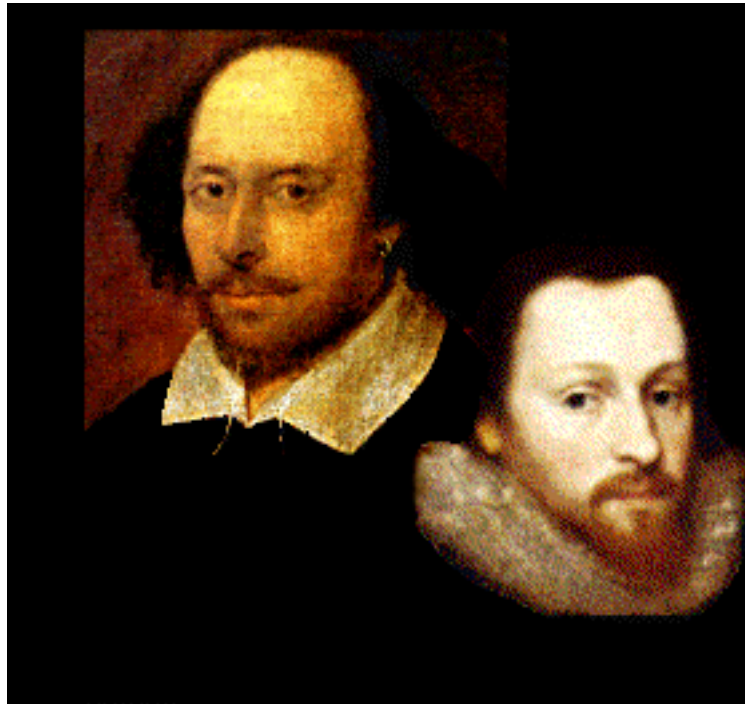


## ***WHO WROTE HAMLET?***



## **The Great Shakespeare Hoax**

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### **I n t r o d u c t i o n**

**A brief summary of the doubts surrounding the Stratfordian attribution**

The contention is that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), is the real author of the works of William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare, alone of all the great writers in Western civilization, is unique in the enigma he presents. Despite two hundred years of scholarly attempts to establish the Stratford man's credentials, doubts of the author's identity simply won't go away. The very multitude of candidates proposed in substitution for William Shakspeare of Stratford defines the difficulties a growing number of people find in accepting his authorship. The reason is that as Henry James said, "The facts of Stratford do not 'square' with the plays of genius...":

There is no reference during the lifetime of Shakepere of Stratford (1564-1616) which either speaks of the author of the Shakespearean works as having come from Stratford or speaks of the Stratford man as being an author. (The first indication that the author of Shakespeare's plays came from Stratford appears, ambiguously, in the prefatory materials of the 1623 *First Folio*.)

In an age of copious eulogies, none was forthcoming when William Shakspeare died in Stratford. William Camden in his book *Remaines* had praised the author "Shakespeare", but in his *Annals* for the year 1616 Camden omits mention of the Stratford man's death. Also, in the list of *Stratford Worthies* of 1605 Camden omits the Stratford man's name, even though Camden had previously passed on Shakspeare's application for a family coat of arms. (The inference is that it did not occur to Camden that the author, "Shakespeare", and the Stratford man were the same person.) The first memorial verse to "Shakespeare" appears in the 1623 *Folio*.

The author of Shakespeare's works had to be familiar with a wide body of knowledge for his time—on such subjects as law, music, foreign languages, the classics, and aristocratic manners and sports. There is no documentation that William Shakspeare of Stratford had access to such information.

In the Stratford man's will, noteworthy for its detailed disposition of household furniture, there is no mention of books, library, manuscripts, or of any literary interest. Indeed, the only theatrical connection there appears as an interlined bequest to three actors.

The only specimens of William Shakspeare's handwriting to come down to us are six almost illegible signatures, each formed differently from the others, and each from the latter period of his life (none earlier than 1612). Three of these signatures are on his will, one is on a deposition in someone else's breach of promise case, and two are on property documents. None of these has any-

thing to do with literature. The first syllable, incidentally, in all these signatures is spelled "Shak", whereas the published plays and poems consistently spell the name "Shake".

**Why should we care about this issue? Isn't it enough that we have the works?**

First, the topic is of interest from the point of view of intellectual history. Does it matter that for more than two hundred years students have been memorizing a point of view which now seems, to an increasing number of informed scholars, to have been false? It would certainly seem so! To say that the subject does not matter is merely to follow the ostrich and bury one's head in the sand.

Second, the claim that "we have the works" is itself suspect. One implication of the authorship question is that we emphatically do not "have the works."

A moment's reflection helps to illustrate why this is so. If literary biography is a tool for providing insight into the significance of a text, then attaching the wrong author's name to the work leads to a host of false assumptions which in turn spawn further misperceptions of the work.

The authorship question is therefore not just a matter of honoring the true author of the work—itsself an important ethical obligation for readers—but also about restoring a sense of authenticity and truth to the work we study and enjoy under the name Shakespeare.

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## **One Man's Overview and Summary**

**Roland G. Caldwell**

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**T**he Second Annual Studies Conference was held at Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, which I attended solely as a matter of personal interest in this issue of gigantic social, literary and political importance.

As one who only became aware of the key factors at issue in 1994, I decided my own agenda would be to seek to do whatever I could to try to broaden public awareness of this colossal error. At

this Conference it was a distinct pleasure and surprise to hear of the progress that has been and is being made toward advancing the “truth” about the Shakespeare authorship issue. The mere fact that an accredited University and its English Department sponsored what can only be described as “controversial” studies was a monumental breakthrough in and of itself, at least in my opinion.

As a non-academic “analyst” by profession I felt the most useful thing I could contribute would be to provide an overview of what I thought were the highlights of the Conference. I do this herein by summarizing five of the “presentations” that made the strongest impact on me personally. Scholarly works are necessarily detailed and referenced. However, a few of them were especially interesting to me because they seemed to be treading into areas of unusual significance regarding the authorship question in its broadest sense. I do not mean to belittle other presentations in any way. I simply wish to point out the ones that seemed to me to be adding new, weightier material to the de Vere position. No attempt will be made herein to repeat the considerable detail of these presentations, which I have entitled solely as a topical convenience and reference. They are presented in the order in which they were presented and not in any order of importance.

### **The Mind**

Victoria Kramer is a tutor in special education in Portland, Oregon. She presented a paper that discussed the development of the human mind from birth and how and why this almost surely impaired the Stratfordian man, growing up as he did in the muddy streets of the backwater town of Stratford-on-Avon. Citing well-referenced recent research results as to how the mind develops and works, her conclusions allege that, from what modern science now tells us, it would have been virtually impossible for any human being regardless of native skill levels to have suddenly and with little or no preparation (he is believed to have been illiterate) become capable of authoring the complex prose, drama and poetry that we know today as “Shakespeare”. It would have had to have been written exactly at the point in his life that was coincident with the dates of the appearance of the works themselves. Further, even from the sketchy environmental influences on WS that are known, she asserted that he would almost have had to have been transformed almost instantaneously from a person with a “blank screen” mind to a highly skilled literary giant in the course of just a few years time. To me, the case was compelling and, with the help of just a little more research, might be capable of becoming an almost irrefutable

thesis regarding the Stratford man's inability to author the works he is credited by society as having written.

### **Linguistic Styling**

James Maxfield, Jr., a real estate appraiser from Ohio, presented a cleverly conceived and quite scholarly paper in which he claimed a case might be possible, when his work is finished, for showing that it might be doable to match with high certainty, the styles of any given writer to that writer's works. His diagrams are too complex for me to describe, yet the general thesis he presented seemed not only plausible but highly probable. It appeared to be able to demonstrate with some certainty that writers of poetry, for instance, tend to write in a style that is unique to that writer and that the patterns, if examined closely enough, are detectable and can be illustrated to be so in a—variety of graphic forms. My own conclusion was that, despite critical comments from a participant at the Conference, the work Mr. Maxfield is doing has considerable merit and possesses a latent element of certainty about it that is more than sufficient to warrant completion of his project. Obviously if a distinct pattern could be detected that unmistakably matched de Vere's work to that of Shakespeare, a finality regarding this issue would have been achieved. That seemed to this participant to be an exceptionally worthwhile reason for him to continue his work.

### **Elizabeth's Vibrant Court**

Daniel Wright, PhD, head of the English Department at Concordia and coordinator of this event, enthusiastically and dramatically described the rise and ultimate fading of a theatrical vibrancy during the identical period of time that de Vere occupied a high place within her Court. He described how the ascendancy mirrored his arrival there and how it declined upon his fall in influence within it. The chronology of the facts and events was simply too vivid and rhyming to have been accidental or coincidental, and his presentation made that case well, indeed. I sensed his report will gain ever greater attention as this coincidental occurrence regarding the Oxfordian's substantial artful influence during Elizabeth's reign comes to be seen as much more than coincidence as time passes and the case for de Vere inevitably becomes indisputable.

### **Geneva Bible**

Roger Stritmatter, U of Mass Doctoral Candidate, presented his quite extensive findings regarding annotations and underlinings in de Vere's own hand within his own personal Bible, ostensibly the one given him by his family at birth. (Note: The King James version of the Bible was yet to be published) The astounding revelations

Roger made, and which I presumed he and his associate apparently uncovered themselves, seemed to be all but proof-positive that portions of phrasing, sentences and topics fit almost exactly the same phrasing, etc., word-for-word, as are found in a number of Shakespearean works. Exactly! The arguments of the non-believing Stratfordians that he mentioned were very weak and unconvincing, and seemed mostly to represent an unwillingness or inability to logically or rationally answer the persuasive position this makes in favor of the Oxfordian case. Combined with the other Conference presentations of evidence as summarized herein I was came away with the impression that the giant question at issue was in fact now no longer really in doubt. Roger and his associate are apparently going to continue their work toward a goal of publishing the final findings in scholarly and literary publications. My impression is that they are going to be very compelling, indeed, and, hopefully final.

### **de Vere's Involuntary Decision**

Elizabeth Appleton (her pen name), a published writer and scholar on the de Vere issue, made an impromptu presentation at the end of the Conference, all of which I was regrettably unable to remain to hear. Her subject, apparently of some 20 years of extensive study, made a strong case that de Vere was forced to submerge his own name beneath that of Shakespeare for political and religious reasons and that his decision was almost certainly not voluntary. Queen Elizabeth, either in consort with or influenced by William Cecil, aka Lord Burghley, as her single most powerful advisor, allegedly forbade de Vere to publish any further works under his own name after the date of his sudden and unexplained disappearance from London Theatre. (Note: de Vere was also the official ward of Cecil after his father's death when de Vere was near the age of 12, and became the official financial conservator of the de Vere estate for many years. Cecil was also abundantly recorded as being very unhappy with de Vere's spendthrift habits in support of the arts.) Ms. Appleton's comments, at least those that I was able to hear, seemed to be definitive and convincing in respect to the many written messages back and forth between de Vere and other religious and political figures of that time, which she has unearthed, regarding the enormous disputes and controversies surrounding the "puritanical" influences that were growing in power and which became threatening to the Crown during this period. All of de Vere's 37 plays, with the exception of the Merry Wives, being overwhelmingly about the royal families and their trials and tribulations, were made to take place outside of the U.K., allegedly so that the criticisms and mockeries of the Royalty would not appear

to be directed at Queen Elizabeth or her Court. The recorded letters back and forth between de Vere and other leaders or clerics during this contentious period that Ms. Appleton refers to, seem to make the case that: (a) de Vere very much wanted to write under his own name but was forbidden to do so; and (b) that he was very much interested in bringing his own bloodline (Plantagenet) back as the rightful reigning monarch. With apologies to Ms. Appleton for any misstatements I might be making here, her work seems to add great weight to the position that de Vere's adoption of "William Shakespeare" was not of his choosing and that, perhaps, the choice of this particular name had more to do with the historical "mightiness and valiantry" of the words "shake" and "spear", than with the Stratford man's unfortunate alleged and brief appearance in London, supposedly tending horses at the Globe Theatre. Maybe the entire issue in respect to the rise of the name of William Shak-Spere of Stratford was simply just a coincidence after all that really had nothing to do with this hapless illiterate merchant? We should all look forward to the book she is now seeking to publish that will lay out her case in detail regarding de Vere's participation in the divisive religious disputes that ultimately led to the founding of the Colonies in the New World.

The Conference was enlightening and very much on point, for my part, for which we all owe many thanks to the administration, faculty and staff of Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. 📖

*Roland G. Caldwell is Founder, Trust Companies of America, Inc. and Chairman, Caldwell Trust Company. He is also a dear friend and long time member of the Center.*

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## *And last but not least . . .*

*Letter to Max Weismann from Mortimer Adler:*

November 7, 1997

Dear Max,

Recently, I had occasion to examine *The Licia Sonnets* published by The de Vere Foundation in California. These sonnets were first published in 1593 in the first edition of *Venus and Adonis*, which incidentally was a single-copy edition.

On several occasions, Charles Van Doren and I have discussed the four demonstrations advanced to support the claim that the

17th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere, authored “Shake-speare’s” poems and dramas. There are also a multitude of arguments that give further support to these demonstrations and claim, and an equal number that discredit the claim by Professors of English that the man from Stratford, Shaksper, authored the works. Just a mere glance at the latter’s pathetic efforts to sign his name (illiterate scrawls) should forever eliminate Shaksper from further consideration in this question -- he could not write.

I myself have become sufficiently convinced that Lord Oxford is the author of Prince Hamlet’s tragedy, and highly recommend a reading of J. Thomas Looney’s treatise, “*Shake-speare*” *Identified in the 17th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere*. It is one of the 20th Century classics.

Academics err in failing to acknowledge the mystery surrounding “Shake-speare’s” identity and authorship. They would do both liberal education and the works of “Shake-speare” a distinguished service by opening the question to the judgment of their students, and others outside the academic realm.

Sincerely,

**Mortimer J. Adler**

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## EDITOR’S NOTE

For those of you who may have further interest in this matter, we recommend these websites for starters:

The Shakespere Fellowship

<http://www.shakespearefellowship.org/index.html>

Shaksper’s actual will:

<http://fly.hiwaay.net/~paul/shaksper/shakwill.html>

The Shakespeare Mystery

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/>

New book by Paul Streit

[http://www.bickley.com/paul\\_streitz.html](http://www.bickley.com/paul_streitz.html)

The authorship question

<http://www.pe.net/~webrebel/>



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## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**Harold French**

**Jay T. Harris**

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