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Alias Shakespeare: Solving the Greatest Literary Mystery of All Time by Joseph Sobran. New York: Free Press, 1997. 311 pp. cloth (n.p.—out-of-print). ISBN 0-684-82658-5.

Diana Price, in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*, does not attempt to identify the real author of the Shakespearean opus. Joseph Sobran makes the case for the Earl of Oxford.

Sobran's book is lighter reading than Price's; one might say that he illustrates where Price demonstrates; or at any rate, he does not delve as deeply and intricately as she does. Nevertheless, Sobran does convincingly show that what little is known about William Shakspere of Stratford makes it very surprising that he could have written those plays, let alone the poems. On the other hand, much is known about the Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and there would be nothing surprising in his having written the whole opus.

To his contemporaries, in the mid-1590s, "William Shakespeare" was known and renowned first of all for his long poems; Chapter 9 makes an excellent case that Oxford was the author. Moreover the nature and content of the Sonnets—first published in 1609—virtually exclude Shakspere.

The poems are ignored in the eulogy to the author in the first published collection of Shakespeare's plays, the 1623 Folio. Shakspere died in 1616, Oxford in 1604. In Chapter 6, "1604: The Critical Year", Sobran shows that these dates make it quite plausible that Oxford was the author. There are hints soon after 1604 that Shakespeare was dead; and Sobran offers evidence too that some of the plays pre-dated 1590, too early for the Stratford man to have composed them.

Chapter 7 draws plausible inferences between Shakespeare and Oxford's known connections and associations; and Chapter 8 is full of striking parallels between known details of Oxford's life—his travels and intellectual interests—and innumerable details of the plays. I was particularly struck that even mainstream scholars regard as the source for Polonius, in *Hamlet*, Queen Elizabeth's powerful Lord Treasurer, Lord Burghley—one of whose wards was Edward de Vere.

Sobran's credibility is enhanced by the fact that he had accepted the main-

stream view for decades. "It's because I was torn between two utterly incompatible views that I am finally able to render my own verdict" (p. 15).

Many Scientific Explorers will empathize with Sobran's remarks about first encountering the unorthodox claims. "I entered a bizarre world of colorful people, totally unlike the academic world I'd known before"; "a great deal of the heretical literature is outlandish" (p. 2). "The bulk of the anti-Stratfordian literature has been produced by a few amateur scholars and a great many eccentrics" (p. 4). "Fallings-out among different anti-Stratfordian sects, or divisions within them, are common" (p. 3). While the unorthodox are prone to "the almost unavoidable errors of isolation from a stabilizing mainstream" (p. 6), the mainstream is marked by "the inability to acknowledge even the possibility of reasonable doubt" (p. 14).

I found this an enjoyable book, and offer this retrospective review as a useful companion to Diana Price's demonstration that the man from Stratford was not William Shakespeare, the author.

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Astrology in the Year Zero by Garry Phillipson. London: Flare Publications, 2000. 272 pp. £15.99 (paper). ISBN 0-9530261-9-1.

In *Astrology in the Year Zero*, Garry Phillipson takes the reader on a guided tour of the astrological world via interviews conducted between 1996 and 2000 with thirty-three of the world's leading western astrologers and researchers. However, this is not the "seven countries in seven days, look at the sights through the window of the bus" tour. This is an immersion experience led by an anthropologist who knows the language, culture, and mores of the natives. Furthermore, he has picked some of the most interesting and articulate members of the astrological community and knows how to elicit their ideas and perspectives on a complex topic. Rather than presenting long individual interviews, Phillipson structures the book around topics that he illuminates with excerpts from the interviews. The book presumes no prior knowledge of astrology. Although the astrologers sometimes speak in the terminology of their discipline, Phillipson provides an appendix that outlines the astrological chart, defining the astronomy behind the calculation of a horoscope and the various astrological terms. He also provides footnotes defining particular terms for the reader as appropriate.

Phillipson has the eclectic background needed to write this book. He graduated