

'Oxonie' on the de Vere seal

1. *The Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*. M.S. Lansd. 762, f.7. nd. (ERO)
2. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. College Edition. 1969 Random House.
3. Colin Thubron, *Shadow of the Silk Road* (London) Vintage 2007, p.248
4. Rory Stewart, *The Places in Between* (London) Picador 2005, p.120
5. Richard Bangs and Pasquale Scaturro, *Mystery of the Nile* (Chichester) Summerdale Publishers 2006
6. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*, Houghton Mifflin, 2000
7. Alexis Dawson, 'Master Apis Lapis', *Shakespearean Authorship Review* (Newport) R.H. Johns 1970
Extracts from 'Speculum Tuscanismi' are taken from *Gabriel Harvey's 'Singular Odd Man'* by Ruth Lloyd Miller 1988

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NO MISTAKES IN 'SHAKESPEARE', a return to Bohemia

by Richard Malim

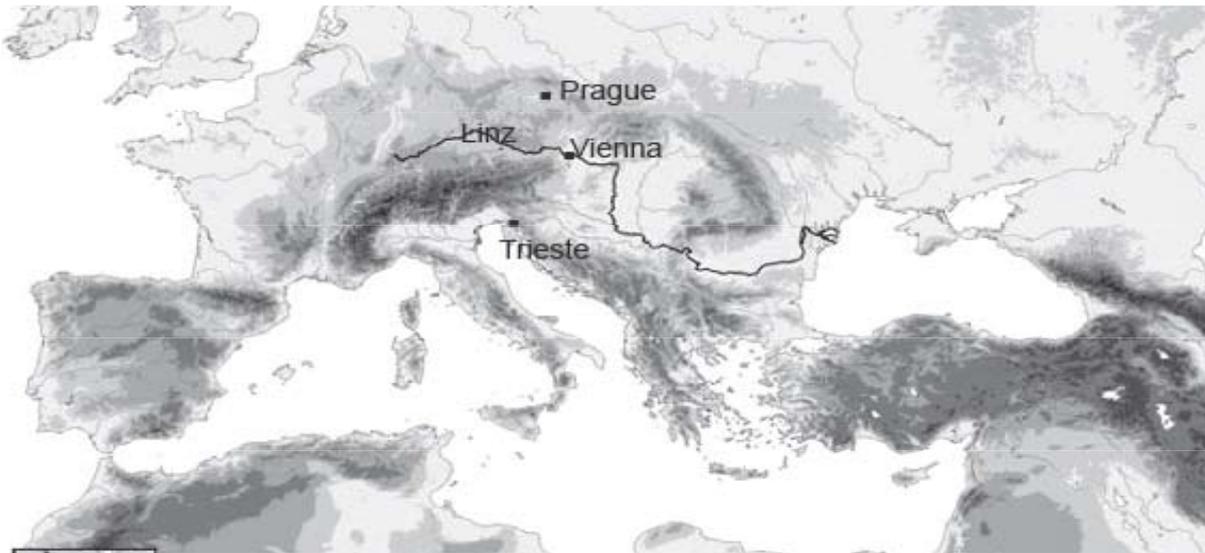
Many of us will be familiar with criticisms of Shakespeare's knowledge of continental geography, but thanks to Noemi Magri and other scholars Oxfordians well know that, for instance, Milan and Verona are ports on the inland waterway system of sixteenth-century Italy at a time when brigands on the roads were an ever-present hazard of land travel.

I make no apology for returning¹ to the 'error' involving Antigonus's wreck on the Coast of Bohemia in *The Winter's Tale*. That the coast is thought to be a part of the Dalmatian coastline which for a short-lived period in the thirteenth century was part of a much greater Bohemia has always seemed to me a poor bet. In the late sixteenth century Bohemia was a central European power, which in the 1560s lost its littoral on the Danube. It remained a player on the political scene of Europe until its demise in 1620 at the start of the Thirty Years' War.

First, we should try to fix the possible route that Antigonus would take the baby Perdita from Palermo and out of the power of Leontes to Prague the capital of Polixenes' kingdom of Bohemia. The first leg would be by boat to Trieste, and then (see map p.30), overland over the Brenner pass to Vienna – the route followed by the railway three hundred years later – , then by boat upstream from Linz, and finally up the valley of the Vltava (Moldau), a recognised trade route², to Prague itself.

Two thirds along the way upstream from Vienna towards Linz on the Danube is the whirlpool of Grein, where the 18-year-old Paddy Fermor 'found the rapids and reefs of this stretch of the Danube smashed up shipping for centuries'. Not finally until the 1890s was passage made safe, and until then, 'everything hung on the pilot's skill and to some degree it still does; the creases and ruffles turning into sudden cartwheel twirls amidstream bear witness to the commotion below.'³ Add then a Shakespearian storm, and there are all the ingredients of the disaster described in *The Winter's Tale*.

My second illustration (p.30) is a copy of the first edition of Act III Scene 3 of the play as it appears in the 1623 folio. It is really a scene in two parts, beginning with 'Enter Antigonus, a Marriner, Babe, Sheepeheard, and Clowne'. Curiously, in view of the drama being played out before them, the Shepherd and the Clown play no part in the first part of the scene: their inclusion is clearly an editorial mistake. That first part ends with the famous direction 'Exit pursued by a Beare' – incidentally bears were common enough at the time in the area. I suggest that naming the character 'Marriner' was another editorial error: noting that in that first part of the scene there is no mention of the sea, by the two characters, Antigonus and the 'Marriner'



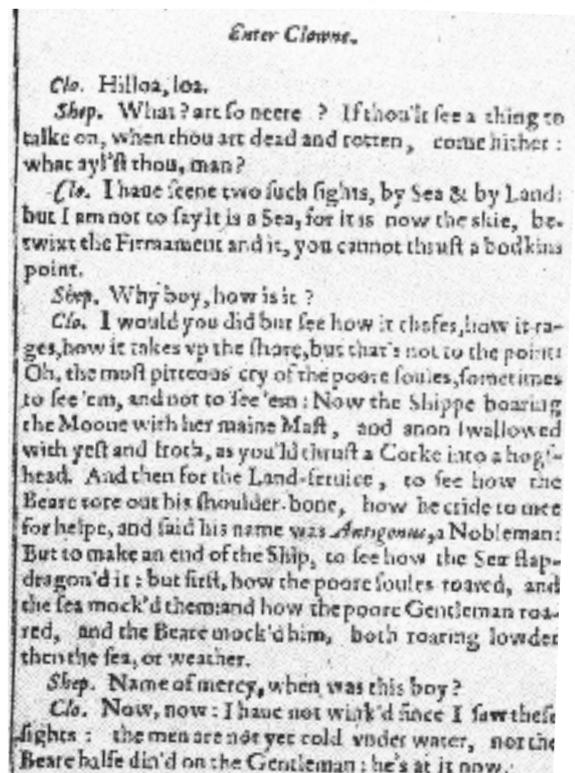
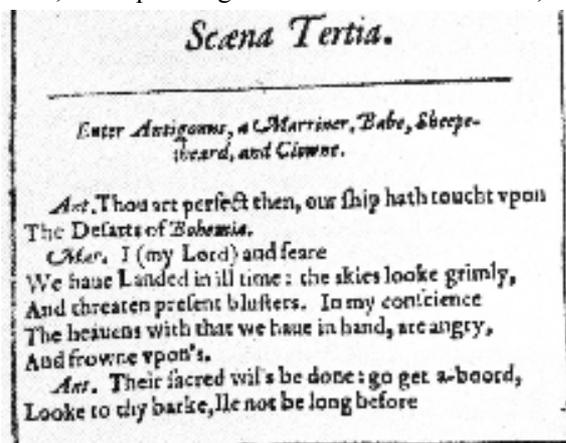
The course of the Danube

who would at least know where they were.

Modern editors seem to accept the initial criticism, as they begin the scene with the entry of Antigonus with the child and the Mariner; the bear sees off Antigonus and then the Old Shepherd enters with his famous soliloquy, beloved by Professor Weis in his recent book⁴: 'I would there were no age between ten and three and twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest, for there is nothing (in the betweene) but getting wenches with childe, wronging the Ancientry, stealing, fighting ...'. which as the Professor points out seems to be as apt a description of William Shakespeare's career in Stratford up to the age of twenty-three in 1587 as any – not much intellectual or artistic content anyway. The Old Shepherd then blames the local hunt for scaring off two of his best sheep, and only by luck will he find them 'by the sea-side, browsing of ivy' – the first mention of the sea in the actual speeches written by the playwright as opposed to the editor's interpolations. He then finds the baby Perdita. Then in comes the Clown, who describes the final moments of both the ship and Antigonus, all in a curious naïve-dramatic fashion. Thus, the ship 'boring the moon with her mainmast, and

anon swallowed with yest and froth, as you'd thrust a cork in a hogshead' seems to be in tune with Leigh Fermor's description of calm conditions at the whirlpool; even the name Grein he says is thought to be onomatopoeia for a cry of a sailor drowning there – the Clown's 'most piteous cry of the poor souls' on the ship.

The Clown refers four times to the sea and once to the shore, and I believe that these are the usages, along with the one by the Old Shepherd, which mislead editors to this day into thinking that 'Shakespeare' is referring to a sea and coast line for Bohemia. Bohemia had much too high a profile for any



educated person to make such an error. Memory recalls the ridicule that greeted the member of the government of the time who thought the then British Guiana was an island when every schoolboy stamp-collector knew better. For the editor to think that this was the author's error is another error on his part. If the editor was Ben Jonson then clearly he missed the point completely. In 'Conversations'⁵ he is quoted (no doubt while drunk) as saying: 'Shakspear, in a play, brought in a number of men they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea neer by some 100 miles.'

Of course, having never visited the Danube at that point, neither Shakespeare nor Oxford would know of the comparative narrowness of the Danube there, although the storm might well provide a defence to this criticism.

So how does the error in Oxford's *The Winter's Tale* arise? The Old Shepherd and the Clown are part of a pattern⁶ in which Shakespeare appears in the plays as an ignorant, rustic, social-climbing buffoon: they are caricatures of his father and Shakespeare himself. The Clown is repeatedly shown in situations⁷ to his detriment, first in the Old Shepherd's (accurate) description of his career to the age of twenty-three described above, and then in his encounters with Autolycus, and finally after Perdita is revealed as a worthy bride for Florizel and the daughter of Leontes and the Clown and the Old Shepherd are rewarded by just the kind of recognition so earnestly sought by William Shakespeare himself:

In effect by saddling Shakespeare and his father with the idea that they thought Bohemia was by the sea, Oxford was adding more cream to his joke – missed by Jonson and twelve-plus generations of editors.

R.M.

1. My earlier article is in *DVS Newsletter* April 2004
2. The Prague-Linz trade route map is shown on p. 204 of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* – Ferdinand Braudel - English Edition 1972
3. Sir Paddy Leigh Fermor: *A Time Of Gifts* (Murray 1977) pp.152 and 164.
4. Rene Weis: *Shakespeare Revealed* (Murray 2007) reviewed in *DVS Newsletter* March 2008 p.30
5. Ben Jonson: *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* 1619 p.16 – Stanford University website
6. See the examples in the *Great Oxford* reference below
7. See Act IV Scene 2, 3 and Act V Scene 2.
Ref. *Great Oxford*: Parapress, 2004: Ch 27 'What Oxford Thought of Shakespeare'. The point is made that Perdita is an allegory for the 'Shakespeare' oeuvre in the custody of the Clown, just as Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew* is left at the end of that play still in charge of that oeuvre, this time allegorised as the lord's sumptuous lifestyle and possessions. Other examples of the putting-down of Shakespeare are: the infantile Latin of William Page in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and William in *As You Like It* (with Oxford's self-portrait as Touchstone/Jaques). To more clearly identify Sly in *T of S*, Oxford puts himself in as Autolycus the failed courtier, vagabond and rogue in the *Winter's Tale* who picks the Clown's pocket: I suggest that this is an allegory of Oxford collecting local colour for the portrayal of Sly and his neighbours, which misleads 'orthodox' commentators into identifying Sly with Shakespeare, when of course it does precisely the opposite.

Letters

Letter from Christopher Paul in response to the *DVS Newsletter* articles on Joan Robinson:

To the (SOS & DVS) Editors:

Not long after the appearance of my article 'A New Letter by J. T. Looney Brought to Light' in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* (Summer 2007, 43:3, 8-9), I was surprised but delighted to read Geoffrey M. Hodgson's bifold contribution in the *DVS Newsletter* (March 2008, 12-16); viz., his introductory 'Early Support for the Oxfordian Case by a Famous British Economist' framing an article by the famous economist herself, Joan Violet Robinson's 'Shakespeare and Mr. Looney', a piece originally published in the *Cambridge Review* (54:389-90, 12 May 1933).

As Robinson's article was previously unknown to me, I had assumed that Looney's letter of 3 September 1933 was exclusively in response to her letter of 28 August 1933, that being his only explicit reference. However, Robinson's article casts rather more light upon Looney's letter, and with that in mind, it now seems probable that when Looney wrote: 'Will you please accept my warmest thanks for writing as you have done,' he was referring not to Robinson's letter—or not only her letter—but mainly her article. Since the article had been published over three months earlier, we may not be sure exactly how Looney became familiar with it; although it seems likely that Robinson had sent him a copy, somewhat belatedly, along with her letter. While the particular circumstances are not that important, Looney's awareness of the article helps to contextualize some of his statements regarding Robinson's Cambridge associates, and I applaud Dr. Hodgson's resourcefulness in bringing this exposé once again to light. That it has obviously been too little noticed will hopefully be a thing of the past, not among Oxfordians only, but the public at large. This is now possible thanks to Dr. Hodgson making it available, with his prefatory *DVS* article paying her tribute, on his website.

Being a research professor of economics, a prolific author, and an Oxfordian—all in common with Robinson—I was not altogether surprised that Hodgson should have been aware of her article, but was curious as to how and when it had come to his attention, and whether the timing of our separate articles was related or purely coincidental. It was, as it turns out, the latter. In an email exchange, Dr. Hodgson explained:

'I found out about Joan Robinson's essay about 15 years ago. About a year ago I decided to try to republish it, and an Internet search led me to the Looney letter. I visited King's College in Cam-