woman, and his relation to Catholicism.

Ruskin's treatment of the former point in “Sesame and Lilies” is well known, but not altogether convincing. He, and others who adopt the same line of thought, seem not sufficiently to discriminate between what comes as a kind of aura from the medieval chivalries and what is distinctly personal. Moreover, the business of a dramatist being to represent every variety of human charac-

ter, it must be doubtful whether any characterization represents his views as a whole, or whether, indeed, it may not only represent a kind of utopian idealism. Some deference, too, must be paid by a playwright to the mind and requirements of his contemporary public; and the literature of the days of Queen Elizabeth does certainly attest a respectful treatment of Woman at that period. In quotations from Shakespeare on this theme, however, one is more frequently met with suggestions of Woman's frailty and changeableness. In his greatest play, *Hamlet*, there are but two women; one weak in character, the other weak in intellect, and Hamlet trusts neither.

Shakespeare, however, is a writer of other things besides dramas. He has left us a large number of sonnets, and the sonnet, possibly more than any other form of composition, has been the vehicle for the expression of the most intimate thoughts and feelings of poets. Almost infallibly, one might say, do a man's sonnets directly reveal his soul. The sonnets of "Shakespeare," especially, have a ring of reality about them quite inconsistent with the fanciful non-biographical interpretation which Stratfordianism would attach to them. Examining, then, these sonnets, we find that there are, in fact, two sets of them. By far the larger and more important set embracing no less than one hundred and twenty-six out of a total of one hundred and fifty-four, is addressed to a young man, and express a tenderness which is probably without parallel in the recorded expressions of [emotional attachment of one man to another. At the same time there occurs in this very set the following reference to woman:

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling.

The second set of sonnets, comprising only twenty-eight, as against one hundred and twenty-six in the first set, is probably the most painful for Shakespeare admirers to read, of all that "Shakespeare" has written. It is the expression of an intensely passionate love for some woman; but love of a kind which cannot be accurately described otherwise than as morbid emotion; a combination of affection and bitterness; tenderness, without a touch of faith or of true admiration.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which, like two spirits, do suggest me still.
The better angel is a man right fair.
The worser spirit, a woman, coloured ill.

In loving thee (the woman) thou knowest I am foresworn, [...]
And all my honest faith in thee is lost.

I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell and dark as night.

Whether this mistrust was constitutional or the outcome of unfortunate experiences is irrelevant to our present purpose. The fact of its existence is what matters. Whilst, then, we have comparatively so little bearing on the subject, and that little of such a nature, we shall not be guilty of over-statement if we say that though he was capable of great affection, and had a high sense of

the ideal in womanhood, his faith in the women with whom he was directly associated was weak, and his relationship towards them far from perfect.

To deduce the dramatist's religious point of view from his plays is perhaps the most difficult task of all. Taking the general religious conditions of his time into consideration, there are only two broad currents to be reckoned with. Puritanism had no doubt already assumed appreciable proportions as a further development of the Protestant idea; but, for our present purpose, the broader currents of Catholicism and Protestantism are all that need be considered. In view of the fact that Protestantism was at that time in the ascendant, whilst Catholicism was under a cloud, a writer of plays intended for immediate representation whose leanings were Protestant would be quite at liberty to expose his personal leanings, whilst a pronounced Roman Catholic would need to exercise greater personal restraint. Now it is impossible to detect in "Shakespeare" any Protestant bias or any support of those principles of individualism in which Protestantism has its roots. On the other hand, he seems as catholic as the circumstances of his times and the conditions under which he worked would allow him to be. Macaulay has the following interesting passage on the point:

The partiality of Shakespeare for Friars is well known. In *Hamlet* the ghost complains that he died without extreme unction, and, in defiance of the article which condemns the doctrine of purgatory, declares that he is

Confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes, done in his days of nature,
Are burnt and purged away.

These lines, we suspect, would have raised a tremendous storm in the theatre at any time during the reign of Charles the Second. They were clearly not written by a zealous Protestant for zealous Protestants.

We may leave his attitude towards Catholicism at that; except to add that, if he was really a Catholic, the higher calls of his religion to devotion and to discipline probably met with only an indifferent response. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that Auguste Comte in his "Positive Polity" refers to "Shakespeare" as a skeptic.

To the nine points enumerated at the end of the last chapter³ we may therefore add the following:

1. A man with Feudal connections.
2. A member of the higher aristocracy.
3. Connected with Lancastrian supporters.
4. An enthusiast for Italy.

³ 1. A matured man of recognized genius. 2. Apparently eccentric and mysterious. 3. Of intense sensibility—a man apart. 4. Unconventional. 5. Not adequately appreciated. 6. Of pronounced and known literary tastes. 7. An enthusiast in the world of drama. 8. A lyric poet of recognized talent. 9. Of superior education—classical—the habitual associate of educated people. (Looney's own summary, from the conclusion of Chapter III—Ed.)

5. A follower of sport (including falconry).
6. A lover of music.
7. Loose and improvident in money matters.
8. Doubtful and somewhat conflicting in his attitude to woman.
9. Of probable Catholic leanings, but touched with scepticism.

Such a characterization of Shakespeare as we have here presented was, of course, impossible so long as the Stratford tradition dominated the question; for there is scarcely a single point that is not more or less in contradiction to that tradition. Since, however, people have begun to throw off the dominance of the old theory in respect to the authorship of the plays, the most, if not all, of the points we have been urging have been pointed out at one time or other by different writers; as well, no doubt, as other important points of difference which we have overlooked. If, then, it be urged that there is not a single original observation in the whole of these two chapters, then so much the better for the argument; for such a criticism would but add authority to the delineation and we should, moreover, feel that the statement had been kept freer from the influence of subsequent discoveries than we can hope to be the case.

Although these subsequent discoveries have doubtless affected in some degree the manner in which the present statement is made, the several points, along with other] minor and more hypothetical matters, were roughly outlined before the search was begun; whilst the statement as here presented was written, substantially as it stands now, in the first days of the investigations: as soon, that is to say, as it seemed that the researches were going to prove fruitful. There are some of the above points which we should now be disposed to modify and others which we should like to develop. The appearance of others of them in the interpolated anti-Stratfordian chapter would under ordinary conditions have required their omission here. As, however, one of our objects is to represent something of the way in which the argument has developed almost spontaneously—in some respects one of the strongest evidences of its truth—we leave the statement, with what vulnerable points it contains, to remain as it is.

The various points are, indeed, the outcome of the labors and criticisms of many minds spread over a number of years, and it may be that the only thing original about the statement is the gathering together and tabulating of the various old points. So collected, these seem to demand such an aggregate and unusual combination of conditions that it is hardly probable that any man other than the actual author of the plays himself could possibly fulfill them all. When to this we add the further condition that the man answering to the description must also be situated, both in time and external circumstances, as to be consistent with the production of the work, we get the feeling that if such a man can be discovered it must be none other than the author himself.

With this we complete the first stage of our task which was to characterize the author from a consideration of the work.

Chapter VI The Conditions Fulfilled

As it will be necessary to discuss the life and character of Edward de Vere from a totally different standpoint from that of Sir Sidney Lee's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and also to add particulars derived from other sources, we shall, at present, in order to avoid as much unnecessary repetition as possible, merely point out the numerous instances in which the portraiture answers to the description of the man for whom we have been seeking.

Although we are not given much information as to what his "eccentricity" consisted in, beyond the squandering of his patrimony, the distinctiveness of his dress, and his preference for his Bohemian literary and play-acting associates, rather than the artificial and hypocritical atmosphere of a court frequented by ambitious self-seekers, it is clear that in those latter circles he had made for himself a reputation as an eccentric, and as a man apart. When, therefore, we are told that his eccentricities grew with his years, we may take it to imply that this preference became accentuated as he grew older, that he became less in touch with social conventionality, more deeply immersed in his special interests and in the companionship of those who were similarly occupied.

His impressionability is testified by his quickness to detect a slight and his readiness to resent it, whilst his evident susceptibility to perfumes and the elegancies of dress, involving, no doubt, colour sensitiveness, bespeak that keenness of the senses which contributes so largely to extreme general sensibility.

Connected with these traits is his undoubted fondness for, and a superior taste in, music. The matter is twice referred to. The first instance is in connection with his education, and from this reference it appears as if music had not formed part of the scheme of education which others had mapped out for him, and that his musical training was therefore the outcome of his own natural bent and choice. The second reference is the passage quoted in the last chapter, from which it appears that his musical taste was of so pronounced a character as to secure special mention in the records of him that have been handed down, notwithstanding their extreme meagerness.

His looseness in money matters and what appears like a complete indifference to material possessions, is undoubtedly one of the most marked features of his character. So long as he had money to spend or give away, or lands which he could sell to raise money, he seems to have squandered lavishly; much of it, evidently, on literary men and on dramatic enterprises. Consequently, from being one of the foremost and wealthiest of English noblemen he found himself ultimately in straitened circumstances.

His connection with play-actors and the drama was not the superficial and evanescent interest of a wealthy patron. It was a matter in which he was actively engaged for many years. He had his own company, with which he both toured in the provinces, and established himself for some years in London. It was quite understood that his company was performing plays which he was himself producing. It is evident, too, that he made a name for himself in the production of comedies and that the celebrity he enjoyed in this respect came not merely from the masses, but from the literary men of the time. On the other hand, we are informed in the article that "*no specimens of his*

dramatic productions survive” — a most mysterious circumstance in view of the vast mass of drama of all kinds and qualities that the Elizabethan age has bequeathed to us.

Of his family, we learn from the first series of articles on the De Veres, that it traced its descent in a direct line from the Norman Conquest and that for five and a half centuries the direct line of male descent had never, once been broken. As a boy, not only had he been a prominent figure about Elizabeth's court, but from the age of twelve he was a royal ward, and may be said to have been actually brought up at court near the person of the Queen herself. The irksomeness to him of court life seems to have manifested itself quite early in manhood and he made several efforts to escape from it.

His education was conducted first of all by private tutors among whom were celebrated classical scholars. He was a resident at Cambridge University and ultimately held degrees in both universities. We may add here, what is not mentioned in the article, that his poems are replete with classical allusions, which come to him as spontaneously as the figure of a field mouse, a daisy, or a haggis comes to Burns.

So keen was his desire for travel that when permission was refused him he set the authorities at defiance and ran away; only to be intercepted and brought back. When at last he obtained permission to go abroad he speedily made his way to Italy; and so permanent upon him was the effect of his stay there, that he was lampooned afterwards as an “Italionated Englishman.”

The article in the Dictionary of National Biography testifies therefore to the following points:

1. His high standing as a lyric poet.
2. His reputation for eccentricity.
3. His highly strung sensibility.
4. His being out of sympathetic relationship with conventional life.
5. His maturity (1590) and genius.
6. His literary tastes.
7. His practical enthusiasm for drama.
8. His classic education and association with the best educated men of his time.
9. His belonging to the higher aristocracy.
10. His feudal ancestry.
11. His interest in and direct personal knowledge of Italy.
12. His musical tastes.
13. His looseness in money matters.

Four points insufficiently supported in the article are:

1. His interest in sport.
2. His Lancastrian sympathies.
3. His distinctive bearing towards woman.
4. His attitude towards Catholicism.

The eighteenth point—inadequate appreciation—needs no special treatment, being involved in the problem itself and in any proposed solution to it.

Before proceeding to the next step in the investigation we shall finish this section by adducing other evidence and authority for the four points mentioned above.

1. In relation to sport we notice—and this is really the point that matters — that his poems, few as they are, bear decided witness to the same interest. The haggard hawk, the stricken deer, the hare, the greyhound, the mastiff, the fowling nets and bush-beating are all figures that appear in his lyric verses. In addition to this we notice that his father, John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, who died when Edward was twelve years of age, had quite a reputation as a sportsman, and until his death Edward was, of course, living with him. The article from which we first quoted mentions his interest in learning to shoot and to ride, so that there is abundant evidence of his familiarity with those sporting pastimes which Shakespeare's works so amply illustrate.

2. Though no statement of his actual sympathies with the Lancastrian cause has been found, we are assured by several writers that he was proud of his ancient lineage, which, taken along with the following passage on the relationship of the De Veres to the Lancastrian cause, may be accepted as conclusive on the subject:

“John the 12th Earl (of Oxford) was attainted and beheaded in 1461, suffering for his loyalty to the Lancastrian line. His son John was restored to the dignity in 1464, but was himself attainted in 1474 in consequence of the active part he had taken on the Lancastrian side during the temporary restoration of Henry VI in 1470. . . . (He) distinguished himself as the last of the supporters of the cause of the red rose, which he maintained in the castle of St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall for many months after the rest of the kingdom had submitted to Edward IV. . . . Having been mainly instrumental in bringing Henry (VII) to the throne he was immediately restored to the Earldom of Oxford, and also to the office of Lord Chamberlain which he enjoyed until his death in 1513. (*Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 9, 1852, p. 24.)

3. So far as his attitude towards woman is concerned, the poem already quoted in full is sufficient evidence of that deficiency of faith which we have pointed out as marking the Shakespeare sonnets; the very terms employed being as nearly identical as Shakespeare ever allowed himself in two separate utterances on one topic. Then that capacity for intense affection combined with weakness of faith which is one of the peculiarities of Shakespeare's mind, has not, so far as we are aware, so close a parallel anywhere in literature as in the poems of Edward de Vere. It is not merely in an occasional line, but is the keynote of much of his poetry. Indeed we may say that it probably lies at the root of a great part of the misfortune and mystery in which his life was involved, and may indeed afford an explanation for the very existence of the Shakespeare mystery.

Only when these poems shall have become as accessible as Shakespeare's sonnets will this mental correspondence be fully appreciated. Meanwhile we give a few lines each from a separate poem:

“For she thou (himself) lovest is sure thy mortal foe.”

“O cruel hap and hard estate that forceth me to love my foe.”

“The more I sought the less I found / Yet mine she meant to be.”
 “That I do waste, with others, love / That hath myself in hate.”
 “Love is worse than hate and eke more harm hath done.”

With these lines in mind all that is necessary is to read the last dozen of Shakespeare's sonnets, in order to appreciate the spiritual identity of the author or authors in this particular connection.

4. So far as the last point, his attitude to Catholicism, is concerned, the quotation we have already given from Green's "Short History" is all that is really necessary. The fact that his name appears at the head of a list of noblemen who professed to be reconciled to the old faith shows his leanings sufficiently well for us to say of him, as Macaulay says of Shakespeare, that he was not a zealous Protestant writing for zealous Protestants. When, further, we find that his father had professed Catholicism, it is not unlikely that on certain sentimental grounds his leaning was that way. Roman Catholicism would, moreover, be the openly professed religion of his home life during his first eight years. There is also evidence in the State Papers of the time that the English Catholics abroad were at one crisis looking to him and to the Earl of Southampton for support. At the same time it is not improbable that intellectually he was touched with the skepticism which appears to have been current in dramatic circles at that time, for amongst the charges made against him by one adversary was that of irreligion: the name "atheist" being given him by another (State papers). Classic paganism, medievalism and skepticism, in spite of the contradiction the combination seems to imply, can certainly all be more easily traced in him than can Protestantism; and in this there is a general correspondence between his mind and that of "Shakespeare."

On all the points then which we set before ourselves in entering upon the search, we find that Edward de Vere fulfils the conditions, and the general feeling with which we finish this stage of our enquiry is this, that if we have not actually discovered the author of Shakespeare's works we have at any rate alighted upon a most exceptional set of resemblances.

We have thus, in a general way, carried the enquiry successfully through four of its stages, and completed the *a posteriori* section of our argument.

Note

In the contemporary State Papers of Rome there is a list of English nobility, classified as (i) Catholics, (ii) of Catholic leanings, (iii) Protestants. Oxford's name appears in the second group.

Chapter XVIII Conclusion

We called Dante the melodious Priest of Middle-Age Catholicism. May we not call Shakespeare the still more melodious Priest of a true Catholicism, the Universal Church of the Future and of all times.

—Carlyle, *Heroes*

We may now bring our labors to a close with a review of the course our investigations have taken and a summary of their results. Having examined both the internal and external conditions of the old theory of Shakespearean authorship, we found that the whole presented such an accumulation

and combination of anomalies as to render it no longer tenable. We therefore undertook the solution of problem of authorship thus presented.

Beginning with a characterization of Shakespeare drawn from a consideration of his writings, a characterization embracing no less than eighteen points and involving a most unusual combination, we proceeded to look for the dramatist. Using the form of the "Venus and Adonis" stanza as a guide, we selected one Elizabethan poem in this form, which seemed to bear the greatest resemblance to Shakespeare's workmanship. The author of this poem, Edward de Vere, was found to fulfill in all essentials the delineation of Shakespeare with which we set out.

We next found that competent literary authorities, in testifying to the distinctive qualities of his work, spoke of his poems in terms appropriate to "Shakespeare." An examination of his position in the history of Elizabethan poetry showed him to be a possible source of the Shakespeare literature, whilst an examination of his lyrics revealed a most remarkable correspondence both in general qualities and in important details with the other literary work which we now attribute to him. Turning next to the records of his life and of his family we found that these were fully reflected in the dramas: the contents of which bear pronounced marks of all the outstanding incidents and personal relationships of his career, whilst the special conditions of his life at the time when these plays were being produced were just such as accorded with the issuing of the works.

His death, we found, was followed by an immediate arrest of Shakespearean publication, and by a number of other striking evidences of the removal of the great dramatist, whilst a temporary revival of publication a few years later was of such a character as to give additional support to the view that the author was then dead. Finally, we have shown that the sonnets are now made intelligible for the first time since their appearance, and that the great dramatic *tour de force* of the author is nothing less than an idealized portraiture of himself.

Summed up we have:

1. The evidence of the poetry.
2. The general biographical evidence.
3. The chronological evidence.
4. The posthumous evidence.
5. The special arguments:
 - (a) The "All's Well" argument.
 - (b) The "Love's Labor's Lost" argument.
 - (c) The "Othello" argument.
 - (d) The Sonnets argument.
 - (e) The "Hamlet" argument.

It is the perfect harmony, consistency and convergence of all the various lines of argument employed, and the overwhelming mass of coincidences that they involve, that give to our results the appearance of a case fully and, we believe, unimpeachably proven.

We have by no means exhausted the subject, however. Not only does much remain to be said, but it may be that in taking so decisive a step, involving the readjustment of more than one long-

established conception, some statements have been made that later will have to be modified or withdrawn. Working, too, amongst a mass of details, in what was previously an unfamiliar domain, it is possible that serious errors have slipped in. In arguments like the present, however, whole lines of subsidiary evidence may break down and yet leave the central contention firmly and unassailably established.

It would not in the least surprise us, moreover, if particular items of evidence much more conclusive than any single argument we have offered, should be forthcoming, or even if it should be pointed out that we have blunderingly overlooked some vital matter. From experience in the course of our enquiries we have no fear that any such oversight will appreciably affect the validity of the argument as a whole. For the detection of oversights hitherto has but brought additional strength to our position; and so frequently has this occurred in the past that it is difficult to think of its, having any other effect in the future. Only one conclusion then seems possible; namely, that the problem of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays has been solved, and that all future enquiry is destined to furnish but an accumulating support to the solution here proposed.

It will be seen that only in a general way has it been possible to adhere, in our last chapters, to the plan of investigation outlined at the start. In tracing indications of the life and personality of Edward de Vere in the writings of Shakespeare, much of the ground mapped out for separate succeeding stages of the enquiry has been covered. The sixth stage was to gather together "corroborative evidence," and this is largely furnished by the last two chapters in which the poetic and the dramatic self-revelation of the poet are respectively dealt with. The seventh stage, to develop personal connections, if possible, between the new author and the old authorship, including the man William Shakspeare, is covered by those biographical chapters which treat of Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid; Anthony Munday, the playwright; Lyly, Oxford's private secretary and "Shakespeare's only model in Comedy"; and lastly Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom the Shakespeare poems are dedicated, who is known as the munificent friend of William Shakspeare, and in whom the Earl of Oxford manifested a special interest.

The task which we set out to accomplish has therefore been performed in sufficient accordance with the original plan. However unworthy of so great a theme the manner of presenting the case may be, it is impossible not to feel gratified at the good fortune that has attended our excursion into a department that is not specially our own. In the brief moment of conscious existence which lies between the two immensities Destiny has honored us with this particular task, and though it may not be the work we could have wished to do, we are glad to have been able to do so much.

The matter must now pass out of our hands, and the case must be tried in public by means of a discussion in which expert opinion must play a large part in the formation of a definitive judgment. Whether such discussion be immediate or deferred, we have no doubt that it must come at some time or other, and that, when it does come, the ultimate verdict will be to proclaim Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the real author of the greatest masterpieces in English literature.

We venture, therefore, to make an earnest appeal first of all to the thoughtful sections of all classes of the British public, and not merely of the literary classes, to examine, and even to insist upon an authoritative examination, of the evidence adduced. The matter belongs, of course, to the

world at large. But England must bear the greater part of the responsibility; and her honor is involved in seeing that a question of the name and fame of one of the most illustrious of her immortal dead, the one name which England has stamped most unquestionably upon the intellectual life of the human race, is not given over to mere literary contentiousness. We are bound, however, to make a special appeal to those whose intellectual equipment and opportunities fit them for the examination of the argument to approach the problem in an impartial spirit. It will not be an easy thing for Stratfordians or Baconians of many years' standing to admit that they were wrong, and that the problem has at last solved itself in a way contrary to all their former views. To sincere admirers of "Shakespeare," however, those who have caught something of his largeness of intellectual vision and fidelity to fact, the difficulty of recognizing and admitting an error will not prove insuperable, whilst their power of thus aiding in a great act of justice will be immense.

In addition to securing the recognition of Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works, much remains to be done in the way of lifting the load of disrepute from his memory, and winning for his name the honor that is his by right. "That gentle spirit," as we believe Spenser to have described him and as his own verses reveal him (according so well as the expression does with our "Gentle Shakespeare"), has remained for too many years under the "unlifted shadow."

Whatever his faults may have been, we have in him a soul awake at every point to all that touches human life. All high aspiration and endeavor find their encouragement in his work, and no phase of human suffering or weakness but meets in him a kindly and sympathetic treatment, even when his mockery is most trenchant. "The man whom Nature's self had made, to mock herself and truth to imitate with kindly counter under mimic shade"—the terms in which we have shown Spenser speaks of De Vere, and which so accurately describe "Shakespeare"—could be no profligate. The irregularities to which the Shakespearean sonnets bear witness are beyond question rooted in sincerity of character and tenderness of heart. We do not condone such, but we are bound to draw a very marked distinction between this and mere dissoluteness. All that Shakespeare has written, and every line of De Vere, bespeaks a man who, even in the lowest depths of pessimism and in his moments of bitterest cynicism, had kept alive the highest faculties of his mind and heart. No man of persistently loose life can do this; and, therefore, the establishing of the identity of Edward de Vere with "Shakespeare" demands the relinquishing of all those superficial judgments that might have been allowed to pass unchallenged so long as Edward de Vere was supposed to be a person of no particular moment in the history of his country or the world.

Until now the world has moreover seen and known in him only the eccentricity and turbulence of Hamlet. The real Hamlet, tender-hearted and passionate, whose deep and melancholy soul broods affectionately upon the great tragedy of human life, and who yet preserves the light of intellect and humor, whose "noble heart" breaks at last but who carries on his fight to the last moment of life, when the pen, not the sword, drops from his fingers, is the Hamlet which we must now see in Edward de Vere, as he stands before the world as "Shakespeare." The fret and trouble of his objective life in the Elizabethan age have hung around his memory for over three hundred years. All this, we believe, is about to end; and, the period of his purgation passed, we may confidently hope that, entering into the full possession of his honors, a time of still richer spiritual influence awaits his continued existence in the hearts and lives of men.

"The fatness of these pury times," against which his whole career was a protest, has settled more than ever upon the life of mankind, and the culminating product of this modern materialism is the

world war that was raging whilst the most of these pages were being penned - a war which has been the most insane gamble for material power that the undisciplined instinct of domination has ever inflicted upon a suffering humanity; threatening the complete submergence of the soul of civilized man. Yet amongst the projects of "after the war" reconstruction that were being set afoot, even whilst it was in progress, materialistic purposes everywhere prevailed. In education, for example, where especially spiritual aims should have dominated, commercial and industrial objects were chiefly considered. And now that the conflict is over the entire disruption of social existence is threatened by material "interests" and antagonisms.

Against this the spirit of "Shakespeare" again protests. His "prophetic soul," still "dreaming on things to come," points to a future in which the human *spirit*, and its accessory instruments and institutions, must become the supreme concern of man. The squandering of his own material resources, though unwise in itself, was the soul's reaction against the growing Mammon worship of his day: and the fidelity with which he represents in his plays the chivalries of feudalism is the expression of an affection for those social relationships, which minister to the finer spirit in man. He stands, then, for an enlarged and enriched conception of spiritual things: a conception embracing the entire range of man's mental and moral faculties, from gayest laughter and subtle playfulness to profoundest thought and tragic earnestness of purpose. He stands for these things, and he stands for their supremacy in human life, involving the subordination of every other human concern to these spiritual forces and interests.

More than ever in the coming years shall we need the spirit of "Shakespeare" to assist in the work of holding the "politician" and the materialist, ever maneuvering for ascendancy in human affairs, to their secondary position in subordination to, and under the discipline of, the spiritual elements of society. We cannot, of course, go back to "Shakespeare's" medievalism, but we shall need to incorporate into modern life what was best in the social order and social spirit of the Middle Ages. "The prophetic soul of the wide world" fills its vision, not with a state of more intense material competition and increased luxury, but with a social order in which the human heart and mind will have larger facilities for expansion; in which poetry, music, the drama, and art in all its forms will throw an additional charm over a life of human harmony and mutual helpfulness; in which, therefore, "Shakespeare," "our ever-living poet," will be an intimate personal influence when the heroes of our late Titanic struggle will be either forgotten or will only appear dimly in the pages of history.

His works do not, and can never, supply all that the human soul requires. To satisfy the deepest needs of mankind the Shakespearean scriptures must be supplemented by the other great scriptures of our race; and all together they will only meet our full demands in so far as they succeed in putting before us the guiding image of a divine Humanity. In this work, however, "Shakespeare" will always retain a foremost place. Speaking no longer from behind a mask or from under a pseudonym, but in his, own honored name, Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, will ever call mankind to the worship of truth, reality, the infinite wonder of human nature and the eternal greatness of Man.

6. From *The Man Who Was Shakespeare*, by Eva Turner Clark

1937

Eva Turner Clark was an early follower of Looney's who published her ground-breaking study, *The Man Who was Shakespeare* (New York: Richard R. Smith), in 1937. Clark's Introduction strongly sums up the case against Stratford and for Oxford, as it stood just before World War II.

Clark's great contributions are three. First, she boldly focused attention on the absence of direct evidence supporting Oxford's candidature, pointing out that contemporary political considerations aside, "The great fire of London in 1666 and before that time the burning of playhouses, including manuscripts of plays, instigated by Puritan fanatics, destroyed many records." She also noted the possible role of the notorious forger, John Payne Collier, "who was for many years highly regarded as a Shakespearean scholar, and had the run of the Bodleian Library and other repositories of Elizabethan manuscripts, until 1853, when he was first suspected of literary forgeries, particularly in connection with evidence bearing on the Shakespeare plays." In other words, there are explanations beyond conspiracy which may account for the absences in the historical record.



Eva Turner Clark 1871-1947

Finally, Clark showed the importance of correctly understanding the date and chronology of Shakespeare's dramas, especially *Hamlet*, first mentioned as early as 1589. The play is simply too mature for a twenty-five year old playwright, even one of genius. Oxford was of course older than Shaksper by some 16 years, making better sense of the existing evidence.

From the beauty of language and imagery, the rhythmic swing of verse, the universal knowledge, the aristocratic understanding, and the thousand qualities which distinguish the plays known since 1598 as Shakespeare's, scholars have for generations held the opinion that the writer of those plays was gentle, musical, observant, broadly educated, widely read, and held a position near to the nobles of Queen Elizabeth's Court. There can be no gainsaying such a conclusion. The plays reveal it.

Scholars admit quite frankly that "the conception which each one forms of Shakespeare the man must be derived in the main from the impressions of personality implied in the plays." They are not, however, on firm ground when they attempt to attach these qualities of cultivated mind to

William Shakspeare of Stratford and to place him in easy social relations with the Elizabethan Court. (The spelling “Shakespeare” in these pages means the dramatist; “Shakspeare” means the Stratford actor.)

They *imagine*, but have no evidence, that William attended the Stratford Grammar School up to the age of twelve or thirteen years. They *imagine*, but have no evidence, that William then left school because his father’s poverty and inability to meet his penny tax, for which they have evidence, compelled it. They *imagine*, but have no evidence, that the boy assisted his father in his business of butcher, glover, or wool-dealer’ (authorities differ as to the father’s business), trying to keep the wolf from the Shakspeare door, though this theory appears to be confirmed by the tradition reported in the seventeenth century by Aubrey and Dowdall, to the effect that William spent his youth as a butcher’s apprentice.

William is really first heard of at the age of eighteen when his marriage to Anne Hathaway took place, though the facts concerning it are not known with exactitude. If the five previous years were spent as his father’s helper in the small-village poverty suggested by modern historians, it can hardly be assumed that he experienced any great leap to affluence at the time of his marriage, for it is not apparent that Anne was an heiress. Within a few months after the marriage, a child was born to the young couple; twins came less than two years later; by the time William was twenty, he was carrying the burden of a considerable family.

Try to imagine this poor young uneducated father, living in a small provincial community, as Stratford then was, at a time when travel was by horseback and news was old when it arrived. Try to imagine young William in this environment attempting to supply the needs of five individuals. In order to provide for a family of five--then or now--a youth of twenty, inexperienced in the ways of the world and without other resources than his brain and hands, must put forth Herculean efforts to pull himself and his little family out of the mire of poverty, even to secure merely necessary food, clothing, and shelter.

While granted that he may succeed in accomplishing so much, it is not possible to imagine him finding time or strength *at the selfsame period* to cultivate his mind in the fine arts, law, history and diplomacy, and to win an easy familiarity with the social and political leaders of the day. Yet this is what advocates of the Stratford theory of Shakespeare authorship asks us to accept in the youth of Stratford. One cannot fill a four-gallon pail with water and expect to pour an equal amount of wine into the pail while the water is in it. No more can a man’s brain be filled with the workaday facts of daily living and at the same time find room in that brain for an overpowering amount of a completely different type of knowledge. Yet that is what we are asked to believe in the case of William of Stratford.

William was twenty years of age in 1584 and, from the life of privation he was then living, he is supposed to have burst upon the sophisticated world of London four or five years later as the greatest dramatist of all time.

That he went to London and became a member of one of the playing companies is undoubtedly true, though very little is known of his early life in London, and the impression he made upon his contemporaries at this period was slight. A few ironical remarks seem to record their opinion of him. His rise to affluence during the decade of the 1590’s must be explained in some other way.

When we are told that late in that decade he was on terms of such intimacy with Mary Fitton, one of the Queen's Maids of Honor, that he incurred the enmity of a rival in Mary's affections, the young Earl of Pembroke, we are forced to declare that such a social inconsistency was not only unlikely but impossible. Not long after this date, he is shown by the records in a lawsuit as living in lodgings at the home of a wigmaker, the kind of environment in which we would expect to find him.

On the other hand, there was another man living in England at the same period, fourteen years older than William Shakspeare of Stratford, of whom contemporary critics wrote that he was the best lyric poet and the greatest dramatist of Elizabeth's day; yet we are told today that, with the exception of a few early verses, all his writings have disappeared. This man was Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Lord Great Chamberlain of England. His early fame as a writer, his rank among the nobility as premier earl, and his position at Court as a favorite of the Queen, would indicate that a special effort to preserve his plays would be made by his admirers, even though Elizabethan convention demanded anonymity of so exalted a personage.

Evidence is accumulating to show that the Earl of Oxford's plays were not lost but were preserved to posterity by being printed under the assumed name of William Shakespeare, a name of like sound but different spelling to that of the unlettered, almost illiterate man of Stratford. Several plays, later known as Shakespeare's, were issued anonymously in quarto by pirate printers in the early 1590's but not until 1598 was a quarto published with the since-famous name on its title page.

That Lord Oxford knew William of Stratford as a minor member of Lord Strange's Company of actors may well be believed because the evidence points to that company's having been made up largely of actors from his own Paul's Boys, otherwise known as Oxford's Boys, a company dissolved in 1590 for caricaturing Martin Marprelate on the stage. As William was more of a businessman than actor, as indicated by later transactions, Lord Oxford would have found him a useful agent in dealing with the printer. Particularly would this have been the case since the person who printed Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in a handsome edition and other books in which Oxford would have been interested was also from Stratford. This printer, Richard Field, after serving a long apprenticeship, had married his late master's widow and secured control of her printing business. In dealing with the printer for the Earl, it would have been far easier for William to use his own name in arranging for the printing of the poem, *Venus and Adams*, the first publication to bear the name of William Shakespeare, than to take a strange one, since he could not divulge the name of the real author.

Writing of *Venus and Adonis*, Sir Sidney Lee observes:

Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* had emulated the example of Theocritus and Bion, the pastoral poets of Greece, in narrating the Greek fable of Venus and Adonis. Ovid's poem filled a generous space in the curriculum of every Elizabethan school, and at all periods of his career Shakespeare gave signs of affectionate familiarity with its contents.

Of course Sir Sidney meant the author of the plays when he made that statement, because the plays do reveal that "affectionate familiarity." Sir Sidney could not grant such a familiarity to the

Stratford actor, who could hardly have reached the sophisticated Ovid in the school's curriculum before he left school at the tender age of twelve.

We *know* that the Earl of Oxford had had every opportunity to gain an "affectionate familiarity" with Ovid, for it was while acting as his tutor that his uncle, Arthur Golding made the translation of the *Metamorphoses* that is so frequently quoted in the plays. As a brilliant student, it is not too much to assume that he assisted in the work of translation.

Of William's handwriting, six illiterate-appearing signatures are all that is known. The evidence on the handwriting of one of the hands in the scrap of manuscript of the play, *Sir Thomas More*, is too slight to be acceptable. The signatures constitute the only specimens of his penmanship that can be accepted by students in general. Can anybody believe that the man who wrote the easy fluent lines of the plays was dependent on a hand that labored from letter to letter? That the brilliant brain was enchained by such a physical handicap is unthinkable! The penmanship must have been as easy and flowing as the lines set down. The few clumsy signatures of the Stratford man should be compared with the easy lines of the Earl of Oxford, legible today as when they were written. Such a hand could glide rapidly over the paper to transfer quickly to its surface the sublime thoughts which crowded into the owner's brain. Not only did Oxford's facile pen lend itself to transfixing his thoughts quickly upon paper but, as he is known to have employed secretaries to whom he dictated business letters (some of which have survived), it is more than possible that he dictated many lines of his plays to Lyly, Munday, and others, known to have been employed by him.

Whatever evidence exists on the actual facts of William Shakspeare's life shows him to have been a penny-pinching business man, court records testifying to the pettiest of squabbles with neighbors and associates, quite consistent with the poverty of his youth when he was forced to niggardly economies in order to make ends meet in the care of his family. The litigious bickerings to which he gave his time and thought in his days of affluence are not consistent with the bigness of mind which evolved the great plays with their broad philosophy and light humor. The careless attitude of the dramatist towards gold and possessions, as evinced in the plays, can no more be reconciled with the avarice shown in the Stratford man's petty lawsuits than can the smoothly flowing lines of lyric poetry be reconciled with the clumsy, labored signatures of this same man of Stratford. Lord Oxford's indifference to his immense inheritance, which slipped through his fingers until all was gone, to the great annoyance of his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, is perfectly consistent with the dramatist's attitude towards gold and possessions.

A point of great significance is that provincialisms found in the plays are not peculiar to Warwickshire. Even the most ardent Stratfordians have been mystified by the fact that a youth recently arrived in London should have displayed little or no trace of his county's dialect in even his earliest writings and, while there are in the plays as a whole some words supposedly peculiar to Warwickshire, there are just as many idioms from other English shires. Had he written the plays, we may be sure there would be much evidence of Warwickshire dialect. Lord Oxford, on the other hand, was familiar with the speech of London and the Court.

A phalanx of University opinion exists upon the question of the chronology of the plays. Dr. Cairncross, has done a notable piece of work, work which his fellows are bound to respect, even though the corollary to it is the rejection of the Stratford Shakspeare as the author of the plays.

Placing the mature play of *Hamlet* not later than 1589, which he does, argues that most of the plays were written before that year, when William was only twenty-five years of age. The “hiatus” in his life from 1584 to 1592, mentioned by Sir Edmund Chambers in his monumental biography, *William Shakespeare* (in which he assumes that the Stratford man was the dramatist), and his conclusion that “after all the careful scrutiny of clues and all the patient balancing of possibilities, the last word for a self-respecting scholarship can only be that of nescience” ill sorts with the conclusion of Dr. Cairncross that the great play of *Hamlet* was written in the 1580’s. If the young provincial had written it, he would have been heralded throughout the London literary world; written by the Earl of Oxford, contemporary writers would not have commented in print for they dared not state publicly that England’s Lord Great Chamberlain was a dramatist, because a large portion of the home population held a very low estimate of the stage, and foreign statesmen would have been unpleasantly critical of Elizabeth for permitting her high officials to demean themselves by writing for the stage.

Sir Edmund Chambers is aware of the weakness of the chronological arrangement of the plays, as supported by Stratford theorists, although he accepts it. He says:

The chronology of the plays becomes difficult at this point, and it is therefore frankly a conjecture that an attempt at *Timon of Athens* early in 1608 was followed by a serious illness, which may have been a nervous breakdown, and on the other hand may have been merely the plague. Later in the year Shakespeare came to his part of *Pericles* with a new outlook. In any case the transition from the tragedies to the romances is not an evolution but a revolution.

Any chronological arrangement of the plays which requires such a conjecture without an iota of evidence cannot be taken seriously. For it must be substituted a chronology which shows a steady evolution, not a revolution. A chronology based on contemporary allusions, subtly, sometimes even boldly introduced into the dramas, reveals a literary and dramatic development which is definitely an evolution. Innumerable allusions are to be found in the plays if events between the years 1576 and 1590 are studied.

A key which unlocks the door to the whole problem of chronology is provided by the Records of the Court Revels and it is highly important that it be examined by the light let in by that open door. By means of the key, we find that ten plays were recorded as being played at Court in the late 1570’s under titles suggestive of later Shakespeare plays, the revising of old plays and providing them with new names being a common practice in Elizabeth’s day. In each play that is considered the revision of a certain earlier recorded play, there are numerous allusions which apply to the period immediately preceding the recorded date in the Court Revels of the early play under consideration. With ten plays thus provided to indicate the presence in them of topical allusions, we conclude that what is true of the ten must also be true of all the other Shakespeare plays. That only ten plays are found thus recorded is due to two reasons: after Christmas of 1580, the Earl of Oxford lost the Queen’s favor (the reason for which will be taken up elsewhere), hence his plays were not produced at Court for two-and-a-half years (when he was again received at Court) and, following that period, the practice of including the names of plays in the Records of the Court Revels was discontinued. However, with the theory of topical allusions established by a study of ten plays and supported by the evidence of a steady literary and dramatic development, it is possible to construct the order of later plays by allusions alone.

Another argument which favors an earlier period of authorship is that the literary style of the Shakespeare dramas antedates the style of Ben Jonson and his contemporaries. The great dramas reflect a moderated Euphuism, a Euphuism tempered by a finer taste than Lyly's. Antithesis and idealistic imagery made possible the use of beautiful and expressive words and the author, with his ear for music and rhythm, brought about an enrichment of the English language, a contribution to the language, never since approached by any writer. This patent fact and a courageous independence as to the observance of the dramatic unities were not to the taste of the later satirist, the academic Jonson, who, in spite of much great and original work, made a fetish of the classics and the unities. When Jonson did admire a phrase or a sentence of his predecessor, he did not hesitate to borrow.

William Shakspeare of Stratford was less than ten years older than Ben Jonson and thus may be considered a contemporary, yet the style of the Shakespeare plays is of a period a whole generation earlier than the Jonson plays, another form of denial of the Stratford man's authorship. The two groups of plays can hardly be compared, one reflecting the taste of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the other that of the reign of King James.

It is a significant fact that all the courtiers with whom the dramatist is believed to have come in contact were intimates of the Earl of Oxford. The Earl of Southampton, to whom in 1593 *Venus and Adonis* was dedicated, was at that time betrothed to Oxford's daughter, though they did not marry, and the next year she became the wife of the sixth Earl of Derby (thought by Professor Lefranc to have been the author of the plays). The Fair Youth of the *Sonnets* is believed by some students to have been the Earl of Southampton; by others, William Herbert, the young Earl of Pembroke. There are other theories but most Shakespearean controversialists will argue hotly over the relative merits of these two. As Southampton in 1593 had been betrothed to Oxford's eldest daughter, so in 1598 Pembroke was betrothed to Oxford's second daughter, though they also did not marry, probably owing to the scandal about this time in which Pembroke's name was linked with that of Mary Fitton. In 1604, several months after the death of the Earl of Oxford, his third and youngest daughter became the wife of Pembroke's brother, Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery. It will be recalled that it was to these two brothers that the First Folio was dedicated in 1623.

Regarding that handsome and expensive volume, it is hard to believe that the printers published it on speculation: the usual theory, for it was too costly for many people to buy and half of those who could have paid the price that was necessarily charged for it were Puritans, fanatically opposed to the drama, whether written or played. The two Herberts, earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, rich favorites of King James, had, through the wife of Montgomery, a vital interest in keeping the plays alive and surely met the heavy cost of printing them.

Having shown that the circle of Lord Oxford's intimates included all courtiers whose names are generally connected with the name of Shakespeare, there remains only the name of Sir Francis Bacon to be considered. It is an interesting fact that he also was connected with Oxford, for he was a first cousin of the Earl's wife, Anne Cecil, and a close friend of the two Herberts. After Bacon's fall from the King's favor in 1621, he turned to his philosophical writings again and in 1622 and 1623 his works were being printed. As a person acquainted with the intricate problem of book publication, it was natural that his cousin, the Countess of Montgomery, should turn to him for advice and assistance in getting her father's plays published. Some of the printers' de-

vices used in decorating the Folio of 1623 would have been, quite logically, the same devices which appeared in the Bacon volumes of the same period.

The question as to why direct evidence on this problem of authorship has not appeared is not difficult to answer. In the beginning there was the author's desire for anonymity, which means that the number of persons who actually knew the facts was limited, though there is written evidence showing concern regarding an anonymous author during the decade of the 1590's. The great fire of London in 1666 and before that time the burning of playhouses, including manuscripts of plays, instigated by Puritan fanatics, destroyed many records.

A very different kind of destruction will perhaps account for the loss of evidence of the most vital kind. John Payne Collier, in spite of some serious misdeeds in early manhood, was for many years highly regarded as a Shakespearean scholar, and had the run of the Bodleian Library and other repositories of Elizabethan manuscripts, until 1853, when he was first suspected of literary forgeries, particularly in connection with evidence bearing on the Shakespeare plays. It has since been definitely proved that his so-called "discoveries" of manuscript evidence, reports of which he published between 1831 and 1849, were mostly fabrications. Because of his reputation for scholarship, he was permitted almost unlimited freedom in the handling of original manuscripts, with what today we would consider an amazing lack of supervision. As during many years he worked at will among the most famous collections of Elizabethan papers, committing endless forgeries without being detected until long afterwards, it is a natural presumption that he destroyed those documents which did not fit in with his ideas, a presumption, which, strong as it is, is unfortunately beyond proof. As Collier began his forgeries some twenty years before the Stratfordian theory was challenged by the first skeptics, proponents of the Baconian theory, he must have discovered among the old records evidence to show that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author of the plays that bore his name. Such are the documents he would have destroyed, a thing far easier to do than his fabrication of the elaborate forgeries he worked upon for twenty years or more. We may ask, why did he prefer to forge documents to uphold the Stratfordian theory rather than announce his discovery that a different man was the author of the great plays.

Our surmise must be that, having worked for so many years on the theory that the Stratford man was the author of the plays, he had built an edifice that he could not bear to topple to the ground, and rather than do it, he preferred to patch his upper stories and keep his knowledge of the foundation weakness to himself.

Until recently so little was known of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford that scholars have taken the easiest way and, if they had any occasion to refer to him at all, have spoken of him as "Burghley's ill-conditioned son-in-law," repeating a phrase they found in earlier books, without going to the trouble to determine if such all expression were based on facts or to learn upon what his difficulties with his wife or her father were based; to learn that, as a victim of Hatton's envy and jealousy, he was naturally and rightly resentful; to learn that his quarrels with his cousins, the Howards, were largely due to righteous indignation over their political intrigues against the Queen.

Evidence available today shows that scandalous reports set going by secret enemies brought about the separation of the Earl and his Countess, to the grave concern of her father; that, as the events of the next few years unrolled, along with the Earl's fall from the favor of the Queen, the

same secret enemies appear to have been behind the curtain; that, with the curtain now drawn aside, it is found that the men who, by scandalous whisperings and innuendo, brought about his downfall, were closely associated with those who were openly inimical to him, self-seekers, envious of his place of favor with the Queen.

Evidence that the Earl was grossly libeled may be found within the covers of one book, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (1928), written by Captain B. M. Ward, after five years of research in England's archives, in response to a demand for more knowledge of the man acclaimed by Mr. J. Thomas Looney in 1920 as the true author of the Shakespeare plays in an epoch-making book, "*Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*." The two books just mentioned constitute the foundation works upon which all later writings upon the theory of the Oxford authorship of the Shakespeare plays have been based and must be based. My own essays on this subject in the past and in the pages which follow would never have been written had it not been for the basic evidence contained in them. My *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays* and *The Satirical Comedy, Loves Labors Lost* have shown the amazing number of topical allusions to be found in the plays, when those plays are placed with some approximation to the dates when they were originally written; several years, on the average, earlier than the Stratfordian theory places them.

The present volume deals rather with the life of Lord Oxford and shows his equipment for the part played by the greatest dramatist ever known through most of the dramatic reign of the great Queen Elizabeth. It tells of his love and knowledge of history, mentioned by Arthur Golding; his love and knowledge of music, mentioned by Farmer; his sixteen months' travel on the Continent, of which a year was spent in Italy, and his speaking knowledge of the French and Italian languages; his foremost position as poet and dramatist, mentioned by contemporary critics; his knowledge of law gained as a student at Gray's Inn and increased as the ranking member of the second parliamentary committee of Triers of Petitions; his knowledge of the New World gained through acquaintance with the leading explorers of the day, shown by frequent investments in their voyages; his knowledge of flowers and plants, gained through his acquaintance with John Gerarde, famous herbalist and director of Lord Burghley's wonderful gardens; his knowledge of astronomy and astrology, gained through his acquaintance with Dr. Devine; his knowledge of horses and horsemanship, shown by his success in the various tournaments in which he took part; all of these things, and others too numerous to mention, made up the mental equipment of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

Students of the Shakespeare plays are well aware that just such mental equipment was necessary to the author of those plays. That the author was a genius is a conclusion accepted by all but this result was attained by his transcendent ability to assemble fragments of his widespread knowledge in such a fashion that they fitted together like the parts of a complicated machine, and were welded together by his exquisite understanding of words and his musical appreciation of rhythm. Genius in drama must have such a combination; it does not leap, like Minerva, full-armed from the head of Jove. Carlyle has said, "Genius means the transcendent capacity of taking trouble," but the tools of knowledge must be acquired before they can be used by a writing genius. Even the ordinary business or social letters of Lord Oxford attest an unusual ability to express his thoughts clearly and directly, an accomplishment seldom found within the grasp of his greatest contemporaries.

Queen Elizabeth had a great affection for her young ward, whom she had known from earliest childhood, and from the time he came of age Lord Oxford was an object of envy among certain jealous courtiers. As the years passed, this envy grew into a policy of settled intrigue against his influence with the Queen. His hereditary right to the office of Lord Great Chamberlain—thus the premier earl of England—made his position highly important; and he was by marriage closely related to Lord Burghley, the great Lord Treasurer, whose power was the greatest single influence in England. Both being important officials, it is difficult to tell whether certain inimical actions were based on personal malice or were a part of the political opposition ordinarily aligned against Burghley, represented by Leicester, Hatton, and the Howards. The backbiting set in motion by these enemies during his early manhood, recognized by both Oxford and Burghley at the time, and declared by them to be based on tales without foundation, has continued down through the centuries to give Oxford an evil reputation. It is unfortunate that only the malice of his enemies has been repeated, for an examination of the characters of the men opposed to Oxford shows them to have been men of such blackguard types that his character shines like gold beside theirs.

In view of the recent discovery at Lubeck of a manuscript which shows that Thomas à Kempis was the translator and not the original author of *The Imitation of Christ*, for five centuries attributed to him (the credit for the original work being now given to Gerard Groote, who died of the plague in 1384, fifty-six years before à Kempis finished the translation), hope revives that a similar manuscript of one of the Shakespeare plays may still exist, and will be recovered eventually from some dark corner of one of the many repositories of English archives. Yet, even without precious direct evidence of such a manuscript or some equally important legal document, we must recognize the value of circumstantial evidence and know that it is in many **ways** stronger than direct evidence, upon the authenticity of which doubt can be cast by those disinclined to accept such evidence. When, moreover, circumstantial evidence is made up of a vast number of interlocking facts, each one confirming the other, we are compelled, even against our personal wishes, to accept the decision based upon it. The Oxford authorship of the Shakespeare plays is a theory built upon such an array of consistent testimony that its protagonists gladly submit the evidence to the world's unbiased readers. The complete story cannot be told in one small volume, but certain facts and theories here presented will contribute something to the larger work that will in time be written.

7. From *This Star of England*, by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn

1952

The dynamic team of Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, joined later by their son Charlton Ogburn Jr., author of *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984), reintroduced the authorship debate to the postwar generation.¹ The following summary of the case for Oxford and against Shaksper has been lightly edited to reflect modern layout practices.

There has been affirmatively presented in the foregoing chapters positive and irrefutable proof that “William Shakespeare” was the pseudonym of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford. It seems therefore superfluous to present either arguments or evidence of a negative character to show the impossibility of William Shaksper’s being the famous dramatist. This volume would be incomplete, however, without a discussion of William Shaksper of Stratford, not only because he has been for so long the accepted author, but because from the part he played in the story Ben Jonson derived the idea of using him for the hoax in the First Folio.



Charlton Ogburn 1911-1998

It is necessary to note the distinction, yet similarity, between Lord Oxford’s *nom de plume* and the name of the Stratford man. Shakespeare (hyphenated on the title pages between 1598 and 1622 of eighteen quarto editions of plays) was obviously a made-up name, as the anonymous author of *Willobie his Avis*, in 1594 readily recognized. It was suggested—among other things—by the cognizance of Edward de Vere as Lord Bolbec, which was a lion shaking a spear, and by the complimentary address to the young Earl of Oxford at Cambridge University, in 1578, by Gabriel Harvey who, after extolling de Vere’s high qualities, his literary achievements and eminence, appealed to him to renounce literature and follow the martial career of his great ancestors, saying “Thine eyes flash fire; thy countenance shakes a spear.”

In Grecian mythology, Pallas Athena was the goddess of wisdom, philosophy, poetry and the

¹ *This Star of England / ‘William Shakespeare’ Man of the Renaissance*, by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952).

fine arts. Her original name was simply Pallas, a word derived from *palein*, signifying a spear. She was generally represented with a spear. Athens, the home of drama, was under the protection of the Spear-Shaker. In our age such a signature would be understood at once as a pseudonym.

Pallas Athena, also goddess patron of the Greek theatre, wore a helmet which made her invisible. These facts known to Oxford, a student of Greek, might have influenced his choice of a pen-name. As the victor in jousting tournaments, in which he had few peers, he was known as a “spear-shaker.” Oxford’s nickname in certain circles was Will. *Wyll* was an old English word meaning well or spring. *Ver* meant spring. He put together these words and formed his pseudonym.

The Stratford man’s name was Shaksper, and thus we write it in this volume. His own spelling was *Shaksper* in five of the only six signatures he ever wrote, so far as can be found; the sixth was *Shakpe*. His biographers have generally added a final *e* to the name in interpreting these signatures. Experts in Elizabethan handwriting have asserted that the supposed final *E* was simply the flourish that follows the German or Gothic *F*, the script used in his handwriting. It is really of no consequence whether there is a final *E* or not. The first syllable is always short, and was written *Shack* in the body of his will. In a letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quiney asking that a loan be obtained from our “fellow countriman,” the name is spelled *Shaksper*, and in another letter the same fellow townsman calls him “*Mr. Shak*.” In the Stratford man’s marriage license the name appears as *Shaxper* and in the marriage bond it is *Shags per*. T. Whittington, a creditor of William’s wife for forty shillings, writes it *Shaxper*. The father’s name was signed as a witness to a conveyance as *Shaxbere* by Walter Roche, the ex-schoolmaster, one of the few persons in Stratford at that time who was literate. (Fewer than one-third of the aldermen and burgesses of Stratford in the latter half of the sixteenth century could write their names. Grand jurymen generally made their marks in their presentments.) The significant thing in these various spellings, as in all sixteenth century orthography, is the pronunciation, the phonetics. In Shaksper and Shakspeare the *A* was invariably short and the accent fell on the first syllable. Thus throughout this book we call the Stratford man by the name he himself used, Shaksper. When we say Shakespeare we mean the author, unless we are quoting or reciting the London entries which may refer to the Stratford man—such, for instance, as the reference to his being a tax-defaulter, etc.

The similarity of names was a pure coincidence, of which, however, advantage was taken by Shaksper to his own financial gain, and after his death by Ben Jonson, Bacon, and Lord Oxford’s family, for the insertion in the First Folio of the false clue that later led biographers and others in cumulative numbers to Stratford-on-Avon.

It should be understood that during Shaksper’s lifetime there was no reference which the most diligent research has been able to find, to indicate that he was ever the author of anything, except his will. Most of his entire life was spent in Stratford, first as a butcher’s apprentice during his teens and as a grain dealer from the age of 33 until his death. For several years he lived in London, having a dubious connection with the theater, finally becoming perhaps a minor actor. That is all we know of him. Every known item is given below. It could all be put on one page.

The recorded facts in the life of William Shaksper begin with an entry in the Stratford Parish Register: *C. Gulielmus filius Johannes Shaksper* was christened April 26, 1564. The date of his birth is not given. The next record is the issuance of a marriage license eighteen years later on November 27, 1582 in the Bishop of Worcester's Registry in Stratford, authorizing the marriage of William Shaxper to Anne Whatley of Temple Grafton. On the following day a bond was filed in the same registry signed by two bondsmen to guarantee the Bishop against all liability, should a lawful impediment exist to the marriage of Wm. Shagsper to Anne Hathway of Shottery. Just when the marriage of these Annes took place is not known; but within six months after these entries in the Bishop's Registry a daughter of Shaksper named Susanna was recorded as christened on May 26, 1583. And on February 2, 1585. was entered in the Registry at Stratford the baptism of twins born to the William Shaksperc. From the time of his own christening, April 26, 1564, until the date of the marriage license nothing whatever is known of his life. There is no record of his ever having attended school.

There existed in Stratford a Grammar School of sorts provided with few if any textbooks but with the inevitable "horn book chained to the desk." Shaksper's parents were illiterate; they could not have taught their son reading and writing. William Shaksper seems never to have acquired the art of penmanship, if we are to judge from the three crude signatures to his will in 1616 and the three illegible scrawls he made of his name in 1612—the only times he ever tried to sign his name, so far as diligent research has discovered. When Shaksper was asked to write he always declined, saying he was "in paine." as Beeston, the actor, declared in later years.

The common people of sixteenth-century England were not only illiterate but dismally ignorant; a wide gulf separated them from the nobility. In the provincial cities and towns the people spoke dialects scarcely comprehensible in other counties. This was the case of the soldiers and sailors who came from Stratford and other towns to fight in the war against Spain in 1588. The first English grammar was published only in the seventeenth century. Among the yeomen the art of writing was almost unknown, and among tradesmen in the provinces it was considered a high accomplishment.

The first biographer of William Shaksper who made an honest effort to find out and record the truth was Halliwell-Phillips. He tells us that in March, 1565, John Shaksper, the father of William, and his colleagues in office, could not even write their own names, and that nearly all tradesmen reckoned with counters. As bailiff, John Shaksper made his mark in signing official papers.

On March 29, 1577, a warrant of habeas corpus showed John Shaksper had been in prison. In 1592 it is recorded that he was one of fifteen persons who "come not to church for fear of process for debt." And he was fined for allowing filth to accumulate in front of his home. In 1575 John Shaksper acquired the house in Henley Street now misrepresented as the "Birthplace," which thousands of gullible tourists pay fees to enter.

After the birth of his twins in 1585 there is no further record in Stratford of William Shaksper (except that his name appears as a party to a court action in 1589) until 1597, when he contracted to purchase "New Place." He was recorded that year as a "householder" in Stratford and listed as the owner of "ten quarter of grain." According to tradition, which Halli-

well-Phillips accepted, he had been apprenticed to a butcher when he was thirteen. The Clerk of Stratford Parish, the only Stratfordian alive during Shaksper's life ever named in an interview, told one Dowdall that Shaksper left Stratford and became a "servitur" in a London theatre.

In 1593 occurred an event of pointed and comprehensive significance. This was the publication of the long poem, *Venus and Adonis*, written in polished, sophisticated English, which marked the Earl of Oxford's first public use of his pseudonym (the "first heir of my invention"—the name he had invented). The dedication to Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton, was signed "William Shakespeare." The publisher, John Harrison, had in 1578 published a volume on military tactics dedicated to the 17th Earl of Oxford. *Venus and Adonis* was printed by Richard Field, a London printer who had come from Stratford-on-Avon, where his father was a tanner, and who in this town of 1600 population was no doubt acquainted with the butcher, John Shaksper. *Venus and Adonis* at once became popular, and several subsequent editions were printed by Richard Field, who in 1594 also printed Oxford's second long poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, with his pseudonym, William Shakespeare, signed to the dedication to the Earl of Southampton. That the name "William Shakespeare" was recognized in some quarters as a made name is shown by an address prefixed to an anonymous poem, *Willobie his Aviso*, published late in 1594:

Yet Tarquyne pluckt his glistering grape
And Shake-speare paints poor Lucrece rape.

This is the first known allusion to the author "Shakespeare" under his pseudonym. As subsequent editions of *Venus and Adonis* were published, the mystery of the authorship grew. Persons at court and some of the literati knew that "William Shakespeare" was the anonymous dramatist whose plays had long been popular. In 1599 John Weever published a tribute beginning:

Honey-tongued Shakespeare, when I saw thine issue,
I swore Apollo got them and none other.
Rose-checkt Adonis.
Romea-Richard, more whose names I know not.

Other writers who were aware that the author was the Earl of Oxford were Edmund Spenser, Marston, Greene, Thomas Nashe, and Marlowe. John Lyly and Anthony Munday, Kyd and Dekker, who had been in Oxford's employ as secretaries, knew. So did Gabriel Harvey. Some merely understood that "William Shakespeare" was the pen-name of a nobleman who wrote the perennially popular plays, but were ignorant of his identity.

Oxford's dramas were written at first for the entertainment of the Queen and the personages at court, including many foreign diplomats; he himself aided in producing them, and with other young nobles often acted in them. Then in 1580 he took over Warwick's company of actors who thenceforth performed Oxford's plays at court even after the Queen's own company was established by Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, in 1583. In this year, Lord Oxford leased the Blackfriars for use as a private theatre where his company acted under the management of Lyly and Evans. (Oxford's was the only adult company giving plays at court in the season of 1584-5.) His actors played in the provinces as a road company continuously for the first five years of the

Eighties, and from time to time until the Nineties. During the Eighties Lord Oxford also had a company made up of choir boys from St. Paul's and of the Chapel Royal, who played at court.

As such plays as *Hamlet*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* began to be played in public theatres, becoming more and more popular in the late Eighties and early Nineties, printers grew eager to publish them. This they could not do without the risk of being sued; nor could they obtain possession of the manuscripts. Although there was no statutory copyright in England under Elizabeth, there was common law copyright: that is, protection by the common law courts of the property rights of an author to his work. The principle of common-law copyright is still recognized by the courts of England and also by the courts of the United States, where there is also statutory copyright. Copinger and Skone James state:

Every man has the right at common law to the first publication of his own manuscript. He has in fact supreme control over his own production and may either exclude others from their enjoyment or may dispose of them as he pleases.²

This statement is applied to the common law of the Elizabethan era.

The printers of London were at a loss to know how they could meet the demand for the publication of these plays. Likewise theatrical producers were eager to obtain them for their theatres. Since the author, who was the owner of the copyright, was anonymous, known to comparatively few persons as the Earl of Oxford, and to a few others as a nobleman using the *nom de plume*, William Shakespeare, there was the obvious difficulty not only of obtaining possession of the manuscripts, but also of securing the right to produce or publish them. The demand became so urgent that finally an ingenious, although illegal, method was adopted by printers to meet it. This method is explained and worked out very cleverly by A. S. Cairncross. In his valuable study, *The Problem of Hamlet, a Solution* (1936, Macmillan), an actor with a well-trained memory who had played Marcellus in *Hamlet* memorized the parts of the other characters, writing out as much of the entire play as he could recall. The result was a garbled and abbreviated version occasionally embodying lines or words from some other play in which the actor had taken part. And this constituted the "stolen and surreptitious" copy of *Hamlet*. Cairncross proves that this pirated copy existed before 1593, and that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had been written certainly by 1588.

Cairncross utilized the scientific studies of *Stolen and Surreptitious Copies* by Professor Alfred Hart of Melbourne University, demonstrating that the following plays were memorized, written out and published in garbled versions: the three parts of *Henry VI*, printed anonymously under the titles of *The Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke*; *King Lear*, printed under the title *The True Chronicle of the History of the Life and Death of King Lear and His Three Daughters* (1608); and *Romeo and*

² Copinger & Skone James on Copyright, (7th edition, Sweet and Maxwell, 1949). The Court of Appeals of the State of New York rendered a decision on December 29, 1949, holding that the common-law copyright of a literary composition is separate from the ownership of the paper on which it is written and that the copyright belongs to the author until disposed of by him and not to the owner of the author's manuscript. The Court affirmed the judgment, forever enjoining the owner of the manuscript written by Samuel L. Clemens—who likewise wrote under a pseudonym—from publishing it. [This reference and comment appear in parentheses in the body of Ogburn's text.—Ed.]

Juliet as An Excellent Conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet (1599). *Hamlet* was printed under its own title, and *The Taming of the Shrew* under the title of *The Taming of a Shrew*. All these pirated plays were performed and printed anonymously until 1598, except that the garbled *Hamlet* was not printed until 1603.

The question naturally arises, How did the printers justify their action in putting out plays without the consent of the owner? To obtain the answer we have to analyze and interpret various references to this practice as found in the writings of Ben Jonson and other contemporary works. It had been rumored for some time that the anonymous playwright was none other than the author of the two long poems published under the *nom de plume* of William Shakespeare. Now enters the young man who had come from Stratford and got a job as a “servitur” in a London theatre, William Shaksper. Struck by the similarity of his name to the name signed to the popular *Venus and Adonis*, he saw the possibilities for taking advantage of it.

It would be less risky (or so they thought) for printers to accept one of the “stoln and surreptitious” copies of the Shakespeare plays from this man who, though no more than an agent of an undisclosed principal, was connected with the London theatre. The gist of the offense of the “Poet-Ape” (Shaksper) was that he passed off plays of other men as his own. The Stratford man became so “proud by underhand brokery” that he must needs have a coat-of-arms and pass himself off as a “gentleman born.” Shaksper’s lowly status around the theatre, “a servitur,” a handyman, or a minor actor, would preclude him from making an application for a coat-of-arms.

The application could, however, be made by his father. Filed in 1596, the application was interlined with the statement that John Shaksper had married Mary, daughter of Robert Arden of Warwickshire, a yeoman branch of a family that bore arms, and the proposal was therefore submitted that he be allowed to impale the arms of Arden.

A draft of a “coat-armour” was drawn up in the College of Arms to John Shaksper (or Shakspere), dated October, 1596. It was not ratified by the College of Heralds, nor were the impaled arms of Arden authorized. According to Sidney Lee the Heralds “betrayed conscientious scruples and this claim was abandoned.” One reason, Halliwell-Phillipps suggests, was that both of Shaksper’s parents were “descended from obscure peasantry.” In 1597 however changes took place in the College and Shaksper now asserted that

certain draft grants prepared by the Heralds in the previous year [1596] had been assigned to John Shaksper while he was bailiff, and the Heralds, instead of being asked for a grant of arms, were merely “invited to give him a recognition or exemplification of it, which was a thing much more easily secured than a grant, for the Heralds might if they chose, tacitly accept without examination the applicant’s statement that his family had borne arms long ago, and they thereby regarded themselves as relieved of the obligation of close inquiry into his present status.” (Lee, 151.)

“There was, however,” according to Greenwood, “a limit beyond which these complaisant Heralds refused to go”—the claim of Mary Shaksper to the Arden arms.

Richard Grant White speaks of the “pretension of gentry set up” when the coat.of.arms was asked for with the actor’s money, that coat of arms which Shaksper prized because it made

him a “gentleman by birth.” Elsewhere he remarks, “The more than the squalid appearance of the place [on Henley Street] saddened me.”

The first application had been denied by the Garter King-at-Arms with the notation: *Non, Sanz Droict*. Sir William Dethick, Garter King-at-Arms in 1599, was charged with having granted coats to persons of base origin not entitled to them, and the case of John Shaksper was one of those complained of.

We have gone into this matter of the coat-of-arms rather fully because Ben Jonson makes much of it in satirizing Shaksper’s pretensions in his play, *Every Man Out of His Humour* (produced in 1598 and published 1601).

The year 1597 was a momentous one in our chronicle. It was the year Lord Oxford decided—with how great reluctance who can measure?—permanently to secure his anonymity as playwright, making it doubly sure by publishing his plays under the pseudonym used for his long poems in 1593 and 1594. And 1597 was the year William Shaksper decided to return to Stratford to live—or perhaps this was decided for him. Six of the plays we now call Shakespeare’s had been pirated in the manner Cairncross describes and printed in garbled, abbreviated editions. The true author had made no protest, had initiated no legal action to stop these thefts. But obviously this sort of thing could not be allowed to go on. Oxford’s decision meant that he must give up during his life all hope of being publicly acknowledged as the great dramatist. The next year 1598 marked the first time any of his plays were published under his pseudonym—*Richard II* and *Richard III* under the name of William Shakespeare, hyphenated, and *Love’s Labor’s Lost* under the name William Shakespere.

The next step was to get William Shaksper out of London, or at least get him away from the activities Jonson described in *The Poet-Ape*. It is interesting that Nicholas Rowe quotes Sir William Davenant as saying that the Stratford man had received one thousand pounds from the Earl of Southampton for the purchase of property. The first purchase made by Shaksper was of “New Place” in Stratford, which he contracted to buy in 1597. He completed the purchase in 1601 when he obtained a deed after a delay occasioned by the murder of the seller, William Underhill. Shaksper was described that year as a “householder” of Stratford. He bought additional real estate there, 107 acres, in 1602; and he purchased the tithes from the towns of Stratford, Old Stratford, Bishopton and Welcombe in 1605 for four hundred and forty pounds. In 1614 Shaksper made another deal in Stratford real estate.

Besides engaging in these transactions, William Shaksper and his father—until the latter’s death in 1601—were grain speculators, supplementing the father’s business as a wool-dealer. In January, 1598, William is recorded as the third-largest hoarder of grain (corn) in Warwickshire. Records show that owing to the drought and to the Spanish wars, there was a shortage grain in Warwickshire in 1597-8. Jonson makes John Shaksper, in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, “the farmer who [almost] hanged himself on the expectation of plenty.” William also was engaged in selling malt. In July, 1604, his legal action against one Philip Rogers was tried in a local Stratford court. The suit was for two shillings loaned to Rogers and for one pound fifteen shillings, the purchase price of malt sold to Rogers by Shaksper in March, 1604. In February, 1609, William Shaksper obtained judgment for six pounds and one pound five shillings costs in Stratford against another fellow-townsmen, John Addenbroke, and a surety, one Thomas Horneby, against whom

according to Sidney Lee, Shaksper “avenged himself.” He sent the surety to prison for the unpaid judgment, Addenbroke having left town. In 1612 Shaksper’s name was in a bill of complaint affecting the tithes.

In 1614, William Shaksper, W. Combe, and M. Mainwaring sought to enclose for themselves the common pasture land near Stratford and thus deprive the poor of their time-honored rights of pasturage. The only recorded conversation of Shaksper’s so far found, is one with his “cosen,” Thomas Green, the town clerk who recorded it in his diary, 1614, as he did one or two other items’ about Shaksper and the enclosures. Shaksper did not discuss the theatre, did not discuss’ literature or the drama. He is merely reported as having told his “cosen” that they meant to enclose the commons no further than to Gospell Bush. The Town of Stratford successfully opposed this rather high-handed appropriation of the commons.

There is one remaining instance which must be noted to make the Stratford record complete. In the Chamberlain’s accounts of Stratford there is an entry to the effect that the Town of Stratford is charged for one quart of claret given to a preacher at William Shaksper’s home in 1614. That entry is worth a paragraph.

We pass on to the will which Shaksper executed in January 1616. The most interesting feature of Shaksper’s will is his signature, or rather his signatures. Next are the interlineations inserted after the will was drawn, as an afterthought; the bequest of his “second-best bed” to his wife, his sole bequest to her; and the bequests interlined at some later date to “John Hemynges, Richarge Burbage and Henry Cundell of xxvjs and viijd a peece to buy them rings,” which could be part of the “build-up” of Shaksper undertaken by the perpetrators of the hoax in the First Folio. Another very significant point regarding the will is that there is no mention whatever, no bequest, of a library or of a book or a manuscript. The will itemizes and disposes of various articles of a personal nature: a sword, a bowl, jewels, plate, but no books. Incidentally, no shares in any theatre were mentioned in the will. There was no devise to his wife, no life-interest was given her in the real estate which he left to his daughter; and no bequest was made to Ben Jonson, who said he loved Shakespeare “on this side idolatry.”

The only mention of Anne as Shaksper’s wife, except the bequest in 1616, is found in the will of Thomas Whittington, who had been a shepherd and who died in 1601. This is the extract from the will, as Halliwell-Phillips gives it: “Unto the poore people of Stratford xi.1. that is in the hand of Anne Shaxper, and is due debt unto me, being paid to mine executor by the said Wyllyam Shaksper or his assignees according to the true meanyng of this my will.”

The only letter ever written to William Shaksper, so far as has been discovered, is one from Richard Quiney in 1598 addressed to “Mr. Wm. Shackspere” and requesting a loan of thirty pounds. This letter was found in Stratford where it is now preserved. A letter from Abraham Sturley to Richard Quincy in the same year makes the request that “our countriman, Mr. Shaksper,’ procure a loan for him, thus indicating that Mr. Shaksper might have become a loan-broker. A second letter from Sturley to Quiney making the same request refers to him as “Mr. Shak.’

The foregoing is absolutely all that is known of the life of William Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon. At his death in April, 1616, no one referred to him as an author, or playwright, or actor. In fact there was no public mention of his death at all.

His son-in-law, Dr. Hall, entered one line in his diary: "My father-in-law died on Thursday." That was all.

The facts of Shaksper's life in Stratford, meager as they are, suffice to demonstrate the impossibility of his having had any literary interests or of his capacity to write plays or poems. Knowing what we do of his life in Stratford from 1597 until 1614, we are convinced that he could not have been a writer or had literary interests. Had he owned a library, or even a folio or two, his will would surely have made some disposition of it, as it did of his bowl, his sword, and his second-best bed. An actor of that day with any education would have been interested in owning books. Hemming, who died in 1630 at the age of seventy-five, provided in his will that five pounds should be spent for books for the education of a grandchild.

[...]

It behooves us now, after having cited every item pertaining to Shaksper in the records of the day, to make a few observations about the lacunae in the records.

The Treasurer of the Chamber accounts, which record payments to actors, never list Shakespeare as an actor during the whole time Shakespearean plays were being produced at Court. (In the suspicious Hemming entry recited above he is, however, named one of three payees, "servants of the Lord Chamberlain.") Records in London and in some seventy smaller cities and towns in England, as we have said, give the names of the leading actors of Elizabeth's and also James's reign, and often the parts they played—Tarleton, Kempe, Burbage, Condell, Alleyn and others—but never once, until after his death, is the name Shakespeare mentioned as an actor in the cast, when it twice appears in Jonson's Folio of 1616. Mrs. C. C. Stopes in *Burbage and Shakespeare* confesses that the records of all actors appearing at Court from 1597 to 1616 fail to reveal a Shakespeare.

There is no reference of any sort anywhere identifying the dramatist and poet Shakespeare as the man from Stratford during the latter's lifetime. There is no reference during Shaksper's lifetime identifying him or the actor Shakespeare, as the playwright. No scrap of writing which can be attributed to the Stratford man, William Shaksper, no letters, no memoranda, no diary, no manuscripts, have ever been found. The reason that none has been found is patently that none was written. If we are to judge by his illegible scrawl—and that is all we have to judge by, he did not know how to write. He would say he was "in paine," when asked to write.

Edward Alleyn, the son-in-law and partner of Henslowe, was one of the leading actors of the period during which Shaksper is supposed to have been on the London stage. Alleyn's memoirs and papers, published in 1841 and 1843, "contain the names of all the notable actors and play-poets of Shaksper's time, as well as of every person who helped, directly or indirectly, or who paid out money or who received money in connection with the production of the many plays at the Blackfriars Theatre, the Fortune, and other theatres. His accounts were very minutely stated, and a careful perusal of the two volumes shows that there is not one mention of William Shaksper or Shakespeare in his list of actors, poets, and theatrical comrades."

Henslowe was a theatrical producer in London at the time and, from 1591 until 1609, kept a detailed account-book or journal of the plays he put on, the payments of royalties to dramatists, and

payments to actors. During this period he produced a number of Shakespearean plays. There is no mention from one end of his journal to the other of the name Shaksper or Shakespeare. The reason is obvious: Lord Oxford, as an anonymous dramatist and nobleman, accepted no royalty payments. The names, signatures, handwriting, of all other leading playwrights of the day are to be found in Henslowe's journal; but not Shaksper's. Frequent are the names of Ben Jonson, Dekker, Chettle, Marston, Wilson, Drayton, Munday, Heywood, Middleton, Porter, Webster, Day, Chapman, and others, but never one mention of Shaksper or Shakespeare as an actor or playwright. There is no record anywhere of any royalty payment to Shaksper or Shakespeare.

Although sixteen of the Shakespearean plays were entered for publication at the Stationers' Register before 1610, none was ever entered in Shaksper's or Shakespeare's name. There is no evidence whatever, not an iota, that anyone during Shaksper's life ever referred to him as the playwright. It was not until seven years after his death that the basis for the myth was laid in the "red herring" inserted in the First Folio. Had Shaksper been both a playwright and an actor, especially a theatrical manager, as his biographers maintain, he would have seen to it that his plays were retained for the theatre, and not stolen and published.

[...]

An immense gulf separates the illiterate youth of Stratford who at thirty-four was a grain-speculator, a dealer in malt and a frequent litigant in the courts of Stratford, from the broadly cultured courtier and nobleman, educated in the classics, in Latin and Greek, in French and Italian, in music and in law, who was the real author. In order to bridge this gulf and bestow upon the Stratford burgher the manifest qualifications of the writer of the Shakespearean plays, his biographers are compelled to rely upon manufactured evidence and conjecture. These biographers seem never to have suspected that the one reference to Stratford in connection with the poet-dramatist, to-wit, Leonard Digges's phrase in the First Folio, was inserted deliberately to divert suspicion from the true author to a dummy. "Thy Stratford moniment," he wrote. To enhance the plausibility Ben Jonson, who three years before had written a list of the distinguished persons he had known and omitted Shaksper's name, and Shakespeare's, now undertook to give Shaksper the status of an actor of the rank of Burbage, Alleyn, Heminge and Condell (to which he was certainly not entitled.) The name of William Shakespeare was listed in the First Folio, taking precedence over the others, as one of the leading actors of London: a flagrant deception.

When Oxford's daughters and their husbands, probably in collaboration with the eighteenth earl, decided to publish the twenty Shakespearean plays never before published, Ben Jonson's aid was enlisted for this First Folio, and two leading actors of the day, Hemminge and Condell, were made the "front" for the publication. Their names were signed to the dedicatory letter and to the preface addressed to "the Great Variety of Readers." Both compositions were obviously from the hand of Ben Jonson. The dedication is to "the most 'Noble and Incomparable Paire of Brethren William Earle of pembroke, etc., Lord Chamberlain to the King's most excellent Majesty, and Philip, earl of Montgomery" [Oxford's son-in-law], etc., etc.

The preface states that the friends of the author, who is dead, have collected his manuscripts "and so to have published them, as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stoln, and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injunous imposters." The Preface

further assures the “Great Variety of Readers” that “wee have scarce received from him [the author] a blot in his papers,” because “what he thought he uttered with that easiness,” etc.

Of the thirty-six plays published in the First Folio, twenty had never before been printed, and most of these had never been produced on any stage. Where did Ben Jonson or the publishers obtain the manuscripts of those never-before produced or printed? Obviously from the “grand possessors” to whom, as stated in the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, 1609 Quarto, these manuscripts belonged. The “grand possessors” could only have been Oxford’s family—the author’s family. The illiterate Judith, daughter of William Shaksper of Stratford. or Shaksper himself, who was active in business in 1609 in Stratford, could not, by any stretch of courtesy, be called a “grand possessor .”

The publishers, as well as Lord Oxford’s family, undoubtedly foresaw the furor of interest which would be aroused by the appearance of these thirty-six great dramas, a score of them for the first time, in folio. It would be the most spectacular publishing event in English literary history. No expense and no effort were spared to make it a notable one. The cost was too high for the publication to have been an ordinary commercial venture. There is a record of one copy’s having been sold just after publication, in 1624, for one pound, which would be ten dollars in today’s money. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who was familiar with printing practices, estimated the number of volumes published to have been five hundred. Obviously the venture was subsidized by the two noblemen to whom the Folio was dedicated, the Earl of Pembroke, and his brother, the Earl of Montgomery, Oxford’s son-in-law. These two were the sons of Lord Oxford’s friend, Lady Mary Pembroke.

There is reason to believe that Ben Jonson may have actually suggested the publication of the First Folio, persuading the reluctant Countesses, Oxford’s daughters, that their father’s anonymity could be protected by going to the extreme of indicating that William Shakespeare was the name of a real person in Stratford, who had been a minor actor. It is significant that the Lord Chamberlain, who was the brother of Oxford’s son-in-law, arranged in 1616 for a pension to Ben Jonson of one hundred marks a year, temporarily increased in 1621 to two hundred pounds, equivalent to \$8,000 in today’s money.

Thus was laid the basis for the most amazing literary hoax of all time. Its success has surely gone beyond the most optimistic hopes of those who conceived and executed it. Ben Jonson himself would no doubt be the most astonished of all, could he know that William Shaksper of Stratford, the pretentious and uncouth impostor pictured in Jonson’s own plays, as Sogliardo-Shift and the Poetaster, is to this day believed, as a result of his artful ambiguities, to be the author of the great dramas which had so stirred Jonson’s envy. He would be also not a little gratified, for thus his own standing is enhanced; and he would always—did always—sacrifice any man, and any truth, for that.

Public curiosity concerning the author of the First Folio was inevitable, and this must be provided for. Essential for a frontispiece would be a likeness of the author, a picture of the mysterious “Shakespeare.” An engraving was accordingly made for this purpose by a London artist only twenty years of age. His name was Droeshout. It is not known what model he used for the engraving. Someone took thought also for providing paintings by famous artists of “Mr. Shakespeare.” A portrait of Edward de Vere was altered by some

capable hand. It was given a bald head; the ruff embroidered with the Tudor rose, which was *de rigueur* in the costume of courtiers, was painted out of the Oxford portrait and there was substituted the plain neckpiece of a commoner such as Shaksper might have worn. The wild boar crest embellishing the signet-ring Lord Oxford wore on his thumb is partially discernible. The Trentham coat-of-arms in the upper left-hand corner was painted out. (It was customary for a nobleman's portrait to be thus inscribed with his wife's coat-of arms.) All this and more can be seen in Charles Wisner Barrell's X-ray and infra-red photographs-reproduced in *The Scientific American*, January 1940-of the Ashbourne portrait of Shakespeare which hangs in the Folger Library in Washington. This portrait of the Earl of Oxford, which shows him wearing the court dress of an Elizabethan nobleman, was painted by Cornelius Ketel, a well-known Dutch artist.

M. H. Spielmann, the great "orthodox" expert on the portraits of Shakespeare, asserts that of all the portraits only the Droeshout engraving and the Stratford monument (how different in appearance the two are!) display the slightest semblance of authenticity, and all the others are frauds made by unknown artists. The Hampton Court portrait, owned by the King of England, has many indications of being a portrait of Lord Oxford, clumsily painted over, as a Barrell X-ray picture shows.

Thus we see upon what a slim and mythical basis has been constructed, without any evidence worthy of the name, the tradition and belief that William Shaksper of Stratford was in fact the greatest of English poets and dramatists, William Shakespeare. Biographers have been forced to adopt tortuous devices in an effort to stabilize that theory. They have had to accuse the greatest luminary in the history of English literature of plagiarizing the works of lesser poets and dramatists such as Marlowe, Lodge, Greene, and even Kyd, so that they might date the plays to correspond with Shaksper's maturity. They have presented this essential courtier and this magnificent man of the Elizabethan Renaissance as writing potboilers for the Jacobean stage!

To explain the author's great learning, his knowledge of the classics of law, of court procedure, court manners and speech, Shaksper's biographers fall back upon another argument which is fallacious: that he was a genius and *ipso facto* became possessed of vast knowledge. It is true that the dramatist was a genius, the greatest the world has ever known. But a genius must acquire both knowledge and experience. Even a genius could learn Latin, Greek, French, Italian, history, law, only by close study under competent teachers and from textbooks. Such studies, either in a university or at the Inns of Court, were obviously not available to the Stratford youth. Flippancy is certainly no answer to the question, yet defenders of the Stratford man frequently say with a lofty air of finality that "Shakespeare was Shakespeare"; which is no more than to state that George Eliot was George Eliot or that Mark Twain was Mark Twain.

Class distinctions in England in the sixteenth century were marked and inflexible. Shaksper's family belonged to the peasant and yeoman class: Mary Arden's father was a small farmer near Stratford related to a family which had won the right to bear arms. The gulf between the peasant, yeomen, tradesmen class and the old aristocracy, not only in social status but also in education and political importance, was so great as to be almost beyond the realization of persons reared in the United States where there have been practically no class distinctions. Shaksper's parents and daughters were illiterate, and Shaksper—to judge by his crude handwriting—was almost so. Throughout his youth in Stratford the family lived in squalid surroundings. The educational facili-

ties were meager; there was a dearth of text-books: Stratford was once described as “a bookless community.” Most provincial towns were such. Books were very expensive, and few were obtainable except by the well-to-do and by the universities.

William Shaksper, coming to London from such an environment—uneducated, speaking a provincial dialect, becoming connected with the public theatre, where the lowest classes gathered, finally acting as a “fence” for stolen plays, and as a play-broker, could in no conceivable manner have had an entree to the court or to the homes of courtiers; nor could he have had any opportunity to acquire knowledge of court-life, of court-language, of court-etiquette, which the author of the plays possessed as by second nature. Few of the classics, Greek and Latin, had been translated into English. There were no public libraries, no encyclopedias or dictionaries, no means of acquiring even a smattering of learning, except from the original sources. It was very different from the situation today. There were no travel- or guide-books. Knowledge of other countries had to be acquired by travel or by listening to the discourse of persons who had travelled. Foreign travel was extremely costly: it was only the privileged and well-to-do who travelled abroad.

By no process of reasoning and only by blind faith, which accepts the traditional and adores the myth, could such an uneducated man as Shaksper—a man primarily interested in making money, materialistic, provincial—be today identified as the greatest poet and dramatist in English letters, the writer of the most polished verse and noblest dramas, when there is no evidence at all to support such a claim. One argument made to us was that since he has been regarded as the author for three hundred years, he must be the author. For a longer time than three hundred years the world was believed to be flat, and universities continued to teach this as fact even after Magellan’s fleet had sailed around the globe.

9. The Importance of Oxford's Geneva Bible

2001

Perhaps the most valuable recent work on the Shakespeare-Oxford connection is Roger Stritmatter's unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2001), available in a limited online version.¹ Stritmatter compares Oxford's hand-annotated bible with well-known (and some not so well known) biblical allusions in Shakespeare. He finds a significantly high correlation: of 1,043 passages marked by De Vere, 246 or 23.6 percent are cited or referred to in the Works.

This is the kind of confirmatory evidence Looney predicted, and of course precisely what we would expect if the Oxfordian hypothesis is correct. We may have—probably do have—Shakespeare's personal bible, with his own annotations in his own hand. Among the unhappiest features of current Stratfordian scholarship is the total lack of interest in this document. This is one illustration of our claim that the Oxfordian hypothesis opens up Shakespeare studies rather than (as is routinely claimed) closing them down.



Geneva Bible, 1560

As noted above, among the most successful recent interventions in the so-called Authorship Debate is Roger Stritmatter's unpublished PhD dissertation examining De Vere's personal bible. Stritmatter argues at length that Oxford was Shakespeare, a case we need not recapitulate here, and that therefore the notes and underlinings we find in his well-

¹ <http://shake-speares-bible.com/dissertation/> Stritmatter's appendices, including tabulated data, are unfortunately missing. According to his website, they include Table A: Marked bible verses previously cited as definite or probable influences on Shakespeare (Carter 1905; Noble 1935; Milward 1976; Milward 1987; Shaheen 1987; Shaheen 1989; Shaheen 1993); Table B: Direct and unambiguous cross-references to verses cited by prior students; Table C: Marked verses which influenced Shakespeare; Table D: Marked Psalms previously recorded as influencing Shakespeare. Biblical references in Marlowe, Spenser, Rabelais, Montaigne are compiled in appendices E and F. "While the De Vere Bible annotations show a 42% correspondence with Shakespeare, all other English writers approach zero and never more than 7%."

Stritmatter's website states: "I am an Associate Professor of Humanities at Coppin State University, a founding member and officer of The Shakespeare Fellowship, and the General Editor of *Brief Chronicles: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Authorship Studies*. My first book, *Shakespeare's Tempest: A Movable Feast*, co-written with critically acclaimed young adult fiction writer Lynne Kositsky, will be published this year by McFarland Press. A second book on Herman Melville may temporarily preempt the Shakespeare's Bible project — but that book will eventually, I promise, be written and published."

read bible should throw some light on the Works generally and the authorship question in particular.

It turns out that Stritmatter is right on both counts, suggesting that he is also right about Shakespeare's true identity—the primary purpose of his argument. The bible in question, dated 1560 and now in the Folger collection, unquestionably belonged to the seventeenth earl. So the connection is not just general, as has always been argued in the case of “Shakespeare,” whose reliance on just such a bible is a critical commonplace, but persuasively particular. Stritmatter presents the history of the volume's purchase and decoration with De Vere's heraldic arms—the records exist. Textually and bibliographically it is a second-quarto “Geneva Bible,” prepared in Switzerland during the 1550s by William Whittingham and other Protestant exiles fleeing Mary Tudor.² According to Stritmatter, the margins contain “over a thousand marked and underlined Bible passages in the fine italic handwriting of Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford” in four different inks: scarlet, orange, brown-black and grey, suggesting repeated visits over time.

What's interesting is that there is a very high correlation between these passages (often emphasized by a swiftly drawn manicule or hand with a pointing index finger) and their echo in the play's and poems of Shakespeare. Stritmatter notes that

One hundred and forty-one of these verses have been designated as influential for Shakespeare—either as source or parallel—by prior scholars (Noble 1935; Shaheen 1987, 1989, 1993; Milward 1987). The remaining number exhibit various degrees or types of significance within the Shakespeare canon, from minor examples which exhibit only a probable or subtle influence, to those which display definite or even pervasive influences in the canon... One hundred and thirty-seven more marked verses exhibit an influence previously undocumented by scholars of Shakespeare's Bible knowledge.

It's not only a question of phrasing or imagery, though these are statistically present at rates far higher than chance. Two hundred of the marked verses contain more than six hundred allusions in Shakespeare, an average of almost three per marked verse. Thematically too there are significant reverberations, especially between passages dealing with the divine right of kings and *vindictia contra tyrannos*,³ major themes of course, especially in the history plays.

Some passages have been interestingly edited: *Ecclesiasticus* 14.13, for instance, which exhorts giving alms to “thy friend,” has been altered to “unto the poore,” reflecting the wording of the Vulgate, “da pauperi” (*Gramatica* 1913). This suggests that the annotator was both a thinking man and a biblical scholar, qualities evident in “Shakespeare.”

Among Stritmatter's striking examples is the marking of Numbers 20.7-8. He notes that Stratfordian scholars like Peter Milward (1973, 93) and Nasseb Shaheen (1993) have previously identified these verses as the source of

² “The Geneva Bible is one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into English, preceding the King James translation by 51 years. It was the primary Bible of 16th-century Protestantism and was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Knox, John Donne, and John Bunyan.” (Wikipedia). Since news of Stritmatter's work leaked out Stratfordians have been hastily back-pedaling on the “used by William Shakespeare” part.

³ An influential Huguenot tract published in Basel in 1579.

Helena: Great floods have flown
From simple sources, and great seas have dried
When miracles have by the greatest been denied.

—*All's Well that Ends Well*, II.i.139-141

A second instance comes from the apocryphal book of *Ecclesiasticus*, where De Vere has marked a whole series of verses about reciprocal forgiveness. Their multiple influence upon Shakespeare is a matter of scholarly consensus. Carter (1905) cites:

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice more than thou desirest

—*Merchant of Venice*, IV.iii.316

And

Bol. I pardon him, as God shall pardon me.
Dutch. O happy vantage of a kneeling knee!
Yet I am sick with fear, speak it again,
Twice saying 'pardon' doth not pardon twain
But makes one pardon strong.

—*Richard II*, V.iii.131-136.

Noble (1935) and Shaheen (1989, 1993) also note:

The mercy that was quick in us but late,
By your own counsel is suppress'd and kill'd.
You must not dare, for shame, to talk of mercy.

—*Henry V*, 2.2.79-83

We do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

—*Merchant of Venice*, IV.i.198-200

A second level of evidence, which Stritmatter calls "verification with extension," includes marked verses with more influence in the canon than previously suspected. An instance is the Pauline doctrine of the alien nature of the agency of sin (Romans 7.15-20), which appears repeatedly in the plays and poems, most notably perhaps in Sonnet 151.⁴

Stritmatter's third level of evidence, "prediction from new data," goes from the marked passages to the Works, rather than, as conventionally, the other way around. The results consist of a number of previously unrecognized Shakespeare Biblical references, 137 in all. They include "whore of Babylon" (*Henry V* II.iii.38-39) and the phrase "laughed to scorn," *Ecclus.* 6.4, which occurs three times in Shakespeare.⁵

A fourth evidentiary level involves the convergence of two or more biblical references upon a single Shakespearean source. A good example is Sonnet 94, "They that have power to hurt and will do none," which "filters the moral of Wisdom 12.18...through the formulaic

⁴ See Stritmatter, *Notes and Queries* (December 1997).

⁵ Stritmatter is careful not to overstate his claims here as both instances also occur unmarked in the Bible.

structure of the beatitudes,” as Stritmatter puts it. Another is Macbeth’s uniting of the Pauline doctrine of the body as the temple of the soul with the Old Testament theology of the anointed king. The principal references are II Samuel 1.14 and I Corinthians 6.19, both marked by De Vere:

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke
Ope the Lord’s anointed Temple and Stole thence

The life o’th’ building.

—*Macbeth*, II.iii.63

Stritmatter’s fifth level of evidence, *Correction*, is his “most impressive.” It occurs when the researcher with De Vere’s bible in hand is able to correct the misprisions of earlier scholars who have mistaken the true biblical source. An example is Portia’s

How far that little candle throws his beam!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

—*Merchant of Venice*, V.ii.61-62

This was incorrectly identified by Richmond Noble (1935) as an echo of Matthew 5.16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good workes, and glorify your father which is in heaven.” In fact it is Philippians 2.15, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” Following a correspondence with Stritmatter, Shaheen altered his citation in *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Comedies* (1993).

Additionally, many of the verses marked in the De Vere Bible are under-represented in the studies of Carter, Noble and Shaheen, despite their profound philosophical and theological import for Shakespeare. Examples include the verses of the Platonic cluster (I Sam. 16.7 *et al.*), Romans 7.20, Revelations 3.5 and associated verses, all of which, says Stritmatter, yield a great number of “verifications with extension.”

De Vere’s annotations take in relatively obscure biblical Books, including the apocryphal Tobit, Judith, II Esdras, II Macabees, the later prophets Daniel, Hosea, Malachi, Joel, Amos, Esther, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zechariah, and Zephaniah, and James in the New Testament. The Books not marked seem also to be the ones that interested Shakespeare least: Ruth, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Obadiah, Jonah and Haggai in the Old Testament, Song of the Three Children, Susanna, and I Macabees in the Apocrypha, and Galatians, I Timothy, Philemon, James, II Peter and Jude in the New Testament.

On the other hand, quoting the bible came easily to De Vere, confirming that he read it frequently and not always with a pen in hand. The most famous example, and the one which, in our opinion ties him and Shakespeare together forever, is his use of “I am that I am” (Exodus 3: 14). This reference shows up only twice in Elizabethan literature: Shakespeare’s Sonnet 121 and in an angry letter from Edward De Vere to Lord Burghley. If the phrase “Lillies that fester smell far worse than weeds” was enough to link *Edward III* to Shakespeare, why not this equally striking convergence?

A second telling example is the “beam in the eye” in Matthew 7.3, not marked but used by De Vere in another letter to Burghley (the Lord Treasurer of England) following the St. Bartholomew Day’s massacre, 1572:

And think if the admiral in France was a<n> eyesore or a beam in the eyes of the Papists, that the Lord Treasurer of England is a block and a crossbar in their way; whose remove they will never stick to attempt, seeing they have prevailed so well in others... (Fowler, 1986, 55.)

Shakespeare also liked the phrase and used it at least three times:

The King your mote did see, but I a beam
Do find in each of three. (*Love’s Labor’s Lost*, IV.iii.162)

None, but to lose your eyes.
O heaven! That were but a mote in yours. (*King John*, IV.i.90-91)

A mote it is to trouble the mind’s eye. (*Hamlet*, I.i.112)

Professor Stritmatter’s web site promises that his dissertation, with supporting data, is being actively prepared for hard-copy publication. Our view is that it is likely to transform the terms of the debate.

8. From *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, by Richard Paul Roe

2011



Richard Paul Roe 1922-2010

captioned with witty and often illuminating comments.

Richard Paul Roe, who died soon after publishing *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*,¹ exemplifies the best of the Oxfordian mind. A retired attorney and Shakespeare enthusiast, Roe meticulously followed up every possible reference to Italy in the Works, and over 20 years visited each one. His discoveries show that “the playwright,” as Roe tactfully calls him, knew Italy at first hand and in detail. This single fact alone calls the traditional authorship account into question, since the Stratford grain dealer never left England. The earl of Oxford, on the other hand, extensively visited Italy, including all the towns, cities and regions featured in the plays and poems.

The following extract from Chapter 8, “Midsummer in Sabbioneta” describes Roe’s exciting discovery of renaissance Italy’s “little Athens,” the true location of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Roe’s book is illustrated with his and Stephanie Hopkins Hughes’s eloquent photographs

On my way from Verona to Florence, I made a stop-over for a few days in Mantua, to see the many great works of Giulio Romano (c. 1499-1546). It was a kind of pilgrimage: Giulio Romano is the only Renaissance artist ever named by the playwright. His name is spoken by the Third Gentleman in *The Winter’s Tale*, V.ii:

No: the princess hearing of her mother’s
Statue, which is in the keeping of Paulina—
A piece many years in doing and now newly
Performed by that rare Italian master, Julio
Romano, who, had he himself eternity and
Could put breath into his work, would beguile
Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape ...

On a Sunday morning, a few days later, when ready to continue on to Florence, I was chatting at breakfast with another traveler. He asked me if I had yet visited the unusual small city near Mantua called Sabbioneta. I had never heard of it. He said it was well worth a visit, being a showcase

¹ *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy: Retracing the Bard’s Unknown Travels*, by Richard Paul Roe (Harper Perennial, 2011).

of idealistic architecture, and completely constructed in only one architectural style, the late-sixteenth-century style called “Mannerist.” Moreover it was entirely built during the reign, and under the personal supervision, of its sixteenth-century duke, Vespasiano Gonzaga, a man of singular erudition.

He mentioned this to me, he said, because on Sundays, this very day, escorted tours were offered to the visiting public, since Sabbioneta had recently been restored to be almost as it was when originally built in the sixteenth century. I was intrigued. It would be only a bit of a detour, and though I assumed Sabbioneta wouldn’t have anything to do with the Italian Plays, I realized it would have been under construction, with some of it completed, at the very same time—around 1573 or 1574—when many events described or alluded to in the Italian Plays were happening. In any case, I thought, no matter what, I could experience being in a perfect chunk of what had become my favorite Italian century. So I went there.

Sabbioneta is about forty-five kilometers—only twenty-five miles—southwest of Mantua, on Highway 420, and is still surrounded by its massive walls. I easily drove through the handsome fortified gate, Porta Vittoria, which stood welcoming on its western flank, noting the attractively paved interior streets, as I entered the little city. Straight ahead, I saw a small crowd of people standing in front of a building. I parked nearby. From the sign on the front of the building, I knew it was the local tourist office, and a smaller placard said this was the very hour for which a city tour was scheduled. I bought a tour ticket and was given a brochure entitled *La Piccola Atena*—“Little Athens.” I also purchased a tourist guide in English, with full color pictures and a descriptive text of more than seventy pages.

Our guide explained the carefully planned layout of the city’s streets and plazas, and she told us about the wealthy, enlightened duke who had built the city. He was Vespasiano Gonzaga Colonna (1531-1591), a member of the cadet branch of the powerful Gonzaga of Mantua. Vespasiano was born on 6 December 1531, in Forlì, in the Papal State of Romagna. His father, Luigi Gonzaga, was an illustrious condottiere in the service of Emperor Charles V. Luigi, usually called “Rodomonte,” died when Vespasiano was only one year old.

As a teenager, Vespasiano was sent to the Royal Court of Spain, there to acquire an education in both academics and military disciplines. In service to Philip II, he rose in rank to become experienced in warfare, then a commanding general, a viceroy, and builder in both Europe and North Africa. Vespasiano was an avid student of Vitruvius, the Roman architect and engineer who wrote *De Architectura*—the only surviving Roman treatise on the subject—which he carried with him at all times, even during battle.

Along our guided way, we visited the interiors of a number of impressive buildings, including the once-elegant ducal palazzo, the summer palace, and other structures housing the duke’s galleries, museum, personal church and ducal mausoleum, an elegant small theater, and even his long gallery for exercise, traditional for noblemen of his day. I remembered that in other ducal palaces I had visited, such facilities were included as *part* of the palace. Here, however, the *city itself* was largely the palace of the duke. Indeed, his guards, physician, aides, and servants were accommodated in various edifices *within* the city. In every case, all designs, materials, and the details

of their execution had been subject to the approval of Vespasiano Gonzaga. His walled town was his brainchild and a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

Some of the buildings in Sabbioneta were originally commodious quarters for the duke's invited guests, his pleasure having been in inviting the erudite among both Italy's, and other western Europe's, nobility and intelligentsia for a visit to his model city. While there, they would admire his rich collections of paintings and sculpture and take part in the festivities, salons, and scholarly lectures that he sponsored during his lifetime. Thus, in addition to the name "Sabbioneta," Vespasiano Gonzaga's guests—and then its steadily increasing numbers of visitors—gave it a second name, *La Piccola Atena*—"Little Athens"—not because of its architecture but because of its immediate reputation as a hospitable gathering place for scholars and intellectuals.

With Vespasiano's passing in 1591, all this ended. Only since the latter half of the twentieth century—a hiatus of some 400 years—have many of these same kinds of events been offered again, with prominent Italian scholars of relevant arts, histories, and literature participating.

Toward the end of the tour, as we stood in the shade of the arched Porta della Vittoria, the architectural main gate of Sabbioneta, our guide explained that this passageway was also known as "*il Quercia dei Duca*." Not understanding the word *Quercia* I questioned one of our group. "Oak," he said, "the Duke's Oak."

I gasped in disbelief. Thinking I had misunderstood, he repeated, "The guide said, 'the Duke's Oak.'" My breath nearly left me, and I steadied myself against the wall. The Duke's Oak? Could this be true?

A Midsummer Night's Dream! The playwright had been in Sabbioneta! A world of understanding burst in my brain. Of course. It made so much sense. I reached my parked car and collapsed. I grabbed my dog-eared paperback of *Dream* and quickly leafed through it. Indeed, the play was set in Athens. It was so designated, not only at the beginning of Act I, but I counted more than thirty references throughout the play to "Athens" or "Athenian"—though tellingly, no references to Greeks, Greece, Grecians, Attica, or Atticans: only "Athens" and "Athenians." It was no accident. The playwright had wanted his *Dream* to take place only there, in "Athens." But it was increasingly clear that there was actually here—in Sabbioneta, *La Piccola Atena*—"Little Athens." Here in Italy.

And the Duke's Oak? Gears clicked into place.

In Act I Scene 2 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in admiration of its own Duke Theseus and his beautiful bride, Hippolyta, six of its rustic characters—Quince, the carpenter, Snug, the joiner, Bottom, the weaver, Flute, the bellows-mender, Snout, the tinker and Starveling, the tailor—decide to put on a play. It is to be their rendition of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, an ancient love story. They meet to discuss their preparations and to be assigned their roles:

Bottom: We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely, and courageously.

Take pains, be perfitt: adieu.

Quince: At the Duke's Oak we meet.

It has been assumed over the years, that the Duke's Oak, as mentioned in *Dream*, is some mighty oak tree on the outskirts of Athens, in Greece. What little commentary there has been merely suggest it is an oak tree in the wood close to a town of such characteristics as to merit being name for the Duke. But by now, having seen in preceding chapters the playwright's allusions to unusual things in Italy, this reference to the Duke's Oak should, especially since it is a proper name, give thoughtful pause. It should never have been dismissed in such an offhanded way. Indeed, the playwright has gone a bit out of his way to bring attention to it.

No ransacking of the legend-history of the hero Theseus reveals such a place or name. Nor were there any dukes, per se, in ancient Athens, Chaucer notwithstanding. "Duke" (*duc* in French; *duca* in Italian; Herzog in German) is a Western European title. In French and Italian "Duke" is derived from the Latin word *dux*, and while there were none in Greece, there were plenty of them in Renaissance Italy.

The second and only other allusion to something that is unique in *Dream* (and located in "Little Athens") is not recognized as noteworthy in modern editions of the play, due in large part to the zeal of modern editors. But it is significant, and one further piece that fits perfectly into the puzzle for *Dream*.

The unique reference—the word "temple" with a lower-case "t"—appears in Act IV Scene 1 of *Dream*, in the wood. Near the end of this scene "temple" appears in typical modern editions, in the following lines:

Theseus: Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple, by and by, with us these couples shall eternally be knit ...

Shortly afterward, the following exchange occurs:

Demetrius: Are you sure
That we awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?
Hermia: Yea, and my father.
Helena: And Hippolyta.
Lysander: And bid us follow to the temple.

In both the Quarto and First Folio editions, the word "temple" is capitalized. There it is spelled accurately, "Temple." It is a small matter, to be sure, but as was demonstrated in Chapter 3 and will be demonstrated again in Chapter 9, it is a matter of no small significance when seeking to confirm the true location of the playwright's "Athens." In Sabbioneta, "Little Athens," there exists a "Temple." It is the church abutting Vespasiano Gonzaga's mausoleum, known as *La Chiesa dell' Incoronata* (The Church of the Crowned Virgin). More simply, however, that little church was referred to only as "the Temple." With a capital "T."

It would come as no surprise if, during his travels, the [playwright was captivated by this perfectly designed little town, Sabbioneta. He may well have been invited here. Giving free reign to his imagination, it would have been a short leap to create a dream sequence with a title describing what he had written.

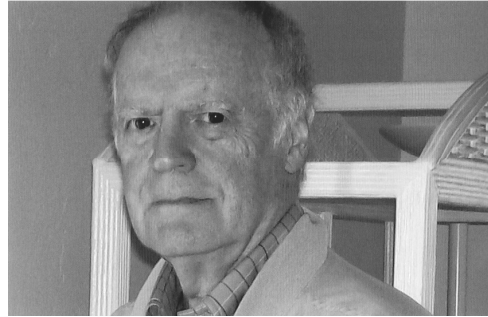
Moreover, it is commonly acknowledged that the playwright's education included Greek language and history, so perhaps he was remembering the ancient Greek love story of Pyramus and Thisbe, and the legendary hero of ancient Greece, a king named Theseus who captured the queen of the Amazons, Hippolyta, and made her his wife. Perhaps. But it is abundantly clear that the romance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a romance between two people who are very different from heroes who are Greek.

By "cracking the codes" of three small elements - Little Athens, the Duke's Oak, and the Temple - it is certain that the playwright visited Sabbioneta. Through complete serendipity, I had come upon yet another Italian setting for a Shakespearean play; and it was in Italy, not Greece, as the world has supposed

10. Robin Fox: Oxford's/Shakespeare's Education

2008

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Robin Fox

The essay below, “Shakespeare, Oxford and the Grammar School Question,” (*The Oxfordian* 2008), takes on the difficult matters of Shakespeare’s education, the nature of Elizabethan grammar schools and how Oxford, assuming he was the playwright, seems to have had first-hand experience of them.

There has been a checkered history of attitudes to William Shakespeare of Stratford’s possible education. There is no record of his having attended either school or university. At one extreme, then, those who take Ben Jonson’s words from his enigmatic eulogy in the First Folio (1623) literally, have credited the author with “smalle Latine and lesse Greeke.” In other words they prefer to think that Shakespeare had no education worth considering, and was an untutored natural genius. In the charming words of Milton’s sonnet about him he was “warbling his native woodnotes wild.” This fits the picture of the rustic youth leaving his Warwickshire home at about age twenty-two, abandoning his wife and children, and making his way in London in “the university of the world.” It fits the democratic image of Shakespeare as just like the rest of us only more so. He was, in this view, better off without an education given the restrictive quality of what was offered: Grammar School being largely a flogging institution concerned to thrash Latin grammar into the heads of unwilling schoolboys, and the universities (Oxford and Cambridge) being little more than vocational schools for clerics, lawyers and physicians. He was lucky, in this view, to have escaped the clutches of the educational system.

The other school of thought sees that according to the poems and plays credited to him, he was clearly a man of considerable learning, especially in the Latin classics. He must have been able to read many of the original sources in French, Italian and even Spanish and Greek, translations not being available at the time. This school has then to account for how the boy from Stratford-on-Avon acquired this mastery. The author of the plays also shows evidence of a detailed knowledge of English history, legal and military matters, the sea and sailing, aristocratic sports and pastimes,

the geography, art, theater and customs of northern Italy, and courtly life in England and France, and even Denmark. These, it is argued, he could have acquired by acute observation during the six “lost years” (1585-91) for which we have no information at all except that William Shackspeare was named in a lawsuit in Stratford. But this theory of learning by osmosis is purely in the realm of speculation, while one fact remains in the realm of distinct possibility: he could have attended the Free Grammar School, “The King’s New School,” at Stratford-on-Avon.

Those of the “natural genius” school are content to take Jonson at his word and shrug off the poet’s education as something that any boy could have got from a few years at Grammar School. The learning, they say, was slight and lightly borne. There was nothing remarkable about it and the Grammar School with all its limitations could have provided it. There the matter can rest. But for others this is not enough. Shakespeare’s two long poems, the sonnets, and the plays, show far too intimate an acquaintance with the Latin classical authors at least, and demand that he knew more than just a smattering of grammar. He must have had a quite serious and detailed education to provide this background. All the natural genius in the world cannot supply *knowledge*. That has to be acquired. In particular, to know the works in the original language means that the original must itself have been thoroughly learned. The issue then became: could the Stratford Grammar School have provided at least his knowledge of Latin and the classical authors, particularly Ovid and Virgil? There is a secondary question of whether there is anything in the works that might point directly to the knowledge having been gained specifically at a Grammar School.

This question of whether anything in the works specifically indicates Grammar School experience, becomes a real issue because there is a ready solution to the problem that bypasses the Grammar School altogether. This proposes that the author of the works was not the untutored boy from Stratford at all, but a nobleman who indeed was privately tutored in the way that noblemen were, by the very best teachers; a nobleman who went to the university (or even both of them) then to the Inns of Court to study law, traveled in Italy and France, knew the royal courts intimately, served as a soldier and a sailor, spoke French and Italian, wrote a graceful Latin and French, wrote poetry and plays for his fellow aristocrats at court, and was involved with his own companies of players, and with playwrights and authors of whom he was a patron and employer: a known man of letters and the theater.

As a high aristocrat, however, he would not have been able to publish under his own name plays that were meant for the common playhouses and written for a fee, however small. It is hard for us to understand this now, but in Elizabethan England it was absolutely so. A nobleman would lose caste if seen to be “in trade” – writing for money, for the public stage constituted such. Noblemen could write for the court and the amusement of courtiers, and even for the Inns of Court or the universities: amateur entertainment. But the playhouses were seen as little more than annexes to the brothels and magnets for their trade. A nobleman therefore would have used a pseudonym, or a front man who produced his plays and took the credit. A pamphlet in 1592, regarded as crucial by biographers of the bard, described one “Shake-scene” as an “upstart crow” who beautified himself with others’ feathers. This is generally agreed by the biographers to be a reference to William since it quotes a line from *Henry VI*. If it is, it is not complimentary.

I don’t want to spell out the whole authorship issue here; it is too well known. I just want to show how the attribution of the authorship to a nobleman with the experience described solves the irritating issue of whether the Grammar School could have done it. In the case of a privately edu-

cated aristocrat it doesn't need to have done it. But then again, that would leave the question of the direct reporting of Grammar School experience in the plays, if there is any, to be explained in turn.

Trashing the Grammar School

The Grammar School issue has been debated in something of an historical vacuum. It is important to understand that the Grammar Schools after 1553 were part of a deliberate attempt to re-make English society as a result of the four influences of Protestantism, Humanism, Nationalism and Gutenberg—the printing press. The reformers—Erasmus, More, Colet, Lyly, Wolsey, Cranmer, Burghley, and the monarchs themselves—sought to create a new kind of Englishman, and the Grammar Schools and the Church of England were their instruments. The commission appointed by Henry VIII to decide on the fate of the loot from the monasteries was significantly called: *The Commission for the Continuance of Schools*. Henry and particularly Edward his son, understood that while the Catholic Church had to be destroyed, the schools it had fostered had to be rebuilt – and completely reformed on Protestant and humanist lines, with a uniform and approved curriculum. This included the Lyly-Colet Latin Grammar, the first schoolbook to be mandated throughout the kingdom.

Supporters of the case for Edward de Vere as author have always taken the view that there is no direct evidence that William of Stratford did go to the Grammar School there (or anywhere) and in this they are right. But they add that if he had gone it would not have given him anything like the education reflected in the works. They thus interestingly align themselves with the native genius school on the issue: no education to speak of. But since they do this to bolster the case of de Vere; they deny that native genius could make up for the deficiencies of the schooling. They thus conclude that the mal-educated or un-educated William cannot have written the plays, and that the combination of education and inspiration lies elsewhere: in the Earl of Oxford.

To this end these Oxfordian critics have consistently trashed both the Stratford school and the Grammar Schools generally. I am sympathetic to the Oxfordian case, believing with Orson Welles that there are otherwise “some awfully funny coincidences,” so I want to ask whether the Oxfordian portrayal of the deficiencies of the schools is warranted, and what is more, whether they really need this put-down of the Grammar Schools to make their case.

It started, as did the Oxfordian movement generally, with the remarkable work of J. T. Looney in his “*Shakespeare Identified*” of 1920. Quoting Halliwell-Phillips he characterizes life in Stratford as one of “dirt and ignorance” and stresses the illiteracy of Shakespeare’s parents. Like subsequent critics he seems particularly shocked by John Shakespeare’s being fined for keeping a dung heap too long in front of his house. But this did not mean Stratford was in any way different from any other active and prosperous wool-town in the English midlands. Dirt and illiteracy were not confined to these. All English towns were dirty and smelly, and few people were literate. The London theater districts were filthy areas with open sewers, no toilet facilities, and were rife with prostitution and robbery. The great playwright-to-be Christopher Marlowe (see David Rigg’s recent biography) grew up as a shoemaker’s son among the leather tanning works in Canterbury. The smell and filth of the tannery surpassed anything the dung heaps of Stratford could produce, but neither this, nor parental illiteracy, prevented Marlowe from gaining a scholarship to the King’s School (the cathedral Grammar School at Canterbury) and going on to Cambridge University.

Looney rightly insists that there is no documentary evidence for William's attendance at the local Free Grammar School. But again he starts the trend of insisting that William's illiterate home would have meant he could not read and write, to do so being a condition of entry to the school. He scorns Halliwell-Phillips idea that "the poet received his first rudiments of education from older boys." But the system could have worked this way: it worked for Marlowe for example, and scholars since have written at length about the system of the "petty school" wherein very young boys (five or six) would be taught their basic alphabet and writing. This was a pretty standard method of teaching the basics in preparation for the upper school, as we shall see.

Charlton Ogburn continues the attacks in his monumental *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984): "The Astonishing Stratford School and the Miracle of 'Genius'" (Chapter 15.) He paints the picture of Stratford as a narrow, tight medieval community, where the town officers were largely illiterate and served unwillingly, including John Shakespeare as Alderman and High Bailiff (mayor.) He paints William's life as one of drudgery in a debtor's home. But during William's young life John was in fact quite prosperous; the debt and disgrace came later and might well have interfered with William's completing school.

Ogburn's main scorn is reserved for the Grammar School itself. This was a typical one-master school, and between 1565 and 1575 there were five masters he notes, and this does not speak well of the school. It can be counter argued that the masters were so good they were rapidly promoted, or that their Catholic sympathies were the issue at a time of Catholic persecutions. The pay of the masters, twenty pounds annually, he has to admit was good in comparison to other schools; Eton masters only got ten pounds. But he claims this appeared better than it was since the master had to pay four pounds to his usher and pay for repairs to the school. He omits that the master got free lodging, and does not elaborate on the paid "usher" or assistant master. (Although the school records are lost, there are plenty of town records with items about the school and the masters.)

We shall look at more of these details later, but in the meantime Ogburn saves his severest blows for the quality of teaching. Despite their decent pay and their M.A. degrees, he insists, the quality of school teaching was abysmal. We do not know this directly for Stratford of course, so he depends on Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), which portrays the general state of teaching in England. Ascham had never been a country schoolmaster. He was himself schooled by a private tutor and became a tutor to the aristocratic rich, including the princess Elizabeth. He paints a dismal picture of poorly trained masters drilling boys largely by the use of the rod and basically just putting them through the motions. As a picture of the worst schools this was probably justified. But it does not tally with any contemporary picture of the better "established" Grammar Schools.

In any case Ascham's diatribe against punishment was out of date by the time it was published (posthumously) and his principles of reasoned tuition were strongly advocated by the leading and influential educationalists of his day. Ascham's picture of the bad teacher applied largely to the scores of independent teachers who appeared in response to the increasing demand for *some* kind of education. David Cressy, in the best short survey of Tudor-Stuart education, reports that in the 1580s only 27 per cent of the schoolmasters licensed in the diocese of London were university graduates. By the 1630s it has risen to 59 per cent. Thus there were a lot of poorly qualified teachers out there in what were often fly-by-night operations. This makes Stratford all the more

admirable both in its secure foundation and funding and in the high standards required of its teachers.

Ogburn continues to disparage T. W. Baldwin's monumental 1500 page two-volume *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, (1944.) This was an account of the elaborate classical curriculum at the English schools, designed by Erasmus, inspired by Thomas More, and put into practice by Colet at St. Paul's, and Wolsey at Ipswich. But Ogburn's criticism is mostly an expression of simple disbelief. Faced with what was required of a seven-year-old boy (Lily, Aesop, Erasmus, Terence, Plautus, Suetonius, Mantuanus, etc.) he comments: "One wonders if the professor had ever met a seven-year old." Not a seven-year-old Elizabethan schoolboy certainly, but neither had Ogburn. Plenty of boys did go through this system and did end up as fluent Latin speakers and writers; they went on to university and some of them to literary fame like Marlowe and Spenser. Ben Jonson never went to university but his education from Westminster stood him in good stead and he remembered it fondly. Stratford was a small one-master school as were most schools, true, but we have no more reason to assume it was a bad school than we have to know it was a good one. It was probably average.

The trashing continues in Diana Price's otherwise remarkable *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* (2001), easily the best account of the authorship difficulties. In her chapter on "Shakespeare's Education" she repeats the Ogburn criticisms without mentioning the dung heap. Interestingly she admits that William might have had some sort of education, and the only reasonable supposition is that he got it in Stratford where it was free and available. He must have had "basic literacy" to have been an actor; he had to learn his lines. If he was the "upstart crow" ("Shakespeare") in the attack by Robert Greene mentioned earlier, then he was guilty of hiring other playwrights to write for him and taking the credit. This must mean he was capable at least of reading the stuff he was going to plagiarize.

His numerous legal and business interests also suggest he could read and write at least minimally. We must not forget he made a great deal of money and retired to Stratford a rich man. Technically he could have done this while illiterate, but it is improbable. People record sending letters to him, but no replies survive. Price accepts the minimal literacy, but denies that the Grammar School could have provided the "Renaissance education" displayed in the plays. She repeats the criticisms of Ascham, along with Peacham and Harbage, concerning the low quality of teaching, but she does not quote Kempe, Brinsley, Hoole and Clarke (quoted by Baldwin) who paint a more positive picture. She thinks the illiteracy and lack of education of William's daughters (his only son Hamnet died) tells against his being educated himself. It tells against his qualities as a father perhaps, but is not conclusive about his education.

In the pro-Oxford compendium from the UK, *Great Oxford* (2004) there are two chapters that continue the trend, and repeat many of the criticisms. In "Shakespeare's Education and the Stratford Grammar School" Phillip Johnson, after again assailing the *presumption* that William attended, takes up the cudgels against the quality of the school. Even if Will had attended, that is, he would not have benefited because the school was in a "rather insignificant midlands town." This, he thinks, renders the pages and pages of comparison in Baldwin with the curricula of the "established" Grammar Schools at Ipswich, St. Paul's, Westminster, Winchester, Merchant Taylors and Eton, unreliable at best. The criticisms Ascham leveled at the country schools, reproduced in Muriel St Clare Byrne's *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country*, are repeated: long

hours, brutality, monotony, discipline etc., that are “unsuited to holding a boy’s natural interest” and so on.

Johnson dismisses the evidence that Shakespeare had contemporaries in Stratford from the same background, including Richard Field the printer in London who published *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and who show evidence of a more than competent education. Baldwin records that the editor and biographer Malone in 1821, wrote at length about the letters of the Quiney family, who were Shakespeare’s in-laws, which showed a high level of Latin competence. There is no record of these people being at the school, Johnson insists, and there is not. But they must have got the education somewhere, and as the sons of Stratford burghers there was not much else open to them. It is a reasonable inference that they went to the local Free Grammar School.

I thoroughly agree with these critics that we are not allowed to assert William’s or anyone else’s attendance as a known fact, given the absence of records for the period. But surely we are allowed reasonable inferences? They are what the case for Oxford is built on after all. Johnson’s final blow to the Grammar School cause is the case for William Smith, another Stratford contemporary who went on to Oxford. This has been taken as proof of the excellence of the local schooling, except, Johnson points out, that Smith went to Winchester College before going to Oxford. True, but he would not have been accepted into the upper forms at Winchester unless he had been competent in the work of the lower forms to start with. There was no way a beginner could have made up the ground. I think Smith speaks well for Stratford.

How well the small schools succeeded was of course heavily dependent on the quality of the master and his ushers. There must have been brutal and lazy masters then as now, but there were also obviously dedicated and careful ones, as the results prove. But we can know this much: if the records from Stratford could be retrieved, they would show much the same syllabus and methods as the small, one-master Grammar Schools at Wimborne, Cuckfield, Saffron Walden, Seven Oaks, Peterborough, Tiverton and others, whose records do survive and which are consciously modeled on Eton, Winchester, St. Paul’s and Ipswich. Erasmus ruled; the Renaissance triumphed; Protestantism was established.

The Stratford Grammar School

In the meantime, what do we know of the Stratford school and its masters? It was founded early in the century by the Guild of the Holy Cross at Stratford-on-Avon. Since it was a Catholic institution, Henry VIII dissolved it along with the monasteries and chantries. It was essentially bought back from Edward VI by the burghers of Stratford and re-founded in 1553. Hence “The King’s New School.” This meant that the men of John Shakespeare’s generation were mostly illiterate because between 1536 and 1553 they had no school. But this did not mean that they did not want their sons to be educated as their move to re-purchase and endow the school shows. Baldwin gives in some detail the dealings between town and gown. The upshot is that from its re-foundation the school had masters and ushers (some of whom became masters) of obviously good quality. They were all clergymen with master’s degrees, some of whom received preferment and even multiple livings while still teaching.

If William had gone to the school it would have been between 1571 and 1579. There is something of a mystery about the existence of a petty school for the teaching of letters. The records seem to



Stratford Grammar School (re-founded 1553)

The original schoolroom was on the ground floor. The upper Chamber, shown above, was the town council meeting room

imply that the usher would start the boys on grammar at seven, assuming them to be able to read and write. They were “obliged to get their necessary preliminary training in English outside of the grammar school.” The critics have not failed to point out that this could not have been from illiterate parents. But even the sons of literate burghers were not educated by their parents; they would have gone to a petty school.

Although Baldwin wrote a whole, and again learned book, on *Shakespeare’s Petty School* (1943), this was largely inferential. He took the description of petty schools of the time and made the leap to first of all the existence of one at Stratford, and second to the assumption that William went there. There is evidence of a petty-school teacher after 1600 (Thomas Parker) who had been there “for some time” and so Baldwin extrapolates backwards. Unlike the town-run Grammar School, the petty school would have been private and held in a private home, so there would have been no official records. This was so everywhere else, so it can be inferred to have been true of Stratford. Once again we must use reasonable inference. The Grammar School was there and was successful. It required its entrants to be competent in English before entrance; therefore they must have been; therefore there must have been a petty school. The appeal can again be made to the plays where the author seems to show evidence of having learned his writing from an ABC – probably a “horn book,” and the Catechism (probably the Calvinist version of Alexander Nowell) that were used in the petty schools.

The teachers at the Grammar School continue to impress. At the turn of the century there was Richard Fox (no known relation) who became Bishop of Winchester and founded Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and William Smyth who founded Brasenose College at the same university. There was a hiatus of course after the dissolution of the Guild School sometime between 1536

and the re-foundation in 1553. Just before William's time there was the master John Brownsword who became a well-known Latin poet. During William's possible years there, there were two masters, Simon Hunt and Thomas Jenkins. Hunt, an M.A. from Oxford, converted to Catholicism and left in 1575 to become a Jesuit. Stratford did not have good luck with the Catholic connection. A future master, John Cottam was ousted because of his Catholic sympathies, his brother being executed for involvement with the Campion plot in 1582.

Jenkins who succeeded Hunt and would have been teaching the upper forms had William been in them, was a Welshman, educated probably at Merchant Taylors, and definitely an M.A. and Senior Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, renowned for its fostering of Greek. That he was Welsh has given rise to a lot of commentary on his being the model for Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. For now let us note in summary that the records show that Stratford had well-qualified masters supported by ushers of good quality, and sent boys on to the universities and the professions. We have no reason to suppose it was not a good school of its kind, as we have no direct evidence William ever went there.

Grammar Schools in the Plays

This leaves the issue of the portrayal of the schoolmaster in the plays, with Sir Hugh Evans as the most prominent. How could the author have painted such accurate pictures without direct knowledge of the Grammar School scene? But first there are some little-quoted specific references to the schools themselves that demand attention, and were briefly mentioned by Foster Watson in *The Old Grammar Schools* (1916). This is from *Henry VIII*, Act IV, Scene 2, where Griffith is replying to Queen Katherine, who has been rejoicing in the fall of her arch enemy Cardinal Wolsey. Griffith asks her to reconsider and praises Wolsey in general:

ever witness for him
 Ipswich and Oxford! One of which fell with him,
 Unwilling to outlive the good that did it;
 The other, though unfinished, yet so famous,
 So excellent in art, and yet so rising,
 That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.

This is a direct reference to Cardinal Wolsey's founding of Ipswich School and Christ's Church College (originally Cardinal's College), Oxford. The original school buildings burned down, but the school, in Wolsey's home town, and the Oxford college, both flourished. Here Wolsey is promised immortality for his educational efforts, including the founding of a Grammar School, and one that was a model for others and was crucial to the surge forward in Tudor education.

What are we to make of this reference? It could be William reflecting on his good fortune to have been a beneficiary of Wolsey's legacy in promoting Grammar Schools; but William never went to Oxford. So it could equally be de Vere reflecting on his own connection both as the Earl of Oxford and a graduate of the university—although I suspect his degree there was *honoris causa*. Still, the reference to Wolsey and his Oxford college and Grammar School is remarkable, showing that the author, whoever he was, understood the importance of Wolsey's educational efforts and singled them out for praise.

Henry VIII is one of those odd plays that appear to have more than one hand in them, so it could have been neither of the candidates. (See Brian Vickers on co-authorship.) Some of the play is

attributed to John Fletcher, including this scene, largely on the basis of the feminine endings of the lines. But some scholars have seen the scene as basically by Shakespeare with “interpolations” by Fletcher. Fletcher might have inserted the lines, but it is hard to see why. He was the son of a Bishop, and he went to Cambridge when he was eleven. We do not know about his earlier schooling, but why would he have singled out “Ipswich and Oxford” as redeeming virtues in *Wolsey*? Fletcher has no known connection with de Vere (he was thirty years younger), but then he has no documented connection with Shakespeare either during his lifetime. Writing for the King’s Men he could have made additions to the unfinished work of either. Whomever the candidate, the fragment remains intriguing in selecting out the founding of a Grammar School as a virtue to persuade the queen. Griffith was successful in any case, and Katherine changed her mind about *Wolsey*.



Ipswich School

Founded in 1528 by Cardinal Wolsey, the original buildings burned down. These are from the 19th century.

Another direct and opposite reference is found in *2 Henry VI*, IV.vii. The rebel Jack Cade is speaking to one of the nobles, Lord Say:

Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and, whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used, and contrary to the King, his crown and his dignity, thou hast built a paper mill. It will be proved to

thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian can endure to hear.

We are here in the early fifteenth century when literacy for the lower orders was suspect to the authorities who were trying to put down the Lollards and other levelers. Printing and literacy for the masses, and especially the use of “grammar” were an abomination.

But the speech is put into the mouth of the upstart rebel, Jack Cade, who represents the worst kind of lower-class chauvinist. In scene 3 he rails against Lord Say:

I tell you that Lord Say hath gelded the commonwealth, and made it an eunuch: and more than that, he can speak French; and therefore he is traitor.

In scene vii Lord Say defends himself, in verse as opposed the prose of the rebels:

Large gifts have I bestow'd on learned clerks,
Because my book preffer'd me to the King,
And seeming ignorance is the curse of God,
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.

Say has founded Grammar Schools, probably in chantries (with their learned clerks), because his learning has gained him promotion from the king, and he therefore recognizes knowledge as the road to salvation on earth as it is in heaven. Henry VI for all his weakness, promoted education, and is of course revered as the founder of Eton. Say follows his monarch's example, but it does him no good with the Yahoo Cade and his yes-man Dick:

Dick: What say you of Kent?

Say: Nothing but this; 'tis “bona terra, mala gens.”

Cade: Away with him! Away with him! He speaks Latin.

And Say is murdered. With *Henry VI* there are also doubts about the complete authorship (at least about part one, not perhaps part two) but there is a consistency here. Wolsey and Say are held up as moral examples for founding Grammar Schools. It is something worth picking out as a particular virtue in these men, Wolsey's Ipswich in particular. The most we can say here is that he thought it worthy of note and regarded it as a virtue. The aristocrats were for it, the ignorant rabble were against it; the author was with the nobility on this yet again.

Oxford's Grammar School

Here is the point to introduce the outstanding fact that, like Say and Wolsey, Oxford's grandfather, the fifteenth earl, was instrumental in founding a Grammar School. In 1520, eight years before Wolsey founded Ipswich in Suffolk, the Rev. Christopher Swallow started a Free Grammar School for thirty boys at Earls Colne, nearby in Essex. As its name suggests the town was named for the Earls of Oxford and was originally part of the Oxford estates. Swallow made an agreement that the Earls of Oxford would be perpetual guardians of the school, an agreement that lasted until the last earl, Aubrey de Vere, in 1673, when it was handed over to the Cressener family, a gentleman, a lawyer and a grocer. In 1682 it passed to the sole care of “John Cressener, grocer.” The tradesmen triumphed.

Alan Nelson in his biography thinks that Edward de Vere, during his tenure as guardian, interfered too much in the running of the school, to its detriment. He appointed as schoolmaster William Adams of St. John's College Cambridge, who proved dishonest and incompetent and was ousted by a commission of inquiry. Oxford promptly overruled the commission and re-appointed Adams, again with disastrous results. It all sounds very Oxford. He wanted his own way, and Adams was from a Cambridge college where the Earl had been registered as opposed to the alternative, John Stockbridge, who was from Hart Hall, a mere non-collegiate hostel. But despite many vicissitudes, including a period as an agricultural college, the school at Earls Colne survived and expanded until it too was abolished as a Grammar School and incorporated into a "comprehensive school" in 1975. Whether or not Oxford was a sensible steward of the school is for our purposes less important than that he *was* a steward and *was* involved in its governance.



Earls Colne Grammar School, 1520

These buildings are from the 19th century

The author's direct concern in two history plays with the founding of Grammar Schools, and his defense of them and respect for their founders, begins to make great sense. Oxford's grandfather, a contemporary of Wolsey at the court of Henry VIII, was a co-founder of such a school, a mere twenty-five miles, as the crow flies, from Wolsey's Ipswich. Oxford was himself concerned, however injudiciously, with the affairs of Earls Colne Grammar School, and would have been very aware of the educational activities of the Cardinal a short distance from his home. William Shakespeare of Stratford, with all his fortune, neither in his retirement nor in his will made any benefactions to, or took any recorded interest in, his local school, to which he is presumed to have owed so much.

Schoolmasters in the Plays

We cannot avoid the famous scene with Sir Hugh Evans in *The Merry Wives*, even though it has been quoted to death by now. It is regarded as conclusive evidence that Shakespeare, as the author, went to the Grammar School, since he seems to recollect his experience directly. The scene is odd since it has all the appearance of being inserted for its own sake. It has no relation to the plot whatsoever. In this it is like the equally curious scene of the German visitors and the mysterious duke (IV.iii). But this is a sprawling peculiar play altogether. No one seems to doubt it is part of the canon, but it is more of a knockabout farce than a Shakespearean comedy

In it Mistress Page has brought her son William (seen by some as a hint that the pupil is indeed Shakespeare himself) for a Latin lesson with Sir Hugh Evans, the Welsh parson. Sir Hugh is not specified as a teacher, just a parson. In attendance is Mistress Quickly, who provides the comic commentary through her complete misunderstanding of the Latin words. Mistress Page asks Sir Hugh to “aske him some questions in his Accidence” that is, his basic Latin grammar. The reference throughout the scene is to William Lyly’s own abbreviation of his authorized work published as *A Shorte Introduction of Grammar* in 1534 (there were numerous editions after that.) (Act 4, Scene 1):

Evans. William, how many Numbers is in Nownes?

Will. Two.

Quickly. Truly I thought there had bin one number more, because they say “Od’s-Nownes.”

—*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV.i.22-4

She is referring to a popular oath—*Swounds!*—God’s wounds. William was in fact right; the two numbers are singular and plural. They proceed with more examples straight from Lily.

Evans. Peace your tatlings. What is *Faire* William?

Will. *Pulcher.*

Quickly. Polecats? There are fairer things than polecats, sure.

—*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV.i.25-7

That, while being one of the bard’s worst puns, must have got a laugh, but from whom? The groundlings (the “nut cracking groundlings”) standing up in the pit would not have known it. And how many grammar-school educated playgoers were there in the tiers and boxes? We don’t know. If the play were written, as tradition has it, to please the Queen, how many Grammar School boys would there have been at court to see it? (See Richard Whalen on the contentious issue of Shakespeare’s audience.) The lesson continues:

Evans. You are a very simplicity o’man: I pray you peace. What is *Lapis* William?

Will. A stone.

Evans. And what is “a stone” William?

Will. A pebble.

Evans. No; it is *Lapis*; I pray you remember in your praine.

—*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV.i.28-32

Remember Evans is Welsh, hence *o'man* = woman, *praine* = brain. What William failed to do here was to turn the English back into Latin as required by the system. He gets the point and goes on:

Will. Lapis

Evans: That is good William: what is he William that do's lend Articles.

Will. Articles are borrowed of the pronoun; and be thus declined. *Singulariter nominativo hic, haec, hoc.*

Again William is right with his declension of *hic*, “this,” but Evans proceeds to mangle the pronunciation.

Evans. Nominativo hig, hag, hog: pray you marke: *genitivo huius:* Well: what is your *Accusativo* case?

Will. Accusativo hinc.

Evans: I pray you have your remembrance childe: *Accusativo hing, hang, hog.*

Quickly: Hang-hog is latten for Bacon, I warrant you.

Evans. Leave your prabbles o'man. What is the *Focative* case William?

Will. O, vocativo, O.

Evans. Remember William, *Focativo* is *caret.*

Quickly: And that's a good roote.

Evans' mispronunciation is a set up so that Quickly can make the joke about *hang-hog* being Bacon, which is capitalized in the original. Baconians have made much of this “clue.” When Evans tells William, correctly, that there is no vocative of *hic* (it is *caret*, missing—exactly as in the Lyly text), Quickly hears this as “carrot”—which is a good roote both as a vegetable and as slang for penis. Evans' *Focative* is probably meant as yet another bawdy word play.

Apart from getting the accusative wrong (it should have been *huc, hanc, hoc*), William doesn't do too badly, and Sir Hugh comes off as a typical pompous schoolmaster-type. Mistress Quickly ends the show with a mishearing that would have got a laugh even from the groundlings:

Evans: What is your *Genitive case plural* William?

Will. Genitive case?

Evans: Aye

Will. Genitive: *horum, harum, horum.*

Quickly. Vengeance of Ginnys case; fie on her; never name her childe if she be a whore.

Evans: For shame o'man.

Quickly: You do ill to teach the child such words: he teaches him to hick and to hack; which they do fast enough for themselves, and to call whorum; fie upon you.

“Ginny's (Ginyes) case” probably meant her genitals in the city slang. “Hic” and “hac” were like enough too slang words for sexual activity, and *horum* was all too obvious. But William got the genitive plural right. He fails in the next passage (which I will not reproduce here) to get his pronouns right (*qui, quae, quod*) and is threatened with a beating. He is about half right; he gets by with a C. Evans on the other hand is a caricature of the boring pedagogue. . What are we to make of this? Is it a memory of Grammar School? Is it a memory of the Welshman Jenkins?

William Farina raises an interesting possibility in that Oxford's associate, employee, and possibly collaborator, the playwright and novelist John Lyly, is thought to have written *Endimion*, the play

which was the basis for the scene with the “fairies” that ends *Merry Wives*. Oxford and Lyly were very close; the Lyly novel *Euphues His England*, which defined the “euphuistic” style and is acknowledged to have deeply influenced the plays, was dedicated to Oxford. Lyly and Oxford together obtained the lease of the Blackfriars Theater in the 1580s. During this time, when Lily was his secretary, Oxford sponsored children’s acting companies—“Oxford’s Boys”—who were managed by one Henry Evans, of course a Welshman. In the bizarre final scene of *Merry Wives*, Sir Hugh Evans “manages” the children and townsfolk as they, disguised as fairies, “administer pinching punishment” to the wayward Sir John Falstaff. Here is a direct reference to an actual H. Evans who seems to fit the bill in many respects.

If we look to Arrigo Boito’s libretto for Verdi’s *Falstaff* we see that he produced a fast-paced, coherent, lyrical and funny script out of the rambling *Merry Wives*, with additions from *Henry IV*. And one way he did this was to leave out Sir Hugh Evans entirely—Latin lesson and all! It is no loss. The plot benefits from the omission. This raises the question of what Evans was doing there in the first place. He does nothing to move the plot; he even obfuscates it. Is it possible that he was just a caricature of a person well known to the crowd, with his Welsh accent and its confusion of voiced and unvoiced consonants (which Londoners think hugely funny), his pomposity, his pedantry, and his “management” of child players? Oxford could have put his associate in, not for the plot but just as a crowd pleaser; he was in there just for the laughs. Hence the Latin lesson – to show his pompous pedantry and to feed salacious laugh lines to Mistress Quickly. If the play was indeed originally written for the court, could this scene have been inserted for the common-theatre version? This interpretation at least gives the part a *raison d’être* it does not otherwise have.

But the Hugh Evans of the play is also an avatar of “the pedant,” who was in part a schoolmaster but also perhaps a creature derived from elsewhere than the Grammar School. Shakespeare (the author) seems to have coined the very term “pedant” from the Italian *pedantaggine* (according to the *OED*.) The prototype of this character is Holofernes in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*. He is stated explicitly to be “The Pedant or schoolmaster.” Baldwin cites him more than any other character in the plays, for the obvious reason that he is the most given to quotations, words and tropes that reflect classical learning, and thus, for Baldwin, reflect the author’s Grammar School education. But while Holofernes lectures everyone in his pedantic style, he does not give lessons as Sir Hugh did. A favorite exchange of those who see the Grammar School writ large in Holofernes is in IV,ii:

Holofernes: Facile precor gelida peccas omnia sub umbra Ruminat and so forth. Ah, good old Mantuan! I may speak of thee as the traveller doth of Venice; *Venetia, Venetia, Chi non ti vede non ti pretia*. Old Mantuan, old Mantuan! Who understandeth thee not, [loves thee not.]
(He sings) Ut, re, sol, la, mi, fa. *(To Nathaniel)* Under pardon, sir, what are the contents? Or rather, as Horace says in his—*(Looking at the letter)* What my soul, verses?
Nathaniel: Ay sir, and very learned.
Holofernes: Let me hear a staff, a stanza, a verse, *Lege, domine*.

The pedant does a garbled misquote from Mantuan. It could mean something like “I pray you are easily doing everything wrong in the cool shade.” *Ruminant*— “it ruminates,” is left hanging. Some commentators have mistaken this for a reference to Virgil, who was also from Mantua, but it is definitely from Mantuanus (Johannes Baptista Spagnola) whose *Eclogues* (1498) were part of

the standard Grammar School curriculum. This was the first poem in the book so every grammar-school boy would know it.

Nath. Facile precor gellida, quando pecas omnia sub um-
braruminat, and so forth. Ah good old Mantuan, I
may speake of thee as the traueiler doth of Venice, vem-
chie, vencha, que non te unde, que non te perreche. Old Man-
tuam, old Mantuan. Who vnderstandeth thee not, *ut re-
sol la mi fa*: Vnder pardon sir, What are the contents? or
rather as *Horrace* sayes in his, What my soule verses.
Hol. I sir, and very learned.
Nath. Let me heare a staffe, a stanza, a verse, *Lege do-
mine.*

First Folio, 1623: Holofernes Speech on Mantuan

The printer reversed Holofernes and Nathaniel.

But the Holofernes line makes a kind of weird sense and would have raised a laugh from any ex-schoolboys (or others tutored in Mantuan) in the audience. Most editors since Rowe and Pope have “corrected” the line, including the editor (Dr. Mustard) of the *Eclogues* when quoting it, thinking the copier or printer made an error, and many errors were indeed made: the Folio printer confused Holofernes and Nathaniel for example. But it seems obvious that the author meant it to be a joke, like the schoolboy howler: “All Gauls are divided into three parts.” The Folger editors agree that this and other Latin mis-quotations were intended as jokes.

Similarly, the Italian of the popular proverb is garbled in the Folio. (“Vemchie, vencha, que non te unde, que non te perreche.”) I have given the “corrected” version here, but I wonder if the author again did not mean it to be a clear signal for the pedant’s pseudo-learning. If so, for what audience was the joke intended, one that knew Italian? Holofernes continues by citing an authority, Horace, for nothing in particular, then does his signature redundant iteration “a staff, a stanza, a verse” and tells Nathaniel, in Latin, to read the letter. His character is summed up in this passage. But it is not really the character of a schoolmaster as such; he is not at all like Sir Hugh Evans for example. It is closer to the character of the pedant or doctor found in the Italian improvisatory theater of the *Commedia dell’Arte*: Il Dottore.

The influence of the *Commedia* on the comedies is well established. An excellent summary of the evidence is contained in Kevin Gilvary’s chapter in *Great Oxford*. The author must have had a first hand acquaintance with the form since it was indeed improvised from standard plots – plots that re-appear all the time in the comedies. It is more plausible, say Oxfordians, that the author was someone who saw these masked farces in Italy, since it would be hard to get the point from second-hand descriptions. Il Dottore, or Doctor Gratiano, is one of the old men of the *Commedia* who are lusty and foolish and thwart the path of true love of the young lovers, Arquino and Colombine.

Il Dottore is repetitious, talks largely malapropic nonsense with a battery of phony learning misquotes authorities and mangles his Latin. The author of *Love's Labor's Lost* may well have used the figure to satirize the self-important English educationalists of his day—although no one has been able to pin down a culprit. (Richard Mulcaster is suggested.) For our purposes it is enough to note that he does not seem to be a representative English schoolmaster at all, even though his knowledge of the classics would overlap.

ECLOGA I, FAUSTUS.

DE HONESTO AMORE ET FELICI EIUS EXITU.

FORTUNATUS. FAUSTUS.

*For. Fauste, precor, gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra
ruminat, antiquos paulum recitemus amores.
ne, si forte sopor nos occupet. ulla ferarum
quae modo per segetes tacite insidiantur adultas
saeviat in pecudes; melior vigilantia somno.*

Mantuanus: Eclogues, 1498

The correct line is *Fauste, precor gelida quando pecus omne sub umbra Ruminat.* "Faustus, I pray, once all the herd is ruminating in the cool shade," etc.

A couple of other "schoolmasters" crop up in the plays, but they are walk-on parts. Do these portraits, and the obvious wide knowledge of the classics in the plays—demonstrated at length by Baldwin to have been obtainable from a Grammar School education, tell us definitely that the author was a Grammar School alumnus?

Oxford and the Education of Royalty

Paradoxically, Baldwin may give us a clue to the opposite conclusion. In the midst of detailing the Grammar School curricula, he inserts four chapters on "The Education of Royalty." These deal with the tutoring of the Princess Mary, Prince Edward (two chapters) and the Princess Elizabeth. There are massive records on all three, especially the young Edward. The whole point of these chapters is to show that *these royals were put through exactly the same paces as any grammar-school boy, with the same curriculum, in the same order, using the same texts and on the same principles.* Let me quote Baldwin's opening words on Prince Edward (Chapter X):

The schoolmasters of King Henry's younger children, Elizabeth and Edward, agree essentially with Sir Thomas Elyot in their points of view. They, too, were ultra-pious men; but they adapted more fully the grammar school curriculum and methods to attain their ends. For Richard Cox, who was in charge of the rudiments of Prince Edward's education, was that master of Eton who transcribed the curriculum of about 1530. It was, therefore, only natural that he should retain the Eton mould when he began to shape

a scheme of education for Prince Edward. The grammar school curriculum had proved itself so effective that its wind was now tempered to the shorn lambs of royalty.

He goes on to detail a group of like-minded educationalists from St. John's College, Cambridge, which, like its counterpart at Oxford, was devoted to Greek (and where Oxford was briefly registered). These men gathered around John Cheke, the first tutor to Prince Edward. They included Roger Ascham, whom we have already encountered and who later became tutor to Elizabeth, William Grindal, Ascham's student who became her first teacher, and the guiding spirit of the group, Cheke's brother-in-law, William Cecil, who, as Lord Burghley became her chief minister. Oxfordians do not need to be reminded that Burghley was also the guardian and father-in-law of Edward de Vere, and responsible for his education. That William Adams was from this college must have carried weight in Oxford's decision to appoint him as schoolmaster at Earls Colne.

To go through Edward VI's schooling from his ABC and Catechism, through his Latin exercises to his eventual mastery of Greek, French, Italian and Spanish, would cause doubters in the capacity of Elizabethan schoolboys to wince at the impossible pressure of it. But Baldwin has the details and we have even the little prince's exercises and letters to check on his progress. And the point is that *he followed the grammar-school curriculum to the letter* only more so, since he was, as Elizabeth was later, the sole pupil with his tutor's sole attention. He started, like everyone else, with the Lyly-Colet Latin Grammar, now the only official one. A copy of it on vellum was presented to him, and we have it with his signatures. In other words, he would have been drilled through his *horum, harum, horum* like any Grammar School boy, by his masters Cheke and Cox, whom Edward, writing about himself in the third person, calls "two learned men, who sought to bring him up in learning of (1) toungues, (2) of the scriptures, (3) of philosophie, and (4) all liberal sciences."

Baldwin reckons that by 1547 Edward "completed the work of lower grammar school like any commoner, and in the expected time." He would, like William Page, have "spent his first quarter... memorizing his accidence" before starting on his Cato and his Aesop. The point here then is that the education of royalty and nobility was not simply modeled on the Grammar School, it was for at least the foundational years the same in all its details. Edward de Vere after his father's death was under the guardianship of the very William Cecil who was at the heart of the group of St. John's men who formed the education of Prince Edward. Cox, the prince's first tutor, had drawn up the Eton curriculum, which he then followed. Can it be doubted that Oxford's education then followed the same pattern? He was raised in the household first of Sir Thomas Smith; he transferred to Cecil's house in 1562. Smith was a remarkable man of learning and diplomacy, and, among other things, was Provost of Eton. (See Stephanie Hughes on Oxford's education.) Between Smith and Cecil then, Oxford would have received no less an education than did Prince Edward, and no less on the Grammar School model—particularly that of Eton.

This would mean that Oxford too would have been drilled in his accidence, and from the authorized grammar of William Lyly. We have already met the Lylys, but let us recapitulate the Lyly connection. (The details can be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.) William Lyly was first High Master of St. Paul's School, the colleague and collaborator of John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, the founder of the school, along with Erasmus. He was a leading humanist in the movement to liberalize the curriculum of the Grammar Schools, and a friend of Sir Thomas More. He died in 1522. His son George Lyly, who died in 1559, was an historian and cartogra-

pher, and is known for having made the first accurate printed map of Britain. His grandson, John Lyly (1554-1606) is the playwright and novelist we have already encountered who worked for Oxford between 1580 and 1588. He and Oxford advanced the cause of Euphuism and this influence is writ large on the comedies. There is no direct record of John's schooling. With his lineage he should have gone to St. Paul's, but he was brought up in Canterbury and may have gone to the King's School like Marlowe. Thus this close companion of, and collaborator with Oxford, was the grandson of the writer of the official "accidence" quoted in such detail in the plays.

This is all germane to the argument that the author of *Merry Wives* must have been to a Grammar School, and was reproducing his experience in the Latin lesson, along with his recollections of Jenkins. This ain't, as the song says, necessarily so.

First: we have seen that Oxford, in the households of Smith and Cecil, would have been drilled in the same manner as a Grammar School boy, from the same texts.

Second: he was a close friend and collaborator of the grandson of the official Latin text's author, himself a product of the Grammar School system, as was Oxford's other employee, playwright and poet Antony Munday. Oxford surrounded himself with a bohemian circle of grammar-school men like Lyly and Munday in his house "Fisher's Folly" during the 1580s: they could surely have compared experiences.

Third: the figure of Holofernes is not modeled on a Grammar School teacher, but is more likely derived from the *Commedia dell'Arte*, which had to be experienced in Italy. The author could have been poking fun at any pedantic private teachers for that matter: perhaps Oxford's learned uncle, Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid, or his tutor Laurence Nowell the founder of Anglo-Saxon studies.

Fourth: the figure of Sir Hugh Evans could as likely be based on Oxford's employee Henry Evans as on Stratford's Thomas Jenkins.

Fifth: the Earls of Oxford were guardians of a local free Grammar School, and Oxford was familiar with its ways and its schoolmasters, and concerned, however clumsily, with the running of it.

As to the vast learning displayed in the plays that Baldwin lays out in his two volumes, while this might have been available from the best of the larger schools, it was even more available from the kind of private tuition that was given the little Prince Edward, and his young nobleman namesake, Edward de Vere. Even Baldwin finds it hard to imagine an advanced knowledge of Greek, Italian, French and Spanish being available at Stratford. The fact that we find numerous references in the plays to texts that were taught in the Grammar Schools, as Baldwin indefatigably does, does not tell us that the knowledge was gained there, any more than from the private instruction given to noblemen that mirrored it line for line.

We know that Oxford was a precocious student. By the age of thirteen Nowell figured he had no more to teach him. He wrote an elegant Latin, and letters in French, and he spoke both French and Italian, could read Spanish, and bought books in foreign languages. We do not need to claim that the author of the plays must have been to a Grammar School. On the other hand, neither do Oxfordians need to trash the Stratford school, and Grammar Schools in general, to make their

case. If William Shakespeare did go to school in Stratford, he could have got for himself a good education, depending on the time he spent there. The extent of this will perhaps always be a mystery.

But whatever he got from Stratford, it is not sufficient to explain the plays and poems, which contain a breadth of knowledge and experience, and an attitude, that go way beyond small-town Warwickshire. This includes the crucial knowledge of as-then un-translated sources in all the languages that we know Oxford knew, and that were unavailable at Stratford. Also, the author's reading went way beyond what any Grammar School could have provided or afforded. Libraries were very expensive and you could not carry them around with you while changing lodgings. The author must have had access to large private libraries like those of Smith and Cecil, or even his own.

A Grammar School education is then not a sufficient explanation of the author's knowledge and ability. After all, thousands of English boys went to Grammar Schools, yet very few of them became famous and immortal writers. But they did become literate and active citizens. These schools were part of a remarkable phenomenon that was the revolution in education, and the part played by the state in it, during the great transformation of the Tudor-Stuart period. Lawrence Stone shows how in 1500 only four percent of English males could read and write but by 1600 this was thirty percent! This had happened in a span of less than fifty years, since most schools were founded or re-founded after 1553 as we have seen.

These schoolboys helped to make the new England, and hence the modern world. They lifted English society from its feudal and medieval condition as part of a conscious plan by the Humanist and Protestant reformers to create a new order of things. These remarkable schools were the confluence of the twin forces of the Reformation and the Renaissance that produced the new bourgeoisie, and these new model citizens and their descendants unseated two kings and were the formative influence on the growth of capitalism and democracy as we know it. Let us not forget that those remarkably literate and determined men on the Mayflower were all Grammar School boys.

Note on Sources

On the history of the Grammar Schools and Tudor education, there is a long list, but I have relied mainly on Watson, Cressy, Brown, and Baldwin. All the basic historical material on Earls Colne, including the Essex Record Office documents (# 3201756, # 32300700, # 32800466) on which I have drawn here, can be found in the Earls Colne Database at www.alanmacfarlane.com/FILES/earlscolne.html. Oxford's education is dealt with in the works mentioned, but Anderson is the most recent. Nelson's biography of Oxford is the most complete, if unsympathetic, account. See also Stephanie Hopkins Hughes on Oxford's childhood, Smith etc. The picture of Grantham Grammar School is from Foster Watson.

11. Waugh on Jonson's 'Sweet Swan of Avon'

2014



Alexander Waugh

Alexander Waugh is an English writer, critic and journalist best known for his biography of Paul Wittgenstein, *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War* (2009). He is a signatory of the *Declaration of Reasonable Doubt*, Honorary President of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, and co-editor with John Shahan of *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* (2013). His Amazon-Kindle Short "Shakespeare in Court" will be published mid-September 2014.

Waugh inherits a distinguished literary tradition, including his grandfather Evelyn and his father Auberon. His biography, *Fathers and Sons* (2004), portrays five generations of males in his family and was made into a 90-minute BBC documentary. *Bon Voyage!*, written with his brother Nathaniel, won the Vivian Ellis Award for Best New Musical.

The essay below was originally titled "The True Meaning of Ben Jonson's Phrase: 'Sweet Swan of Avon!'"

The most celebrated description of "William Shakespeare" occurs in the 71st line of Ben Jonson's poem "To the memory of My Beloved, The AUTHOR Mr William Shakespeare And what he hath left us," prefixed to the First Folio of 1623:

Sweet Swan of Avon! What a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appeare,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza, and our James!

"Sweet Swan of Avon" here stands as perhaps the only noticeable light in the flickering Stratfordian firmament, for it is in this seemingly innocuous and posthumous literary record that the poet "William Shakespeare" is identified, for the first time in history, as the actor-manager-businessman, William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon.

It is, of course, only a poetic allusion, and poetic allusions do not carry the same evidentiary weight as prose statements such as, "William Shakespeare was a poet and playwright who came

from Stratford-upon-Avon.” “Sweet Swan of Avon” is nevertheless a reference that indisputably points in that direction. Shakespeare’s verse was, after all, described as “sweet”, “sugared” “mellifluous” or “honeyed” (cf. Weever, Barnfield, Meres, Heywood, etc.); the “swan” since Virgil’s day was conventionally used as a symbol to represent a poet; and “Avon” is the name of the river that runs through Stratford in Warwickshire where William Shakspeare was born in 1564 and died in 1616.

So in “Sweet Swan of Avon” the poet and the actor-money-lender appear, for the first time, united as one. For those who have studied the Shakespeare Authorship Question in sufficient depth to understand why the man from Stratford could not have been the author of the plays and poems traditionally attributed to him, this reference presents something of a rare problem. If the playwright “William Shakespeare” was not from Stratford why did Jonson describe him as “Swan of Avon”?

Anti-Stratfordians usually try to shrug the problem off with mumblings about “avon” meaning “river” in Welsh and there being at least seven of them in the United Kingdom. This is not a very strong argument. Nor is it persuasive to protest, as some do, that Mary Herbert (née Sydney), Countess of Pembroke, the poetess and Shakespeare authorship candidate, must have been Jonson’s “Sweet Swan” because “Sydney” resembles the French *cygnet*, a swan. It is sometimes added that she was once pictured wearing a swan pattern on her ruff and that she was buried at Salisbury, a city on the Wiltshire Avon. Against that, she lived all her married life at Wilton, which is on the Wylie.

Oxfordians also occasionally point out that one of Edward de Vere’s properties, the manor of Bilton, near Rugby in Warwickshire, is “on the Avon.” This however must also be discounted as it is situated at least 3.5 kilometers from the river, nor is there any record of Lord Oxford ever having lived there. In fact he leased it to Lord Darcy in 1574 and sold it to John Shuckburgh in 1580, some 43 years before Jonson’s allusion and 24 years before his own death.

While these interpretations are undoubtedly wrong, the wary reader of Jonson’s slippery poem, “To the Memorie of my Beloved THE AUTHOR,” has every reason to suspect a double meaning. It begins with a stark warning against the “silliest ignorance” of those who may believe that they are perceiving truths in his lines, though they are in actual fact only echoes.¹ Jonson was a master of poetic ambiguity, and when, as in this exceptional case, he writes a 16-line preface to a poem warning his readers to pay particular attention not to misinterpret his true meaning through “silliest Ignorance,” “blinde Affection” or “crafty Malice,” we would do well to take him at his word. In calling “Shakespeare” a “Sweet Swan of Avon”, Jonson was allowing, and probably expecting, some of his readers—those of “silliest ignorance”—to think of Stratford-upon-Avon, home to the late Mr Will. Shakspeare.

But how did he expect the cognoscenti to interpret the phrase? To answer this we need, first, to examine his “Swan of Avon” in context. Jonson reveals that “Shakespeare”, the “Sweet Swan of Avon”, made “flights” on the banks of the Thames greatly pleasing to Queen Elizabeth and her successor, King James.

There can be no doubt that by “flights on the Thames” Jonson meant stage performances of Shakespeare’s plays. I do not know of anyone who disputes this interpretation, though where ex-

actly did the monarchs so enjoy these poetic “flights”? Neither ever attended a public theatre,² so the Globe, Hope, Rose, and Swan, all situated on the Thames, must be ruled out. Many of Shakespeare’s finest and most sophisticated dramas were written to be performed for the Royal Court and not, “for the gawkish groundlings of the Globe” as Richard Levin and others have pointed out.³

By far the grandest, most elaborate and most frequently used Court theatre, throughout the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, was the Great Hall at Hampton Court, located in Surrey on the banks of the Thames, 16 miles west of London. It was here that Henry VIII presented masques and other spectacular entertainments to courtiers and visiting dignitaries, and here also that Queen Elizabeth herself acted, where she went often “for her private recreation,”⁴ and where she mounted huge shrove, summer and Christmas-tide festivals of plays annually from 1572.

When James I came to the throne in 1603 he chose Hampton Court over all his Royal Palaces as the best venue for dramatic entertainment.⁵ The Revels Accounts reveal that no expense was spared in the construction of stage-sets there. The bill, on one occasion, included charges for the “painting of seven cities, one village, and one country house” and for the importation of trees into the hall intended to represent a wilderness. It is known that the players used the pantry behind the permanent screen at one end of the Hall as a dressing room, and that they rehearsed in the Great Watching Chamber next door.⁶ King James visited Hampton Court five times in the first half-year of his reign and had no fewer than 30 plays presented there over the 1603-4 Christmastide season including, it is argued, several by Shakespeare.⁷

Since “William Shakespeare” was the finest playwright of his age, whose works were evidently performed (many presumably for the first time) before Queen Elizabeth and King James upon the grandest courtly stage in England, situated on the banks of the Thames at Hampton Court, it would have been entirely appropriate for Ben Jonson to have alluded to his “beloved, The AU-THOR” as the “Sweet Swan of Hampton Court.”

But he didn’t, so what has all this to do with “Sweet Swan of Avon”? To find the answer we need to look no further than Jonson’s close friend, mentor and erstwhile tutor, William Camden. Jonson described his relation with this great historian as “a pupil once—a friend for ever”, and famously praised him in an epigram:

CAMDEN! Most reverend head, to whom I owe
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

In 1607 Camden published an exhaustive Latin history of Great Britain and Ireland entitled *Britannia*, with the intention of restoring “antiquity to Britaine and Britaine to its antiquity.” In a chapter entitled “Trinobantes,” he quotes six lines by the historian John Leland, apropos of Hampton Court:

Est locus insolito rerum splendore superbus, Alluiturque vaga Tamisini fluminis unda, Nomine ab antiquo iam tempore dictus Avona. Hic Rex Henricus taleis Octavius aedes Erexit, qualeis tot Sol aureus orbe Non vidit.

The key words here are “dictus Avona.” Jonson, an accomplished Latinist, would have known exactly what they meant. Others may have had to wait for Camden’s 1610 English translation of *Britannia*, in which (p. 420) Leland’s lines on Hampton Court are rendered thus:

A Stately place for rare and glorious shew There is, which Tamis with wandring stream doth dowse;
Times past, by name of Avon men it knew: Heere Henrie, the Eighth of that name, built an house So
sumptuous, as that on such an one (Seeke through the world) the bright Sunne never shone.⁸

So it would appear that Hampton Court was anciently known as “Avon”. Camden’s source was Leland’s *Genethliacon* of 1543, but this was by no means his only reference to the Royal palace as “Avon.” In his *Cygneae Cantio* (1545) Leland explained that Hampton Court was called “Avon” as a shortening of the Celtic-Roman name “Avondunum” meaning a fortified place (*dunum*) by a river (*avon*), which “the common people by corruption called Hampton.”⁹ This etymology was supported by Raphael Hollinshed, who wrote in his *Chronicles* (1586) that “we now pronounce Hampton for Avondune.”¹⁰

Edward de Vere’s tutor, the antiquarian Laurence Nowell, also knew of this connection because he transcribed, by hand, the complete “Syllabus” from Leland’s *Genethliacon*, which contains the entry: “Avondunum. Aglice Hamptoncourte.”¹¹ Historian William Lambarde, in his *Topographical and Historical Dictionary of England*, written in the 1590s, includes an entry for Hampton Court which, he writes, is “corruptly called Hampton for Avondun or Avon, an usual Name for many Waters within England.”¹²

Henry Peacham, in his *Minerva Britannia* (1612) alludes to Hampton Court, which was famously constructed around five noble court-yards, as “AVON courtes.”¹³ Jonson was a voracious reader,

his Learning such, no Author old or new,
Escapt his reading that deserv’d his view.¹⁴

We may be certain then that he knew the work of the famous Leland, both the *Genethliacon* of 1543 and the famous poem, *Swan Song* (1545), in which the poet (assuming the guise of a swan) swims down the Thames from Oxford to Greenwich describing the topography of its banks and calling Hampton Court “Avona” no fewer than five times along the way.¹⁵

In the unlikely event that the supremely well-read Jonson was unaware of the allusions to “Avon” in Leland, Hollinshed, Lambarde, Nowell and Peacham we must assume, at very least, that he had read his mentor’s and close friend’s greatest work, *Britannia*, and noticed the reference there. Anti-Stratfordian, John Weever, certainly spotted it because he copied both Leland’s Latin poem and Camden’s translation verbatim into his account of Hampton Court in *Antient Funeral Monuments* (1631).¹⁶ It would appear then, from all these contemporary references, that the name “Avon,” meaning Hampton Court, was a commonly known fact among the educated men and women of Jonson’s day.¹⁷

If Jonson correctly predicted that those of “silliest ignorance” among his readers might perceive the mere echo “Avon” as a reference to Stratford Shakspeare’s birthplace, he would equally have expected his sharper and more learned readers to appreciate the true meaning of his lines, which is summarised in the following paraphrase: “Sweet Poet, star of the Hampton Court stage What a

joy it would be to see your plays, Which so delighted Queen Elizabeth and King James, Performed once again in that Great Hall on the banks of the Thames.”

Adding this to what is already known about Jonson and the First Folio—his repudiation of the Droeshout portrait;¹⁸ his satiric penning of the “Heminge-Condell” letters;¹⁹ his discrepant accounts of Shakespeare here and elsewhere²⁰—helps to highlight the game he was playing. He was commissioned, we may safely assume, to edit the First Folio without revealing the true identity of its author. While avoiding the outright lie, he carefully laid plausibly deniable false trails, thereby sending those “of silliest ignorance” in one direction, while allowing the enlightened to perceive the truth behind his lines and applaud the ingenuity of his wit. That the cult of Stratfordianism was spawned from these games is regrettable, but for Jonson, at the time, it was a reasonable solution to a difficult and inconvenient problem.²¹

Jonson, not once but twice in the First Folio, referred to Shakespeare as “gentle.” This word, which derives from the Old French “gentil”, meaning high-born or noble, is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “well-born, belonging to a family of position; originally used synonymously with noble.” So if the “sweet swan of Avon/Hampton Court” is a well-born or noble “courtly maker” who could he be? Oxfordians do not need reminding of William Webbe’s commendation of the

noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty’s Court, which, in the rare devices of poetry, have been and yet are most skilful; among whom the right honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of most excellent among the rest

or of George Puttenham’s statement in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) that

in Her Majesty's time...have sprung up another crew of Courtly makers, Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford.

These references support the view that an enlightened reader of Jonson’s lines would first consider that noble gentleman Edward de Vere as the pseudonymous author of “Shakespeare’s” works on reading Jonson’s prefatory verses. But what of the unenlightened, or so-called “delighted” readers? In 1638 William Davenant published poetical advice to “delighted poets”²² warning them against the Avon as a place of Shakespearean pilgrimage. His poem²³ entitled “In Remembrance of Master William Shakespeare” begins:

Beware (delighted Poets!) when you sing
To welcome Nature in the early Spring
Your numerous Feet not tread
The Banks of Avon

and concludes with a neat double pun. “Our Vere” (River)²⁴ has long passed away; the poet to remember in connection with the Warwickshire Avon is not “Shakespeare” but the minor versifier, Fulke Greville, who, as Baron Brooke, lived in Warwick Castle on a promontory jutting out into the Avon River, eight miles from Stratford:²⁵

The piteous River wept it selfe away Long since (Alas!) to such a swift decay; That reach the Map;
and looke If you a River there can spie; And for River your mock'd Eie, Will find a shallow Brooke.²⁶

Notes

¹ Jonson writes apropos of praising Shakespeare's name: "But these ways / were not the paths I meant unto thy praise: for seeliest Ignorance on these may light, / which, when it sounds at best, but ecchos right; / Or blinde Affection, which doth ne'er advance / The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance / Or crafty Malice, might pretend this praise, / And think to ruine, where it seem'd to raise." The warning against "crafty malice" suggests that Jonson is pointing at those who would raise the name of "Shakspeare" to the deliberate detriment of Edward de Vere.

² According to Edmond Malone neither Elizabeth nor James ever attended a public theatre. The first recorded attendance of a British monarch at a public theatre was Queen Henrietta Maria's visit to the Blackfriars to see Massinger's now lost Tragedy of Cleander (16 May 1634). See *Poems and Plays of Shakespeare*, Variorum Edition, (1821), Vol 3, pp. 166-7.

³ Richard Levin: "Shakespeare's Second Globe," *TLS* (25 Jan 1974), p. 81.

⁴ "Remembrancia 407", cited in E. K. Chambers: *Elizabethan Stage*, (1923), Vol IV, p. 100.

⁵ See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), Vol IV, pp. 77-128 *passim*.

⁶ Details of theatrical entertainments at Hampton Court drawn from Ernest Law: *A Short History of Hampton Court* (2nd ed., 1906), pp. 153-4 and 164.

⁷ See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), Vol IV, p. 117.

⁸ Camden's translation shows that the name "Avon" applies to the place (Hampton Court), not to the river Thames, but English does not afford the same clarity as Latin. In Leland's original the fact that the place ("locus") is named Avon ("dictus Avona") and not the Thames ("Tamisini") - genitive case - is unequivocal. In some 18th century translations from Camden (eg. Bishop Gibson, 1722), the name "Avon" is inaccurately changed to "Hampton" possibly in respect for the new Stratfordianism.

⁹ "Avondunum propius nomen exprimit...quam vulgus Hampton corrupte pro Avondune vocat. Sed nos brevitati studemus. Est enim Avon frequens fluvii nomen apud Britannos." From *Kykneion Asma-Cygneia cantio* (1545), p. 108. Leland is alluding to the fact that -dunum (in Avondunum) is a Celtic-Roman suffix meaning a "fortified place". The original meaning of Avondunum was therefore "fort by the river."

¹⁰ Raphael Hollinshed: *The First and Second volumes of Chronicles*, augmented by John Hooker (1586), p. 101.

¹¹ See Rebecca Brackmann: *The Elizabethan Invention of Anglo-Saxon England: Laurence Nowell, William Lambarde and the Study of Old English* (2012), p. 112.

¹² This quotation is found sub. "Hampton" in Lambarde's *Dictionary*, written in the 1590's but withdrawn due to the threat of competition from Camden's *Britannia*, hence unpublished until 1730, but not necessarily unknown to Jonson.

¹³ In Henry Peacham's "Rura mihi et silentium" from *Minerva Britanna* (1612), p. 185, the poet muses on what he would be able to do were he free and well-born, envisaging a "solitarie academe" neere "princely RICHMOND" or "AVON courtes."

¹⁴ Lucius Carey, Viscount Falkland: "An Eclogue on the Death of Ben Jonson" in *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638), p. 4.

¹⁵ For instance, lines 110-1: "Next, moving further down river, I came to the lofty and conspicuous palace of Avona." Leland's use of "Avona" as opposed to "Avon" in *Swan Song* and other Latin verses is purely poetical.

¹⁶ See A. Waugh: "John Weever – Another Anti-Stratfordian", *DVS Newsletter* (May 2014), pp 12-15; Weever's ref. to Hampton Court as "Avon" may be found in *Antient Funeral Monuments* (1631), p. 446.

¹⁷ Acknowledgement of this fact continued into the 18th Century, see for example: *The Law-Latin Dictionary* (London 1701) by F.O: "Hampton Court. Avona"; Jean Baptiste Bullet: *Memoires sur la Langue Celtique* (1754), p. 358: "HAMPTONCOURT – Anciennement Avone au bord de la Tamise"; Polwhele's *Historical Views of Devonshire* (1793), Vol 1, p. 175: "Hampton Court, now a royal palace of our Sovereign, was first called Avon in that it stood on the river" etc. ¹⁸ Jonson wrote next to the Droeshout

image of Shakespeare: “Reader, Looke not on his picture but his Booke.” Droeshout’s clownish effigy was subsequently ridiculed in the Second Folio (1632), Shakespeare’s Poems (1640) and Brome’s Five New Plays (1653).

¹⁹ That Jonson was the true author of the “Heminge-Condell” letters in the First Folio was placed beyond doubt by George Steevens in the 18th Century. For his masterly proof see Boswell’s Malone (Third Variation, 1821), Vol 2, p. 663.

²⁰ Jonson’s description of “My Shakespeare...The AUTHOR...Soul of the Age!” in the First Folio (1623) contrasts sharply with his description of the Stratford actor in Discoveries where he writes of Shakspeare “(whatsoever he penn’d)” – as a windbag who cannot shut his mouth or learn his lines properly (Discoveries ll. 646-668). In conversation with William Drummond (if Robert Sibbald’s 18th Century ms transcription is to be trusted) Jonson stated that “Shakspear wanted Arte.”

²¹ That Jonson may have regretted setting up the player, Shakspeare, as the false icon of a new cult is suggested in his veiled confession to the fact that in honoring the actor’s memory in the way he did (presumably through the Heminge-Condell letters) he had transgressed “this side idolatry.” The passage, which occurs in the posthumously published Discoveries, is labeled “de Shakespeare nostrat[im]” in Timber or Discoveries (1641).

²² For other examples of “delighted” used to mean “unenlightened” or “deprived of light” see Ingilby Centurie of Praise (1888), vol. 1 p. 217.

²³ William Davenant “In Remembrance of Master William Shakespeare” from Madagascar, with other Poems (1638, imp. 1937), p. 37.

²⁴ “Our Vere” is a phrase used by William Covell (1595) and Gervase Markham (1624). Davenant is addressing poets to whom “our Vere” (an apparent pun on R-ver) would suggest Edward de Vere as the poets’ ring-leader.

²⁵ “De-lighted” (unenlightened) Stratfordians insist that Leonard Digges in his First Folio tribute refers to the Shakespeare monument at Stratford with the lines “Time dissolves thy Stratford Monument, Here we alive shall see thee still.” But Digges (like Jonson) uses the Spenserian word “moniment” which is not the same as “monument.” See George Mason’s Supplement to Jonson’s Dictionary (1801), sub “moniment” which defines the word as “a memorial” which might include anything written or set up to preserve the memory of a person or thing. Digges’s reference to “thy Stratford Monument” might, therefore, have referred to nothing more than Jonson’s ambiguous allusion to “Sweet Swan of Avon” three pages earlier.

²⁶ The idea that pilgrims would be “mocked” if they looked for the author “Shakespeare” at Stratford-upon-Avon, was wittily enforced by the antiquarian, William Dugdale, who, in 1634, drew a picture of the Shakespeare monument with apes’ faces jeering at the onlooker from each of the capitals on the pillars either side of the sack bearing figure of grain-dealer, William Shakspeare.

