

# Another Coincidence? Shakespeare and Oxford Together on the Same Day

by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

One can imagine the excitement in orthodox circles if documents were to show conclusively that William Shaksper of Stratford and, say, Edmund Spenser or Ben Jonson, were at the same place at the same time. There would perhaps be even greater excitement on the Oxfordian side if evidence indicated that “Shakespeare” and Oxford attended the same function. Apparently, that is what we have.

King James treated Oxford exceptionally well. Immediately upon his accession to the throne in 1603, he restored Oxford’s place at court and granted him lands he had pursued for years. The King’s Men, formerly The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, acted a play before James at the Earl of Pembroke’s estate at Wilton on December 2, 1603. E.K. Chambers<sup>1</sup> conjectured that the play was Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. So James apparently held a good view of both Oxford and Shakespeare, a reasonable confluence if they were the same person.

This is not the only time that Oxford held a prominent place in King James’ public appearances. A section of Christopher Paul’s article<sup>2</sup> noted an event that occurred three months later, in March 1604. As Nelson describes it, “On 15 March the King rode in triumph through London.”<sup>3</sup> Nichols<sup>4</sup> records that upon that occasion immediately to the King’s left was “The Lord Great Chamberlaine,” i.e., the Earl of Oxford.

Something else happened on this date. Price<sup>5</sup> records that in a document from 1604, “‘William Shakespeare’ heads the list of ‘Players’ who are issued red cloth for ceremonial livery on the occasion of King James’s procession through London...on 15 March,”<sup>6</sup> 1604. Moreover, the recipient

could not have been William Shaksper of Stratford because at that time he “was back in Stratford selling malt to Philip Rogers.”<sup>7</sup>

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**However, the recipient could not have been William Shaksper of Stratford because at that time he “was back in Stratford selling malt to Philip Rogers.” Is it a coincidence that the very man whom 85 years of scholarship identifies as Shakespeare was present in a ceremonial role in the same place on the same day as the elusive William Shakespeare, and at a time when the Stratford man was out of town?**

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Shakespeare was present in a ceremonial role in the same place on the same day as the elusive William Shakespeare, and at a time when the Stratford man was out of town? We may postulate that Oxford, who lived until June of that year, was filling a role in the final months of this life that he had played

so many times for James’ predecessor, Queen Elizabeth. On this occasion, it appears, he played both the Earl of Oxford, Great Chamberlain of England, and William Shakespeare, the first-listed receiver of ceremonial livery among the King’s Men’s players. Whatever one might conjecture about the specifics of that day’s events, the record shows that Edward de Vere and “Shakespeare” attended the same function on the same day, at the behest of King James.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Chambers, E.K. (1930). *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, vol.2, Oxford, 329.

<sup>2</sup> “A First Blast of the Trumpet against the *Monstrous Adversary*,” *Shakespeare Matters*, Fall 2006, 6:1, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, Alan. H. (2003). *Monstrous Adversary*. Liverpool University Press, 424.

<sup>4</sup> Nichols, *Progresses of James*, Volume 1, 327, as qtd. in Paul, Christopher, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Price, Diana. (2001). *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

<sup>6</sup> Price, 17, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Price, 33.