

Review: *Reflections on the True Shakespeare*, by Gary Goldstein (Verlag Uwe Laugwitz (250pp))

English and American Shakespeareans should ponder in shame the sobering fact that the best and most consistent publisher of Oxfordian books is German. Verlag Uwe Laugwitz, based at Buchholz in Lower Saxony, has now published, as ‘special editions’ of the *Neues Shake-Speare Journal*, four paperback books entirely in English, of which Gary Goldstein’s *Reflections on the True Shakespeare* is the latest. Oxfordians are warmly encouraged to acquire them all. The series includes Robin Fox on *Shakespeare’s Education*; an anthology of ground-breaking essays by the late Neomi Magri (*Such Fruits Out of Italy*), mainly dedicated to Shakespeare-Oxford’s Italian associations, and a superb collection of diverse Shakespearean essays by Peter R. Moore (*The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised*). Also in this series (but alas only in German) is Robert Detobel’s blissful *Wunsch und Wirklichkeit* – a searing attack on James Shapiro’s clumsy and derisive history of the anti-Stratfordian movement, *Contested Will*.

Laugwitz’s latest publication brings the best articles and reviews of Gary Goldstein together in a single volume. Goldstein was the producer of the TV documentary, *Uncovering Shakespeare*, and founding editor of the exceptional, but regrettably defunct journal, *Elizabethan Review*. In 21 short and diverse pieces, the author soars from the general to the particular and back again with ease. Beginning with a short biography of Oxford and an overview of the Shakespeare authorship question, he proceeds to question whether the Tudor stage was used as an instrument of state propaganda. The theory that it was can only be supported by inference, but Goldstein works his subject with a keen intensity, miraculously producing a near-watertight case, despite the unexplained omission of the crucial and clinching evidence that supports his thesis – Nashe’s description of a ‘policy of plays’ as one of the ‘secrets of government’ targeted at captains, lawyers and courtiers in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592).

Goldstein’s previously unpublished analysis of Oxford’s poetry as ‘Shakespeare’s juvenilia’ builds on the pioneering work of Joseph Sobran in showing how Vere’s small handful of acknowledged poems provide a logical fit for the missing early works of William Shakespeare – a neglected area of Oxfordian study from which he mines many gems. I was particularly impressed by two shorter items – one concerning Shakespeare’s apparent knowledge of Hebrew in *Merchant of Venice* and one on Hamlet’s final utterance: ‘The rest is silence, O, o, o, o, *Dyes*’ (FF, 1623). Goldstein plausibly cites this is an allusion to the prologue of Agamemnon, part 1 of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* in

which the Watchman says: ‘the rest is silence; the ox is on my tongue.’ Neither essay attempts to push the Oxfordian point, as Goldstein, a well-mannered writer, never attempts to push his point. His skill is in the laying of strong foundations. With clarity and insight his essays serve to propel the thirsty reader to unchartered waters of his own research. The former had me looking into Oxford’s associations with Jews in Italy and his alleged knowledge of the Hebrew *Toldoth Jesu* stories, obliquely mentioned by Alan Nelson (pp. 210 and 213); the latter had me researching references to him as ‘ox’ such as the ‘ox’ who reminds Gulio of Shakespeare in *The Returne from Parnassus* (1600) and Charles Arundel’s spiteful reference to Oxford as an ox ‘grazing in the pastures.’

Few of Goldstein’s conclusions will lead to heated debate, though claiming the hand that descends from the clouds to clasp Oxford’s in Hilliard miniature of 1588 as the hand of Queen Elizabeth might raise the under-collar temperature of a few Oxfordians by a couple of Fahrenheit. The collection ends on a note of optimism through an appeal to disciplinary scholarship to resolve the current deadlock of its two Shakespeares. The book is full of interesting, thoughtful and varied information, well researched, clearly stated, nicely printed and very pleasant to read.

Alexander Waugh

Letters to the Press:

Professor Alan Nelson’s Blunders (Part I)

An Occasional Series Highlighting the Errors, Omissions and False Statements in Alan H. Nelson’s biography of Oxford, ‘Monstrous Adversary’ (Liverpool, 2003)

Oxford’s ‘Small Latine’

Although he must have known that in 1577 Orazio Cuoco had testified, on oath, that Oxford was one who spoke the Latin language well (*‘era persona che parlava ben la lingua Latina’*) and that Gabriel Harvey had praised Oxford’s “many Latin verses” in the following year, Professor Nelson proposes that Oxford’s Latin was “seriously defective.” On p. 66 of *Monstrous Adversary*, he gives five reasons for supporting this belief:

1. *levare facias* - Nelson has heard of the legal term ‘levari facias’ and mocks Oxford for writing ‘levare facias’ assuming it to be a schoolboy Latin error, but both phrases are correct and both mean the same thing – except in the former, the infinitive is passive (‘cause to be levied’) and in the latter, it is active (‘cause to levy’). Nelson with his ‘small Latine’ does not appear to understand this. Jones (in his ‘Introduction to Petty Bag Proceedings in the Reign of Elizabeth I’, *CLR*, Dec 1963) explains that the Elizabethan ‘levare facias’ gave a creditor the right to direct a magistrate to “levy a forfeited sum from a recogniser’s goods and lands”

(896). ‘Levare facias’ (as opposed to ‘levari facias’) appears in various law books of the 17th century, such as Herne’s *Law Conveyances*, Earl of Nottingham’s *Law*, John Kitchen’s *Jurisdiction* etc.

2. *fyre facias* - Nelson has heard of the term ‘fieri facias’ and complains about Oxford writing ‘fyre facias’ branding it a ‘first year’ Latin error, but ‘fire facias’ (an English-Latin hybrid form) appears in countless sources throughout the centuries (e.g. Wilson, 1799: “Lord Cole says, that albeit a fire facias be a judicial writ, yet because the defendant may thereupon plead, this fire facias is accounted in law to be in nature”). ‘Fire facias’ and ‘fieri facias’ would appear to be interchangeable as Sir Robert Moyle demonstrates in his *Judicial Writs* (pub. 1658): “... he should not have an ELegit to the Bpp. but a fire facias de bonis, ecclesiasticis and thereupon a fieri fac. de bonis exclesiasticis was made in that case.” Failing to spot a plain English word in its common Elizabethan spelling, Nelson mistakenly trumpets another Latin howler!
3. *de benne esse* - Oxford spells ‘bene’ conventionally except on one occasion when he writes, ‘de benne esse.’ Nelson derides this clear error in spelling without acknowledging that lawyers have been spelling it ‘de benne esse’ for hundreds of years, as any Google search of that phrase will testify.
4. *quantum in nos est* - Nelson has heard of the term ‘in nobis est’ and scorns Oxford’s use of ‘in nos est’ arguing that ‘the replacement of *nobis* (ablative following ‘in’) by *nos* (accusative) is an egregious error in grammar.’ He would no doubt clap his little hands to learn that a Google Books search for the term ‘*in nos est*’ returns his own confused complaint against Oxford right up top. However, the 4119 hits that follow show that the accusative (“*nos*”) is frequently used as an alternative to the ablative (“*nobis*”) following ‘in’. Examples include *St Paul’s Epistles* of 1591 (‘in nos est fides’); ‘De persecutione anglicana libellus’ of 1582 (‘praetex tu quantum in nos possunt’); and a legal licence granting John Morrison the right to preach in 1582 that duplicates Oxford’s exact phrase (‘modo praemisso factam, quantum in nos est’); as does *Capitularia Regum Francorum* of 1677 (‘quomodo Deo adjuvante, quantum in nos est’), etc. etc. ad nauseam!
5. *summmum totale* - Nelson has heard of the term ‘summa totalis,’ which he translates as “the sum of all (the foregoing)” but does not appear to have heard of the term ‘summmum totale,’ which is what Oxford wrote in a business letter to Lord Burghley in 1595. ‘Summmum totale’ is correct; it means ‘sum total’. Although the word totale/totalis does not appear in Classical Latin dictionaries, it is a standard hybrid word of Renaissance Latin. Early examples of ‘summmum totale’ may be found on EEBO in the scholarly works of James Marmaduke, Mark Hildesly and Arthur Bury. Had Nelson understood that Oxford intended ‘totale’ as a noun and ‘summmum’ as an adjective, he would have spared his long-suffering readers the boredom of a fatuous corrective disquisition on the nominative, singular, feminine noun ‘summa’ and realised that Oxford’s Latin was correct.

So that’s the ‘summmum totale’ of Oxford’s Latin mistakes, according to Nelson.

Alexander Wagh