



# THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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## Record Attendance at 2015 SOF Conference in Ashland

by Alex McNeil, James Warren, and Hank Whittemore

Some 118 persons attended this year's annual conference, held at the historic Ashland Springs Hotel in Ashland, Oregon, from September 24 to 27. Many of the attendees also took the opportunity to see one or more of the three Shakespeare plays put on by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival: *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*.

Although the conference officially began on Thursday, authorship-related events were held on Wednesday, September 23, as well (see separate article by chief conference organizer Earl Showerman on page 8 of this issue).

### DAY ONE: Thursday, September 24

#### **Folio Exhibit and *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth***

Thursday morning featured an optional excursion to see an exhibition of several Shakespeare Folio editions at the Hannon Library at Southern Oregon University in Ashland; the library has more than 8,000 Shakespeare-related titles. Later in the morning Cheryl Eagan-Donovan screened her Oxfordian documentary film, *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth* (see Spring 2015 issue of the *Newsletter*). The film was

screened in June at the Sheffield Film Festival Videotheque Program in England, a program for films seeking distribution. Its world premiere took place at the Bergen International Film Festival in Norway in September. Eagan-Donovan has also been invited to present her film at the University of Michigan, at MIT, and at the Cosmos Club in Washington, DC.

#### **Julia Cleave: "Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Case of the Bassano Fresco"**

The first speaker on Thursday afternoon was Julia Cleave, a trustee of the Shakespearean Authorship Trust in England. She noted that the traditional biography of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan visual arts culture operate to constrain an expansive view of Shakespeare's treatment of the visual arts. But she reminded us that Shakespeare had to have been aware of Titian's own copy of his painting, "Venus and Adonis," which shows Adonis wearing a bonnet; that Shakespeare refers to Italian painter-sculptor Giulio Romano; that the 200-line description in *The Rape of Lucrece* of the siege of Troy seems to describe Romano's painting of it on the ceiling of an Italian palace; and at least one of the paintings mentioned in the induction scene in

*(Continued on page 22)*



## ***From the President: After Ashland***

Dear Members of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship,

Those of you who attended the SOF's annual conference in Ashland, Oregon, in September will probably agree with me that this was a special conference. It featured record attendance of 118 people (almost twice our usual number), presentations by six British scholars, Michael Delahoyde's revelation of his and Coleen Moriarty's Oxfordian discoveries in the Venice archives, and the presentation of the Oxfordian of the Year award to Alexander Waugh. And those are just some of the highlights. The conference was filled with fascinating presentations related to the authorship question, and I'm sure that every attendee, including myself, gained a great many new insights. Coverage of the conference begins on page 1 of this issue.

I appreciate the membership's electing me to serve another year as President of the SOF at the conference. The membership also elected James Warren, the editor of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*, to his first term on the Board of Trustees and re-elected Richard Joyrich and me to new three-year terms on the Board. James succeeds Lynne Kositsky, who retired from the Board after many years of outstanding service to the Oxfordian cause.

Lynne, who was the Oxfordian of the Year in 2006, was instrumental in bringing about joint conferences of the SOF's two predecessor organizations, which eventually led to their unification in 2013. She is the author of the delightful *A Question of Will*, a book on the authorship question for young readers, a review of which is featured in the latest edition of *The Oxfordian*. She is also the coauthor, with Roger Stritmatter, of *On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's The Tempest*, the book that lays to rest the theory that Oxford could not have written *The Tempest*. Lynne and her husband Michael are currently working on a project to bring *A Question of Will* to the stage as a musical, and we wish them unbounded success in this project. Thank you, Lynne, from all of us at the SOF for all that you have done to bring the truth to light.

The Board of Trustees elected Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, director of the Oxfordian film, *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth*, to succeed Lynne Kositsky as 2nd Vice President of the SOF. Cheryl has proven herself a valuable Board member, having ably chaired the Finance Committee this past year. The Board decided to have the remaining officers from last year continue in their roles: Richard Joyrich as 1st Vice President, Tom Rucker as Treasurer, and Wally Hurst as Secretary. These officers, along with Trustees Joan Leon, Michael Morse, Don Rubin, and new Trustee Jim Warren, make a very strong, experienced team.

### **The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter**

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The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to investigating the Shakespeare authorship question and disseminating the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), is the true author of the poems and plays written under the pseudonym "William Shakespeare."

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship pursues its mission by supporting research, educational and scholarly initiatives, annual conferences, website and social media, and by publishing this Newsletter and two annual scholarly journals, *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles*.

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was formed in 2013 when the Shakespeare Oxford Society, founded in 1957, and the Shakespeare Fellowship, founded in 2001, united to form a single organization. Dues, grants and contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

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Articles, essays, commentary, book reviews, letters and news items of interest to the Shakespeare Oxfordian community are welcome. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. As provided in the bylaws, "The conferences, publications, and other educational projects of the Fellowship will be open forums for all aspects of the Oxfordian theory of authorship."

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I hope that you have seen *The Oxfordian 17*, which is available for download by members from our website and can be purchased in printed form from Amazon. This is the first edition to be edited by Chris Pannell, who has done a wonderful job. Through *The Oxfordian* and our other fine journal, *Brief Chronicles*, the SOF is helping to ensure that Oxfordian research continues to be available to a wide audience.

One reflection of the SOF's strength is its growing membership. Our membership grew to 433 members in 2015, an increase of over 100 from 2014. Increased membership gives us more resources with which to spread our message. Now is the time to renew your membership for 2016. Let's keep the momentum that we gained in 2015 going strong into the next year. I have already renewed my membership for 2016, and so have all the other Board members. You can use the insert in this newsletter to renew your membership for 2016, or you can renew through our website (select "Join Us" on the menu bar). Membership dues have not increased over last year's, and we have added special reduced rates for students. You may also want to consider buying an Introductory Gift Membership for a friend who is new to, but interested in, the authorship question. Many of you have been known to add on a donation when you renew your memberships, and this greatly helps our mission. Like most nonprofit organizations, we need donations as well as dues to support our basic functions of publishing newsletters and journals, holding

conferences, and maintaining our website and social media. We would also like to create new outreach programs, and such programs will be prime beneficiaries of your donations.

At the Ashland conference, we held an open forum in which our members offered their ideas on how we can further promote the Shakespeare authorship question. Our members gave many excellent suggestions. We would like to implement many of them, but unfortunately our resources are limited. I don't mean limited just by money (although we can always find ways to use more money to help the cause); I'm talking about time spent by volunteers. Many people cheerfully volunteer many, many hours of their time to keep the SOF going strong. A perfect example is Earl Showerman, who was the prime mover and master organizer behind our magnificent conference in Ashland. Alex McNeil, Oxfordian of the Year in 2014, both edits this newsletter and manages the SOF office as a volunteer. Linda Theil has written dozens of fine articles for the SOF website as a volunteer. If more people were to volunteer, we could accomplish even more. If you have time, even an hour or two a week that you would like to devote to the SOF, please contact me at [info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org](mailto:info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org) and tell me about your interests and capabilities.

Let's make 2016 even better than this year has been!

Tom Regnier, President

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## Letters to the Editor

I wish to thank William Ray for his appreciative notice of *Unreading Shakespeare* in the Summer 2015 issue. I might add that it would have been helpful to observe that it is the second half of a Shakespeare commentary which begins with *Hamlet Made Simple* (2013). As such, the project should be evaluated in its entirety. While the critical aim is properly indicated, it is only when the two volumes are joined together that its extraordinary scope comes into focus. Most of the renowned expositors of Shakespeare, past and present, are taken up and corrected. Further, this text can properly claim to be the first substantial foray in literary criticism from an Oxfordian perspective. It surely deserves the attention of every serious student of Shakespeare. When comes such another?

David Gontar  
Huhhot, China

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In the Summer 2015 issue of the *Newsletter*, it was reported that this question was put to Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson of the Birthplace Trust:

“Q: In the Waugh-Shahan book, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? — Exposing an Industry in Denial*, they ask you to debate this position and they offer money to the Birthplace Trust if you can prove your position ‘without doubt.’ Why won’t you accept that debate?”

To which Wells replied:

“The position has been debated many times before. I have participated in such debates.... One more debate will prove nothing. I certainly won't be involved in any more debates on the subject. Even when the people are good, the debates go nowhere.”

I'd like to clarify that the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (SAC) did not actually challenge the Birthplace Trust to a “debate,” but, rather, to a mock trial. The distinction between the two is an important one. Wells routinely mischaracterizes our challenge as being to a “debate,” because it would favor the Stratfordian side, and because it is easier to dismiss our challenge on the ground that there have been many previous debates. Debates are often freewheeling, with little accountability unless a skilled, knowledgeable and aggressive moderator is willing to intervene, which is rare. Rather than being about evidence,

Stratfordians could easily argue from authority, resort to *ad hominem* attacks, or even lie about the evidence with impunity. With no opportunity to challenge their claims under cross-examination or to demand that they back them up with evidence, they could get away with anything.

In a mock trial, the focus would be on actual evidence, with a trial judge ruling on its admissibility and relevance. Stratfordians would be deprived of their usual tactics. Each side would have an opportunity not only to present its own expert witnesses, but also to cross-examine witnesses for the other side. There would be a verdict by a distinguished panel of judges, and it would be difficult to mislead such a panel. A mock trial would also be longer than a debate, making it possible to expose a pattern of deception. A mock trial would also be a high-profile, newsworthy event.

While it is unlikely that any such trial will ever take place (Stratfordians know they would lose), we should not let them deprive us of the PR victory we rightly deserve for having exposed them as unwilling to defend their claim that the authorship is “beyond doubt”—a claim rightly tested in a mock trial, not a debate.

John Shahan, SAC Chairman  
Claremont, CA

If I said the upper portrait is of John de Vere, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, would you say “No, no, no that is not right; that is the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford”?

Well, you are right in one respect—that is that this portrait has been misidentified many times. The portrait is the St. Alban’s Geerhardt portrait of John de Vere, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, painted c. 1560, which has been identified by Sir Roy Strong. Wouldn’t you think that the mixup might have been because there is a remarkable family resemblance between father and son?



John de Vere  
16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford



Edward de Vere  
17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford

Next is the portrait of Elizabeth de Vere, Edward de Vere’s daughter, about whom there was much controversy when she was an infant, and de Vere did later accept her as his daughter.

In fact, she shows a very strong resemblance to the de Veres, particularly to her grandfather, the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl. She is the spitting image of him. The portrait is in the possession of his grace the Duke of Atholl, who is her direct descendant.

The next two portraits are of Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton and his mother Mary Browne, Countess of Southampton. The Earl has a very favorable resemblance to his mother; I don’t know why anyone would think otherwise. I would not even think that he resembles the Queen.

Does anyone need to believe the Prince Tudor theories any more? I would think all these people really are who they said they were.

Margaret Becker  
New Bloomfield, PA



Elizabeth de Vere, Countess  
of Derby



Henry Wriothesley,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton



Mary Browne,  
Countess of Southampton



## What's the News?

### *The Year of Lear?* What Have We Here?

by Alex McNeil

Earlier this fall, James Shapiro's newest book was published here and abroad. The US edition is titled *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606* (the UK title is *1606: William Shakespeare and the Year of Lear*). In it the Columbia University academician presents his case that three of Shakespeare's best-known plays—*Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*—were all written in 1605-06, and reflect the playwright's reaction to the political climate of the time. In other words, Shapiro is setting to "prove" that Shakespeare was a Jacobean as well as an Elizabethan literary figure.

Make no mistake about his true intention, however. Perhaps disappointed that his previous book, *Contested Will?* did not succeed in extirpating the pesky Shakespeare Authorship Question, Shapiro is now trying another tactic. If he can convince the world that *Macbeth*, *Lear* and *A&C* had to have been written after 1604—the year Oxford died—then he will have killed off the most serious alternative authorship candidate and further cemented the case for the Stratford grain merchant. And he will have done it without even discussing Oxford, who's only mentioned once in *The Year of Lear*, as the father of "Susan De Vere."

Fortunately, Shapiro's entertainingly written web of suppositions-as-facts, misdirections, omissions and outright errors is not going unchallenged. In late September Oxfordians Mark Anderson and Alexander Waugh decided to quickly put together an e-book pointing out Shapiro's many missteps, and invited me to assist them in editing it. They solicited contributors to a chapter-by-chapter rebuttal, and received insightful work from C.V. Berney, Christopher Carolan, Katherine Chiljan, Jan Cole, Michael Delahoyde, Robert Detobel, Walter Hurst, Lynne Kositsky, John Lavendoski, Richard Malim, Tom Regnier, John Shahan, Earl Showerman, Steven Steinburg and Roger Stritmatter.

"It is a shame that American academics are not tenured under a sworn obligation to the truth," said Waugh. "If there existed some sort of equivalent to the Hippocratic Oath whereby professional scholars were bound on oath to avoid bias and to seek the truth at all times, James Shapiro would never have been allowed to publish this book. As it is they are free to say whatever looks trendy and so the duty falls upon others to clean up the messes they make."

Added Anderson, "Shapiro has in a sense given Oxfordians quite a nice little gift. Here he has laid on the table as close to a definitive case for a post-1604 Shakespeare chronology as any high-profile, commercially-published book has dared. In doing so, he has unwittingly demonstrated how hollow the

Stratfordian case really is. He was the one who left the door open. Our job was just to walk through it."

The e-book is titled *Contested Year: Errors, Omissions and Unsupported Statements in James Shapiro's The Year of Lear* (the UK title contains the English title of Shapiro's book), and is expected to be available in early December, at very low cost, through Amazon.com, Amazon.ca and Amazon.co.uk.

### 2015 SOF Research Grant Announced

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's 2015 Research Grant Program selection committee has announced that it will fund one proposal for further research into the Shakespeare Authorship Question. This is the second year that applications were received.

**Michael Delahoyde** and **Coleen Moriarty** have been awarded \$11,400 for research in a few northern Italian archives. The award is intended to enable them to follow up on the research that they pursued this summer with Delahoyde's 2014 SOF Research Grant award. The committee believes that its investment has so far paid off tremendously.

Delahoyde stated that the purpose of their research is to build upon "our recent discovery of documented evidence of Oxford's request and permission to access artwork in private governmental chambers" and "to remain on de Vere's archival trail through northern Italy in 1575-1576 as well as that of his personal secretary, Anthony Munday, in 1579. Beyond the archives, we hope to strengthen a sympathetic alliance among present-day locals engaged in the arts and education who recognize that they have a cultural stake in Oxfordianism and the visitors such fellowship attracts. We aim to expand the historical work into a very contemporary context: what would it mean to know, incontrovertibly, that Shakespeare himself not only drew breath but also found direct inspiration for his works here?"

Delahoyde and Moriarty gave a short summary of their summer 2015 findings at the SOF Shakespeare Authorship Conference (see page 25).

The members of the 2015 Research Grant Program selection committee were John Hamill (chair), Katherine Chiljan, Bonner Cutting, Ramon Jiménez and Don Rubin.

The committee expects to have another Research Grant Program for 2016. Further details will be announced in the next few months. In the meantime, members can help continue the Research Grant Program with donations.

## More Publicity for *The Shakespeare Mask*

Author Newton Frohlich reports, “I’ve been running around for my book. Barnes & Noble reports great interest generally in *The Shakespeare Mask* and invited me to do a book signing event—a Meet and Greet—at their Amherst [MA] location October 21. It will be followed the next day by my lecture on the book at the Jones Library in Amherst. Last week I was on an online radio interview show in Cambridge for the Harvard audience.”

*The Shakespeare Mask* is a historical novel that Frohlich wrote in 2014. As reported previously in this Newsletter, in 2015 it won an Award for Historical Fiction from the Independent Book Publishers Association.

## Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable Celebrates 30 Years

This year the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Roundtable, headquartered in Los Angeles, is known worldwide as a forum for open-minded inquiry into the authorship question. Its current officers include Carole Sue Lipman, Mark Mendizza, Sylvia Holmes and Gardner Monks, some of whom have served since its founding.

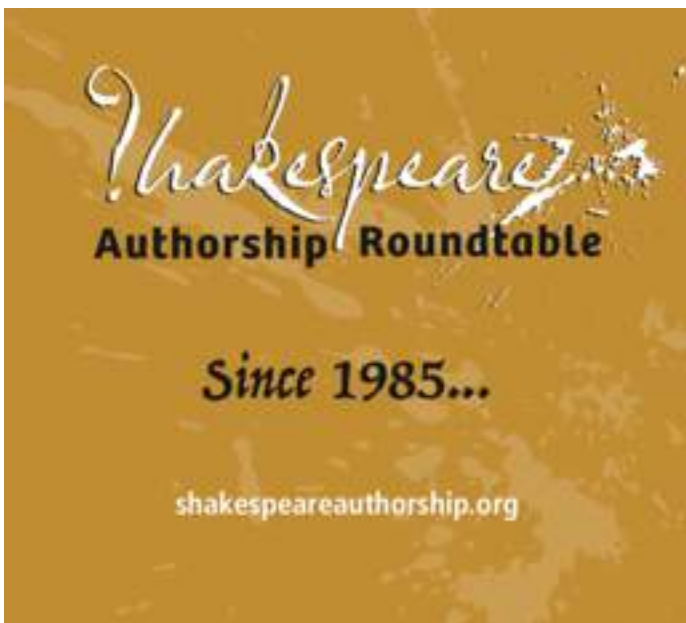
The Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable emerged in 1983 from unexpected beginnings. Lipman was doing research for a documentary film about the authorship controversy, and asked Charles Champlin, Arts Critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, to moderate a panel on the subject at UCLA Extension Humanities. Champlin had initially heard about the Earl of Oxford at a dinner with Barbara

and John Crowley, Ruth and Minos Miller, and Dick and Jane Roe. He wrote an article for the *Times* about the controversy, which prompted Lipman’s inquiry. He agreed to serve as moderator, but then they encountered an obstacle that would become all too familiar: UCLA declined to sponsor it.

Champlin and Lipman were dismayed, but not deterred. In fact, it was this type of academic censorship that inspired them to create an independent seminar in 1984 titled “Shakespeare in Cross-Examination.” Afterward, Barbara Crowley suggested setting up a non-profit educational organization; in 1985 they did exactly that, and the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable was officially born. In the early years the Roundtable expanded to include other authorship luminaries such as Elizabeth Wrigley at the Claremont Bacon Library, Calvin Hoffman and Louis Ule of Marlovian fame, and the young Charles Burford (now Beauclerk) on his first American tour. Over the years guest speakers have also included Bonner Miller Cutting, Peter Dawkins, Stephen May, Diana Price, Mark Rylance, Earl Showerman, Steve Sohmer, Roger Stritmatter, Gary Taylor and Hank Whittimore, among others. Thirty years later, the Roundtable continues to meet quarterly at the Beverly Hills Library, and welcomes all inquiries at: [www.shakespeareauthorship.org](http://www.shakespeareauthorship.org).

## Folger Library Marks Anniversary of Death of Stratford Grain Merchant

The year 2016 is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon. To mark the occasion, the Folger Shakespeare Library is sponsoring “The Wonder of Will: 400 Years of Shakespeare.” The main event is actually a series of 52 related events, as the Folger has set up “The First Folio Tour,” whereby a copy of the First Folio will be exhibited in each of the fifty states, as well as in Puerto Rico and Washington, DC, during 2016. The Folger Library owns 82 copies of the First Folio. The festivities will kick off on January 4, with simultaneous exhibitions at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana and the Sam Noble Museum in Oklahoma. Most of the individual locations will host the exhibit for about four weeks. Each location will sponsor additional public events during the exhibit. The complete First Folio Tour schedule may be found on the Folger website: <http://www.folger.edu/first-folio-tour-host-locations-and-dates>. Apparently each touring Folio copy will be opened to the page in *Hamlet* that contains the famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy. In addition, at some (if not most) locations, the opening of the exhibit will feature two actors reenacting the play’s Gravedigger scene, after which the “Gravedigger arrives with a trunk and a book and answers ‘questions’ from the audience with pieces of text from *Hamlet*.” So—get your questions ready!



## In Memoriam

### Charles Kellogg (1940-2015)

Oxfordian Charles Kellogg passed away on September 21, 2015. He attended the Holderness School, graduated from Williams College in 1962 and received an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College in 1972. He was employed by IBM for many years, and was later a consultant at Global Partners. A lifelong skier, Kellogg was captain of his college ski team, was a member of the US Army's biathlon team in 1964, and won the inaugural US National Biathlon championship in 1965. In 1968 he made the United States winter Olympic team, competing in (and completing) both the 30- and 50-kilometer Nordic skiing events at Grenoble, France. In the winter of 2015 he participated in the US national masters skiing championships. He also enjoyed mountaineering, cycling and running. Kellogg was an active participant at many Boston area Oxfordian events over the years, and was an early supporter of Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's documentary film project, *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth*. He is survived by his wife, Gillian (Shaw) Kellogg, two children and four grandchildren.

### Norman Robson (1925-2015)

Truly a man of many interests, longtime Oxfordian Norman Nugent Robson passed away on May 9, 2015. Born in Ohio, he attended Marietta College and Case School of Applied Science, and served in the military during World War II. After his discharge he studied architecture at Western Reserve University and became involved in theatrical design. He was a scenic artist for NBC television in New York in the early days of that medium. He later relocated to West Palm Beach, Florida, and designed sets for a theatrical group before landing a job with an architectural firm. He worked for three firms before opening his own office. He designed many private and public buildings in Palm Beach County. Outside of work, he was an avid sports collector of British sports cars. After retirement he took up painting. He subsequently became interested in the Shakespeare authorship question, and was a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. He is survived by his wife of sixty-one years, Margaret Doty Robson, four children, ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

### Patricia Urquhart (1946-2015)

Patricia "Pat" Urquhart passed away on September 18, 2015, after a brief battle with metastatic melanoma. A fifth generation Oregonian, Pat earned a BA from Portland State University and a JD from Lewis & Clark Law School. She and her husband, John, were married in 1977. They spent several years in northern California and Idaho before returning to Oregon in 1988. Pat then spent the next seventeen years as a senior assistant attorney general with the Oregon Department of Justice, where she specialized in employment and civil rights matters. She briefly retired, but soon returned to practice law as counsel for a labor law firm in Eugene.

After watching the 1989 PBS *Frontline* documentary, "The Shakespeare Mystery," Pat became interested in the authorship question. She was a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and a founding trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship in 2001. Pat regularly attended the annual authorship conferences that were held at Concordia University in Portland. Many Oxfordians who also attended those conferences have fond memories of getting together afterwards at Pat and John's spacious log home on the banks of the Sandy River in nearby Troutdale.

In addition to her husband, Pat is survived by two children.

#### Note:

At press time we learned that noted anti-Stratfordian John Rollett had passed away. In the next issue of the *Newsletter* (Winter 2016) we will have an obituary and a review of his most recent book, *William Stanley as Shakespeare*.



## Shakespeare Authorship Discourse at Southern Oregon University

By Earl Showerman

Although the SOF annual conference did not begin until Thursday, September 24, two important events took place in Ashland on the previous day. Both featured several of the distinguished scholars who came all the way from England to Oregon. The first event was an hour interview on “The Jefferson Exchange,” broadcast on Jefferson Public Radio, Southern Oregon University’s internet radio outlet. Hosted by Geoffrey Riley, the program featured Ros Barber, Kevin Gilvary and Alexander Waugh. [The interview was still available at press time on the Jefferson Exchange archive for September 22: <http://ijpr.org/programs/jefferson-exchange>.]

Gilvary stated that he became curious about the Shakespeare authorship question through the history plays, which he recognized as Elizabethan propaganda. Shakspeare of Stratford did not get rich writing plays, he argued, and his fortune (over £1,000 equity in Warwickshire properties) had to have been gained by other means, perhaps by being a front man for an anonymous author. Barber noted that the documentary record proves Shakspeare was a businessman, and a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, the King’s Men, and the Globe, suggesting the possibility that he was also a broker of plays. Henslowe’s diary lists the majority of plays as written collaboratively. However, printed editions—those intended to be read as literature—were almost exclusively listed under the name of a single author.

Gilvary summarized his doctoral thesis, “Shakespearean Biogra-fiction: How modern biographers rely on context, conjecture and inference to construct a life of the Bard,” in which he found that almost all claims made by modern Shakespeare biographers have no foundation in documentary evidence. He and Barber asserted that writing about the Shakespeare authorship challenge is still a taboo subject in academia. Both obtained their doctorates by writing theses that did not directly address the authorship question: Barber’s thesis, “The Marlowe Papers,” was written as imaginative, lyrical fiction.

Waugh challenged the traditional interpretation of the First Folio dedicatory epistles, noting that the “sweet swan of Avon” may not refer to Stratford-upon-Avon. “Avon” was commonly used to refer to Hampton Court on the Thames, the royal palace where many dramatic productions were staged (“Hampton” is a corruption of “Avon dunum,” the ancient name for the fort constructed along the Thames). He also noted that many cryptic allusions to “Shakespeare” in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century texts suggest that the name is a pseudonym, and that most traditional scholars have ignored or misinterpreted them.



Margrethe Jolly, PhD; Kevin Gilvary, PhD; Alexander Waugh, Wally Hurst, JD; Ros Barber, PhD; and Earl Showerman, MD; gather before the JPR radio talk-show on Sept. 23, 2015, in Ashland, Oregon.

Photo credit: Julia Cleave

Gilvary added that it was not until 1843 that a serious attempt at a biography of Shakespeare was written, and that it established a pattern of romanticized, imaginative speculation about the poet’s life that continues to this day. And, at about the same time, authorship doubt became a popular concern. He stated that documentary evidence that might support Oxford’s authorship was probably lost in fires, one at Hedingham Castle and another at Wentworth Library, which held the papers of Susan Vere.

Concluding the interview, Barber noted that Christopher Marlowe invented blank verse drama and the English history play, that “most scholars” doubt the inquest testimony of the witnesses to his death in 1593, and that he possessed the “means, motive and opportunity” to avoid being killed and to change his identity. Waugh stated that there are “thousands” of reasons to believe Oxford was Shakespeare, with 300 books and 600 articles supporting this theory, and that Oxford maintained a “scriptorium” of writers. Further, of the hundreds of literary sources identified in Shakespeare, none were published after 1604, the year Oxford died. Gilvary stressed the singular importance of biography in the interpretation of literary works.

The second event of the day was a two-hour forum at SOU, “Did Shakespeare Really Write those Plays? How Credible Is the Evidence?” sponsored by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a national organization with over 1,500 retiree members in



southern Oregon. Interest in the Shakespeare authorship question among OLLI members was established in 2012, when over 100 attended a screening of *Last Will. & Testament* with Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias. This time, more than 140 persons attended the program, the largest turnout ever for an OLLI community lecture or panel. Barber, Gilvary and Waugh were joined by Julia Cleave and Eddi Jolly.

Posing the question, “Why Is Shakespeare’s Authorship Doubted?” Ros Barber amused her audience by reminding them that authorship skeptics are often accused of being “ignorant snobs,” “anti-Shakespearean” or conspiracy theorists. However, she pointed out the extant records pertaining to Shakspeare of Stratford all concern legal and business matters, and that none of them suggest a literary life. She compared the elegant italic signatures of other writers to the six extant scrawls of Shakspeare. She challenged the traditional interpretation of Ben Jonson’s effusive praise of Shakespeare in the dedication of the First Folio, citing Jonson’s disparaging reference elsewhere to the “poet-ape” who “wanted art,” and Jonson’s mocking Shakspeare’s family motto, “Not without right,” as “Not without mustard” in *Everyman Out of his Humour* (1599). Reproducing Diana Price’s table for a “literary paper trail,” she demonstrated how Shakespeare’s literary contemporaries all had numerous points of proof, while Shakspeare met virtually none of Price’s criteria.

Julia Cleave challenged the claims made by traditional scholars that no one doubted Shakspeare’s authorship for more than 200 years after his death, and that Delia Bacon was the first to do so in the 1850s. To the contrary, she noted, literary evidence exists for a much earlier tradition of doubt about the attribution. Among the examples she cited were:

- “A mere factotum of the theatre – a vulgar and unlettered man.” *The Romance of Yachting* by Joseph C. Hart (1848)
- “I dreamt of nothing but a black gentleman, at full length, in plaster-of-Paris...he said it was Shakespeare just as he had been when he was alive, which was very curious indeed...” *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens (1839)
- Lord Carducis (a character based on Byron) expresses doubts about Shakespeare’s authorship in *Venetia* by Benjamin Disraeli (1837)
- “With equal falsehood has he been father’d with many spurious dramatic pieces. ‘Hamlet, Othello, As You Like It, The Tempest, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream’, for five, of all which I confess myself to be the author. ...” *The Story of the Learned Pig* (1786)
- “Shakespeare’s a Mimicke.” *The Great Assises Holden in Parnassus* (1645)

Cleave further noted that Shakespeare’s contemporaries tell a story of pseudonyms, impostures, plagiarizing, proxy and concealed authorship. They seem to drop heavy hints about what Greene called an “underhand broker” of plays.

Kevin Gilvary recounted his initial disillusionment on discovering that there was no evidence that William Shakespeare had served as a tutor to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, whose family seat was the village of Titchfield where Kevin resided; he then cited other examples of fictional and unsubstantiated claims by Shakespeare biographers for the past 150 years. Alexander Waugh continued his commentaries on the cryptic nature of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century allusions to the man from Stratford being a front man and the Earl of Oxford being the true author.

Eddi Jolly concluded the forum with “The Mystery of the First Quarto of *Hamlet*” (Q1), a text which was only discovered in 1825. Reviewing the history of scholarship on the dating of the very different versions of *Hamlet* and the invention of an “ur-Hamlet” by Thomas Kyd to explain the references to a “Hamlet” play between 1589 and 1596, she noted that the early scholars considered Q1 to be a “corrupt,” “mutilated,” “mangled” or “marred” text. More recently, it has been proposed that Q1 represented an abridgement or a faulty memorial reconstruction. She identified many similarities between Q1 and Shakespeare’s primary source, Francois Belleforest’s *Les Histoires Tragique* (1576), analogues that are not present in Q2 or the Folio *Hamlet*. “The evidence supports the hypothesis that Q1 was written first, suggesting a playwright who pursued a deliberate and extensive process of revision, working from the source to Q1, and then to Q2. It suggests that Q1 may be an example of what some would see as the missing ‘juvenilia,’ and that the date for *Hamlet* needs reviewing.”

On Thursday, a number of OLLI members attended the screening of *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth* at the Ashland Springs Hotel and joined our group at the special exhibit of Folio editions in the Bailey Collection at SOU’s Hannon Library. In recent years, Southern Oregon University programs and facilities have proven to be valuable resources for Shakespeare authorship studies, and I expect that future endeavors involving SOU, OSF and the SOF are also likely to be highly educational, entertaining and just as successful.



## BOOK REVIEWS

***Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* by Colin Burrow (Oxford Shakespeare Topics, Oxford University Press, 2013), 281 pp.**

Reviewed by Earl Showerman

Colin Burrow, Senior Research Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, has written widely on the relationship between Renaissance literature and the classics. In his most extended study of this subject, *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity*, he argues that “Shakespeare knew—from his grammar school education and from his general reading—at least as much classical literature as many classics graduates today. He also knew enough to make his contemporaries think, just for a moment, that he might be a British equivalent to Euripides or Aeschylus, or, as Francis Meres described him in 1598, a reincarnation of the ‘sweet witty soul of Ovid.’”<sup>1</sup>

*Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* was praised by Robert S. Miola as a “fitting homage to the distinguished dedicatee Emrys Jones” in a review in *Renaissance Quarterly* Vol 67, No. 3 (Fall 2014). Miola notes that Burrow posits that Shakespeare demonstrated an “evolving relation” with Greek and Roman authors, and that Burrow’s work “deserves a place of honor” alongside those of Edmond Malone, T. W. Baldwin, Gordon Braden, Charles Martindale, and Jonathan Bate. Miola interprets Burrow’s achievement as twofold in that he “freshly explores Shakespeare’s many uses of classical texts and his representations of antiquity; and he convincingly sets these encounters, for the first time, in specific literary, political, and cultural contexts.”

Burrow’s introductory chapter underlines how Shakespeare and his contemporaries read and imitated classical literature with the reverence of a “trans-temporal longing.” He maintains that Shakespeare’s employment of classical learning frequently embodied stylistic and literary effects that distinguished it from the surrounding text, as in the First Player’s speech about Hecuba in *Hamlet*, or the Pyramus and Thisbe adaptation of Ovid performed by the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. These effects, Burrow argues, create the appearance of “anachronism” and an effect of “ancientness,” which makes Shakespeare’s response to classical literature unique and fascinating. While translations of classical texts, including Golding’s Ovid, Phaer’s Virgil, Newton’s Seneca, and others expanded the horizons of English poetry and dramatic narrative, Burrow notes that, unlike many others of that period, Shakespeare showed little interest in Latin elegy, classical metrics, or epigrams. Burrow defers to a sense of “possibility” in reviewing what classical texts he believes Shakespeare actually “knew”:

[S]ay, the first four books of Virgil’s *Aeneid* pretty well, a number of comedies of Plautus and probably some by Terence, as well as a good number of Seneca’s tragedies, probably a dash of Homer, probably in translation, quite a lot of Ovid (the *Metamorphoses* and some of the *Fasti*, perhaps some *Tristia*, the *Heroides*, and the *Ars Amatoria*), possibly some plays by Euripides in Latin translation, maybe an ode or two of Horace, perhaps some of the satires of Juvenal and maybe a little Persius too, passages from Lucan’s historical epic on the Roman civil wars, and quite a bit of Plutarch via Sir Thomas North’s translation, as well as prose works by Cicero (the *De Officiis* in particular) and Seneca.<sup>2</sup>

In his review, Miola praises Burrow for casting his net more widely than previous commentators to capture the “multiple significances of specific allusions, imitations, and refashionings: humanists such as Johannes Sturm, Thomas Cooper, Desiderius Erasmus, and Philip Melancthon; the War of the Theaters; Shakespeare’s rivalry with University Wits; his acting in *Sejanus*; the imposing presence of Ben Jonson; the publications of classical editions and translations.” Burrow describes the several modes of classical textual transmission, including comments in private libraries, booksellers, publishers, printers, and the fragmentation of ancient literature into commonplace books and anthologies. He speculates that Shakespeare’s “early encounters with antiquity betray a nervous self-consciousness expressed in various strategies of framing.”

Of particular interest to Oxfordians is Burrow’s argument that Johannes Sturm’s *Nobilitas Literata* (1549), translated by Thomas Browne of Lincoln’s Inn in 1570 as *A Rich Storehouse or Treasure of Nobility and Gentlemen*, was the kind of “aspirational work which Shakespeare might have read.” It served as a guide to “acquiring gentility through the imitation of classical texts.”

In his discussion of the imitation of texts from classical antiquity, Sturm writes: “Therefore, as Aristotle did exclude young boys from his *Ethics*, so I will remove from this artificial practice [of imitation] not only children and boys, but also those men which know not the precepts of rhetoric.”<sup>3</sup>

Noteworthy in this regard is the documentary evidence that in the spring of 1575 the Earl of Oxford visited Sturm in Strasbourg en route to Venice. Mark Anderson reports that: “As a rhetorician and classist, Sturm was one of the giants of his age. Ascham has noted that of all the modern scholars who could be imitated, only Sturm was one ‘out of whom the true survey and whole workmanship [of antiquity] is

especially to be learned.”<sup>4</sup> Further, Anderson reports that it was from Sturmius that Ascham developed his philosophy of drama, the doctrine that comedies and tragedies were ideally a perfect imitation of the life of “every degree of man.” Finally, Anderson notes that de Vere claimed to have “read the rhetoric lecture publicly in sermons preached in Strasbourg.”

Discussing the absence of books in Shakespeare’s will, Burrow maintains that this does not necessarily prove that Shakespeare was in any way less a reader of classics than Ben Jonson, further postulating that many early modern writers had access to libraries belonging to nobility, and that writers frequently would spend time visiting bookstalls at St. Paul’s, “picking up snippets of information about new styles and fashions.” Burrow’s remarks here are reminiscent of those made by fellow Oxford University Professor Laurie Maguire, who contextualized the problem over Shakespeare’s debt to Euripides in her book, *Shakespeare’s Names* (2007):

Reluctant to argue that Shakespeare’s grammar-school Greek could read Euripides, critics resort to social supposition to argue their case. Charles and Michelle Martindale suggest that “five minutes conversation with a friend could have given Shakespeare all he needed to know” as does Nutall: “If we suppose what is simply probable, that he (Shakespeare) talked in pubs to Ben Jonson and others....” I agree with these suppositions, as it happens, but invoking the Mermaid tavern is not a methodology likely to convince skeptics that Shakespeare knew Greek drama.<sup>5</sup>

Although Burrow includes extended chapters on Shakespeare’s familiarity with Virgil, Ovid, Roman comedy, Seneca and Plutarch, he falls far short of offering a fresh assessment of classical influences on the playwright by categorically dismissing the notion that Shakespeare owed any direct debt to the dramatic literature of 5<sup>th</sup> century (BCE) Athens:

Shakespeare almost certainly never read Sophocles or Euripides (let alone the much more difficult Aeschylus) in Greek, and yet he managed to write tragedies which invite comparison with those authors. He did so despite the limitations of his classical knowledge, and perhaps in part because of them. He read Plutarch in North’s translation rather than reading Sophocles in Greek. This means that he read a direct clear statement about the relationship between divine promptings and human actions rather than plays in which complex thoughts about the interrelationship between human and divine agency were buried implicitly within a drama. Having “less Greek” could therefore have enabled him to appear to understand more about Greek tragedy, and its complex mingling of voluntary actions and divine

promptings, than he would have done if he had actually been able to work his way through Aeschylus and Euripides in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

Here Burrow seems to have fallen back on the argument originally put forward by J.A.K. Thompson in *Shakespeare and the Classics* (1952), but without providing an appropriate citation. Thompson, to his credit, admits that the argument is speculative at best:

I will venture on a statement that may surprise some of my readers. I believe that it was from Plutarch that Shakespeare learned how to make a tragedy of the kind exemplified in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Lear*.... But Plutarch himself—and here lies the extreme interest and importance of the matter—was only the channel or medium of the Greek tragic spirit. This, as we all know, received its highest expression in the great Attic poets Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.<sup>7</sup>

The call for greater interest in Greek sources proposed by the few scholars who have seriously investigated the question runs counter to the arbitrary limits accepted by Burrow and most modern Shakespeare critics who turn away from the Greek dramatists as possible sources because of Shakespeare’s apparent lack of education and limited access to continental Greek or Latin editions. The authorship claim of the Earl of Oxford, who throughout his life was surrounded by scholars versed in the Greek canon, may have paradoxically limited the intellectual vigor of Shakespeare studies simply by the fact that Oxford represents a far superior candidate for the creation of dramas based on 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek tragedies and comedies.

The recent colloquium at the University of York, “Greek Texts and the Early Modern Stage,” may be a healthy sign that the times are changing. The Center for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies sponsored the day-long event to explore the impact of the Greek canon on Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Given the reluctance of many scholars to accept the influence of Greek drama on Shakespeare, this represents a radical cultural shift. According to the colloquium website, “Greek provokes strong associations for a number of reasons: its



controversial associations with Erasmus, Protestantism, and heresy; the specter of democratic governance; the rebirth of interest in Galenic medicine; the pervasive influence of Greek culture on Latin literature; and the identification of Greece with the origins of theatre.”

While Colin Burrow is an accomplished writer and is admirably well versed in the classical canon, his failure to consider seriously the influence of Greek dramatic literature in *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* limits the scope of his book and adds little to our understanding of Shakespeare’s debt to classical literature. In *Shakespeare and Ovid* (1993), Jonathan Bate adopted a similarly convoluted view of how Shakespeare acquired his knowledge of Greek drama: “Despite the resemblances between *The Winter’s Tale* and *Alcestis*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Hecuba*, it cannot be proved that Shakespeare knew any of the plays of Euripides. But there is no doubt he derived a Euripidean spirit from Ovid. Euripides taught Ovid what Ovid taught Shakespeare . . . .”<sup>8</sup> That two such

eminent scholars should be so loath to entertain the idea of a “Shakespeare” who had direct knowledge of the revolutionary conventions and texts of the first golden age of theatre in 5<sup>th</sup> century (BCE) Athens, is another sad testament to the blind spots placed on Shakespeare studies by the limitations of the traditional biography.

1. Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare & Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.
2. Id., 22.
3. Id., 26.
4. Mark Anderson, “*Shakespeare*” *By Another Name* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 79.
5. Laurie Maguire, *Shakespeare’s Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 98.
6. Burrow, 247.
7. J.A.K. Thompson, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1952), 241-243.
8. Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (London: Clarendon Books, 1994), 239.

***Ideas of Order: A Close Reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, by Neil L. Rudenstine (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014)**

Reviewed by Hank Whittemore

I must admit that it’s impossible for me to write an objective review of this slender book, because of my own take on both the identity of “Shakespeare” and the meaning of his Sonnets.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless I do agree with Neil Rudenstine, a former Harvard professor who served for a decade as the university’s president, that the sequence printed in 1609 is in a deliberate “order,” implying a “story” from start to finish. Another assumption we share is that these are personal writings in reaction to real persons and events in the poet’s life.

The Sonnets consist of “love poetry that is as passionate, daring, intimate, searing, and lyrical as any that we may ever encounter,” Rudenstine writes, adding that the poems are “more carefully ordered—as a coherent sequence” than most commentators allow, and that “some of the clusters of linked sonnets seem so tightly bound together” that we can trace “an overall progression of sentiments and a general development.” In other words, he’s on the brink of viewing the numbered sonnets as a single, unified masterwork.<sup>2</sup>

From that point on, however, his assumption of Stratfordian authorship constrains him from going further. For one thing, it prevents him from identifying the other participants; for another, it limits him to perceiving a triangular love story, as opposed to a political story involving matters of state. Like many others, Rudenstine finds there is just one male friend and just one mistress, who must be real persons well-known to the author, but that’s the limit. He even avoids describing “Shakespeare” beyond the name itself.

Rudenstine is satisfied with, and perhaps even comforted by, W.H. Auden’s remark that “we know almost nothing about the historical circumstances under which Shakespeare wrote these sonnets. We don’t know to whom they are addressed or exactly when they were written, and unless entirely new evidence should turn up, which is unlikely, we never shall.” This basic assumption of a love triangle with two unknown participants produces a picture most strange. The poet is there, but really not there; he interacts with the two other individuals, but they remain ghostly figures at best. Something very personal and deep appears to be going on, but we haven’t the slightest notion of what the real-life drama might actually look like in the setting of 16<sup>th</sup>-century England.

The overall problem, as I see it, is that the poetry itself is far too powerful and intense for the presumed love story; the depth of expression of emotion and thought creates an effect far greater than the cause. Rudenstine reports that the subject matter is that of sexual love and passion between the two males, of the poet’s faith in the younger man followed by their multiple deceits or betrayals of each other, and then finally of their mutual lust for the mistress and helpless sexual servitude to her. So he unfolds the recorded story from one “cluster” to another, but his “close reading” is actually nothing of the sort, since it never goes beneath or beyond the surface. The result is a perceived chain of “tortuous actions and reactions” by the three actors, but with no sense of their flesh-and-blood reality. In effect, they are shadows of themselves projected onto the wall of Plato’s Cave.

Rudenstine ignores the near-universal perception of two main sonnet sequences of unequal length running in parallel within the same time frame—one focusing on the Fair Youth (1-126), the other on the Dark Lady (127-152). Instead, he sees the entire sequence as a continuous record

of unexplained reactions and behaviors. The poet and the friend are unfaithful to each other but then reunite over and over again; later, each man succumbs “entirely to the mistress, becoming a slave to ‘lust in action.’” By the end, our supreme poet has “disintegrated in the face of uncontrollable desire” for the manipulative woman, while the friend undergoes “an analogous progression” from declarations of love to persistent unfaithfulness to becoming “helpless in the face of the Dark Lady,” when finally both men have “completely capitulated” to her powerful seductions.

“In short,” Rudenstine writes, “the two sections of the sequence—combined, as a single work—track the continuous ‘fall’ of both the poet and the friend. Each of the two major figures moves from the early prospect of potential mutual love to episodes of unfaithfulness and betrayal, to complete helplessness in the face of lust”—not for each other, but for the woman.

Following this narrative is a kind of game, which, requiring no other knowledge of the real-life players or situations, anyone can play. The exercise might be likened to reading the “To be or not to be” soliloquy without knowing who is speaking or anything else beyond the words on a page. In that case, how close could we come to discerning the context of *Hamlet*?

Oxfordians know it’s possible to come closer to “getting” these intensely autobiographical sonnets by first figuring out who the author is; and if we think Oxford is writing the lines, we suddenly have a very different (and detailed) framework of biography and history. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Oxfordians agree with Rudenstine’s two main tenets: (1) that the Sonnets comprise a unified work, the verses deliberately arranged in numerical and chronological order, and (2) that the recorded story involves real persons whom Oxford knew, and knew very well.

Here is where Oxfordian views diverge, however, as there is no clear agreement about whether the Earl is

writing about a bisexual triangle or, in stark contrast, about his involvement in matters of politics and state power. [In the Fall 2014 issue of the *Newsletter*, editor Alex McNeil reported that a survey of Oxfordians at 2014 SOF conference revealed sixteen respondents agreeing that “the principal story of the Sonnets is of politics and succession, with nine others disagreeing and seven more being

uncertain.”] Based on previous surveys, however, it also appears that Oxfordians’ views on the fundamental context of the Sonnets tend to fluctuate, indicating that many minds remain open to further discussion.

If we accept that the sequence is a unified work, it’s just a short step to go looking for evidence of an internal structure; when we do look, it’s easy to view Sonnet 26 as an *envoi* at the end of a sequence,<sup>3</sup> just as Sonnet 126 is the generally acknowledged *envoi* that concludes the entire Fair Youth series.<sup>4</sup> After Sonnet 26 the tone of the Sonnets abruptly changes, with Sonnet 27 plunging us into darkness, despair and grief as the poet—Oxford—now imagines the “shadow” of his friend as “a jewel hung in ghastly night.”

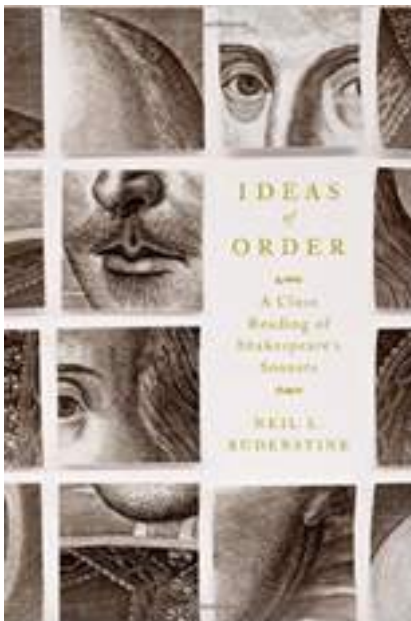
Recognizing not one, but two, envois—26 and 126—now makes it easy to tease out a 100-sonnet central sequence in the exact middle between two shorter ones of twenty-six sonnets each:

Sonnets 1 to 26 .....	26
Sonnets 27 to 126 .....	100
Sonnets 127 to 152 .....	26

The existence of this 26/100/26 structure requires no agreement on what the Sonnets are really about. The structure exists whether or not they concern romance and sexual power or politics and state power. Inevitably, however, accepting the existence of such an elegant design leads to questioning why the poet would have created it in the first place. For what reason does he (presumably Oxford) deem it so important to have done so? Why does he repeatedly describe his work as a “monument” to the younger man (presumably the Earl of Southampton) for the eyes of future generations?<sup>5</sup>

One possible explanation for building the structure is simply his great love for the other man, which at first seems reasonable, given that the world has never tired of poems and songs in which the speaker shouts from the rooftops about loving someone forever. But the perceived “love” story being immortalized in the Sonnets is one of a bitter, three-way romance involving the two men with each other and both with the same woman. Their multiple, back-and-forth betrayals are compounded by their mutual lust for the mistress, who overpowers each man and plunges both into abject sexual servitude. Under that scenario, why would Oxford tell Southampton in Sonnet 18 that “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee” or make similar promises throughout?

The Stratfordian view allows for no other explanation for the tone and structure than the tortured, triangular “love” story of Rudenstine’s “close reading,” but Oxfordians do have the option of viewing the Sonnets within an entirely different context. While some (or perhaps many) prefer a similar love story involving Edward de Vere, it is also possible to see a much broader or deeper purpose, given that Oxford was a peer of the realm who cared about the direction and fate of his



sceptered isle. In fact, one could argue that the combination of structure, language and tone provides no meaningful alternative to seeing his concerns about matters of state:

When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay... (64)

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.  
(107)

Exploring this other alternative allows us to discern a story based on contemporary political history. For starters, we can view the younger man's "crime" <sup>6</sup> as Southampton's role in the failed Essex Rebellion of 1601, for which he was convicted of treason and sentenced to death. (Among all the "crimes" that he might have committed in his life, surely this one tops the list.) Then we might agree with the majority of traditional editors that Sonnet 107 celebrates Southampton's liberation on April 10, 1603, after having been "supposed as forfeit to a confined doom" (sentenced to perpetual imprisonment) in the Tower, as well as about the recent death of Queen Elizabeth ("the mortal Moon") and the succession of King James.

In addition we can see Sonnet 125 evoking the funeral procession for Elizabeth on April 28, 1603, <sup>7</sup> when the "canopy" of state was borne over her effigy and coffin, marking the official end of the Tudor dynasty. <sup>8</sup>

Given Rudenstine's view that the poet's story is all about love and passion, sexual betrayal and enslavement to lust, we should not be surprised to find him avoiding any attempt to include Sonnets 107 and 125. Does he skip over them because they cannot fit into his relatively trivial reading of the recorded story?

As the authorship debate continues to heat up, even some Stratfordians are now seeing the clear evidence that this author was deeply concerned about matters of state; for example, in his new book, *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*, James Shapiro argues that the politics of the time inspired Shakespeare of Stratford to write *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shapiro's own authorship paradigm distorts his ability to see things clearly, but at least he's going into the political realm. Might we discern here a desperate urgency to keep pace with Oxfordians, in terms of coming up with better explanations for Shakespeare to be so occupied with matters of kingship and government policy and royal succession?

My view, of course, is that the political realm is where the Sonnets belong, especially when Oxford is accepted as author. Have those Oxfordians who perceive a triangular "love story" done much better than Rudenstine?

I suggest not, especially given the widely differing candidates for the Dark Lady in Oxford's life. <sup>9</sup> In any case, it's probably just a matter of time until Shapiro strikes again with a new Stratfordian bestseller called *State Power in the Sonnets*—unless, that is, we get our act together before he beats us to the punch.

## Endnotes

1. Hank Whittemore: *The Monument*, 2005.
2. See John Kerrigan: *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, 1986, pp. 8-10, citing "continuities" and "links" that "recur throughout the sequence" and "suggest that the poems need no reordering."
3. Sonnet 26 to "Lord of my love" has been likened to the *Lucrece* dedication to Henry Wriothesley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton, pledging, "The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end." Also see See Rowse, A. L.: *Shakespeare's Sonnets: The Problems Solved*, 1964, p. 55: "This sonnet [26] reads like a conclusion, an *envoi* to the whole of this first section, Sonnets 1-26."
4. While Sonnet 26 opens to "Lord of my love," Sonnet 126 opens to "O Thou my lovely Boy..."
5. "'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room even in the eyes of all posterity that wear this world out to the ending doom" – Sonnet 55; "Your name from hence immortal life shall have ... Your monument shall be my gentle verse, which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read, and tongues to be your being shall rehearse, when all the breathers of this world are dead" – Sonnet 81.
6. "To you it doth belong/ Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime" – Sonnet 58; "To weigh how once I suffered in your crime"—Sonnet 120.
7. John Thomas Looney: *"Shakespeare" Identified*, 1920, p. 229-230: "It is just possible that this ceremony (the queen's funeral) is directly referred to in Sonnet 125." Also see Stephen Booth: *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 427: declaring that the reader is invited "to think of the 'canopy' as borne in a funeral procession."
8. Roy Strong: *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 1977, p. 14: "No monarch was officially dead until the day of burial when the great officers of state broke their white wands of office and hurled them into the grave"—referring to the day of Elizabeth's funeral procession from Whitehall to Westminster Abbey.
9. Oxfordian candidates for Dark Lady have included Anne Vavasour, Emilia Bassano Lanier, Elizabeth Trentham, Penelope Rich and Queen Elizabeth. According to Rudenstine's basic conception, her Majesty would seem the obvious Oxfordian choice, since both Oxford and Southampton wound up in helpless servitude to their sovereign mistress.

***Hidden in Plain Sight—The True History Revealed in Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Peter Rush (Leesburg, VA: Real Deal Publications, 2015, 361 pp.)**

Reviewed by James Norwood

The eminent Elizabethan scholar A. L. Rowse asserted that “the Sonnets of Shakespeare offer us the greatest puzzle in the history of English literature.”<sup>1</sup> Rowse went so far as to identify the Fair Youth of the Sonnets as Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, and set forth what he believed is the only methodology for understanding the poems as a whole: “The proper method is an historical one: to take each poem one by one, to follow it humbly line by line, watching for every piece of internal information and for its coherence with what is happening in the external world, checking for consistency at every point, accumulating patiently every fact and what may legitimately be inferred, until the whole structure stands forth clear.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, a persuasive understanding of the collective 154 poems eluded Rowse, as well as other Stratfordian scholars. Very few works have even attempted to analyze the Sonnets as a unified, coherent whole.

Rowse’s major tenets described above figure prominently in Peter Rush’s *Hidden in Plain Sight—The True History Revealed in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. In accordance with Rowse’s historical methodology, Rush approaches the Sonnets through the lens of what he believes is occurring “in the external world” at the time the poems were composed. At the start of his book, Rush sets forth an ambitious three-part objective. His goals are (a) to offer a detailed Oxfordian analysis of the poems, (b) to demonstrate how the identity of the Earl of Oxford is revealed in the Sonnets, and (c) to show why the Sonnets are the key to unlocking the mystery of why the author known as Shakespeare could not reveal his true identity publicly and had to resort to a pseudonym.

An instructive feature of *Hidden in Plain Sight* is the author’s collation of quotes from Stratfordian commentators. Rush has selected four contemporary scholars as representative examples of the most current and widespread understanding of the poems. The commentaries are extracted from Stephen Booth’s *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1977, 2000), Colin Burrow’s *Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (2008), Katherine Duncan-Jones’s *Shakespeare's Sonnets* in the Arden edition (1997), and John Kerrigan’s *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* (1986). It is useful to have so many glosses of these scholars on display, as they clearly demonstrate the limitations of the academicians who are starting on the



premise that William Shaksperre of Stratford is the author.

In the commentaries of the four orthodox scholars, the disconnect between their reading of the sonnets and the known facts of the Stratford man is immediately apparent. To avoid the embarrassing topic of biography, the academicians resort to such abstract and generalized analysis that it becomes virtually meaningless. These four Stratfordians never come close to following the recommended method of A. L. Rowse of a thoughtful historical grounding of the Sonnets. The only limitation of Rush’s extraction of so many of the commentaries is that the four scholars’ interpretations are so vapid that after a point, the reader wants

to cry out Macbeth’s epithet, “Hold, enough!”

By contrast, there is little doubt that the analysis provided by Rush is both imaginative and engaging. Like Rowse, Rush makes a strong case for the Sonnets to be read in numerical order and as a unified collection. For his interpretation, Rush relies on Hank Whittemore’s 2005 book *The Monument*. Using Whittemore’s model, Rush engages in detailed textual analysis of the Sonnets as applied to the Prince Tudor theory that Southampton was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Oxford and Elizabeth I, who was allegedly placed in the Southampton household at infancy and later raised as a ward of the state by William Cecil. The thoughtful reader who approaches this book with an open mind will take away an entirely new perspective on the poems.

In Rush’s structural approach to the Sonnets, he identifies major clusters and a precise hypothesis for dating. The so-called procreation poems (1-17) urge the young man to sire a child in order to ensure that the royal heritage of the Tudors is kept alive. Rush believes that the procreation sonnets were completed no later than 1591. Sonnets 18-26 were written one per year from 1592-1600. Composed from the poet’s wishful perspective, these poems imply the “hopeful expectation” that Southampton will be designated as the heir to the throne. Next, the large central cluster of one hundred poems (27-126) comprised of what Rush terms an eighty-sonnet “prison sonnet” series and a twenty-sonnet post-prison group, all allegedly written from 1601-03. These poems chronicle the period when Southampton was incarcerated and eventually released from the Tower of London following the unsuccessful Essex Revolt. The final grouping of Sonnets (127-52) focuses on the person traditionally known as the Dark Lady. In the Rush-Whittemore interpretation, she is Elizabeth I, and the poems allusively hint at the complicated relationship of the poet (the Earl of Oxford) and Queen Elizabeth.

To demonstrate the hypothesis above, Rush seeks to apply a scientific method of argumentation, and it is in this area that his study becomes problematic. Drawing upon Thomas Kuhn's approach to the history of science in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Rush argues for a paradigm shift in a new, universal acceptance that "the Sonnets are about Elizabeth, Oxford and their royal son Southampton," and that the poems "should be thought of equivalent to theorems in mathematics."<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, history is written from documentary and eyewitness evidence, as opposed to works of literature. While an important primary text, the Sonnets do not constitute a formal historical record any more than Shakespeare's English chronicle plays are a definitive account of the Wars of the Roses.<sup>4</sup>

Rush implies that the author of the Sonnets left for posterity an elaborate historical message in a bottle. Rush suggests that the author of the Sonnets was writing in code, or what Rush describes as Aesopian language. That is, the author of the Sonnets encrypted his message for the ages like Aesop's fables, based on what is described in Sonnet 76 as "dressing old words new." For Rush, "beauty" signifies *royal blood*, "love" is translated as *my royal son* in Sonnet 13, and "noted weed" means *familiar disguise*. The words "fair," "kind," and "true" denote the three main characters of the Poet, the Fair Youth, and the Dark Lady. To Rush, "using words with hidden meanings enabled Oxford to speak of his father-son relationship with Southampton, and of Elizabeth as Southampton's mother, while appearing to speak of an ordinary love relationship."<sup>5</sup> The code words serve as the "deep cover of an Aesopian revelation," masking the personal identity of the author.<sup>6</sup>

Every one these word translations is debatable. The most unconvincing of the code words is "misprision," which is the basis for Rush's thesis of why Southampton was not executed along with the Earl of Essex in 1601. Misprision is a complex legal term with multiple meanings, and Rush does not examine the word in context in Sonnet 87. Instead, he narrowly defines it as a catchall for the undocumented stay of execution for Southampton, resulting in the lesser sentence of life imprisonment. Rush extrapolates from this connotation that Oxford was serving as Southampton's advocate behind the scenes to strike a deal with Robert Cecil and Elizabeth. In exchange for a promise never to stake a claim to the crown, Southampton's life would be spared. A corollary to the deal was that Oxford could never lay claim to the authorship of his plays and poems.

Consider, however, the Bond of Association—an act conceived in 1584 by William Cecil and Francis Walsingham to thwart an attempt to replace Elizabeth on the throne with Mary Queen of Scots. The act stipulated that anyone participating in a revolt against the Queen would be removed from the line of succession, even if the actions were carried out in ignorance. By the very act of his involvement in the Essex Revolt, Southampton would no longer have been in contention for succession,

whatever his blood ties to Elizabeth may have been. As stipulated by the Bond of Association, even if Southampton had not been aware of the seriousness of the Essex rebellion, as he claimed in his desperate self-defense at his trial, he had by that time automatically forfeited any claim to the throne, due to his subversive actions.

Another speculative assertion is that the author of *Richard II* may have written the notorious deposition scene of Act IV expressly for the 1601 rebellion, with the possible goal of placing Essex on the throne.<sup>7</sup> If that were true, then the author would have been a knowing participant in the revolt and should have been subject to prosecution right along with Essex and Southampton. If Oxford had indeed written the scene with full awareness of the impending insurrection, it would be a stretch to conclude that he could have possibly served as "Southampton's *de facto* defense counsel," as suggested by Rush.<sup>8</sup>

Just as Baconian ciphers have never convinced a mass audience, there will be no widespread agreement in the foreseeable future about the translations of the various words in the Sonnets, as decoded by Peter Rush. While a hidden message written for posterity may be an engaging conceit, it does not constitute a scientific proof. In the second half of the book, the theorems drop out of the equation, and the reasoning becomes circular. In other words, the fact that the Sonnets themselves were written in the way Rush believes they were is the "proof" that we must rethink the biography of Elizabeth I and rewrite the history of Tudor England with little or no corroborating evidence.

In his pursuit of a proof based exclusively on the Sonnets, Rush omitted discussion of an essential premise about Shakespeare that must be overcome in order to change minds in the authorship controversy. This is the most basic misunderstanding of Shakespeare, who for centuries has been seen primarily as a dramatist and man of the theater, as opposed to a court poet. Because of the received heritage of the biography of the industrious shareholder-writer-actor working in London, the Sonnets have been marginalized almost as a pastime, occasionally even treated as "literary exercises" used as a warmup for the dramatist's pen.

A far more important literary term that is not discussed in Rush's book is allegory. For centuries, scholars have had no difficulty in assessing the ambiguities in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, wherein Spenser is acknowledged primarily as a writer of poetry in which allegory is part and parcel of the genre. Due to the publication of the First Folio, in which the plays were collected at the exclusion of the poems, Shakespeare came to be seen first and foremost as a dramatist. In literature, the critics prefer their genres separate, and allegory has traditionally been assigned to poets, as opposed to dramatists.<sup>9</sup> More than four hundred years later, the world still views Shakespeare from the limited perspective of a popular dramatist. The next step in the



paradigm shift needs to raise awareness of the Sonnets by placing them on the same footing as the plays. The revised perception of Shakespeare as a poet, along with being a playwright, will help to open minds to a new way of thinking about his identity.

Rush has built upon the template of Hank Whittemore with an extremely detailed *explication de texte* of the Sonnets. He provides a trenchant reading of individual lines of poetry and an overall arc of the 154 poems. The interpretation is fascinating and raises provocative questions. But what is missing are corroborative facts about the Essex Revolt, the life of Southampton, and the maneuvering of Robert Cecil. When one looks for primary sources in the notes for this book, one finds almost exclusively secondary works by authors who, in turn, do not identify original source materials.

The book raises more questions than it answers. The reader waits in vain for a lucid appraisal of the purpose of the 1601 Essex rebellion and why the author Shakespeare was not prosecuted to the full extent of the law as the author of *Richard II*—the alleged performance of which was apparently a key part of the revolt. Not only was the author not arrested, but he later sat on the tribunal that condemned both Essex and Southampton. Why?

And how is it conceivable that the author of *Richard II* could have been in any position to engage in an intervention with the Queen on Southampton's behalf? After the failed rebellion, Robert Cecil clearly held all the cards and would have no need to negotiate with the Earl of Oxford. The documentary evidence points to Cecil being sympathetic to Southampton all along, with no need to make any deal. Perhaps the most untenable assertion of this book is the suggestion that Elizabeth would need to be persuaded not to execute her own son. By 1601, she was still haunted by the act of signing the death warrant for her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Are we to believe that she would now shed more of her Tudor blood—in this instance, that of her own womb—for the reckless, yet inconsequential actions of the young and impressionable Earl of Southampton?

In 2014, a survey was conducted at the annual Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship conference with the results published in the fall 2014 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. One of the most contentious issues among the SOF membership was the Prince Tudor hypothesis. The views were so divergent that there was neither clear agreement nor disagreement on such topics as whether the principal story of the Sonnets is about the Tudor succession or whether the Earl of Southampton was the son of Oxford and Elizabeth. The statistical information from the survey reveals not merely a great divide, but a gaping chasm among Oxfordians with regard to the Prince Tudor topic.

A prognosticator with a successful track record, Mark Twain predicted that it would not be until the year 2209 at the earliest that the man from Stratford “will have to

vacate his pedestal.”<sup>10</sup> Peter Rush has prepared a detailed, well-written, and creative interpretation of the Sonnets in *Hidden in Plain Sight*. He states that this new reading “calls for rewriting the history of England from 1590-1626.”<sup>11</sup> His firm conviction is that “*Shakespeare's Sonnets* thus, by themselves, proves the dual case—who Shakespeare wasn't, namely, Shakspeare of Stratford, and who he was, namely Oxford.”<sup>12</sup> But to convince a wider audience of these conclusions, much work lies ahead to buttress this theory with more evidence than merely the Sonnets themselves. A question for all Oxfordians to ponder is what are the limitations and the dangers of reducing Shakespeare's works purely to autobiography and disguised history?

*James Norwood holds a PhD in dramatic art from the University of California at Berkeley. He taught humanities and the performing arts for twenty-six years at the University of Minnesota where, for a decade, he offered a semester course on the Shakespeare authorship question. His paper entitled “Mark Twain and ‘Shakespeare’: Soul Mates” was presented at the 2014 SOF conference in Madison, Wisconsin and was published in the 2015 edition of the SOF journal, Brief Chronicles.*

#### Endnotes

1. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, edited with introduction and commentary by A. L. Rowse (New York, Harper & Row, 1964), vii.
2. Rowse, vii.
3. Rush, 350.
4. It has long been acknowledged that the deformity of Richard III portrayed by Shakespeare and the Tudor revisionist historians is a myth, which has been confirmed by the recent discovery of the bones of Richard III. As indicated in an article in the *Daily Mail* (April 14, 2015), the portrayal by Shakespeare of Richard III as being grossly deformed was grossly exaggerated in the play: “When Shakespeare's Richard boasts of his shape-changing potential, he registers too the bending course of history and myth making.” <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3038298/Did-Richard-III-hide-deformed-spine-life-Plantagenet-king-kept-scoliosis-secret-death-historian-claims.html>.
5. Rush, 142.
6. Rush, 241.
7. Rush, 88.
8. Rush, 92.
9. The scholars James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver write the following about the separation of literary genres: “As a naturalist avoids thinking of a kangaroo as an enlarged rabbit-mouse with a vest pocket, so the literary analyst avoids thinking of Shakespeare and Spenser as similar ‘Elizabethans’: not so much overlapping dates and common environment as the nature of drama and allegory gives him a framework within which to examine the individual allegorist and dramatist.” James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver, eds. *Forms of Poetry* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 3. A meaningful shift in thinking in authorship studies must find widespread agreement that Shakespeare and Spenser are in fact “similar Elizabethans” and that the “framework” for understanding Elizabethan literature includes poetry, drama, and allegory in a single literary text.
10. Mark Twain, *Is Shakespeare Dead? From My Autobiography* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1909), 129.
11. Rush, 177.
12. Rush, 303.

## *Cymbeline: the Hidden History Play*

by C. V. Berney

[This is the first of a two-part article. – Ed.]

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is not a well-known play. It seems to have been stitched together from plot devices that were successful in other plays—e.g., “an evil Italian stirs jealousy” (*Othello*), “the evil queen” (*Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus*), “the servant refuses an order to kill” (*The Winter's Tale*), “changeling children” (*The Winter's Tale*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), “death-feigning potion” (*Romeo and Juliet*), and, of course, those ever-popular standbys, “virtuous woman accused of adultery” and “woman disguised as a boy,” each with examples too numerous to mention.

In spite of its patchwork construction, *Cymbeline* is a fast-moving play that can engage audiences. The Boston-based Actors' Shakespeare Project mounted a production in February 2012 that was very successful. It was performed in an empty commercial space, rather than in a proscenium theatre. The staging was reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte*—there was much doubling of parts, actors not in a given scene were seated on the sidelines, and frequently played musical instruments to augment the action.

**The Ur-cast of *Cymbeline*.** When I start to study a play I usually turn to Eva Turner Clark's *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*<sup>1</sup> for a preliminary look at what she calls “topicalities”—historical figures or events that are mirrored by allegedly fictional figures or events in the play. I use the term “Ur-cast” to designate the historical figures thus mirrored. For example, in Kenneth Branagh's 1998 film of *Hamlet*, the main characters are Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Polonius, and Ophelia, the cast of players representing these characters is Branagh, Julie Christie, Derek Jacobi, Richard Briers, and Kate Winslet, while the corresponding Ur-cast is Oxford, Elizabeth, Leicester, Burghley, and Anne Cecil.

**The Queen and Cloten.** One of the main characters in *Cymbeline* is the Queen, a character so iconically evil that she needs no name. In the play, she dabbles in poisons, and schemes to marry her son (from a previous marriage) to the king's daughter, Imogen, which would make him effective heir to the throne. Clark associates her with Catherine de' Medici, dowager queen of France, whose reputation had been tarnished by her role in the massacre of Protestants and by incidents of poisoning. She was the mother of François, Duke of Alençon, who was an active suitor for the hand of Queen Elizabeth during the period 1578-81. If his suit had been successful, he (like Cloten) would have been consort king of England. In the play, Cloten (rhymes with “rotten”) is portrayed as a vicious, self-absorbed braggart. The aptness of his identification with Alençon is illustrated by historian J. L. Motley's description<sup>2</sup> of the duke:

Francis, Duke of Alençon . . . was, upon the whole, the most despicable personage who had ever entered the Netherlands.

His previous career at home had been so flagrantly false that he had forfeited the esteem of every honest man in Europe. . . .

The world has long known his character. History will always retain him as an example to show mankind of mischief which may be perpetrated by a prince, ferocious without courage, ambitious without talent, and bigoted without opinions.

This sounds like a perfect Cloten.

**Cymbeline.** This character is ostensibly based on the early king of Britain Kimbelinus, described in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), but there is little overlap with this historical figure. He had two sons—Guiderius and Arviragus—but they were not stolen in infancy and raised in a mountain cave, as in the play.

For a title character, Cymbeline is surprisingly passive. In the course of the action, he makes only three decisions: (1) he banishes Posthumus (this actually happens before the play begins and is probably the Queen's idea); (2) he decides to stop paying tribute to Rome, a decision he explicitly blames on the Queen (see 5.5.463); and (3) he decides to resume paying tribute to Rome, a puzzling move, since he just fought a successful war to stop payment.

Clark describes Cymbeline as “a composite of Queen Elizabeth of England and Henry III of France,” probably because they were both reigning monarchs during Alençon's courtship of Elizabeth. The Henry III attribution is confusing, since he was Catherine de' Medici's son, not her husband, but Henry is said to have relied heavily on his mother's advice, so perhaps that's the allusion. Actually, come to think of it—high in government circles, father of a marriageable daughter, tendency to bumble—Cymbeline looks a lot more like Lord Burghley than Elizabeth or Henry. On further reflection, however, I'm inclined to associate Cymbeline with Edward IV, father of Elizabeth of York (Imogen), and of Edward and Richard, the “Princes in the Tower” (Guiderius and Arviragus). And, like Cymbeline, Edward IV married an attractive widow who was ambitious for the political advancement of her son.

**Posthumus and Imogen.** If you believe what other characters say about him, Posthumus Leonatus is the hero of the piece; if you judge him by his actions, not so much. Expository dialogue at the start of the play reveals that he is a “poor but worthy” gentleman who has married Imogen—the king's daughter and heir to the kingdom. Cymbeline, at the insistence of the Queen, has

banished Posthumus for this effrontery. Although Oxford was Elizabeth’s favorite in 1578, by 1581 he had accused a group of Catholic nobles of plotting against the queen, and their counter-accusations carried enough weight to get Oxford banished to the Tower. The lands Oxford had inherited from his father had largely been pried away from him, initially by Leicester, over time by Burghley, and on the occasion of his 1575-76 Grand Tour, by himself. Oxford fits the “poor and banished” template very neatly.

In her chapter on *Cymbeline*, Clark includes the anecdote of Elizabeth’s castigation of Thomas Radcliffe, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Sussex, for a supposed paucity of plate displayed on the sideboard. This was during a progress through the East Counties, and the group (which included two envoys from Alençon) had reached the town of Long Melford. Oxford was a particular friend of Sussex, and reacted to his friend’s humiliation by refusing the Queen’s request to dance before the French envoys. Clark suggests that *Cymbeline*, with its portrayal of the odious Cloten, was written partly as a protest against the unfair treatment of Sussex. She further suggests that the character Posthumus is a composite of Sussex and Oxford. Posthumus may be a composite, but I don’t see Sussex in the mix; he was never poor and was never exiled.

I believe that Clark overestimates the importance of the Incident of the Insufficient Plate. Not only has it led her to inflate Sussex’s contribution to the character of Posthumus, it has caused her to misinterpret the play’s references to Milford Haven. Clark refers to Imogen’s questioning Pisanio about the distance to Milford Haven (3.2.64-67) and concludes that Milford Haven must be code for Long Melford, the town southeast of London where Elizabeth met with Alençon’s envoys. Clark’s interpretation ignores the obsessive regularity with which the name of the Welsh harbor is mentioned throughout the play. Like the tolling of a great bell, “Milford” or “Milford Haven” occurs no less than seventeen times.<sup>3</sup> Its importance is underscored when Imogen wakes from the coma induced by the Queen’s potion; the first thing she says is “Yes sir, to Milford Haven, which is the way?” (4.2.291). I can only conclude that Milford Haven actually means Milford Haven, the place where Henry Tudor landed his forces in 1485 in his successful campaign to overthrow Richard III.

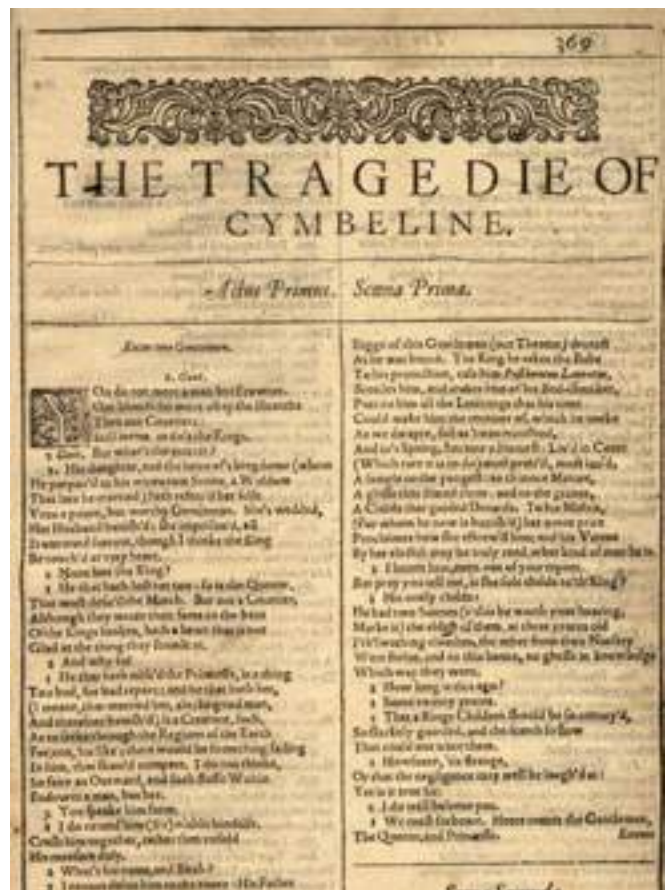
I greatly admire Eva Turner Clark and her work, so I am happy to report that I agree with her assessment of the character of Imogen. Insofar as she is being sought in marriage by Cloten/Alençon, she is Elizabeth, and as she is the virtuous woman wrongly accused, she is Oxford’s first wife, Anne Cecil.

The library I attend has a shelf labeled “New Books.” One afternoon I plucked out a tome entitled *Elizabeth of York*; it was a biography of the eldest child of Edward IV, written by Alison Weir. I was idly leafing

through it when I saw a phrase that struck me like a thunderbolt, and each particular hair stood on end, much like the quills of the fretful porpentine: “Henry Tudor, the posthumous son of Edmund Tudor”<sup>4</sup> I checked. It was true—Edmund Tudor died 3 November 1456, and Henry Tudor was born 86 days later, on 28 January 1457. This fact sheds a dazzling new light on the significance of the “hero” of *Cymbeline*, and also accounts for his unusual name—Henry Tudor was truly “posthumous.”

Identifying Posthumus with Henry Tudor thus has implications for our understanding of the character of Imogen. Before invading England, poor, exiled Henry Tudor had pledged that, if victorious, he would marry Elizabeth of York, daughter of the deceased Edward IV, thus uniting the houses of York and Lancaster and ending the Wars of the Roses. He won at Bosworth Field (22 August 1485), was crowned (30 October), and fulfilled his promise by marrying Elizabeth (18 January 1486). Thus both Imogen and Elizabeth of York are kings’ daughters, heirs to the kingdom, who marry a soldier born posthumously, that soldier having won a battle on English soil.

I stated earlier that Posthumus is at least partially Oxford. My finding of the significance of the character’s posthumous birth raises the question: Was Oxford himself born posthumously? It turns out the answer depends on who you think his father was. If you think it



was John de Vere, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, the answer is definitely “no.” The accepted date for Oxford’s birth is 12 April 1550<sup>5</sup>; John didn’t die until 3 August 1562, when Oxford was twelve. If you think the father was Thomas Seymour (having had his way with the teenaged Princess Elizabeth) the answer is “probably not.” Elizabeth was removed from the Parr household in June 1548, so the last time she and Seymour could have been in contact was early June. If there was a normal pregnancy, the child would have been born in early March 1549. Seymour was imprisoned 17 January 1549 and executed for treason on 20 March. A birth in early March would not be technically posthumous, but would be functionally so, since the child would never see the father.

Identification of Imogen with Elizabeth of York makes a lot of sense. Here is Hallett Smith’s description of Imogen:

She is one of Shakespeare’s good women, loving and faithful, patient to an almost incredible degree. . . .<sup>6</sup>

And here is Alison Weir’s assessment of the historical Elizabeth of York:

Impeccably connected, ceremonious, fruitful, devout, compassionate, generous, and kind, Elizabeth fulfilled every expectation of her contemporaries. Her goodness shines forth in the sources, and it is not surprising that she was greatly loved. She had overcome severe tragedies and setbacks, and emerged triumphant.<sup>7</sup>

This sounds like Imogen to me.

**Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus.** Belarius is a grizzled warrior whose unfair banishment caused him to kidnap Cymbeline’s infant sons and flee with them to the wilds of Wales (all this happened twenty years before the action of the play). His identity is revealed early on, and very clearly:

Belarius: Then was I as a tree  
Whose boughs did bend with fruit; but in one night,  
A storm or robbery (call it what you will)  
Shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves,  
And left me bare to weather.

Guiderius: Uncertain favor!

Belarius: My fault being nothing (as I have told you oft)  
But that two villains, whose false oaths prevail’d  
Before my perfect honor, swore to Cymbeline I was  
confederate with the Romans.

(3.3.60-68)

This passage indelibly marks Belarius as an Oxford figure. Just before Christmas 1580, Oxford confessed to Elizabeth that he, Henry Howard, and Charles Arundel

had been plotting pro-Catholic activities. Howard and Arundel (the “two villains”) responded with a farrago of accusations against Oxford. Elizabeth, who was already angry with Oxford for impregnating Anne Vavasor, used these allegations as an excuse to have Oxford thrown in the Tower.<sup>8</sup> Note that in the final two lines, “Cymbeline” stands for Elizabeth and “Romans” stands for Roman Catholics.

In addition, Belarius refers to himself as a tree in the first part of this speech; this brings to mind the tournament at Whitehall on 22 January 1581, in which Oxford presented himself as “the Knight of the Tree of the Sun.”<sup>9</sup>

After fleeing to Wales (which is close to Milford Haven), Belarius sets up housekeeping in a cave and raises the king’s sons as his own. By the time of the play they have grown to be vigorous young adults. The elder Ogburns speculate on their place in the Ur-cast:

There is much revealed in *Cymbeline* regarding the sons of the sovereign, the true heirs of Cymbeline’s kingdom—that is, to the throne of England. This alone could explain why the play was never printed before it appeared in the First Folio, when the identity of Belarius was obliterated along with that of the dramatist. People would have comprehended too much. To the suspicious and alert it would have been only too obvious that Belarius represented the banished Earl of Oxford and the two boys Elizabeth’s two sons. Who else could they have been?

One is puzzled to find Oxford portraying Arthur Dudley, the Queen’s son by Leicester, and Southampton, her son by him, as though they were on equal footing; for he certainly considered Southampton Elizabeth’s rightful heir. Yet the scene in which Belarius and the boys are introduced (III.3) is Wales; and it was actually to Milford Haven in Wales that Arthur Dudley went in 1580: the “Milford Haven” of *Act III, scene 4*. The sole way we can explain what seems to be an all but superhuman impartiality—to say nothing of such bold candor—is by taking account not only of Oxford’s determination to tell the absolute truth, but also of the fact that, while bent upon reminding the Queen that she had two sons, he nevertheless regarded Dudley as a bastard and Southampton as legitimate.<sup>10</sup>

I don’t buy that for two main reasons. First, Arthur Dudley wasn’t important enough to be included in an Ur-cast; he went from Milford Haven to Spain, where he was kept incommunicado for the rest of his life.<sup>11</sup> Second, I recoil from any attribution of superhuman powers to the author, since that is the explanation for his erudition brought forward so frequently by Stratfordians.

In response to the Ogburns’ plaintive cry, “Who else could they have been?” I offer the following suggestions:

- (1) Guiderius and Arviragus are simply the sons of the historical Kimbelinus. Sometimes a historical figure is just a historical figure.
- (2) They represent the sons of Henry Tudor: Arthur (1486-1502) and Henry (1491-1547). This attribution complicates the character of Cymbeline, making him stand for Henry VII as well as Elizabeth and Burghley.
- (3) They represent Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, pretenders who perturbed the reign of Henry VII. The obvious objection to this assignment is that Guiderius and Arviragus are revealed to be true princes, not pretenders (although the author is capable of the occasional mischievous inversion<sup>12</sup>).
- (4) They represent the sons of Edward IV: Edward, Prince of Wales (proclaimed Edward V but not crowned) and Richard, Duke of York—the “Princes in the Tower,” thought to have been killed by Richard III. They were the brothers of Elizabeth of York (identified with Imogen), so this assignment is attractive in that it preserves the brother-sister relationship between these characters. Just as the removal (by death) of the two princes made Elizabeth the natural heir to the throne, the removal (by abduction) of Guiderius and Arviragus makes Imogen the natural heir—strong motivation for Cloten and the Queen. Note that in both cases—historical and dramatic—the sons, though significantly younger than the daughter, would have succeeded to the throne, as males were preferred.

As noted, Milford Haven, the place where Henry Tudor started his campaign for the crown, is in Wales.

Henry took care to emphasize his descent from the ancient kings of Britain, and in particular the legendary Arthur, and the Welsh prince Cadwaladr, who had fought the Anglo-Saxon invaders in the seventh century. He claimed Cadwaladr as his hundredth progenitor, and had his red dragon blazoned on his standard and later used as one of the supporters of the Tudor royal arms.<sup>13</sup>

The author (himself pseudonymous) had Belarius choose pseudonyms for himself and his two young charges after fleeing to Wales. The name he chose for Arviragus was Cadwal, obviously an abbreviated form of Cadwaladr. Guiderius became Polydore, presumably a reference to Polydore Vergil, the official Tudor historian. Belarius called himself Morgan; three candidates for this allusion are given below.

Morgan Mwynfawr (d. 665?), regulus of Glamorgan . . . is said to have been a cousin of King Arthur and a knight of his court . . .

Morgan Hen (d. 973), regulus of Glamorgan . . . was the chief prince of the region, and in that capacity attended the English court . . .

Morgan (fl. 1294-1295), leader of the men of Glamorgan, appears, like his fellow-conspirator,

Madog, only in connection with the Welsh revolt which came to a head on Michaelmas day, 1294. . . .<sup>14</sup>

It is evident that the play *Cymbeline* is suffused with references to Wales and Welsh imagery, and partially inspired by the career of Henry VII. Scholars have noted that Shakespeare dramatized the lives of all the English kings from Edward III to Henry VIII, with the significant exception of the first Tudor, Henry VII. We now see that a play about Henry VII is not missing, just disguised. As are Belarius (Morgan), Guiderius (Polydore), and Arviragus (Cadwal).

1. Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rev. Edition, ed. Ruth Loyd Miller (Kennikat Press, 1974).
2. John Lothrop Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic* (New York, 1898, 1931), quoted in Clark, 86.
3. Milford Haven in *Cymbeline*: 3.2.43-44, 48-49, 58-60, 82; 3.4.28, 41-43; 3.5.7-8, 130, 149, 155, 159; 3.6.4-6, 58, 60-61; 4.2.291, 335; 5.5.281.
4. Alison Weir, *Elizabeth of York* (Ballantine, New York, 2013), 35.
5. *Dictionary of National Biography* (1968), Vol. XX, 240-242.
6. Hallett Smith in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 1519.
7. Weir, 444-445.
8. Mark Anderson, “*Shakespeare*” by Another Name (Gotham, 2005), 165-169.
9. Daniel L. Wright, “Shaking the Spear at Court,” *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* 34.2 (Summer 1998).
10. Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn, *This Star of England* (Coward-McCann, 1952), 962.
11. Id., 1252-1256.
12. C.V. Berney, “The Merchant of Venice: 2004 and 1980,” *Shakespeare Matters* 4.2 (Winter 2005), 30-31 (“Oxford’s Offstage Cameo”).
13. Weir, 164.



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**(Record Attendance, cont. from p. 1)**

*Taming of the Shrew* matches the description of a Correggio painting. Cleave then discussed the town of Bassano del Grappa, located about 40 miles northwest of Venice, arguing that it is reflected in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. She expressed gratitude to the late Professor Roger Prior of Queen's College, Belfast, who first noted some of these connections in a 2008 journal article which has largely been ignored by mainstream academics. Among the connections are that the name "Otello" is common in that town, and nowhere else in Italy; that the local Bassano family is reflected in the character names Bassanio in *MOV*, Emilia in *Othello*, and Bassanius and Emillius in *Titus Andronicus*; that the Bassanos were sometimes nicknamed "Piva," one of the meanings of which is "bagpipes," and that bagpipes are mentioned in *MOV* and *Othello*. Cleave then focused on a prominent fresco there, commissioned by Lazzaro del Corno and painted by Jacopo Bassano, which has echoes in Act III of *Othello*; Lazzaro del Corno may also be the prototype for one of Portia's suitors in *MOV*.

**Jan Scheffer: "Oxford's Capture By Pirates, April 1576"**

Dutch scholar and psychoanalyst Jan Scheffer sketched the Dutch political scene in the 1570s and the ascent of William of Orange (1533-84, aka William the Silent), leader of the Dutch opposition to Spanish rule. By the mid-1570s Dutch pirates, known as *Watergeuzen*, were notorious; they operated mainly out of Flushing and preyed on Spanish as well as English ships. It is well known that, as Edward de Vere prepared to return home from the Continent, his ship was attacked by Dutch pirates in the English Channel on April 10 or 11, 1576; the incident is also described in *Hamlet*. News of the attack reached England before de Vere himself did, as an English envoy, Robert Beale, was dispatched to Flushing on April 17 to discuss the matter. De Vere did not reach British soil until April 20; he probably spent some time with the pirates. It is said that his life was spared because one of the pirates, a Scotsman, recognized him. In part



Jan Scheffer

because almost none of the confiscated goods were ever recovered, the incident escalated. In August 1576 the Privy Council ordered the seizure of all ships from Orange. Eventually, William of Orange agreed to an exchange of captured ships and Queen Elizabeth agreed to help finance Orange's resistance against Spain.



Heward Wilkinson

**Heward Wilkinson: "Did We Mislaid Hamlet's 'as 'twere' on the Way to the Authorship Amphitheatre?"**

British psychoanalyst Heward Wilkinson noted that, when discussing the Shakespeare authorship question, one gets "caught up in the factual story." He stated that many Oxfordians tend to "hold the mirror up to nature," rather than "as 'twere, hold the mirror up to nature." He contrasted the Oxfordian approach with the "art for art's sake" approach taken by many mainstream academics and critics such as James Shapiro, Oscar Wilde and T.S. Eliot. These are, of course, two different belief systems, and the nature of rigid models leads their adherents to inflexibility. Wilkinson recalled that John Henry Newman once wrote that he found Jane Austen irritating because she introduced so many small incidents and details, but nevertheless felt passion for her characters. Answering the question why we feel passion for fictional characters, Wilkinson stated that it is because we live in two worlds simultaneously; that state is the third position, the "as 'twere" position. Wilkinson argued that Shakespeare himself endorses the third position, as shown in *Henry V*, where the Chorus exhorts the audience to use its imagination (which de Vere may have meant as a reaction to Philip Sidney's complaints about the absence of realism in the theater). Taking the "as 'twere" approach, Wilkinson concluded, gives Oxfordians an unparalleled opportunity to expand the scope of literary criticism of Shakespeare.

**Don Rubin: "Methinks the Man: Peter Brook and the Authorship Question"**

Don Rubin, Professor of Theatre at York University in Toronto, first noted that, year after year, Shakespeare is the most widely produced playwright in the world, and suggested that Oxfordians should turn more to persons in the theatrical community, who are "the ultimate students" of period, place, manners, psychology, history, as well as text. He then turned his attention to director Peter Brook, who has staged more than a dozen



Shakespeare works in his long career. Rubin (left) noted that in his most recent book, *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on Shakespeare*, Brook mentions the authorship issue numerous times, though he always comes down on the side of the Stratford man (perhaps because of his personal connections to the

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust). Brook states that the author's identity makes no difference to him, that he prefers the "magic of the unknown," and that he finds the Shakespeare corpus to show the struggle against chaos and anarchy. Brook does note the dysfunction of Elizabeth's court. As Rubin stated, Brook seems to want to know more about the author, but finds that there is only text. "It is no accident," Brook writes, "that he made himself so anonymous." In the end, Brook falls back on the "genius" argument. Rubin concluded that "Brook's errors of interpretation are not worthy of him," and that he's trapped in an old belief system.

### Alexander Waugh and Roger Stritmatter: A New Shakespeare Allusion Book



British author Alexander Waugh (above, left) and Coppin State University Professor Roger Stritmatter (above, right) announced that they are collaborating on a new Shakespeare allusion book. They intend to locate and annotate every allusion to the writer Shakespeare up to 1642. For each allusion they will reproduce the text, provide a summary of orthodox analysis of the allusion, and then provide an Oxfordian interpretation of it. Waugh said that Shakespeare is mentioned by name as a writer only five times in the 1590s (with a sixth reference to "Adon," clearly intended to refer to the author of *Venus and Adonis*), and that all six allusions actually suggest that the name is a pseudonym. Standard Stratfordian analysis of these allusions is that they show that Shakespeare was becoming famous, though Stanley Wells states that some of them are "cryptic," but doesn't explain why they're cryptic. Stritmatter estimated that there exist some 125 to 150 Shakespeare allusions up to 1642. He added that they hope to produce a de Vere allusion book after this one.

### "Shakespeare Identified 100"

Kathryn Sharpe (right), who serves on the SOF Communications Committee, stated that an audio version of J. Thomas Looney's 1920 book, *Shakespeare Identified*, is available on the SOF website. She also stated that the SOF is interested in awarding a grant for research about Looney. New SOF trustee James Warren mentioned that he is working on a book about how Looney's book influenced others, and that he intends to include letters to or from Looney about the authorship question and to locate all contemporary reviews of *Shakespeare Identified*. Sharpe also encouraged all attendees and SOF members to make use of social media, noting that the SOF home page connects to SOF presences on youtube.com, Facebook, and Twitter. Virginia Tech faculty member Shelly Maycock mentioned that during 2016—the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakspeare's death—the Folger Shakespeare Library plans to exhibit copies of the First Folio in all fifty US states and Puerto Rico. (See page 6 of this issue.) Roger Stritmatter said that, in connection with that project, a special volume of *Brief Chronicles* will be devoted to the First Folio.



And so Thursday's presentations concluded. Most attendees stayed for the "no-host" bar in the adjoining lobby, and many went out to see a modern dress production of *Much Ado About Nothing* at the OSF's Bowmer Theatre.

### DAY TWO: Friday, September 25

#### William J. Ray: "The Droeshout Etching as a Revolutionary Renaissance Work of Art"

Bill Ray woke everyone up on Friday morning with observations on how the deliberate oddities in the Droeshout portrait point to de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's works. As one example, the portrait was constructed on a pattern of geometric angles and line lengths that form a unique five-pointed star, the Vere mullet. As another, the most striking identifying devices on the surface are the two small embroidered spear points on the left of the collar and four longer spear points on the right, indicating the name of the author: the number of spears in French, then German, is "deux-vier," or de Vere. Ray also noted that the portrait is no more than a caricature that manages to look halfway (but only halfway) human even though it contains no "golden mean" ratios in the face at all, while the human face has more than thirty. The Droeshout is a masterpiece of Renaissance artfulness, Ray believes, that accomplishes



Bill and Bill

its purpose of protecting the politically sensitive identity of the true author of Shakespeare's works.

### Robert Prechter: "Why Did Robert Greene Repent His Former Works?"

Robert Prechter presented reasons why Edward de Vere—not Robert Greene, Henry Chettle or Thomas Nashe—wrote *Greenes Groats-worth of Witte* (1592) and the rest of the Robert Greene canon. He noted that linguistic markers link Greene's works to Shakespeare's, that Ovid was both writers' favorite source, that Greene's last play, *James IV*, is on a level with Shakespeare's early works, that nobody ever recorded seeing Greene in person, and, most important, that Greene's works are dedicated to relatives and friends of de Vere. Prechter explained that Greene's famous "repentance"—taken by orthodoxy as genuine—was merely a literary exercise. Scholars have missed the author's own announcement in the preface to *Greenes Mourning Garment* (c. 1590) that he (Greene) would follow Ovid's literary path from love stories to lust-warnings to renouncing his previous life and works as he neared death, and that's exactly what he did over the ensuing seven volumes.

Since de Vere authored both the Shakespeare canon and *Greenes Groats-worth*, Greene's "upstart Crow"—again contrary to orthodoxy—is anyone *but* Shakespeare. The best candidate, as others have proposed, is actor Edward Alleyn, who inserted his own blank verse into plays by Greene and Marlowe. Prechter added that Robert Allott attributed one of Greene's poems to Oxford in 1600 and that a 1617 preface to *Greenes Groats-worth* depicts Greene as Oxford.



### Margrethe Jolly: "Juliet and the Grafter"

Margrethe "Eddi" Jolly explained her reasons for concluding that the first two quartos of *Romeo and Juliet*, dated 1597 and 1599, were legitimate publications that Shakespeare/Oxford oversaw as he developed his material, and not—as many have speculated—pirated versions based on actors' memorial reconstructions. She was led to that conclusion by comparing the first two quartos of *Romeo and Juliet* with their source, Arthur Brooke's *Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet*. Might there be any justification for the note on the title page of the second quarto, "Newly corrected, augmented, and amended," she asked. After examining Brooke's characterization of Juliet and her transformation in the plays, she reaches a positive conclusion. The first quarto, she explained, is an example of Shakespeare's juvenilia, and the second shows the author's willingness to engage in extensive revisions of his earlier works.

Jolly had been led to that three-way comparison after doing a similar comparison concerning *Hamlet*, i.e., comparing the French source of *Hamlet* (Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, 1572) and the first two quartos of the play. Her examination revealed that the first quarto is closer to the source, with twice as many echoes of it as the second quarto, which supports her view that the first quarto was a "first sketch." Jolly concluded that the second quarto is a substantially revised version of the first, and that the playwright was not afraid of the hard graft needed to ensure that his play achieved the effect on the stage that he wanted.



### Shakespeare Oxford 2014 Fellowship Research Grants Report

Bonner Miller Cutting reported on grant recipient **John Lavendoski's** work expanding on Richard Roe's pioneering research on the existence of canals and waterways in northern Italy. Working with local experts, Lavendoski has tracked down period maps, documents and engineering material, and has found the existence of at least three canal systems linking the Adige and Po Rivers.

**Roger Stritmatter** provided an update on his work analyzing the handwritten annotations in a 1563 edition of *The Tragedies of Seneca*. So far, he has categorized all annotations by theme and has had a handwriting expert compare sections of the annotations with samples of



Edward de Vere's handwriting, a task that is made more difficult by the small script used in the margins of the 1563 book. He also found a signature that appears to have been blotted out, and is working to determine ways to make it more legible.

Later in the day, **Michael Delahoyde** presented his northern Italian archival findings, made possible by a research grant from the SOF, where he discovered enormous collections of 16th-century documents that have been seemingly ignored. Teaming up with his lifelong friend (and new Oxfordian) Coleen Moriarty, he found in the Venice archive a page on which Oxford elegantly signed his name twice—in Italian and also in Latin—as Edward Vere, Count of Oxford, Great Chamberlain of England. The accompanying document, penned by a scribe and indexer, is dated June 27, 1575. (Until now Oxford's whereabouts in spring and summer of that year have been unknown.) It records a request Oxford made of the Council of Ten, a Venetian governmental bureau that met in the Doge's Palace, seeking access to the "chambers of arms ... and the places of sanctuary." Delahoyde and Moriarty surmise that Oxford wanted to see the glorious works of art on the walls and ceilings of these private halls, paintings by Veronese, Zelotti and other Italian Renaissance masters. The document also notes that the Council voted unanimously to allow Oxford the special access. Delahoyde is currently researching the artworks to see whether, as in the case of Adonis's cap appearing only in Titian's personal copy of the painting and in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, there are specific Shakespeare connections. The SOF has awarded them a renewal research grant so they can return to the Italian archives next spring for further discoveries (see page 5).

### **OSF Panel: *Much Ado about Nothing***

Ren Draya chaired the session with four actors from the OSF's Thursday evening production of *Much Ado* (Christiana Clark, Eileen DeSandre, Cristofer Jean and Tyrone Wilson), calling on them first to describe how they approached their roles in a play with a modern setting and an ending somewhat revised from Shakespeare's. They all stressed the importance of bringing the characters to life in whatever time the production is set (the OSF production was set in modern times). One noted that clowns must take themselves seriously or the humor of the situation is lost. Wilson, who played two different characters, described his efforts to make them sound different by experimenting with using different voices and making them come from different social classes before selecting those he would use in the play. Clark described her pleasure in Beatrice's witty dialogue and the need to ensure that she spoke clearly so that it would be easily understood. She also described her efforts to understand Beatrice's motivations and why she used her wit the way she did,



noting its power to "build you up, tear you down, and to get revenge." She sought to show how Beatrice's motivations changed from scene to scene.

The actors commented on the difficulty of presenting a comedy with such a hard edge to it and with such unpleasantness near the end. To do that, they had to bring out the wider choices that a woman has today compared with 400 years ago. In response to a question on the Shakespeare authorship question, they stated that what was most important to them was trying to bring the characters to life onstage rather than trying to determine what was in the mind of the author so long ago. One actor noted the contrasts between a performance of the play twenty-five years ago, which ended with a wedding scene and a big wedding cake as a prop, and the current production, in which the final scene places Hero and Claudio at opposite ends of the stage, looking away from each other.

### **Ros Barber: "The Value of Uncertainty"**

Noting first that Stratfordians are certain that William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon wrote the works attributed to him and that most non-Stratfordians are equally certain that he didn't, Ros Barber examined the benefits of uncertainty. Uncertainty not only allows us to be collegial, reducing the likelihood of stressful and energy-sapping personal battles, but, by opening our minds to evidence and counterarguments which undermine our position, it allows us to discard weak arguments and concentrate on those which extend and deepen the challenge to orthodox thinking. Perhaps counter-intuitively, uncertainty also offers non-Stratfordians the possibility of gaining academic legitimacy for the Shakespeare authorship question. Using concrete examples of arguments and counterarguments derived from researching and writing *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, Barber demonstrated why



the apparently “weak” position of uncertainty is actually the strongest, most beneficial position a non-Stratfordian can adopt.

### Alexander Waugh: “‘Vulgar scandal’ Mentioned in Shakespeare’s Sonnets”

Author Alexander Waugh led off the afternoon session with a new interpretation of the “vulgar scandal” mentioned in Sonnet 112. He proposed a new candidate for the Dark Lady: Penelope Rich (1563-1607), sister of Robert Devereux, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex and traditionally regarded as Philip Sidney’s model for “Stella” in his sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*, printed posthumously in 1591. While married unhappily to Robert Rich, by whom she had seven children, Lady Rich began a secret affair in 1590-91 with Charles Blount, bearing four illegitimate children by him before they wed privately in 1605.

Waugh cited a patchwork of evidence for his theory that Oxford, after the death of his first wife Anne Cecil in 1588, began his own affair with Penelope Rich; then, physically unable to beget an heir to his earldom, he wrote the first seventeen sonnets to persuade Southampton to father an heir with Lady Rich in his place. The result, Waugh said, was the birth in 1593 of an illegitimate son by Southampton and Penelope Rich. The infant was transferred into the care of Oxford and his new wife, Elizabeth Trentham, and christened in 1593 as Henry de Vere, 18<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford, lending numerical significance to Sonnet 18. Waugh promised to reveal more about this “vulgar scandal” and “shame” and “disgrace” as expressed later in the Shakespearean sonnet sequence.

### Julia Cleave: “*Antony and Cleopatra* as Chymical Theatre”



British scholar Julia Cleave (left) discussed *Antony and Cleopatra*, starting with its appropriate setting in ancient Alexandria, birthplace of Hermetic philosophy. She noted, for example, that the mud of the Nile was said to possess alchemical qualities, and that Cleopatra herself was “subsequently included among the pantheon of legendary alchemists.” The play contains an

“extraordinary range” of

chemical imagery; the characters “endlessly bond and separate,” mimicking “the recurring pattern of *solve et coagula* or ‘dissolving and fixing.’” Above all, Cleave said, the two protagonists “go on a progress involving the four elements and the seven planetary metals, climaxing in a ‘chymical wedding’ that runs counter to

the overtly tragic trajectory of the play.” The result is an “imaginative engagement with the spiritual imagery of this royal art [of alchemy].”

### Michael Delahoyde: “Oxford’s *Antony & Cleopatra* Beyond Denial”

Professor Michael Delahoyde delivered a talk on his newly published edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* (a deliberate spelling change from “Antony”), which he edited, introduced and fully annotated from an Oxfordian perspective. The play depicts the “celebrity awareness” experienced by Oxford and Queen Elizabeth, he said, adding that Oxford “saw himself as a modern-day Anthony” based on his readings of *Plutarch’s Lives* and, later, on the English translation by Thomas North in 1579. The setting of the Shakespearean play, Delahoyde noted, is actually the royal court of England; and while in the first acts Cleopatra may be a combination of Elizabeth and Oxford’s mistress Anne Vavasour, a kind of courtesan, later in the play it appears that Oxford is begging the Queen for forgiveness while chafing at her hold over him.

That concluded Friday’s conference presentations. After dinner, many attendees went to the OSF’s newly refurbished Allen Outdoor Theatre to enjoy *Antony and Cleopatra*.

### DAY THREE: Saturday, September 26

#### Mark Anderson: “Shapiro *Agonistes*”

Speaking a week or two in advance of the release of James Shapiro’s book *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*, author Mark Anderson analyzed Shapiro’s arguments for Jacobean topicalities in the purportedly “late” Shakespeare plays. (Anderson drew his material from a three-part BBC TV series Shapiro did in 2012 called *Shakespeare: The King’s Man*.) Although Shapiro’s arguments appear impressive at a glance, all collapse upon inspection. The fact that topicality in Shakespeare’s works stops in 1604, the year that Edward de Vere died, remains one of the strongest pieces of evidence in favor of his authorship of Shakespeare’s works.

#### OSF Panel: *Antony & Cleopatra*

Michael Delahoyde (below, left) introduced the panel of two actors and an associate director from OSF’s Friday evening production, inviting them to comment



first on the distinction between public and private in the play, and the extent to which the characters revealed their true thoughts and feelings when acting in public roles. Jeff King, who played Enobarbus, got right to the point, observing that Cleopatra expressed what she really felt, that although she was acting in the public role of queen in such scenes as that on the barge, she presented not so much cunning as her true passions. He also noted that one of Enobarbus's functions was to be a "unifying" character as an observer of all the most important scenes, whether they took place in Egypt or Rome.

Michael Hume, who played Agrippa, mused about whether the scene in which Agrippa proposes that Antony marry Octavia had been set up in advance by Caesar and Agrippa, again reinforcing the idea that the characters were themselves playing public roles. And Dawn Monique Williams, associate director, noted the innovative idea in this production of having Cleopatra and Antony physically be onstage (but not speaking) during important scenes involving the other character to emphasize how haunted each of them is by the other.

The panelists cited their passion for this work, noting that it is a play for adults, for people with much experience in life; it is a play about middle age love, as opposed to early love in such plays as *Much Ado*; it is a play that asks if it was still possible to throw it all away for love regardless of one's age.

On the authorship question, the actors again emphasized their top concern of presenting a convincing performance of the text they had been given, rather than considering too deeply who the author may have been. Williams described the year-long production process, noting that the tasks of preparing a scene-by-scene breakdown chart, designing the set, casting the play, and selecting the text left little time to delve into the authorship question. Their final comments, in response to Delahoyde's question, addressed what they loved most about Shakespeare: his characters and his language, which presents life's great pageant without judgment on it.

### Kevin Gilvary: "Who Wrote Shakespeare's First Biography?"

Nicholas Rowe is often credited with having written the first biography of Shakespeare in 1709, but DeVere Society chair Kevin Gilvary (right) showed that that's not the case at all. He noted that Rowe's essay at the beginning of his edited six-volume collection of Shakespeare's works, often referred to as a "biography," really wasn't. Most of its 8,000 words are an



appreciation of the works themselves and an encouragement to potential readers to show their good taste by purchasing the set. Gilvary further showed that only four or five of the fifteen "facts" Rowe cited were actually true. Gilvary then reviewed biographies of Shakespeare, beginning with the earliest (highly fictionalized) accounts that emerged in the Victorian period. He concluded that none of them can be considered true biographies of Shakespeare because of their speculative nature and because they had the wrong man. He thus reached the startling conclusion that the first true biography of Shakespeare was Mark Anderson's "*Shake-speare*" *By Another Name*, published in 2005.

### Katherine Chiljan: "Origins of the Pen Name 'William Shakespeare'"

The first afternoon speaker was Katherine Chiljan, author of *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth about Shakespeare and His Works*. Chiljan argued that the name "William Shakespeare" was a pen name, as stated by the author himself in the dedication to *Venus and Adonis* ("first heir of my invention"), as well as in Sonnets 76 and 81. The frequency with which the last name was hyphenated in print also suggests pseudonymity. She noted the phrase "spear shaking" was in use in England from 1534, and that the Greek goddess Pallas Athena is traditionally depicted brandishing, or shaking, a spear. English writers often called upon Pallas Athena (or Minerva, her Roman counterpart) to help them. The image of a quill pen making marks on paper is itself a miniature representation of shaking a spear; indeed, the phrases "spear shaking" and "spear writing" are both used by "E.K." in the *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579). In 1593 Thomas Edwards referred to the author of *Venus and Adonis*, stating that he is "tilting under Friaries." Chiljan submitted that the genesis of the Shakespeare pen name may go back as far as 1571, the year that Oxford triumphed in a jousting tournament. It may not always have been associated solely with Oxford, however; Chiljan noted that in 1576 (while Oxford was abroad) George Gascoigne referred to himself as a poet with a "spear," but quickly dropped that allusion. In 1578, Gabriel Harvey punned on the "Shakespeare" name in a Latin address to Oxford. As to the first name "William," Chiljan believes that Oxford may have been known as "Willy" to some of his literary contemporaries as early as 1579, where the name appears in *Shepherd's Calendar*. Chiljan then discussed *Greenes Groatsworth*



*of Wit* (1592), with its famous allusion to someone who fancies himself as the “onely Shake-scene in a country.” Chiljan believes that this reference may be to Shakspeare of Stratford, but pointed out that the word “Shake-scene” is hyphenated and that the use of the word “onely” implies that another “Shake-scene” is already in existence (i.e., Oxford is using the Shakespeare pen name privately). Chiljan believes that the efforts to make it appear that “Shakespeare” was the Stratford man were all made after the deaths of Oxford and Shakspeare.

### **Wally Hurst: “*Percicles, Prince of Tyre: Its Authorship, the Question of Collaboration, and Its Place in the Shakespearean Canon*”**

Wally Hurst (right), Director of the Norris Theatre at Louisburg College in North Carolina, gave the first of three presentations about *Percicles*, which was presented that night at OSF. He observed that it’s “a play that doesn’t fit in,” with its convoluted plot, a tale of heroic adventure interspersed with brothel scenes and references to incest. The play has many sources; the principal one is Lawrence Twine’s 1576 book,



*The Patterne of Painfull Adventures*. The play was registered in 1608. The first quarto was published in 1609; another five quartos were published through 1635. Obviously, it was popular with contemporary audiences; Ben Jonson wrote in 1629 that he resented its popularity. However, *Percicles* is not included in the First Folio (1623) or the Second Folio (1632). It was included in the Third Folio (1663), together with several other plays not previously in the folios. Orthodox scholars are somewhat puzzled by its non-inclusion in the first two folios; they have speculated that the editors were not able to get permission to include it, or that the text was bad. More commonly, they assert that the reason for its omission was that the editors knew it was a collaboration between Shakespeare and another playwright who is not named in print. The consensus among mainstream academics is that little-known playwright George Wilkins is the principal author of the first two acts, and the brothel scenes. However, some traditional scholars do maintain that the play is entirely Shakespeare’s.

### **Roger Stritmatter: “Know You the Character? *Percicles* and the Failure of Stratfordian Discourse”**

Professor Roger Stritmatter first noted the play’s “iconoclastic, Protestant zeitgeist,” and pointed out that most of the Biblical references appear in those parts of the play attributed by orthodoxy to Shakespeare’s coauthor. He then discussed the evolution of the “disintegration” theory of the play (i.e., attribution to a second author,

generally believed to be George Wilkins). It stems from a subjective judgment of the quality of the play, that some of the scenes aren’t “good enough,” especially if the play is accepted as one of Shakespeare’s later ones. Orthodoxy applies several tests to find evidence of collaboration in *Percicles*, including; (1) distribution of “rifts” (a rift is a non-rhyming line trapped between two couplets) and “rafts” (a raft is a couplet trapped between two non-rhyming lines); (2) partial rhymes; (3) use of the words “sin” and “which”; (4) use of “function words” (prepositions and conjunctives); and (5) rhyme links to the known works of Wilkins. However, Stritmatter stated that each of these tests is fallible. For example, one oft-cited study from 1969 found that the word “sin” appeared eleven times in the play, all in the first two acts, and that, in the rest of the corpus, the word appears an average of five times per work. In fact, “sin” appears only eight times in *Percicles*, not eleven (the original study simply miscounted), and the number of uses of it elsewhere by Shakespeare ranges from zero to sixteen. Moreover, as Stritmatter pointed out, the concentration of its use in the first two acts of the play is just as likely for thematic reasons—to the author, incest was a more truly sinful offense than prostitution. Stritmatter closed his talk by noting two Biblical allusions in the play, one of which he had not been aware of when he wrote his dissertation.

### **Earl Showerman: “*Percicles, Prince of Tyre: An Early, Hermetic, Historicized, Miracle Play*”**

Chief conference organizer Dr. Earl Showerman (right) discussed the play as “an early experimental drama,” or miracle play, that may be a response to Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* in 1590. Showerman noted the play’s archaic language, especially in the first two acts, its medieval themes, use of a chorus, dumb shows, chivalric pageantry, theophany (the appearance onstage of a goddess), its “trite gnomic



verse, imitative of Gower,” continuous moralizing, episodic structure, and depiction of characters as all good or all bad. It is a deliberate effort by the playwright to return to an older form of drama. Showerman also noted that the author changed the name of the protagonist from Apollonius to Pericles, and that the reference to the pirate Valdes may allude to Don Pedro de Valdes, an admiral of the Spanish armada whose ship was captured by the British. Showerman argued that such usages help move the play away from pure myth to contemporary events. He also speculated that the appearance of the goddess Diana was a reference to Queen Elizabeth, and that it may represent a paean from Oxford to Elizabeth expressing

gratitude for the £1000 annuity Oxford began to receive in 1586.

### Ren Draya: “The Music in *The Tempest*”

Professor Ren Draya (right), who teaches Shakespeare, creative writing and British literature at Blackburn College in Illinois, began by observing that every Shakespeare play includes sounds and music, as well as spoken lines. Though songs had been “attached” to plays previously, Shakespeare was the first to incorporate music for specific purposes integral to the plots—martial and state music, instrumental music (often for dancing), and songs, partial songs and lyrics. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest* are Shakespeare’s most musical plays. In the latter play, Prospero describes Antonio using musical references and Caliban describes the island in aural/musical terms. The play opens with noise, not words, all part of an illusion created by Prospero. *The Tempest* contains nine songs, four of which are sung by Ariel, two by Stefano, and two by the fairy spirits in the betrothal masque. “The characterization and structure [of the play] can be seen as musical,” Draya stated, observing that *The Tempest* is more of an ensemble work than other Shakespeare plays. Finally, she noted its “fugue-like” structure, with only nine scenes. Scenes 1 and 9 feature all the main characters, Scenes 2 and 8 feature Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand and spirits, Scenes 3 and 7 feature Gonzalo, Sebastian, etc., Scenes 4 and 6 feature the bawdy trio of Trinculo, Stefano and Caliban, and Scene 5, at the center, is a love scene with Ferdinand and Miranda. Only Ariel, the musician-messenger, flits and flies among the scenes.

Although Professor Draya’s talk focused on *The Tempest*, it also helped establish another connection to Saturday’s evening’s OSF production of *Pericles*, which skillfully incorporated music throughout the play.

### DAY FOUR: Sunday, September 27

#### James Warren: “Oxfordian Theory and Academia—Past, Future and Present”

Author and researcher James Warren (right) delivered a condensed version of his written paper on “Oxfordian Theory and Academia—Past, Future and Present,” which he distributed to all members of the conference, in conjunction with his earlier work entitled “Oxfordian Theory, Continental Drift and the Importance of Methodology.”



Now Warren presented a “game plan” for Oxfordians when engaging with academia, that is, “not on how to convince individuals of the merits of de Vere’s authorship, but rather on how to spark institutional change by convincing the sizable minority of literary scholars who already recognize the validity of the Shakespeare authorship question to act on the basis of that belief in the face of institutional and peer pressure against doing so.” Drawing on his own experience in public diplomacy for the US Department of State, he said that any game plan needs to have five components: defining goals, identifying those with whom to hold a dialogue, determining the actions of these interlocutors, selecting methods of reaching members of the target audience and drafting messages to convince them to take the actions we want them to take.

“Our primary target group should be ‘Secret Doubters,’” he said, meaning those academics “who are Stratfordian in their public stance but who already believe that Edward de Vere wrote the works of Shakespeare or who have doubts that the man from Stratford did, but who have not made their beliefs known because of political pressure against doing so.” They and other Stratfordians are now in a “growing-sense-of-crisis” phase, Warren noted, and our task is to increase that sense of crisis and “emotional discomfort” by “continually highlighting the weaknesses” in the traditional paradigm. Warren, who listed many “talking points” and methods of engaging with academia, can be reached at [jwarren1000@yahoo.com](mailto:jwarren1000@yahoo.com) and encourages members to comment and/or request further information.



#### Tom Regnier: “The Law of Evidence and the Shakespeare Authorship Question”

SOF President and attorney Tom Regnier gave “a lawyer’s view” of the Shakespeare Authorship Question, explaining how the rules or laws of evidence in legal matters can be instructive when applied to this literary and historical arena. After discussing the differences between “evidence” and “proof,” giving examples from the Oxfordian-versus-Stratfordian argument, Regnier summarized the various kinds of evidence: direct vs. circumstantial, contemporaneous vs. posthumous, and so on.

Citing Stratfordian scholar Jonathan Bate’s comment that arguments based on the absence of evidence are “dangerous,” he noted that for Shakespeare, who lived and worked in the full glare of the English renaissance, and whose documentary record has been researched so thoroughly, the absence of evidence for him as a writer is important. He cited Diana Price’s work in *Shakespeare’s*

*Unorthodox Biography* to show that Shakspere, unlike the writers of his day, left no paper trail. He also referred to Ramon Jiménez's paper about "Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing"—contemporary individuals who, logically, would be expected to have left some personal testimony if Shakspere of Stratford had really been the great author.

Regnier quoted J. Thomas Looney in "*Shakespeare Identified*" on circumstantial evidence and coincidence: "A few coincidences we may treat as simply interesting; a number of coincidences we regard as remarkable; a vast accumulation of extraordinary coincidences we accept as conclusive proof. And when the case has reached this stage we look upon the matter as finally settled, until, as may happen, something of a most unusual character appears to upset all our reasoning. If nothing of this kind ever appears, whilst every newly discovered fact adds but confirmation to the conclusion, that conclusion is accepted as a permanently established truth."

#### OSF Panel: *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

Wally Hurst (below, right) hosted a panel discussion with associate director Dawn Monique Williams (center) and actress Emily Serdahl (left), focusing on their involvement in the company's production of *Pericles*, attended by many conference participants the previous night. They said that although *Pericles* is often viewed as a patchwork of two or more hands, early on the director and cast viewed it as "a very cohesive play" by a single author. (From the audience, Roger Stritmatter said he was happy to inform them that, in fact, the predominant Oxfordian position is that "Shakespeare wrote all" of the play.)

Williams and Serdahl spoke about the strong musical component incorporated within the Festival production, particularly on the part of the chorus, an aspect that had



won obvious approval from the theater audience. (There was even a musical rendition of Sonnet 154, woven seamlessly into one of the transitional phases of the play.) They said that during early rehearsals it was discovered that several of the actors play instruments, so these talents were put to use in furthering the musical component, which contributed a strong and effective emotional tone throughout the production.

A common opinion expressed in many of these discussion panels is that actors do not generally consider it necessary to learn about the author of a play. On the other hand, as Kevin Gilvary mentioned from the audience, the great Shakespearean actor Mark Rylance, an anti-Stratfordian, has often found it helpful to know as much about the author as possible and to understand his or her point of view and intentions. It was agreed by all that such knowledge is desirable, and certainly can be helpful, to directors and actors. Williams noted that she is an avid reader of materials about the authorship issue, and, though she still considers herself a Stratfordian, she is open to all new information.

#### "Legitimizing the Shakespeare Authorship Question"



James Warren, Wally Hurst, John Shahan, and Tom Regnier (above, l to r) took part in a panel discussion about "legitimizing" the Shakespeare authorship question. Shahan, who founded the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and its online Declaration of Reasonable Doubt, referred to the book *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?*, which he co-edited with the coalition's honorary president, Alexander Waugh, and cited its effectiveness in countering the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust of Stratford-upon-Avon in its work *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*. The coalition's book demonstrates convincingly that there is plenty of room for reasonable doubt about the traditional authorship view. He added that this serves to "reduce the burden" on the doubters, since it requires the Stratfordians to step up and try (in the face of virtually no evidence) to defend their case.

It was agreed that the future of the Oxfordian movement lies with young people and students, whose minds are still open to new information. Another reason for hope in the future, as Waugh stated from the audience, is the growing availability of historical documents online. The internet, he said, "has taken away the authority" of the academics. A recent book that was highly recommended is *The Truth about Shakespeare* by David Ellis, emeritus professor of English literature at the University of Kent at Canterbury, who (though himself a Stratfordian) boldly exposes the virtually complete lack of evidence within Shakespearean biography.



**Oxfordian of the Year**

SOF President Tom Regnier presented the Oxfordian of the Year Award to author and critic **Alexander Waugh**, in recognition of his several authorship-related accomplishments in recent years. In 2013 Waugh co-edited, with John Shahan, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*. In 2014 he wrote *Shakespeare in Court*, a “Kindle short,” which satirizes the Stratfordian theory in a courtroom setting. He has contributed to Oxfordian scholarship by discovering that the allusion to “Sweet swan of Avon” in the First Folio prefatory material is likely a reference to Hampton Court, not to Stratford-upon-Avon. He has also proposed a “holistic” interpretation of the Stratford monument, arguing that it suggests that the real Shakespeare is buried in Westminster Abbey.

**Mark Anderson: Keynote Address**

Delivering the keynote speech at the awards banquet, Mark Anderson reflected on the decade since publication of *Shakespeare by Another Name*, his 2005 biography of Edward de Vere as the author of the Shakespeare works. It was by no means easy to launch any such project in the mainstream of the publishing world, Anderson said, offering examples of how editors expressed their reluctance; on the other hand, he found “plenty of open minds” among publishers. After receiving a contract, Anderson went through a number of editorial meetings geared to finding the right approach to the material. If the Earl of Oxford is to be the main character, are there fact-based anecdotes for every year of his life? What about the life of William Shakspeare and the Stratfordian side of the authorship question? Initially the editors wanted both sides presented, but in the end it was decided to tell the story almost exclusively from the earl’s point of view. Anderson spent two and a half years writing the book, which contained more than 2,000 endnotes, a huge number for a trade book. Anderson also noted the many important Oxfordian and anti-Stratfordian books that have been published in the decade since 2005.



Many thanks to Ann Zakelj for the wonderful conference photos used throughout this report!





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# SHAKESPEARE

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