

of *The Mawe* performed in 1593/4). This compares with 1584-1604, the conclusion in the chapter on *Othello* (by Noemi Magri) in *Dating Shakespeare's Plays*.

This edition does not overtly put the Oxfordian case: rather, and more subtly, it proceeds from a very strong hypothesis that Oxford was the author, to demonstrate the effect that this has on our view of the play. The echoes in Oxford's life of the play's dominating themes of Reputation, Shame and Jealousy are brought out well, and demonstrate how much the acknowledgment of a credible author with a substantial well-documented life story can add to appreciation of the play and its impact on an audience. I would recommend it as the standard edition for any committed Oxfordian, for those who are interested but unconvinced, and perhaps more especially for teachers who want to add an extra dimension to their pupils' study of *Othello*.

C.H.D.



## SHAKESPEARE: THE CONCEALED POET

by Robert Detobel

Review by Jan Scheffer and Elke Brackmann

Robert Detobel has definitely achieved mastery in the art of making documents speak. Reading is not as easy a skill as it seems: Detobel indeed teaches us to read anew.

In the introduction he promises thoroughly to examine key documents and place them in their right historical context, something previous scholars have failed to do, doubtless with disastrous results – his unbiased approach to the task, however, is outstanding.

The book is in three parts. A proper reading of the 'lifeless' documents results in his demonstrating that de Vere is Shakespeare.

The dedication to the Herbert brothers and the epistle 'To the Great Variety of Readers' in the First Folio are analyzed first. Robert goes to great lengths to stress a difference most readers might simply overlook. The author was dead and the author could not edit his own works. However, the two statements are not correlated. Minute as the difference might appear at first glance, equally wide-reaching are the consequences for the author-

ship debate. For the epistle tells us that the author was prevented by death from the right to 'oversee' his work, whereas the dedication states that he had no chance 'to execute' his own writings, adding that this was 'common with some'.

Both terms are borrowed from testamentary terminology. The overseer was appointed by the testator to watch the executor; he controlled the carrying-out of the will from the background. This is what Shakespeare was doing as an overseer between 1598 and 1604. In 1604 he was deprived of that right. But even between 1598 and 1604 the author Shakespeare did not publicly assume the role of author, that is, he wrote neither dedications nor epistles to the readers, nor were the works accompanied by encomia. It was not death that deprived him of the right to 'execute'. The fate of not being in a position to 'execute' his own works, was the fate of the aristocratic writer. And so the apposition 'common with some' becomes clear. To execute their own works was common for 'commoners' but not for aristocrats. Thus these two very small bits of information suffice to set free this truth: Shakespeare was an aristocrat or courtier who died in 1604. It is hardly surprising that no noteworthy attempt has been undertaken by orthodox scholars to elucidate the meaning of the prefaces.

The other two chapters of the first part proceed with a close reading of the registers of the Stationers' Company between 1595 and 1623. It is Detobel's merit to have shown for the first time what scholars had been unable to explain up to now: what does the entry about Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* on 22 July 1598 mean?

This is a memorandum to the successive wardens (they were yearly elected anew) of the company that no other stationer could claim the printing of one issue even when the person who held the copy, James Roberts, was waiting a very long time before publishing the play — which, indeed, is what Roberts was doing. But this prohibition could take effect on only one condition: the author had to express his veto. From which it follows that the Lord Chamberlain, making the publication conditional upon his permission or licence, was the author. Who is this Lord Chamberlain? In 1598 there were only two candidates: Lord Hunsdon, Chamberlain of Her Majesty's House, as was his full title, or the Earl of Oxford, Lord Great (or High) Chamberlain of England. Hunsdon is of course an unlikely candidate.

The second part mainly deals with the letter in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* and Chettle's

apology. Both documents contain some elements more overlooked than looked over by orthodox and anti-Stratfordian scholars alike. Detobel's profound reading of the documents makes some of the actions of the 'divers of worship' intervening for another person 'of worship' in this literary scandal explicable.

He proceeds analytically, asking important questions: why do the 'divers of worship' argue against the letter in *GGW* that the playwright was 'honest' when, at face value, no reproach of dishonesty is made? If the 'divers of worship' argue for the playwright's honesty, the possibility must arise that such a reproach was implied. Why does Chettle revoke the reproach alleged by the 'divers of worship' by saying that his 'demeanour was civil' and why do the 'divers of worship' seem to be satisfied with this revocation? And what could Chettle's affirmation that his demeanour was civil 'as excellent as he in the quality he professes' mean? Why did Chettle not know for certain if one of the two playwrights actually felt personally offended (he only knew it because 'divers of worship' intervened on behalf of one of the playwrights)? Why did Chettle not address a personal apology to this playwright as he did in the case of the other (Marlowe)? Because Chettle's apology to the third playwright was a public one, enforced on him by the 'divers of worship'.

The answer, based on two articles on slander in the 16th and 17th centuries by William S. Holdsworth in the *Law Quarterly Review* (1924) is fairly simple. Slander of commoners was a private

affair dealt with by a court, generally the Court of Star Chamber. Chettle would have had to reckon with being sued by Marlowe for slander in the Star Chamber. But slander of a peer or another high-ranking officer was no private affair: it was an affair of state. It was not the private affair of the high-ranking person to require restitution of honour, nor was it left to a court. The Privy Council took charge of the matter. This they did in 1580 when Gabriel Harvey slandered Oxford and Sir James Croft thought he had been slandered by Harvey. Neither man intervened personally with Harvey. Harvey was urged to recant by some 'worshipful persons', namely Sir Walter Mildmay and second secretary of state Thomas Wilson.

Hence, the third playwright was a man of high rank and can be neither the commoner William Shakespeare nor the commoner George Peele. This argument is sufficient to destroy the contention that George Peele was the third playwright. But Chettle gives us more information which has hardly ever been noted and excludes Peele: the third playwright's 'demeanour was civil' and 'as excellent as he in the quality he professes'. The expression 'quality he professes' refers to the profession of actor and unequivocally tells us that the third playwright had been exposing himself as an actor. Moreover, the author explains why Chettle's testimony to the civility of the third playwright satisfied the 'divers of worship' who had 'argued his honesty', civility and honesty being interchangeable signifiers for 'proper social behaviour', something orthodox scholars seem not to be aware of.

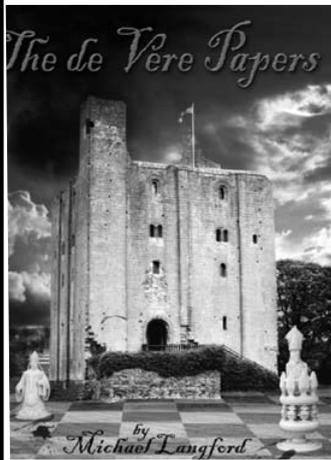
Were this all, *Shakespeare: The Concealed Poet* would still be a very valuable book. These two parts, however, are topped by the wealth of new insights contained in the third part, which offers a close reading of the Harvey-Nashe quarrel and its relation to the subplot of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The importance of the quarrel and the subplot for the Oxfordian theory cannot be stressed enough.

That this subplot has something to do with the Harvey-Nashe quarrel has also been noted by orthodox scholars. But they have never entered into details. Understandably so, for it would be hard for them to dodge the question why Shakespeare, who in his play shows himself privy to the quarrel, is not once named by Harvey or Nashe, whereas Oxford occupies centre stage, sometimes expressly named, more often clearly alluded to. Moreover, by intentionally confounding four times in a row Harvey's *Three Familiar Letters* of 1580, in one of which he libelled Oxford and his *Four Letters* of 1592,

## The de Vere Papers

by our member Michael Langford

a Victorian 'whodunnit'



Is Dr Simon Weatherspoon of De Vere College, Cambridge, the respectable young clergyman he seems to be? And can he reach the college treasure before the serial murderer reaches him?

Price: £7.9 p & p free  
[www.parapress.co.uk](http://www.parapress.co.uk)  
 or e-mail the Editor:  
[office@parapress.myzen.co.uk](mailto:office@parapress.myzen.co.uk)

in which he vituperated against Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe, Nashe sends the clear message that the quarrel between him and Harvey in 1592 is intimately connected with the satirical poem 'Speculum Tuscanismi' which Harvey probably wrote against Oxford in 1580. In the light of this quarrel, many a joke in the subplot of *Love's Labour's Lost* becomes more understandable. The Harvey-Nashe quarrel and the subplot illuminate each other.

Finally, although he does not name him explicitly, at one point Nashe identifies Oxford unambiguously. In *Have With You to Saffron Walden* Nashe lashes out at Harvey's overbearing speeches at Audley End in 1578. Nashe's source in this case are the four books of Harvey's *Gratulationes Valdinenses*. The first three books contain Harvey's speeches to the Queen, Lord Burghley and the Earl of Leicester, and the fourth book the speeches to the Earl of Oxford, Philip Sidney and Christopher Hatton. So when Nashe in 1596 wishes Sidney's 'knight companion' the favor he had enjoyed at court in his youth, only Oxford can be meant (Leicester, Sidney and Hatton were dead by 1596). Nashe suggests that Oxford is writing under another name; he wishes him 'no other fame than he hath purchased himself by his pen'. The praise Nashe, writing, remember, in 1596, bestows on Oxford is such as one would have expected him to bestow on the literary star of the day, the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, for Nashe lauds Oxford as 'Our Patron, our Phœbus, our first Orpheus or quintessence of invention'. But a real author William Shakespeare seems to have been completely unknown to Nashe.

Detobel has kept his promise and more: the title page shows Rembrandt's famous doctors dissecting a corpse; obviously an allusion to the Stratfordians' attempt to reanimate Shaxpeare as Shakespeare. Detobel's profound and selfless research is a powerful medicine against such wishful thinking.

There is a German proverb expressing how when matters are generally settled it is the little things that cause big problems. A word-for-word translation is 'The devil is always stuck in the details.' But so are the gods! Meditating upon details dispels uncertainties and doubts and offers insights. Detobel's contribution has helped the latter side. Oxfordianism cannot do without his mental landmarks.

June 2011,  
Wuppertal, Germany, Elke Brackmann  
Utrecht, Netherlands, Jan Scheffer

## Appeasing the Fringe of the Oxfordian Movement (continued from page 29)

The postings generated a concerted reaction from a handful of PT advocates privately and also on the Concordia University listserv moderated by Prof. Daniel Wright. The SF president, Earl Showerman, MD, (and the Board) was accused by a literal handful of individuals with censorship, betrayal of the Fellowship's founding charter, 'cannibalizing our best scholars' (i.e., PT advocates) and personal invective. PT members on the SF Board echoed the accusations to the full Board repeatedly – even after Dr. Showerman acquiesced to the minority's demand to reconsider the motion, adding that he would introduce a motion to withdraw the entire statement until the Board could view the movie in its entirety to ascertain its content. At that point, the Board could reconsider issuing a statement concerning the movie and PT.

The motion was reconsidered on July 14th via teleconference, and 8 of its 9 members voted to withdraw the June statement in its entirety. Indeed, the president was so certain of the outcome that days before the Board convened, he emailed the editors of the *DVS Newsletter* and German website to be prepared to remove the statement after the Board's vote. I was the only Board member who did not approve the motion – and resigned from the Board in protest at the Board's appeasement of the minority PT faction, which is represented by a very small number of members in the Fellowship. By this measure (of representation) alone, the Board betrayed its membership; by abdicating its intellectual responsibility to the larger Oxfordian movement, the Board was unable to protect the movement's scholarly reputation.

Lynne Kositsky, member of the Fellowship's Nominating Committee, has resigned her position. Moreover, Dr. Showerman has now informed the Board that he will resign at the end of his current term in 2012. Regardless, the likelihood of the Fellowship issuing a statement critical of PT in the autumn is nil, as the PT faction and allies control the SF Board. To paraphrase Roger Parisious's prophetic question from 1998: 'Is the Shakespeare Fellowship to become a scholarly society with a lunatic fringe or a lunatic core with a scholarly fringe?' With the behavior of the Shakespeare Fellowship Board of Trustees, that has been answered in full. The leadership of the Oxfordian movement now rests with European Oxfordians in England and Germany.

G.G.

Gary Goldstein is currently managing editor of *Brief Chronicles* (2009 – present), available online at [www.briefchronicles.com](http://www.briefchronicles.com). He was a trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship from 2009-2011, and former editor of *The Elizabethan Review* from 1993-2001 (see [www.elizabethanreview.com](http://www.elizabethanreview.com)).