



# THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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## SOF Annual Conference Sets New Attendance Record

by Julie Sandys Bianchi, Bill Boyle, Alex McNeil, Earl Showerman, James Warren and Hank Whittimore

By any measure, the 2019 SOF Annual Conference was a smashing success. Held at the historic Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, it attracted not only a record number of members (about 150), but also quite a few students and local residents. Credit is due not only to the Conference Committee, chaired by SOF Second Vice President Don Rubin, but also to the efforts of the SOF's Director of Public Relations, Steven Sabel, who came to Hartford two weeks before the Conference to make media and educational contacts (see page 31).

### Day One: Thursday, October 17

The conference opened with a talk by Virginia Tech composition and professional writing instructor **Shelly Maycock**. In "Floating 'the Sweet Swan of Avon': An Oxfordian Reading of Ben Jonson's First Folio Metaphor," Maycock laid out evidence in support of her conclusion that the phrase in Jonson's encomium referred to the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. Foremost among her evidence was Alexander Waugh's 2014 discovery that "Avon" was an old name for Hampton Court, where plays were staged to entertain the Queen and her court and international guests. To complete the Oxfordian significance of Jonson's metaphor, she maintained, it is possible to link the "swan" and his complex use of its symbolism to Oxford through contemporary allusions, classical meanings, troubadour legends known to Elizabethans, and through the Oxford family's historical heraldry.

In "A Mullet Is Born," biologist **Marty Hyatt** examined the origins of the heraldic star used by the Earls of Oxford. He noted the often-cited story that, according to antiquarian John Leland, the de Vere star had its origins in an incident that occurred

during the First Crusade; however, Leland's account is riddled with errors about the early de Veres and their participation in the Crusades—errors that continue to propagate in the literature. Hyatt cited another version of the star story, this one from the Rotheley poem found on the binding leaves at the front of the Ellesmere Chaucer, an elaborate manuscript version of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* now owned by the Huntington Library; its first known owner was John de Vere, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford (1408-1462). A published transcription of the Rotheley poem exists, but because it's difficult to read, Hyatt has produced a modern-spelling version of it with notes to explain difficult points. In this account, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Oxford star played a significant role at the Battle of Barnet, where confusion between badges in the fog may have changed the course of the War of the Roses. Although the origin of the Oxford heraldic star may remain obscured in the fog of the historical record, Hyatt

hopes to provide a more reliable account of the early de Veres and to bring the Rotheley poem to wider attention through a modernized and annotated version.

SOF PR director **Steven Sabel** brought his expertise as a producer and director of nearly 60 full-scale Shakespearean productions to bear on the subject of "Shakespeare: Playwright and Stage Director—The Brilliance of the Bard's Stage Directors to Actors." The works of Shakespeare are often noted for the paucity of any specific written directions to actors.

"Or are they?" Sabel asked. "Is there any evidence that the author of the works had experience as a stage director, or even understood the importance of proper



Earl Showerman, Mark Anderson, Shelly Maycock, and Stephanie Hughes

*(Continued on page 18)*

## From the President:

Dear SOF Members:

It has been an interesting year! Overall we are making progress.

We just had a wonderful and informative SOF Conference at Hartford, Connecticut, at the home of the great writer Samuel Clemens, who is, of course, better known by his pseudonym, Mark Twain! The Conference was sold out! It was the most successful and highly attended conference we have had. We had a large number of new attendees, so the word seems to be getting around. The report of the Conference begins on page 1. At the end of the conference, we received an additional donation from the Joe W. & Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation of \$2,500. What a way to end the Conference! This year's Oxfordian of the Year Award went to Cheryl Eagan-Donovan. Cheryl is multi-talented and this year she was able to release her dramatic movie, *Nothing is Truer than Truth*, documenting the life of Oxford (especially his sojourn in Italy). If you don't have a copy – get one! Hopefully, our next SOF Conference, to be held in Ashland, Oregon, in October 2020, will be even bigger!

Our new Director of Public Relations, Steven Sabel, has been working hard to promote the SOF. We have had

favorable press coverage in Santa Barbara, CA, Ashland, Oregon, and in Hartford for the Conference. We also received national coverage in *The New Yorker*, where Tom Regnier and Alex McNeil of the SOF were interviewed after the passing of US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, who signed the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt and was Oxfordian of the Year in 2009. The *New Yorker* coverage generated sharp negative reaction from Gail Kern Paster, formerly of the Folger Library, who opined that Stevens's "denial of Shakespeare's authorship is founded on a conspiracy theory that no reputable Shakespeare scholar countenances." Professor James Shapiro of Columbia University also attacked Justice Stevens along the same lines (see pages 9-11). We sent our own letters to *The New Yorker*, challenging Paster and Shapiro's attacks on a dead man who cannot defend himself; none of our letters were published.

I also wrote to all nine Supreme Court Justices about Shapiro's false and misleading accusations in attacking their late colleague, and asked them to sign the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt. Only Justice Samuel Alito responded, saying that he did not know enough about the Shakespeare Authorship issue and that "therefore [I] am not in a position to express a view on this issue." Well, at least he responded.

We also reached out to CBS and other news outlets, but without success. We will continue doing so. We have a

### 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 an annual scholarly journal, *The Oxfordian*.

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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compelling story and will continue to contact the media to encourage them to cover it. Once they do, the doors should swing wide open!

In other news, Tom Rucker and Joan Leon have been term-limited off the Board of Trustees. They have served for many years as valuable Board members who will be sorely missed. Both have motivated and inspired us to improve our Fellowship in different and numerous ways.

I am sad to report that we lost two leading Oxfordians in the last year: Ron Hess, whom many of you knew personally or through his books, articles, and presentations; and Justice John Paul Stevens (see Summer 2019 issue of the *Newsletter*).

Our membership has remained stable with only a slight increase over last year. While the cost of printing and mailing the *Newsletter* has increased slightly, the Board of Trustees decided not to increase dues this year. We have kept dues at the same level since 2015. We will be able to keep the dues at the same level for 2021 if we have an increase in the level of donations from our members. We will assess that issue next year.

To attract younger audiences, this year started with a bang when we launched the “Don’t Quill the Messenger” authorship podcast series. There have been many podcasts covering a variety of subjects and we are getting a following. Many more are planned.

This year the SOF also published the first in a Brief Chronicles book series: *The Poems of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford...and the Shakespeare Question: He that Takes the Pain to Pen the Book*, by Roger Stritmatter. More books will follow.

A new College Essay Contest will start in 2020, with a \$1,000 first prize. Other prizes will be determined. Julie Sandys Bianchi and Theresa Lauricella will be the co-chairs. We hope to motivate young people to consider the authorship question by promoting this contest nationwide.

Finally, to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*, on March 4, 2020, we are planning an event to celebrate it and catch the media’s attention. It’s hard to believe that this revelation is already 100 years old, and is still largely ignored! See page 6 for more information.

Our initiatives are all aimed at reaching the public to promote the Shakespeare Authorship Question and get the word out that Oxford was the real Shakespeare! All of these projects require funding and are compelling reasons why we currently have a donation drive. **Please be generous!**

John Hamill, President

## Research Grant Program

The SOF is the only organization in the world that provides grant funding for Oxfordian Research. The Research Grant Program is now in its sixth year. To date, the research provided by our grantees has been quite comprehensive. We have researchers in England and Italy. Much of the research by our grantees is still in progress.

This year we received a donation from the Joe W. & Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation for \$5,000. The Brown Foundation has been our strongest supporter, donating \$15,000 over the last few years! We really appreciate their support. We have received other donations, but as of September 30, still need to reach the \$10,000 goal this year. **The SOF will match the donations up to \$10,000, for a total award of \$20,000.**

In 2018 we awarded grants to Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty for \$12,000, for continuing research in Italian archives; Jim Warren for \$4,000 for research at Brunel University in England, but he additionally did much research at his own expense for Looney documents; Rima Greenhill for \$4,000 for research at the Moscow State Archives. Unfortunately, due to visa issues between the US and Russia, her work has been postponed to the summer of 2020.

## Updates on Previous Grants

### Report from Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty: Research at Italian Archives

Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty devoted three summer months to searching for traces and news of the Earl of Oxford in Italy, researching in Venice, Mantua, Verona, Rome, Naples, Bologna, Siena, Palermo, and Messina. Most of these cities they had not visited in previous years, and they expanded their search beyond state archives to include other repositories of 16th-century documents, such as the Vatican Secret Archive, the Venerable English College in Rome (where William Stanley, John Milton, and other nobles and notables stayed), the Accademia dei Rozzi in Siena, the Marciana and Correr Libraries in Venice. The importance of the 16th and 18th Earls of Oxford in the Italian records with oblique recollections of the 17th Earl in later years, combined with the latter's elusiveness in 1575-76, indicates that Edward de Vere had a sensitive diplomatic mission in Venice involving the re-establishment of ambassadorial relations with England, and that he subsequently succeeded in traveling through Italy incognito.

**The closing date for accepting new Research Proposals is November 30.**

**Report from Gary Goldstein:  
Research at Bodleian Library re books donated by  
Sir Francis Vere.**

The goal of the project was to first obtain an index of books donated by Sir Francis Vere to the Bodleian Library in the early 1600s, then search the books, if they could be located, for evidence that any had been owned by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, the first cousin of Francis Vere. Then to analyze any marginalia found in these books to determine if such books were used as sources for any of the Shakespeare plays. To that end, nineteen books were examined in June of 2019 at the Bodleian Library. Of these, not a single book examined had a bookplate, imprint or signature of Sir Francis Vere or the Earl of Oxford. None of the books had a gold boar on the cover like the Herodotus that Oxford owned, or silver-plated clasps showcasing a boar, as does the cover of Oxford's Geneva Bible. Nor were there any books with little hand-drawn pictures of hands with a finger pointing at the text, such as occurs in de Vere's Bible.

**Report from Eddi Jolly:  
Research at English Record Offices and Libraries**

Over the past eighteen months I've checked (online, emails, snail mail letters, actual visits, etc.) more than fifteen public record offices, and more than fifty-five libraries, both public and in private houses.

While a few tiny crumbs have turned up, most "results" are eliminations. I suppose that was predictable—it's just disappointing. I am very grateful to the large number of librarians, archivists and home

owners who have responded; almost all have been helpful (and proud of their libraries, of course).

**Report from James Warren:  
Research at English Libraries for Looney  
Documents**

I made three trips to England in search of Oxfordian materials from the first decades of the Oxfordian movement. I visited archives at three universities—the Shakespeare Fellowship/Shakespearean Authorship Trust Archives and the De Vere Society Archives at Brunel University, the Canon Gerald H. Rendall Archives at the University of Liverpool, and the Katharine E. Eggar Archives at the University of London—and compiled databases of the 2,400 Oxfordian items and 1,200 Oxfordian books found there. The book list isn't final yet. I also searched for and found hundreds of rare Oxfordian articles at the British Library, and took 8,000 photos of them and the items at the university archives.

And I obtained from J. Thomas Looney's grandson almost 300 items of his grandfather's papers totaling 1,940 pages, and inventoried and scanned them so that a permanent record of and images of them exists. I also transcribed many of them, and am preparing for publication annotated editions of almost 400 letters sent between prominent Oxfordians in the first decades of the Oxfordian era. Divided into fourteen sections and introduced and annotated, the letters will tell the story of the first twenty-five years of the Oxfordian era in the words of the participants in them.

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## ***From the Editor:***

**Stuart Kells Says He's Found  
Shakespeare's Library — Sort Of**

I'm not going to review a book I haven't read, but I was intrigued by a recent article in the *Guardian* (October 24, 2019), reporting that Australian writer Stuart Kells has recently published *Shakespeare's Library: Unlocking the Greatest Mystery in Literature*. It featured an interview with Kells, who said he's spent twenty years on the trail of Shakespeare's library. First of all, Kells is an adamant Stratfordian—a good bit of the book attempts to demolish the arguments that the Stratford man is not the true author. Indeed, according to the reviews, Kells's book is not a reference book about what particular books the Bard owned, but rather a tale about the history of the quests to find those (still elusive) tomes.

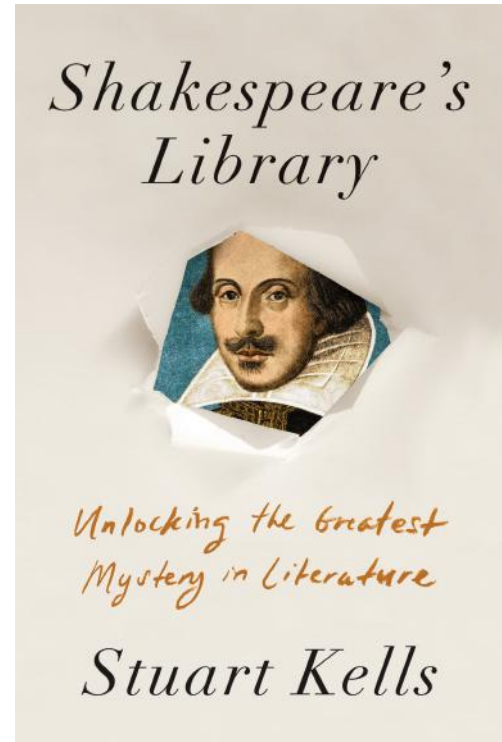
Of course, Kells has not found the Stratford man's library, and never has claimed to have done so: "But I have confirmed its existence, clarified its scale and scope, and documented what happened to it. It would be a very different book if I had gone out and discovered his library. No one has done that. It isn't in one spot. To the extent that it exists, it's spread out. You need to approach Shakespeare in order to understand what it might have been like." Kells continued: "Shakespeare certainly did have books, and he certainly read them. Why, then, have we found none of his manuscripts, and why are there no books with an authentic Shakespeare signature, bookplate, book label or inscription?" Kells expressed his belief that "some of the library was probably scattered" after Shakespeare's death in 1616; Kells went on to cite the case of actor Nicholas Tooley, who, in his will, asked his executor to "have a care to

put off and sell my books to the most profit that he can.”

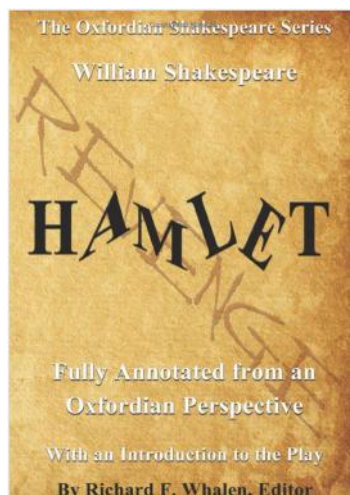
Let’s pause right there for an imaginary conversation. *Q*: Nicholas Tooley mentioned books in his will. What about this Shakspeare fellow—did he mention any books in his will? *A*. Mmm, no, he didn’t, but—. *Q*. Doesn’t his three-page will go into great detail about his possessions, and who should receive what? *A*. Mmm, yes, but—. *Q*: Are you going to tell us that the great man’s books wouldn’t have been mentioned in the will because they would have been included in the (now lost) inventory? *A*: Why, yes, of course, everyone knows that. [End of imaginary conversation.]

Not many people owned books in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but as Bonner Miller Cutting has shown convincingly (see “Shakespeare’s Will . . . Considered Too Curiously,” *Brief Chronicles* I, 169-191 [2009]; “Doubter Response to Question #35: Is It Suspicious That No Books Are Mentioned in Shakespeare’s Will,” in Waugh & Shahan [eds.], *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial* [2013]), those who did have books were proud of it, and took pains *in their wills* to mention them. When they drafted their wills and codicils they did not intend to toss books in with the rest of their “household stuff.” Moreover, the purpose of the postmortem inventory was to assign monetary values to a testator’s possessions for the purpose of settling any financial claims that might be made by creditors of the estate. Indeed, it is Professor James Shapiro who is in error in his assertion (in *Contested Will*) that authorship doubters don’t know much about probate laws and practices of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Has he examined 3,000 wills and abstracts of the time, as Bonner Miller Cutting did?

But I digress. If you believe in Shakspeare of Stratford as the Bard, then it’s logical to believe that he owned books, that something must have happened to those books and at least some of them must still exist. That’s certainly a lot more logical than the opinion expressed by Dominic Dromgoole (artistic director of the Globe Theater from 2006 to 2016) in his review of Kells’s book (*New York Times Book Review*, April 28, 2019): according to Dromgoole, Shakespeare was “a man who didn’t give a hoot about books.”



Advertisement



## Ever wonder what an Oxfordian edition of a Shakespeare play would look like?

Try the Oxfordian edition of *Hamlet* (2018), a play that the Stratfordians call “enigmatic” and “problematic,” but which makes perfect sense and wonderful entertainment when read with the understanding that it was written by the Earl of Oxford.

Edited by Richard F. Whalen with Jack Shuttleworth, chairman emeritus of the English department at the U.S. Air Force Academy, *Hamlet* is the latest of four plays so far in the Oxfordian Shakespeare Series, following the second edition of *Macbeth*, also edited by Whalen, general editor and publisher of the series; *Othello*, edited by Ren Draya of Blackburn University and by Whalen; and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, edited by Michael Delahoyde of Washington State University.

All four plays are available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

## What's the News?

### SOF Plans Looney Centennial Event in Washington, DC, in March 2020

The SOF will officially commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of J. Thomas Looney's "*Shakespeare Identified*" with a special event to be held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2020. The date is the exact anniversary of the publication in America of Looney's seminal work on Shakespeare's authorship.

The event will probably be three to four hours, and will be aimed at the press and the general public. Topics have not been finalized, but it is expected to feature several Oxfordian speakers, including James Warren, Tom Regnier, Bonner Miller Cutting, and Roger Stritmatter.

Further details will be announced on the SOF website and in the Winter 2020 issue of the *Newsletter*.

### Winners Announced in SOF's 2019 "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" Video Contest

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship announced the three cash prize winners in its third annual "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" video contest on October 20, 2019, at the annual conference.

Previously open only to United States residents, this year the contest was open to residents of the United Kingdom, Canada (excluding Quebec), Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, in addition to the United States, and the winners came from three different countries.

First prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Rosemary O'Loughlin of Ireland for her video, "[With the Mind I Will Be Seen](#)." O'Loughlin herself was in attendance, and was able to receive her check in person. Second place prize of \$500 went to Jonathan David Dixon (US) for "The Brave Little Shakespeare." Third place prize of \$250 went to John Thor Ewing (UK) for his video, "Who Really Wrote Shakespeare?"

This year's "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" video contest was announced on April 3 and challenged contestants to submit a three-minute video on "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" that would cast doubt on the traditional theory that the man from Stratford wrote the works of "Shakespeare." From the submitted videos, the

contest judges selected eight videos to be in the finals. The finalists' videos were displayed on the SOF website, where members of the public could vote for their favorites from August 20 through October 10. You can see all eight videos [here](#).

Congratulations to all the finalists for their excellent efforts, which were entertaining and enlightening! All finalists received a free one-year membership to the SOF, which includes the SOF's quarterly newsletter, the [Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter](#).

The SOF expects to sponsor another "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" video contest in 2020. Winners and finalists from the [2017](#) and [2018](#) video contests can also be seen on the SOF website.

First Prize  
Winner  
Rosemary  
O'Loughlin



## Cheryl Eagan-Donovan Named Oxfordian of the Year

Filmmaker Cheryl Eagan-Donovan was named Oxfordian of the Year for 2019 by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship for her documentary film, [Nothing is Truer than Truth](#), which follows Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, as he travels to Venice and throughout Italy in 1575-76, discovers *commedia dell'arte*, and collects the experiences that would become identified with the works of Shakespeare. The film explores the role of de Vere's bisexuality as a reason for his using the pseudonym "Shake-speare."

Eagan-Donovan discovered Edward de Vere in Professor Don Ostrowski's history class at Harvard University in 1997. This led her to read J. Thomas Looney's "*Shakespeare*" *Identified* and Joseph Sobran's *Alias Shakespeare*. She later learned about Mark Anderson's then-work-in-progress biography of de Vere, "*Shake-speare*" *by Another Name*. "As a writer and a filmmaker," she said, "I knew that this story had all the elements for a great film: a complex protagonist, cinematic locations, and a true hero's journey." She soon met with Anderson and optioned his book.

Eagan-Donovan's work on the film began with interviews of scholars and writers on de Vere. She traveled to Italy to film the locations de Vere had visited in 1575-76. She went to the UK and interviewed Sir Derek Jacobi, Sir Mark Rylance, and Alexander Waugh, among others, and filmed at Burghley House, Castle Hedingham, and Westminster Abbey, documenting the connection between Shakespeare's work and the author's life.

The *Boston Globe* declared *Nothing is Truer than Truth* more "level-headed" than the 2011 film *Anonymous* on the subject of Oxford and the Shakespeare Authorship Question. *Globe* correspondent Peter Keogh wrote that Eagan-Donovan's "investigation led her to Venice, Verona, Mantua, Padua, and Brenta, Italy, which are settings for *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. They're also cities visited by de Vere in his lifetime of louche pursuits. And could the name 'Shake-spear' be a ribald, punning allusion to de Vere's bisexuality? Interviews with actors Derek Jacobi and Mark Rylance, and stage directors Diane Paulus and Tina Packer, add credibility to the theory."

The final cut of *Nothing is Truer than Truth* was shown at the SOF's Oakland conference in October 2018. In February 2019, the film was widely released by Gravitas Ventures on such platforms as Apple iTunes, Comcast, Verizon, and Dish Network in the US, Shaw and EastLink TV in Canada, as well as Google Play, YouTube, Microsoft, and Vimeo. In August 2019, it



premiered on the subscription film and television service Hulu and became available on [Amazon Prime](#) for free streaming and download for all Prime members. *Nothing is Truer than Truth* has been invited to screen at libraries, universities and conferences in the U.S. and Europe.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan has said about *Nothing is Truer than Truth*: "While making the film, I found that the author's sexuality remains as controversial as the idea that 'Will' was a pseudonym. It is my hope that the presentation of the evidence in my film *Nothing is Truer than Truth* will inspire others to discover the charismatic, tempestuous, witty, often misunderstood but truly brilliant writer also known as Shakespeare." Together with Oxfordians Roger Stritmatter, Shelly Maycock and Wally Hurst, she will attend the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) conference in Baltimore later this month, where she hopes to get educators interested in the documentary film.

Eagan-Donovan has served on the Board of Directors of Women in Film & Video New England, The Next Door Theater, and The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. Eagan-Donovan's debut documentary, *All Kindsa Girls*, was screened at film festivals and art house theaters in London, Toronto and throughout the US. She is a frequent lecturer at conferences and teaches writing, film, and literature at Lesley University, Northeastern University, Lasell University, and Grub Street Center for Creative Writing. She has published articles about screenwriting and film in journals and magazines, appeared on several podcast series, and is currently working on a book for screenwriters, *Shakespeare Auteur: Creating Authentic Characters for the Screen*.

The award was presented at the end of the 2019 Conference in Hartford, Connecticut. Eagan-Donovan later wrote to the SOF Board of Trustees:

I was so surprised and absolutely thrilled to receive the prestigious Oxfordian of the Year Award! I was very embarrassed that I hadn't prepared a speech and was only able to thank a few people personally at the event. First, I'd like to thank the entire SOF Board of Trustees for the very generous donation pledged at the Oakland conference which allowed me to

complete the distribution deal for the US and Canada. The feedback we have received from viewers, including many college professors, has been very positive. I also want to thank everyone who has taken the time to review the film on Amazon. I'm very excited about expanding the distribution to the UK, Europe, and the rest of the world.

I am truly indebted to each and every one of you for your amazing scholarship, your willingness to appear on camera, your amazing support of our several fundraising campaigns, and your leadership of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, which is truly making a difference in the world by supporting research and outreach. We can all agree that the Oxfordian mission often seems Sisyphean, but paradigms do shift, and as was noted in Hartford, a new generation of scholars may finally succeed in chipping away at the old academic bedrock.

I am extremely moved and grateful to be included with such an illustrious group of scholars, authors, actors, educators, attorneys, and Justice Stevens. I want to thank the Award Committee for their votes and to assure all of you that I will continue to work tirelessly to bring Shakespeare authorship studies and de Vere's work to both the academy and the general public.

Grazie mille!

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan is the first Oxfordian of the Year to be selected by a special five-member committee appointed by the SOF president and formed for the specific purpose of bestowing that honor, a selection that had previously been made by the committee that organizes the annual conference. All members of the Oxfordian of the Year Committee are previous recipients of the award. The list of former Oxfordians of the Year is as follows:

2018: Ramon Jiménez and Joan Leon

2017: Hank Whittemore

2016: Tom Regnier

2015: Alexander Waugh

2014: Alex McNeil

2013: Roger Stritmatter

2012: John Shahan

2011: Kevin Gilvary

2010: Richard Roe

2009: Justice John Paul Stevens

2008: Daniel Wright

2007: Richard Whalen

2006: Lynne Kositsky

2005: Mark Anderson



## Stephanie Hopkins Hughes Announces Book Series

Literary historian (and longtime Oxfordian) Stephanie Hopkins Hughes has announced that she will soon publish a three-volume series, *Shakespeare and the London Stage*, which thoroughly explores the authorship question. In the first volume, *What Shakespeare Knew*, she details the depth and sources of the Bard's astonishing education. In the second volume, *What Shakespeare Did*, she portrays the Earl of Oxford's childhood with Sir Thomas Smith, the statesman and scholar who gave him his Shakespearean education, followed by his creation of the London Stage, the means by which he attracted what has become over the centuries an audience of millions. In the third volume, *Tongue-Tied By Authority*, she reveals how power politics has kept the truth about him and his great accomplishments buried ever since.

Hughes founded the peer-reviewed annual journal *The Oxfordian* in 1998, and edited it for ten years. She can be reached by email at: [stephanie@politicworm.com](mailto:stephanie@politicworm.com).



## ***New Yorker* Article on Justice Stevens Generates Blowback**

by Alex McNeil

As noted in the Summer issue of the *Newsletter*, the authorship question (and the SOF in particular) received some favorable attention in the August 5 & 12 issue of *The New Yorker*. Assigned to do a piece on the death of US Supreme Court Justice (and prominent authorship skeptic) John Paul Stevens, staff writer Tyler Foggatt interviewed and quoted three of the four persons who had presented Justice Stevens with the Oxfordian of the Year Award in November 2009, and briefly but fairly summarized the Oxfordian case.

No doubt the article generated quite a few letters in response. *The New Yorker* chose to print only one, however. In its August 26 issue appeared a letter from Gail Kern Paster, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library from 2002 to 2011. After noting that Justice Stevens “would bring his clerks to see books in our collection that may have belonged to Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford,” Paster continued:

We at the Folger revered Justice Stevens for his independent-mindedness. But his denial of Shakespeare’s authorship is founded on a conspiracy theory that no reputable Shakespeare scholar countenances. The historical evidence of Shakespeare’s career as an actor and a playwright—including praise of his greatness by his contemporaries—is clear and undeniable. Those interested in the question should consult *Shakespeare Documented*, the Folger’s authoritative Web site. While we at the Folger will remember Justice Stevens fondly, we strongly disavow his wrongheaded opinions about Shakespeare.

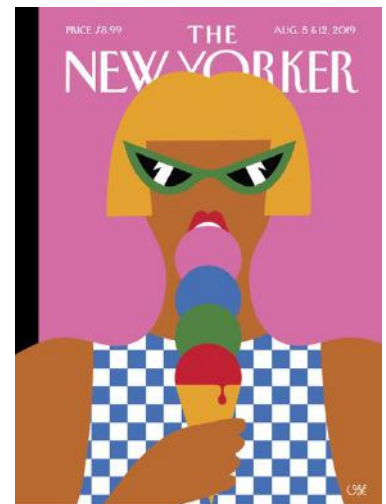
Let’s look at that paragraph again to see what rhetorical tactics Paster resorted to. Economical with her words, she manages to jam three arguments into the second sentence. First, she conflates the author Shakespeare with Stratford Shakspeare, a common tactic used by orthodox defenders to make people think that there’s no difference in the spelling of the names and that we’re talking about just one person. Second, she bleats “conspiracy theory.” Third, she trots out argument from authority (“no reputable Shakespeare scholar countenances”). In the next sentence she refers to “evidence” (a subject she must know more about than a judge) that is “clear and undeniable,” including “praise . . . by his contemporaries.” Again, she intentionally conflates the author with the Stratford man. Nobody is denying that the author Shakespeare was praised by his contemporaries, but to rely on that line of reasoning would force us to conclude that there must have been a real person named Mark Twain. Paster

thoughtfully refers interested persons to a website, from her own institution, of course. And in the final sentence she can’t resist a further dig at the late “wrongheaded” Justice.

There was more on *The New Yorker’s* website. On August 6 it published a longer piece from Columbia Professor James Shapiro, who let it be known that he and Justice Stevens had corresponded about the authorship question for a period of six months in 2011-2012, following the publication of Shapiro’s book *Contested Will*. It is well worth reading in its entirety: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/an-unexpected-letter-from-john-paul-stevens-shakespeare-skeptic>. Shapiro wrote that he responded to Stevens’s first letter because “I was curious about what led so wise a jurist to embrace a conspiracy theory—and that’s the only word for it, since there’s not a shred of documentary evidence linking Oxford to Shakespeare’s plays, only speculation and surmise. To look back on my exchange with Stevens is a reminder of how firmly conspiracy thinking has taken hold in America, from anti-vaxxer propaganda to the belief that [the moon landing was faked](#).” Shapiro disparaged J. Thomas Looney’s political views (which Stevens, in his reply, rightfully dismissed as irrelevant), and blasted Roland Emmerich’s 2011 film *Anonymous* as “ludicrous.” After coming to realize that his own vast knowledge of the subject would be insufficient to change Stevens’s mind, Shapiro wrote to the Justice that “It will remain a source of profound disappointment, and a mystery, that someone as intelligent as you can continue to believe, in the face of overwhelming documentary evidence, with only surmise and circumstantial evidence to pit against it, that Shakespeare didn’t write the plays.” Shapiro noted that “Gracious as ever, Stevens wrote back a final time.”

Shapiro explained that the reason he waited until after Justice Stevens’s death to reveal their correspondence was “[o]ut of my great affection and respect for” him. Of course, that also ensures that Shapiro will have the last word about this, and that Stevens is denied an opportunity to respond.

But there is a response. It was delivered by Tom Regnier at the SOF’s recent Conference in Hartford. It appears (in slightly expanded form) on the following page.





Justice Stevens

## Justice Stevens v. James Shapiro: The Law of Evidence and the Shakespeare Authorship Question

(a rebuttal to “[An Unexpected Letter from John Paul Stevens, Shakespeare Skeptic](#)” in *The New Yorker*, August 6, 2019)

by Tom Regnier



James Shapiro

James Shapiro’s *New Yorker* piece, written a few weeks after Justice Stevens died, tells how Shapiro received a letter from Stevens in August 2011, after which the two men corresponded for six months about the authorship question. Shapiro’s article is a revelation—not so much about Stevens, who steadfastly insisted on focusing on the evidence—but about Shapiro, who asserted foregone conclusions while refusing to consider counter-evidence and showed none of the academic spirit that would open-mindedly welcome alternative solutions to his pet theories.

During the course of their correspondence, Shapiro attempted to dissuade Stevens from the Oxfordian theory, by arguing that J. Thomas Looney was “anti-democratic” and wanted “Shakespeare” to be an aristocrat because Looney wanted the world to return to a repressive feudalistic society where everyone knew his or her place.

Let’s think about that for a minute: Shapiro claimed that Looney wanted Shakespeare to be an aristocrat because that would somehow bring back feudalism. How would it do that? If we discovered that Shakespeare had been a nobleman, would that mean that common folk would suddenly clamor to be serfs again under the thumb of the lord of the manor? If Looney really believed such a silly idea, he would indeed be loony.

But “*Shakespeare Identified*,” which Looney wrote to introduce the world to his theory, expresses no such hope. Instead it carefully and methodically lays out the incongruities of the Stratfordian theory, presents a list of characteristics gleaned from the works of Shakespeare that Looney believed the real author must have had, and explains how, after an extensive search, Looney found that Oxford had all the characteristics he expected to find in Shakespeare and no one else came close. If Shapiro believes that there is some flaw in Looney’s method, he does not bother to identify it; rather he impugns Looney’s motives for making the inquiry at all.

If there is a dominant leitmotif that runs through Shapiro’s article, it is the theme of “conspiracy theory.” Shapiro drops the name of almost every notorious one he can think of—anti-vaxxerism, moon-landing skepticism, Pizzagate, birtherism. He never displays any

qualms at slapping the “conspiracy theorist” label on Stevens and anyone else who doubts the Stratford man. But what is a “conspiracy”? “Conspiracy” is defined in the dictionary as “a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful.” History is full of such plans: what about the Elizabethan “Babington conspiracy,” which sought to overthrow Queen Elizabeth and place Mary Queen of Scots on the throne? Or the conspiracies to kill Julius Caesar or Abraham Lincoln? Is a “secret plan” to hide an author’s name “unlawful or harmful” enough to qualify it as a “conspiracy”?

The Elizabethan Age has been called a “Golden Age of pseudonyms,” a time when almost every writer used a pen name at some time.<sup>1</sup> To investigate whether a name printed on a play is the author’s real name or a pseudonym is therefore not an indulgence in conspiracy theories, but an attempt to uncover the truth about an era in which people had good reasons for hiding their identities—fear of retaliation by the state<sup>2</sup> and the “stigma of print”<sup>3</sup> being but two such reasons.

Add to this Diana Price’s research<sup>4</sup> showing that, for the Stratford man, William Shakspere, unlike any other Elizabethan writer, there is no documented evidence from his lifetime indicating that anyone thought of him as a writer. The concept of a hidden author behind the “Shakespeare” mask thus becomes a reasonable hypothesis. Merely labeling it a “conspiracy theory” seems obtuse and terribly lacking in nuance.

Indeed, the evidence for Shakspere of Stratford is incredibly thin. All of it is either posthumous or ambiguous, or both. The First Folio obliquely identifies Shakspere as a writer, but why does the first document identifying him as such not come until seven years after his death?

Shapiro states: “there’s not a shred of documentary evidence linking Oxford to Shakespeare’s plays, only speculation and surmise.” Shapiro asked Stevens how he could confuse circumstantial evidence with documentary evidence. Shapiro seems to think that circumstantial evidence is somehow not really evidence at all. But in a court of law, most evidence is circumstantial and most cases can be proved entirely with circumstantial evidence. Circumstantial evidence is

often more reliable than direct evidence.

Shapiro trusts “documentary” evidence, but fails to consider that documents can be mistaken or can be made to lie, just as people can be. To simply dismiss a whole class of evidence without carefully considering the reliability of each piece of it based on its provenance and the circumstances that surround it is to take an extremely simplistic approach to evidence. This leads Shapiro into trying to dissuade Stevens from his belief about what happened over 400 years ago, when the works of Shakespeare were created, by arguing about the motives of an early twentieth-century British schoolmaster and his “anti-democratic” ideas and by lecturing Stevens about the need to shy away from conspiracy theories because such thinking might encourage others to believe that President Obama was not an American. These things have nothing to do with what happened 400 years ago!

Stevens, the legal scholar, was right to reject such arguments as absolutely irrelevant. Instead, Stevens looked at the *evidence*—the six shaky signatures that suggested a man who could barely write his own name, the complete absence of books, and the dearth of tributes upon his death—honors that writers usually conferred on their recently departed fellows, even on writers of only moderate fame.

What is most disappointing about Shapiro’s article is that, like many traditional Stratfordians, he cannot admit that there is even the least room for doubt about authorship, and instead he engages in *ad hominem* attacks, calling skeptics “conspiracy theorists” and implying that they are anti-democratic elitists. Whether Shapiro or Stevens is ultimately proved correct is not as important as the fact that Shapiro, who has threatened to flunk students who persist in raising the authorship question, did all he could to suppress critical thinking, while Stevens continued to ask questions and to follow the evidence wherever it led, no matter the consequences.

Endnotes:

[1] Taylor and Mosher, *The Bibliographical History of Anonyma and Pseudonyma*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press (1951), p. 85.

[2] A man named John Stubbs had his hand cut off at Queen Elizabeth’s order because he had stated in a pamphlet, among other things, that the Queen was too old to marry.

[3] It was considered beneath a nobleman’s dignity to write plays or poetry, which were considered frivolous.

[4] *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem*. Westport: Greenwood Press (2001).



## ***Mimus*: A Neglected Source of Shakespeare’s Plays?**

by Margit Greiling and Reinhard Greiling

Ancient Greek dramatic texts include the “classical” type from well-known authors such as Euripides, and another type, the *mimos*. *Mimos* (Greek) or *mimus* (Latin) may be called a small play or drama with a realistic or satirical presentation of particular scenes from everyday life on an (improvised) stage; the ancient *mimos/mimus* differs from the modern mime and pantomime in that the *mimus* scenes incorporated song and dialogue as well as body movement. Related types of plays are Interludes and the Roman Atellan Farces (*Atellanae Fabulae*), which are included in the *mimus* discussed here. The *mimus* may be moralizing, but often covers the very opposite. Ignobility and lasciviousness may be a major characteristic of this dramatic genre.

Hermann Reich (1903) provided a detailed characterization and literary history of the *mimus*. He defined a mimic hypothesis with alternating prose, iambus, and lyric parts. A number of studies (e.g., Chambers 1903, Creizenach 1911, Reich 1903) show the *mimus* to have originated in Greek drama before the third century BCE. Philistion and Sophron of Syrakusa are important early authors, followed by others such as Herondas, Decimus Laberius, and Publilius Syrus. Julius Caesar and Tullius Cicero are reported to have enjoyed *mimus* performances, and mentioned *mimus* characters in their own texts. More recently, Chambers (1903) implied that the *mimus* tradition had disappeared prior to Elizabethan times and did not relate them to Shakespeare. Quiller-Couch (1917) provided a definition of the interlude in the Shakespeare context. However, they failed to see the earlier *mimus* traditions on which the interludes and other dramas are relying.

It is the merit of Reich (1903) to show the use of *mimus* scenes and characters, more or less continuously, from the Greek and Roman writers to Shakespeare. He devotes a whole chapter to Shakespeare’s plays, where he gives numerous examples of “mimic elements” in the plays. The fabulous poison that causes only temporary “death” in *Romeo and Juliet* or in *Cymbeline* is a typical *mimus* element. Witty and intelligent clowns or jesters are equally characteristic of the *mimus* of Philistion or Publilius Syrus and for Shakespeare’s plays. *King Lear*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *All’s Well That Ends Well* all have their clowns. Perhaps most famous is Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the two *Henry IV* plays. Adultery, often with the perpetrator hiding in a box, as in *Merry Wives* and *Cymbeline*, is again adapted from the antique *mimus*. Also, related characters like the witch and the bawd and/or innkeeper appear in these plays. Teachers

and priests as in *Love's Labours Lost*, *1 and 2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Twelfth Night* represent further *mimus* characters. An illustrative example is the transformation of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bullough (1957) offers Apuleius's "Golden Ass" (Adlington 1566) as a possible source. Reich (1904) showed the use of what he calls "Eselsmimus" (ass *mimus*) even prior to Apuleius in Greek drama. His example, from an antique ceramic fragment, shows an actor with the mask of an ass. This resembles more closely the "translated" Bottom than the Apuleius story. Obviously, the author used bits and pieces of *mimus* scenes as sources in many of his plays as an important addition to larger source texts and episodes.

Other Greek texts were accessible during Shakespeare's time, though some may have been only in fragments. The early Greek *mimus* scenes or dramas were, of course, recorded in the Greek language, and not all of them were translated into other languages (Reich 1903). Therefore, it will be worth exploring systematically, (a) which of the Greek *mimus* texts/plots may be found again in Shakespeare's plays, and (b) whether they had been translated from the original Greek language at the author's time?

After scanning the central European literature of pre-Looney (1922) times, we feel, there are a number of points that may be worth reconsidering in the light of our modern discussions and insights. Many of Shakespeare's plays show variable styles of language, with some scenes distinguished by particular dialects, sticking out from the language of the other characters, like the constable Dogberry in *Much Ado*. Such scenes derive from a type of the "classic" Greek theatre, the mimos, and are an integral part of the plays.

We suggest that these points may be used as working hypotheses for further research, both into the sources of the plays and into the question of the author's capability of reading classic Greek. We (little Latin, less Greek) hope that these points may attract the interest of Shakespeare scholars with appropriate language skills.

#### Examples cited by Reich:

- witty-intelligent clowns/jesters (68, 77)
- sad events and shipwrecks (70)
- *mimus* types adopted in his plays (334)
- incompetent servant (445, e.g., Shylock's servant)
- silly jokes (infantile/adolescent, 467)
- *mimus* interrupts time sequence (568)
- prose, iambus, lyric measures
- prologue in iambus at *mimus* plays (571)
- rude sentences (574)
- contrast in language between heroes and lower class (e.g., *Troilus & Cressida*, 584)

- shipwreck: *mimicum naufragium* (e.g., *Tempest*), poison/sedative (e.g., *Romeo & Juliet*), false oath (587-590)
- ass *mimus*—Atellane, Apuleius, Bottom (591)
- miraculous—fantastic events vs. reality (595-596)
- low language—colloquial—lyric; clowns talking in prose: Bottom, Lanz (Veroneser), Dogberry, clowns—*Hamlet*, clowns singing,
- small songs/couplets, serious songs, *Cymbeline* Totenklage, *Hamlet* Totengräber (597)
- mixture of serious and happy scenes (598)
- authors: Herondas, Miniamben, Philiston (879).

#### References:

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### SOF Research Grant Program Applications Due November 30, 2019

The SOF Board of Trustees has announced that it plans to award up to \$20,000 in Research Grants for 2020. It is anticipated that two to four grants will be awarded. The application deadline is November 30, 2019. Complete details may be found on the SOF website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/shakespeare-oxford-fellowship-research-grant-program/>

## Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship 2019 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was held on November 18, 2019, at the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut. It was called to order by SOF President John Hamill at 8:00 AM.

### President's Report

President Hamill began by thanking Joan Leon and Tom Rucker, who were termed out as members of the SOF Board of Trustees at this meeting. They have served for many years as valuable Board colleagues and will be sorely missed. Both have improved our Fellowship, and have motivated and inspired all of us to do so, in different and numerous ways.

Hamill sadly reported that we lost two leading Oxfordians since our last conference a year ago: W. Ron Hess (see *Newsletter*, Summer 2019) and former US Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens (see *Newsletter*, Summer 2019).

Hamill then summarized his President's Report. His remarks and his written report covered the following key points. The SOF's new Director of Public Relations and Marketing, Steven Sabel, successfully promoted the SOF in local newspapers in Santa Barbara, California (where SOF First Vice President Bryan H. Wildenthal gave an authorship talk); Ashland, Oregon (where both local papers featured Professor Roger Stritmatter, Sabel, and others involved in our Ashland Summer Seminar in July 2019); and here in Hartford in the run-up to this conference. Sabel has built up a database of thousands of media contacts, created our first new membership brochure in many years, and has continued and expanded the Speakers Bureau established some years ago by former President Regnier. The SOF also received national coverage in *The New Yorker* magazine in August 2019, which interviewed former SOF President Tom Regnier (editor of our website) and Alex McNeil (editor of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*), upon the passing of retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens in July (see *Newsletter*, Summer 2019). This coverage caused a sharp negative reaction from Gail Kern Paster, formerly of the Folger Shakespeare Library, who stated in a letter published by *The New Yorker* that Justice Stevens's "denial of Shakespeare's authorship is founded on a conspiracy theory that no reputable Shakespeare scholar countenances." Professor James Shapiro of Columbia University also attacked Justice Stevens along similar lines, in an article that *The New Yorker* unfortunately chose to publish on its website. Many of us sent letters in response to Paster and Shapiro, challenging their false and misleading attacks on a dead man who cannot defend himself, but none of our letters were published.

Hamill wrote to all nine current U.S. Supreme Court Justices to protest Shapiro's attacks on Justice Stevens, and asked them to sign the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt. Only Justice Samuel Alito replied, saying he did not know enough about the issue. Our outreach to other major media outlets has continued. We will try to persuade them to cover the compelling story we have to tell.

Membership has remained generally stable in recent years, though with a modest increase this year of more than 8%, from 376 to 408 paid members, with total membership dues increasing from around \$24,000 to more than \$26,000. While the cost of printing and mailing the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* has increased slightly, the Board again decided not to increase membership dues this year. We have kept dues at the same level since 2015. We will be able to keep dues at the same level into the future if we can increase both our membership numbers and the level of donations from our members.

In order to attract more people to the authorship issue, especially younger audiences, we started this year with a bang by launching our "Don't Quill the Messenger" podcast series, conceived by SOF Trustee Julie Sandys Bianchi and hosted by Steven Sabel. The podcasts have won rave reviews and many followers. Many more are planned.

The SOF also launched its first in-house published book series this year. The series takes its name, *Brief Chronicles*, from our widely admired annual scholarly journal published from 2009 to 2016, and like the journal, is again edited by Roger Stritmatter, Professor of Humanities at Coppin State University (Baltimore). The first book appeared in April 2019: *The Poems of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford ... and the Shakespeare Question, Vol. 1: He That Takes the Pain to Pen the Book* (containing articles by Professor Stritmatter and others). More books will follow, including Volume 2 of this landmark study of Oxford's early and other attributed poems (outside the currently accepted Shakespearean canon), *My Mind To Me a Kingdom Is*. The third book in the overall *Brief Chronicles* series, *The Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook*, should also appear in the near future. Like the later issues of the *Brief Chronicles* journal, and all recent issues of our annual scholarly journal *The Oxfordian*, these books may be purchased on Amazon.com.

A new College Essay Contest will be launched in 2020, with a \$1,000 first prize, and additional prizes to be determined. SOF Trustees Julie Sandys Bianchi and Professor Theresa Lauricella will lead this project. We hope to motivate young people nationwide to consider the authorship question. A related project in November 2019 is that the SOF will have a booth and table presence

at the next convention of the National Council of Teachers of English in Baltimore. Professor Roger Stritmatter and Shelly Maycock are leading this project. This will enable us to reach the educators who in turn reach millions of high school students around the nation, at the very time that most people are first introduced to Shakespeare!

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's book that launched the Oxfordian theory, "*Shakespeare Identified*," on March 4, 2020, we are planning a major event to celebrate the Centennial and catch the media's attention. [Note: Shortly after the Hartford Conference, the Board of Trustees approved the National Press Club in Washington, DC, as the site for this event. See page 6.]

All these projects require funding and are compelling reasons why we will launch our traditional annual fundraising and membership renewal drive over the next few weeks. Please be generous!

Hamill concluded by noting and thanking all the members of our SOF committees over the past year, including our four standing committees under the Bylaws: the Nominations Committee (chaired by Second Vice President Don Rubin), the Fundraising and Membership Committee (chaired by outgoing trustee Joan Leon), the Communications Committee (chaired by former President Tom Regnier, who also edits the SOF website; this committee also supervises *The Oxfordian*, edited by Gary Goldstein, and *Newsletter*, edited by Alex McNeil), and the Conference Committee (also chaired by Don Rubin).

Hamill also noted the SOF's continuing *ad hoc* committees (those not specifically established in our bylaws, but no less important to our work; these committees are created and maintained from year to year by the SOF President): the Finance and Investment Committee (co-chaired by Tom Rucker, our outgoing Treasurer, and by Alex McNeil), the Public Relations and Marketing Committee (chaired by Trustee Julie Sandys Bianchi) and its Video Contest Subcommittee (chaired by Tom Regnier), the Research Grant Program Committee (chaired by Hamill), the Looney Centennial ("SI-100") Committee (chaired by Kathryn Sharpe, with First Vice President Bryan H. Wildenthal taking over as chair in early October), the Data Preservation Committee (chaired by Kathryn Sharpe, who will continue in that role), and the Oxfordian of the Year Committee (chaired by Tom Regnier).

### Minutes of 2018 Annual Meeting

Copies of the minutes of the SOF Annual Meeting held in Oakland, California, on October 13, 2018, were provided to all members present. President Hamill asked for any corrections and none were suggested. Upon motion by SOF Secretary Earl Showerman, seconded by

SOF Trustee Julie Sandys Bianchi, the minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

### Treasurer's Finance Reports

Outgoing Treasurer Tom Rucker presented these reports, including Profit and Loss Statements covering calendar year 2018, as well as the period January 1-October 5, 2019, a Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2018, and the SOF's overall 2019 Budget. These reports are available to any SOF member who wishes to peruse them. As they indicate, the SOF's finances are in good order. We continue to enjoy stable and solid finances. We pay our bills promptly. We have no funded debt and there has been no need to borrow any money, even on a short-term basis. Costs associated with the annual conference will, as usual, temporarily reduce our account balances, but our annual membership renewals and donations at the end of this year should, as usual, replenish our funds. We currently have unrestricted cash reserves of over \$90,000, and a restricted endowment account (of which we can only spend the income, though to date we have prudently chosen to reinvest the income) with a current balance of about \$70,000. In November 2018, the SOF began moving most of its reserve funds into income-earning investment accounts with Wells Fargo Brokerage and the Fidelity Balanced Fund. This way, our funds will earn more income than if they all remained in cash accounts.

During the past year, the SOF formalized its budget process and asked committee chairs to submit projected budgets for the year. This enabled the Treasurer and Finance Committee, assisted by Rick Foulke (who joins the Board as a new Trustee), to finalize a 2019 Budget for the Board's consideration, within the first ten days of the year. We plan to follow the same process for 2020.

In late 2018, former trustee James Warren elected not to continue on the Board in order to focus on his important research and writing activities. We did not realize how much work Warren had been doing with regard to our finances and membership until we went through the process of reallocating his work to others. SOF members Patrick Sullivan and Rick Foulke stepped up, with Sullivan taking over much work with our QuickBooks accounting system, and Foulke assisting with budgetary matters and financial statements. On a related note, Virginia Hyde, who has diligently prepared the SOF tax returns for many years, has indicated that she also must step aside to focus on other things. She will be missed.

During questions and discussion following these reports, First Vice President Bryan H. Wildenthal noted that the Board decided in April 2019 to modify slightly its approach to donated funds that are targeted to particular projects or appeals. The Board will not view such targeting as a rigid restriction on how funds may be

spent, given that flexibility may be needed in light of changing and unpredictable needs and priorities that the SOF may experience. The Board will continue, however, to make every reasonable effort to spend donated funds in accordance with any targeted purpose. The SOF currently solicits targeted funds to support either our Centennial (“SI-100”) projects or our Research Grant Program. As always, we continue to welcome all donations to our general fund. All such donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law, as the SOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable and educational organization.

The Board made a carefully considered decision to engage in some moderate deficit spending during 2019, amply supported by our existing reserves (thus, again, no borrowing was required). The Board will carefully monitor our ongoing revenues in deciding on spending and budget for 2020.

### Fundraising and Membership Report

Outgoing Trustee Joan Leon presented these reports. She noted that our fundraising for the first nine months of 2019 showed a modest increase over previous years. As is true every year, we remain well short of our annual goal as of October, but we expect to make up the difference with our end-of-year fundraising and membership renewal appeals. A great deal of the Fellowship’s work is only possible because of donations, including much of our Research Grant Program and most of our various outreach and educational efforts. Our new public relations and marketing campaign, led by Steven Sabel, will also continue to require additional resources from annual giving, foundation approaches, and planned gifts and bequests.

To help us reach our goal of \$37,000 in donations for 2019, the Board of Trustees approved an approach that has been effective for many other non-profit groups. In our end-of-year fundraising letter, we will be offering gifts to people who make donations at various levels (above and beyond membership dues, counting all donations between October 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020). They are a way for us to say how much we appreciate and value your support. The gifts are: (1) for donations of \$125 or more, a DVD of Cheryl Eagan-Donovan’s film *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth*; (2) for donations of \$250 or more, the DVD plus a copy of James Warren’s new centenary edition of Looney’s “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*; (3) for donations of \$500 or more, the DVD, the Looney book, and an SOF coffee mug (Bryan H. Wildenthal will also, at his own expense, send a signed copy of his new book, *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*, to donors at this level and above); and (4) for donations of \$1,000 or more, all of the foregoing plus a copy of Bonner Miller Cutting’s new

book, *Necessary Mischief: Exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question*.

SOF’s total membership stands at 422, including gift and honorary memberships. While this year’s total is somewhat larger than last year’s, it is still far below the level we have long felt we need to have a stronger impact. However, there is one indication of growth akin to membership, with regard to social media. As reported by Tom Regnier as chair of the Communications Committee, our online visitors and joiners of our email list are expanding rapidly. We have around 1,200 email subscribers now. What makes this group interesting is that many are presumably part of a younger, internet-savvy generation, reputed to be anti-joiners but still intensely interested in literary, social, and political issues. They may be our future members.

### Communications Report

Tom Regnier, chair of the Communications Committee and editor of the SOF website, presented a report. This committee oversees not just the website, but also our social media presence and email list, as well as our print publications. Volume 21 of *The Oxfordian*, our longtime flagship annual scholarly journal, was published in September 2019. Editor Gary Goldstein, layout artist Lucinda Foulke, and the entire Editorial Board did a great job. It is selling well on Amazon.com. Regnier also summarized the new *Brief Chronicles* book series edited by Professor Roger Stritmatter (as described above). The first book is also selling on Amazon.com. We hope to distribute the third volume, *The Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook*, at the upcoming National Council of Teachers of English in Baltimore. The *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, edited by Alex McNeil, is now in its 55th year.

The SOF website averaged 183 views per day in 2013, its first year. In 2019, it averaged 390 views per day, more than twice as many. It received 66,795 total views in 2013, and 135,050 total views in 2018. The latter equals about 10,875 views per month. We have had 56,552 unique visitors since October 2018, or about 4,713 unique visitors per month, up from 4,400 per month during the previous year. The website was viewed in 164 countries (up from 161 the year before). The top ten, in order, are the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, India, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Russia, and Sweden.

Many thanks to Jennifer Newton for her work keeping the website running smoothly, and to Lucinda Foulke and Bryan H. Wildenthal for their assistance in posting articles.

SOF’s “MailChimp” email list now has over 1,200 subscribers, up from about 400 in 2017. We have had recent surges in subscribers coinciding with *The New Yorker* article in August 2019 and our annual Video Contest.

We redesigned the SOF website recently, with two goals in mind: (1) making it friendlier and more accessible to newcomers to the Shakespeare authorship question (SAQ); and (2) putting more emphasis on Oxford, as opposed to the SAQ generally. Check out the new home page and let us know what you think. The website has become a major part of the efforts of the Data Preservation Committee (see report below) to preserve our Oxfordian heritage. Over the past few years, we have posted all newsletters dating from the 1930s and 1940s of one of our predecessor organizations, the Shakespeare Fellowship (US branch). In the near future, we plan to post: (1) all past issues of the *Elizabethan Review*, with the kind permission of its editor, Gary Goldstein; (2) past newsletters of the British branch of the Shakespeare Fellowship founded in 1922 by J. Thomas Looney and Sir George Greenwood; (3) DVS Newsletters; and (4) articles from the website of the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre at Concordia University.

Our Video Contest has again been a huge success. The eight videos in the 2019 contest (“Who Wrote Shakespeare?”) received about twice as many views as did those in the 2018 contest: about 14,000 views so far, and that number will increase when we post the winning videos on the website. The Video Contest is thus the single biggest attraction we’ve ever had for bringing people to the website. Our Facebook advertisement for the contest, for which we spent \$600, reached 155,418 Facebook members and generated 1,418 reactions, comments, and shares, and 8,778 clicks to the voting page. This year, we opened up the contest to contestants from five additional countries: Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. We received submissions from all except New Zealand, and British and Irish entries made it to the finals along with entries from the US (Note: The winning videos were announced later at the Conference; see page 6).

The SOF sponsored Shakespeare Authorship Mystery Day on November 8, 2018, with Jennifer Newton, Kathryn Sharpe, and Linda Theil creating some 25 to 30 memes about “SAM” Day (now an official “day” every November 8, the date on which the First Folio was originally published in 1623), and posted them to SOF’s Facebook page and Twitter as well as on other Oxfordian Facebook pages. The memes provoked many “likes” and comments. The four presentations remain accessible on the SOF FB page.

Finally, the SOF YouTube channel, established in 2015, continues to grow. It now has 39 videos, mostly presentations from our conferences, and over 1,000 subscribers. The videos have received a total of over 147,000 views.

### Public Relations and Marketing Reports

Trustee Julie Sandys Bianchi (chair of the Public Relations and Marketing Committee), and Steven Sabel,

the SOF’s Director of Public Relations and Marketing, each presented reports covering this area. As summarized by Bianchi, our PR efforts are now carried out both by Sabel as our professional contracted PR director, and by various subcommittees, overseen during the past year by Bianchi and Joan Leon.

The first episode of SOF’s new podcast series, “Don’t Quill the Messenger” (conceived by Bianchi, and hosted by Sabel on a volunteer basis), premiered on January 1, 2019. We have now aired twenty-one episodes. Because of the low-cost service we use as distributor, we have only limited means to measure our listenership, but as of September 2019, almost 10,000 individuals had downloaded our podcasts. During the period June to August there was a marked increase in downloads, from 1,273 in June, to 1,577 in July, and 1,957 in August.

During November 21-24, 2019, four Oxfordians, all current or former professors or instructors at institutions of higher education, will staff an Oxfordian informational booth at the annual meeting in Baltimore of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): Roger Stritmatter, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, Wally Hurst, and Shelly Maycock.

The PR committee will sponsor a College Essay Contest in 2020. Trustees Bianchi and Professor Theresa Lauricella are establishing the parameters, based on the past contest that Bonner Miller Cutting organized for high school students.

### Data Preservation Committee Report

Kathryn Sharpe (chair of this committee, the “DPC”) summarized a detailed written report provided to the membership about the many important activities of the DPC, whose goals are to: (1) preserve Oxfordian websites; (2) support the continued development of the SOAR database, created by Bill Boyle and enriched by James Warren’s *Index to Oxfordian Publications*; (3) preserve miscellaneous documents and research materials that may be held by private individuals; (4) provide online access to Oxfordian newsletters; (5) preserve our history by interviewing Oxfordians; and (6) collect the papers of first-generation Oxfordians. During 2018-19, the DPC focused on three areas: (1) retaining Oxfordian materials (developing guidelines for what to save and looking for long-term storage); (2) identifying and collecting materials (taking shipments of materials owned by the late Dan Wright and the late Ron Hess; indexing Oxfordian archives in Britain; and acquiring J. Thomas Looney’s papers from his grandson); and (3) sharing materials (posting historical newsletters on the SOF website and building the SOAR and related databases).

Sharpe’s report included supplemental reports from the following committee members: Michael Dudley (on the possibility of hiring an archivist to assist with preservation of SOF and Oxfordian materials); Bill



Boyle and Catherine Hatinguais (on efforts to build and maintain the online Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources ["SOAR"] database, to acquire and preserve physical archives and books of leading Oxfordians, and related projects); James Warren (on his archival researches in Britain, at Brunel University, University of London, and University of Liverpool, and his successful efforts to obtain and preserve priceless letters and papers of J. Thomas Looney from Looney's living descendants); and Tom Regnier, Bill Boyle, James Warren, and Kevin Gilvary (on digitizing and posting past Oxfordian newsletters, including those from Britain's De Vere Society, which DVS President Gilvary has graciously authorized SOF to post on our website).

### **Looney Centennial ("SI-100") Committee Report**

SOF First Vice President Wildenthal (the new chair of this committee) presented this report, briefly summarizing the work of the committee over the past year. He thanked Kathryn Sharpe for her tremendous work chairing this committee for several years. Personal and family commitments required Sharpe to give up chairing the committee in early October, and President Hamill appointed Wildenthal to step in. Wildenthal also thanked all the members of the committee for their energy and leadership, including James Warren (whose crucial research and publications regarding Looney will be a central focus of the 2020 Centennial celebrations), Linda Bullard (who, among other things, has chaired the subcommittee devoted to planning for an event on March 4, 2020, to celebrate the exact 100th anniversary of Looney's book), and Joella Werlin, who has generously supported and participated in many aspects of the committee's work. Many other members of the committee, which has become SOF's largest committee with about fifteen active members, have also contributed to planning for the Centennial celebrations.

Wildenthal reported that the committee has proposed to the Board a plan to hold a major event at the National Press Club on March 4, 2020, and appealed for donations targeted to the Centennial efforts. Wildenthal also summarized the committee's efforts to develop suitable "memes and themes" to promote Looney and his work during 2020, and to support local events during 2020 to celebrate and promote Looney and the Oxfordian theory that he launched almost 100 years ago.

### **Research Grant Program Report**

President Hamill (chair of the Research Grant Program Committee), presented this report. He recounted the history of the RGP over the past few years, noting that we have supported researchers in Britain and Italy. Much of the research by our grantees, and reports thereon, is still in progress. Research at the Russian State Archives

in Moscow, by Rima Greenhill, had to be postponed due to visa issues; this will take place next summer. The RGP has been generously supported by the Joe W. & Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation, which has donated about \$15,000 to the program over the past few years. We continue, however, to depend on member donations to fully support our research efforts.

### **Conference Committee Reports**

Second Vice President Don Rubin, outgoing chair of the Conference Committee, presented a report on the planning and finances of the current conference in Hartford. SOF Secretary Earl Showerman, incoming chair of the committee, presented a report about plans for our next annual conference in Ashland, Oregon, scheduled for October 1-4, 2020 (see page 29).

### **Nominations Committee Report**

Second Vice President Don Rubin, chair, presented its nominations on behalf of himself and committee members Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Joan Leon. The committee was tasked this year with nominating candidates for four seats on the Board of Trustees. Trustee Bryan H. Wildenthal was eligible for reelection to a second three-year term. Trustee Theresa Lauricella was eligible for election to complete the final two years of the term to which she was appointed by the Board in October 2018. Trustees Joan Leon and Tom Rucker were ineligible for reelection due to term limits. To fill these four Board seats, the committee nominated Wildenthal and Lauricella for reelection and election, respectively, and nominated Ben August and Rick Foulke to replace Leon and Rucker. The committee also nominated President Hamill to serve a second one-year term as President. His current Board term does not expire until 2021, at which time he will be eligible for reelection to the Board. He will be eligible for reelection as President in 2020.

No other candidates were nominated for these positions within the time allowed by the SOF bylaws. Upon being presented to the membership at this meeting, they were approved by acclamation.

### **Adjournment**

President Hamill again thanked all in attendance and adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.

[*Editor's note:* this is a slightly abridged version of the minutes as recorded by First Vice President and Acting Recording Secretary Bryan H. Wildenthal.]





# SHAKESPEARE

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*Conference Report (continued from page 1)*

stage direction when it came to the performance of the plays?" He analyzed the plays from a performance perspective, using various guidelines to acting Shakespeare that have been established over the centuries as a key to the works and stage directions which, if not explicit, are unmistakably incorporated into the texts. He showed how the author uses the meter, punctuation, enjambment, shared verse lines, elision, stressed syllables, and specific word choices to convey to actors the correct way of delivering the lines of the characters presented. Details about the timing of entrances and exits, action points, the rate of speech, particular emphases, and even the familiarity and relationships between certain characters are all revealed within the text of the lines, largely avoiding the need for separate written stage directions beyond those we find in the quartos and folios that are often credited to editors and typesetters. This evidence serves to further reveal the genius behind the works of Shakespeare, not only as a playwright, but also as an experienced and talented stage director well versed in the art of performance.

Longtime Oxfordian psychotherapist and the author of *The Muse as Therapist* **Heward Wilkinson** then brought his expertise to bear on Shakespeare's "organic" use of language in a talk titled "Why Oxfordians Should Be Post-Modernists." Postmodern usage of inherent ambiguity and irreducible cross-referencing is near universal in our culture, and also in Shakespeare, and in the Shakespeare Authorship Question—it's right in our face, e.g., the Droeshout Portrait. After noting that Hank Whittemore and Jim Warren have made significant antithetical interventions in this question, he raised the example of Charles Dickens, in whom there is no dispute about a direct relationship between his life and his work, then suggested that the life versus art antithesis is a false one which does not at all negate postmodern insights. Wilkinson explored the unfathomable complexities of the first true postmodern drama, *Hamlet*, via the paradox that the Wells and Taylor Oxford Edition of *Hamlet*, in the name of down-to-earth commonsense, no-nonsense realism, ended up with a *Hamlet* which is pure "deconstruction of the author." He illustrated this by contrasting their editorial changes to Act 4 Scene 4 in the Second Quarto with the Oxfordian *Hamlet*, which is pure postmodernism and is not at all incompatible with the massive presence of the life in the work. Therefore, Wilkinson concluded, this is a false antithesis, harmful to our cause, with which authorship skeptics definitely need not shackle themselves.

In "Misprison or Bust—Why One Word, in One Sonnet, Matters," **Bill Boyle**, retired librarian and founder of the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library ([www.shakespeareoxfordlibrary.org](http://www.shakespeareoxfordlibrary.org)), which manages the Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources (SOAR) catalog-database of Shakespeare authorship materials and publishes authorship-related books through its

Forever Press imprint, drew attention to the special significance of one key word in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*—"misprision." He began by noting that Hank Whittemore's "Monument Theory" about the Sonnets, introduced exactly twenty years ago, was unprecedented in its scope and completeness, positing a real documented moment in time (the Essex Rebellion and its aftermath) as the subject of the middle one hundred sonnets, and the identification of the key figures as the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford (the Poet), the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton (the Fair Youth) and Queen Elizabeth (the Dark Lady). Boyle revisited the core issue of the Monument Theory, i.e., that the sonnets are about real events in the lives of actual people, and that the real event in this case was indeed the Essex Rebellion of February 8, 1601, and the two years immediately following. The use of the word "misprision" in Sonnet 87, he believes, illustrates this point better than any other in the whole sonnet sequence. The word has only two definitions, one broad and general (a misunderstanding or misinterpretation), the other narrow and legal (neglect of official duty or concealment of a crime), usually in connection with the crime of treason. Understanding the difference between "treason" and "misprision of treason" is the key to understanding the significance of this word here. Treason is an overt act that is punishable by death while misprision of treason is an "act of omission" that results in a sentence of life imprisonment. During the Tudor dynasty there were cases where treason convictions were commuted to misprision of treason, and the offender's life was spared. Following the Essex Rebellion, six persons were executed over a four-week period; the rebellion's co-conspirator/co-leader, Southampton, was tried, convicted of treason, and condemned to death, but was spared execution, and eventually pardoned. So the key to understanding the presence of the word "misprision" in Sonnet 87 is to see that it may well be an open, overt, legally correct reference (not a veiled or coded word to be interpreted) to what must have been the legal mechanism by which Southampton was spared.

The final talk of the day, "The Launch of the Pen Name: Who Knew What and When?" was given by **Hank Whittemore**, the author of *The Monument*, which presented a "macro" theory of the language, structure and biographical/historical context of the sonnets, and of, more recently, *100 Reasons Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford*. He focused on five key people involved in the launch of "Shakespeare" in 1593 (with the publication of *Venus and Adonis*), and asked, "What did they know and when did they know it?" They were: (1) John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, Elizabeth's "little black husband" and chief censor, who reviewed the manuscript (rather than passing on the responsibility to his staff) and issued the license for publication in his own hand; (2) Richard Field, printer and publisher, who also published



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Protestant works for Lord Burghley, to whom in 1589 he dedicated *The Arte of English Poesie*, which reprinted an Oxford poem and cited the earl as foremost among the courtier poets; (3) Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, the dedicatee, who was being pressured by Burghley to marry his granddaughter Elizabeth Vere; (4) William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who, with his son Robert Cecil, operated a web of informants and had important personal and political interests in *Venus and Adonis*, starting with its authorship and the poet's dedication to Southampton; (5) Queen Elizabeth, to whom William Reynolds, an early reader of *Venus*, wrote directly that the poem contained a parody of her. In a separate letter, to Burghley, he wrote that he was offended by this portrait of an "old" but "lustful" queen trying to seduce a young man. Noting that many of the writers who had worked with Oxford had died or left the world of the theater by 1593, and that Oxford himself had "retired" from Court, Whittemore offered his conclusion about one of the most

seminal moments of world literature (not to mention the event that kicked off the Authorship Question in the first place): that all five key individuals had known in advance about Oxford's use of the pen name "William Shakespeare" and had acquiesced.

### Second Day: Friday, October 18

The morning session started with two eulogies. **Jan Scheffer** paid tribute to the late W. Ron Hess (see *Newsletter*, Summer 2019) by reviewing all the work and projects he had been engaged in over the past thirty years. Scheffer had been working with Ron in recent years, and had presented papers with him at several recent conferences. This year they had planned a presentation on the Joust. Scheffer recalled Hess's work, noting his book *The Dark Side of Shakespeare* (Vols. 1 and 2), and his three dozen newsletter and journal articles and book reviews. Generally, Hess presented a political view of

Oxford as Shakespeare, anchored more in the 1570s and 1580s than in Oxford's later years.

The second remembrance was by **Alex McNeil** and **Tom Regnier**, who honored the late Justice John Paul Stevens (see also *Newsletter*, Summer 2019). Stevens was one of the judges at the famous 1987 Moot Court debate over the authorship question, and several years later came out in support of the authorship debate as a legitimate, important activity, citing Oxford as the best candidate for the true Shakespeare. Stevens was named Oxfordian of the Year in 2009. McNeil recited some of the details in planning and scheduling the presentation of the award, which took place in Stevens's chambers at the Supreme Court building. McNeil was accompanied by three other Oxfordians: Tom Regnier, Michael Pisapia, and Melissa Dell'Orto. Stevens was very open and generous with his visitors. It was, McNeil recalled, a very impressive and memorable presentation. Regnier followed with a more recent story, this one in the immediate aftermath of Stevens's passing. Professor James Shapiro (*Contested Will*, 2010) responded to the *New Yorker* article about Stevens by revealing a long-time correspondence he had had with the late Justice following the release of *Anonymous* in 2011. It was, Regnier said, a very self-serving and one-sided response by Shapiro that revealed more about him than Stevens. Shapiro wrote of how he tried to change Stevens's mind about the authorship, and was condescending throughout, attacking John Thomas Looney's politics as fascist and Stevens himself as a gullible conspiracy theorist who couldn't understand evidence. There was, of course, no opportunity for Stevens to respond (see page 10).

**Ben August**, who will be joining the SOF Board of Trustees this year, related the story of his purchase at a London auction of an original 1565 book (Herodotus's *Delle Guerre de Greci et Persi*), inscribed by Oxford to his first cousin, Thomas Berkeley, and bearing his Boar emblem on the cover (see *Newsletter*, Summer 2019). When notice of the auction first appeared last spring, a fundraiser among Oxfordians raised about \$15,000 in pledges to secure the purchase (anticipated to be around \$8,000-\$12,000). But when the auction actually commenced, the bidding skyrocketed to more than \$48,000; the final price was \$60,000 (including fees). August had the funds to keep up, and was determined to make the purchase. He said that the Huntington Library was the counter bidder, which clearly indicates that they see great value in this volume, which in turn means that they must see Oxford as Shakespeare. He had the volume with him, and left it out for attendees to view and (with gloves on) to actually hold.

Next up was the founding editor of *The Oxfordian*, **Stephanie Hopkins Hughes**, attending her first conference in several years. Hughes plans to publish a three-volume set (*Shakespeare and the London Stage*)

that covers the breadth and depth of Shakespeare's contribution to Anglo-American culture and letters, imbued with the unique, enlightening perspective that only the Oxfordian thesis can bring to it. Her topic was, "Why is it taking so long for the Establishment to deal with the Shakespeare Authorship Question?" The answer is that, in a nutshell, it's the history departments that block the issue, not the English departments. History, Hughes said, hates Edward de Vere. For centuries Oxford has been depicted as the "greatest wastrel of them all ... ill-tempered ... vile ... etc., etc." This is a direct result, she submitted, of Cecilian propaganda, first launched in the 1570s and continuing to this day. That is why today we have English departments focused only on the structure of his language as they continue to ignore the obvious connections to the events and personalities of his time (i.e., the history). We all pay a price for this, Hughes said, as the true history of the development of the English stage has become a "lost history." She noted that many Elizabethan historical records are kept at Hatfield House (the Cecils' ancestral home), not government



Ben August with the original 1565 book Herodotus' *Delle Guerre de Greci et Persi*, inscribed by Oxford



archives, and it is only since 2003 that they are slowly being made available. She reminded us that "he who controls the records controls history." That is what the Oxfordian movement has been fighting the whole time, and continues to fight today. Hughes received a standing ovation.

The final morning presentation was from **James Warren**, the indefatigable researcher, author and publisher who has literally been traveling around the world to document the records and history of the early years of the Oxfordian movement. Warren has most

recently published the Centenary Edition of Looney's "*Shakespeare Identified, Shakespeare Revealed*," a collection of once lost but now found letters and articles by Looney), and a new edition of Esther Singleton's 1929 Oxfordian-based novel, *Shakespearian Fantasias*. Warren has several more books in the works, including a history of the impact of "*Shakespeare Identified*" upon its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a biography of J. Thomas Looney, and the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of his indispensable *Index to Oxfordian Publications*. Warren reviewed his research activities over the past year, which involved three separate trips to England in search of early Oxfordian materials. His first trip to England was in November 2018, where he visited Brunel University and the British Library. At Brunel is a collection of forty-two shelves worth of Oxfordian material, including the early Shakespeare Fellowship publications and papers (circulars, press clippings, dinner invitations, etc.). A second trip in February 2019 took him back to Brunel, and then to the University of London, which holds the papers of Katherine Eggar, a very active Oxfordian in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. That material includes thirty letters from Looney. Warren's third trip in June and July 2019 was the biggest and best of all. He visited Looney's grandson, Alan Bodell, in Scotland and acquired a cache of papers that had been in a desk for more than fifty years: a treasure trove of Looney letters, clippings, business records, etc. Warren called it a "goldmine" and is still working on processing everything he found. From these records, for example, he was able to determine that Looney never received any royalties at all from either his English or his American publishers. On the way back from Scotland he visited the Liverpool University library, which houses the papers of Gerald Rendall. Warren has set up a spreadsheet database of all his findings of papers, letters, etc., which will eventually be made available to the Oxfordian community.

Writer-director **Sky Gilbert** (who also teaches at the University of Guelph) led off the afternoon session with "*Double Falsehood: Was Shakespeare Don Quixote?*" *Double Falsehood* is a play written by Lewis Theobald in 1727. Theobald claimed his play, which is based on the Cardenio episode of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, was inspired by manuscript copies of an unnamed lost play by Shakespeare (believed by some to be a lost play titled *Cardenio*). *Double Falsehood* has attracted attention recently, with some modern scholars claiming it was largely authored by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, with little involvement from Theobald himself. Gilbert firmly disagreed with those claims, on stylistic and thematic grounds; he believes that Theobald wrote the play, trying to mimic Shakespeare's style. Thematically, Gilbert noted that in *Double Falsehood* a rape victim marries her attacker, whereas Shakespeare chooses to "aestheticize" the victim's pain (as in *Lucrece*). Gilbert also disagreed with those who use stylometrics to conclude that

Shakespeare was a Jacobean playwright: "they're confusing the forest for the trees," he said. While most Jacobean playwrights were concerned with real people, Shakespeare's "concept of reality is art, not the observable world." Turning to Cervantes, Gilbert suggested that perhaps Shakespeare himself was a model for Don Quixote; each of them longed for an earlier time, when chivalry was part of the fabric of social order, and poet-courtiers were flourishing. Indeed, in 1654 Edmund Gayton called Don Quixote "the Shakespeare of La Mancha."

He was followed by **James Norwood**, who taught humanities and the performing arts at the University of Minnesota for many years. His talk, "A New Way of Looking at Shakespeare's Stagecraft," nicely complemented Steven Sabel's Thursday talk on Shakespeare's stage directions, as both presenters showed that the Bard gives necessary cues and clues through the speeches themselves. Discussing *Twelfth Night*, Norwood pointed out that music begins even before the first line ("play on!") and is abruptly halted by Orsino a few lines later ("Enough, no more"). "The writer is also a sound designer," remarked Norwood, noting that music is called for again, after Viola's shipwreck. Norwood also argued that *Twelfth Night* was almost certainly written originally to be performed at court, not in a public theater. This is shown again via stagecraft—the "box tree" (likely a Christmas tree), and the "dark room" for Malvolio in Act IV were devices that would have worked well in an intimate space, not a large barren platform. Moreover, a record exists of a *Twelfth Night* performance at court on January 6, 1601 (twelve days after Christmas), with the Duke of Orsino, an Italian diplomat, in attendance. Guests included the Countess of Oxford, the Earl of Derby and his wife (Elizabeth de Vere). "Where was Oxford?" Norwood asked, suggesting that the man himself was onstage, acting and directing in his own play. Oxford may well have played the fool Feste, who called himself "Olivia's corrupter of words." Norwood also discussed stagecraft in *The Winter's Tale* indicating that it too was intended for a small performance space. Responding to an audience question, Norwood said that the comedies and romances were probably written for court performance, and that the histories and tragedies (at least in the versions that have come down to us) were probably set for the public theaters.

"A journalist with scientific training looking for a story finds it in the Shakespeare Authorship Question," explained **Mark Anderson**. In his talk, "The Unlikely Bardographer," he detailed how he came to write "*Shakespeare By Another Name*," the major biography of Edward de Vere published by Gotham/Penguin in 2005. After doing graduate work in physics and astronomy in the early 1990s, Anderson took an English class, in which *Troilus and Cressida* was discussed; he

found it “impenetrable,” but resolved to learn more about Shakespeare. Before long he was attending monthly get-togethers at Isabel Holden’s house in Northampton, Mass., where he met Roger Stritmatter, who was doing graduate work on de Vere’s Bible. He then started attending authorship conferences, and wrote articles on the authorship question for local newspapers. Then came the first of several trips to Europe. After reading Diana Price’s *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography* in 2001, he felt that “a door had been opened” to erasing the Stratford myth. A year later he put together a proposal for a book about de Vere as Shakespeare. It attracted attention from three publishers; Anderson felt most at home with Gotham/Penguin. He expressed much gratitude to his editor, Brendan Cahill, for ensuring that the book would include more than 150 pages of notes—a rarity for a trade book—so that every factual statement was backed by authority. Anderson reminded his listeners that he was able to write such a book because he was “not motivated by salary, prestige or tenure, and not averse to heresy.” In short, he concluded, “I wrote the book I wanted to read.”

SOF President **John Hamill** discussed “Southampton and the Devereux Family,” further exploring those connections. Southampton (Henry Wriothesley) met Robert Devereux, later the Earl of Essex, when both were royal wards. He later followed Essex in his military campaigns; there were rumors in 1599 that the two had had a sexual relationship in Ireland. Southampton also knew Essex’s sister, Penelope Rich, in the early 1590s, when at least some of Shakespeare’s sonnets were written. At the time she was married to Robert Rich (later First Earl of Warwick) and had several children by him; while still married, she later had an affair with Lord Mountjoy, and had several more children by him. Hamill argued that she is the Dark Lady of the sonnets; her favorite color was black; her bedroom had black walls; she is said to have had black eyes. Hamill also maintained that she is depicted as Venus in *Venus and Adonis*, which, of course, Shakespeare dedicated to Southampton. She was called “Venus” in another poetic work, *Penelope’s Complaint* (1596), by one Peter Colse. As for Southampton, he eventually married Elizabeth Vernon, a cousin of the Devereux family; interestingly, he named his daughter Penelope. Hamill further argued that Edward de Vere’s son by his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, may not have been legitimate, and that Southampton may have been the biological father. The child was named Henry (a first name not previously used among de Veres or Trenthams). A 1622 portrait shows him with a face resembling Southampton’s, and holding a “baton sinister,” indicating bastardy.

In “Did Shakspeare Write Shake-Speare? Internal and External Meanings of Pen Names,” **Richard Waugaman** first observed that a major base of the Stratfordian case is that the name William Shakespeare could not have been

a pen name. Yet, as shown by many scholars, for many centuries it was not customary for writers to put their own names on their works. This was especially true of works of fiction; it is estimated that more than seventy per cent of novels published before 1800 were pseudonymous or anonymous. Waugaman then noted that persons sometimes deal with emotional crises in their lives by pretending that those events happened to someone else—“separate self-states,” as Waugaman called them. From there it is a very short step for a creative person such as a writer to create a pseudonym. Sometimes the pen name itself stimulates the writer. Waugaman cited writers who are well known by their pen names, e.g., Mark Twain and O. Henry. Søren Kirkegaard used many pen names. Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa created dozens of what he called “heteronyms,” which to him were entirely different entities from his own literary persona. Some authors also used allonyms, i.e., the names of other living persons. In Oxford’s case there was an additional factor that would have weighed against identifying himself: the “stigma of print,” that it was socially unthinkable for a nobleman to put his name on a printed work. Given all these factors, Waugaman asked, “Why did Oxford use a pen name? We can confidently say, ‘Why not?’”

The day’s final speaker was former SOF President **Tom Regnier**. In “What Did Shakespeare Mean By ‘Kill All the Lawyers?’” Regnier noted that the famous phrase from *Henry VI Part 2* is better known than its historical source or its dramatic context. In the play it is uttered by Dick the Butcher, a henchman of Jack Cade, who is leading a rebellion against the crown. There was a historical Jack Cade, who in 1450 led an uprising, was defeated at the Battle of London Bridge, and was captured and killed. However, Cade harbored no resentment against lawyers; he and his supporters were mainly seeking tax relief. The anti-lawyer sentiment dates from an earlier event, the Wat Tyler Rebellion (also known as the Peasants’ Revolt) in 1381; that uprising began in Kent, and did involve the murder of some lawyers as well as the Chief Justice of England. Regnier then offered five possible meanings of the phrase “let’s kill all the lawyers” as used in the play: (1) lawyers are oppressors, as they chiefly represent the power of the State; (2) lawyers defend personal liberty, and for that would be hated by anarchists; (3) simply a joke; (4) the playwright conflated historical accounts and is neutral toward lawyers; (5) a condemnation of the misuse of the law, particularly against the illiterate peasant class. Regnier suggested that all five meanings are possible, with a good case for the last one. Unlike the vast majority of the population, lawyers could read and write, as could clergymen. The ability to read and write enabled one accused of a crime to plead “benefit of clergy” and thus be tried in an ecclesiastical court, where the penalties were usually much less strict than in the King’s courts.

### Day Three: Saturday, October 19

**Alice Knox Eaton**, Professor of English at Springfield College in Springfield, MA, discussed her experience in “Teaching the Shakespeare Authorship.” Professor Eaton recently taught a Shakespeare seminar for English majors from an Oxfordian perspective. She was joined by two of the participants, each of whom presented an original paper: **Molli Mowry** (“Edward de Vere: The True William Shakespeare”) and **Emily Van Horn** (“Oxfordian Theory and Purposeful Play Within a Play”). Professor Eaton’s goal was to help students “gain a stronger grounding in the Shakespeare canon with a deeper understanding of how conflicting versions of the author’s biography illuminate the works themselves.” All of the students were new to the Authorship Question. Professor Eaton assigned several articles supporting the traditional biography based on William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, but the students found the evidence for Oxford’s authorship to be compelling. Reading her paper, Molli Mowry stated her view that the connections between Oxford’s writing and the events of his life are “undeniable” as seen in “numerous different works, but most specifically in *Hamlet*, as well as in many of his sonnets. . . . Some topics are easy to write about,” such as things one can observe, but “writing about feelings one has never felt is a very specific and difficult challenge.” Mowry cited many factors that have convinced her of Oxford’s authorship, such as the markings in his copy of the Geneva Bible (as identified by Professor Roger Stritmatter); for example, the earl’s noting of the phrase “Pride, fulness of bread,” and Hamlet’s remark that his father was murdered “grossly, full of bread.” This connection, she said, “is not likely a coincidence.” In her paper, Emily Van Horn also cited connections between de Vere’s life and aspects of the plot of *Hamlet* that “point in the direction of the Oxfordian theory.” She focused her attention on Oxford’s use of the “play within a play” as a “purposeful” choice that “may also have been an act of revenge” for the death of Oxford’s own father. “Readers of *Hamlet* will understand that the prince asked for this play to be created for revenge, just as Edward de Vere had written *Hamlet* as an act of revenge.” This view is akin to that of a hall of mirrors: if the play *The Mousetrap* is a portrayal of reality within *Hamlet*, “then the play *Hamlet* itself portrays the reality of the Elizabethan world and of the life Oxford was truly living.”

In “O What a Tangled Web”—Oxfrauds, Misfits, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Shakespearean Discourse,” **Roger Stritmatter**, a Professor of Humanities and Literature at Coppin State University in Baltimore, MD, delivered a sweeping, insightful, satirical and amusing survey of anti-Oxfordian groups and individuals. He focused on “the unholy alliance” connecting the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust



Springfield College students Molli Mowry and Emily Van Horn with Prof. Alice Knox Eaton

(SBT) to a web design group called “The Misfits” (which he called the SBT’s “online contractee”) and to the “Oxfrauds,” a special-interest anti-Oxfordian group also online. “Following the Misfit playbook,” he said, “the Oxfrauds seem to believe that implied threats of violence and public shaming against skeptics are a legitimate way to discuss Shakespeare. Up until now, they have been tolerated on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia and Amazon book reviews.” Using online clips, screenshots and other non-traditional documentary sources, Stritmatter examined the “strategic nexus” linking the SBT to the Oxfrauds, a nexus that includes public endorsements by Sir Jonathan Bate, an Oxford University professor. “As numerous statements attest,” Stritmatter said, “these overlapping organizations share a primary mission: to counter Oxfordian discoveries, misrepresent the historical record about the authorship question, sow chaos in online-discussion forums, and generally conduct an organized smear campaign against persons sympathetic to the post-Stratfordian or



Oxfordian argument.” He traced the modern origins of this “unholy alliance” to the publication of Charlton Ogburn’s *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1984 and the PBS *Frontline* documentary “The Shakespeare Mystery” in 1989. The 2011 feature film *Anonymous* about Oxford as Shakespeare, by producer-director Roland Emmerich, served to “strike terror into the hearts of Stratfordian professors” around the world. The traditional biography, he concluded, is defended by those with strong economic interests and others with “underlying quasi-religious impulses” toward the standard view. The Catholic doctrine of “papal infallibility” is matched here by an unofficial but powerful doctrine of “Stratfordian infallibility.”

**Don Rubin**, Professor Emeritus at Toronto’s York University, concluded the morning session by examining William Leahy’s view that the Shakespeare works were created by “a multiplicity of authorial hands.” In his recent book *My Shakespeare*, Leahy argued that editors of the recent Oxford University Press edition of Shakespeare’s works (led by Professor Gary Taylor) have justified his view of a complex web of collaboration behind the works. This expanding conception of the authorship may be occurring, in the first place, because of an increasing awareness of the weaknesses of the Stratfordian biography. Rubin then turned his attention to the Italian linguist John Florio. His name has been receiving “a huge amount of attention in France” during the past few years, Rubin said. “Was he an ‘influence’ on Shakespeare, whoever he or she or they were? . . . There are too many verbal flourishes in the Florio style, too many words that Florio used in his translations and dialogues or words even *invented* by him not to have had influence on the Bard, and even, perhaps, direct contact with him.” Rubin continued, “As for the identity of the author, I still believe that de Vere . . . *was* the center of it all, *was* the final arbiter and the corporate hallmark of the works published under the Shakespeare name. But I am being convinced more and more by the research of people like Taylor and the arguments of open-minded scholars like Leahy that de Vere really did work closely with many other people (who are named in the new Oxford edition of the Works and in Leahy’s *My Shakespeare*). I have no problem supporting Leahy’s call for the authorship question to be seen, not so much as a search for a single individual, but, rather, as the beginning of a whole new academic ‘field’ of research – one that will reveal, in the decades ahead, that – like Brecht and the creation of *his* plays, like Michelangelo and *his* art studio, like Yves St. Laurent and *his* dozens of collegial designers – the center of all these great works was the mind of a single genius like de Vere as well as the hands of many, many others.”

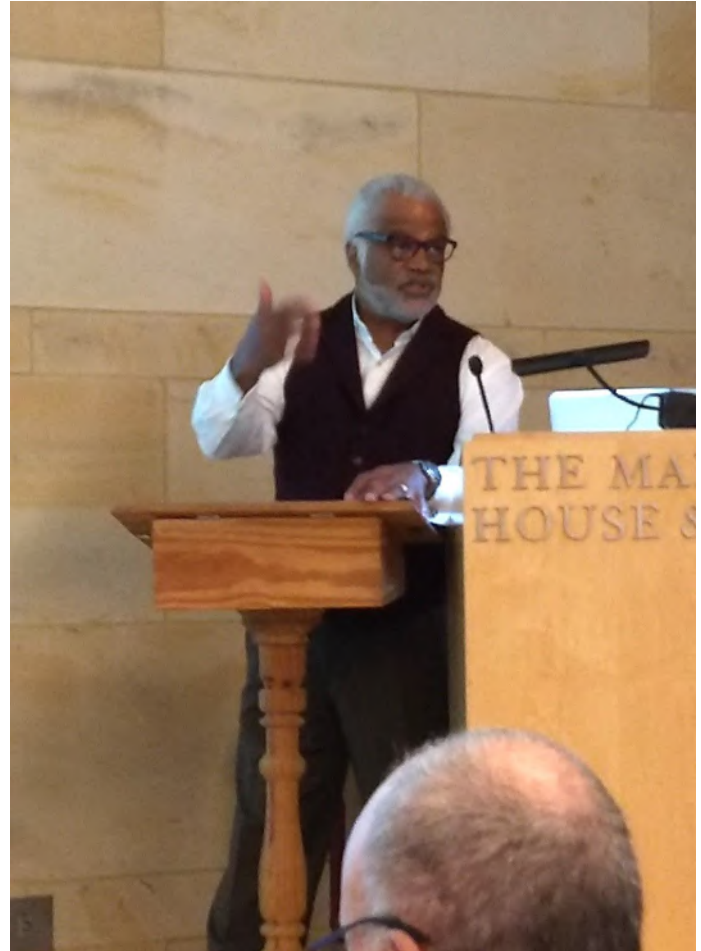
The afternoon session commenced with Professor of Law Emeritus **Bryan H. Wildenthal** speaking of “Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts: Perspectives on the Past and Lessons for the Future.” Wildenthal began by

summarizing two key lessons he had gained while researching his book, *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts* (2019). First, more than thirty literary references published between 1589 and 1616 raised doubts about the attribution, and second, both sides of the authorship debate would benefit from reading and responding more respectfully to each other’s scholarly work. Wildenthal listed the key issues that have inspired doubt about the traditional narrative: the unusual absence of documentary evidence, the expressions of doubt starting in 1589, the posthumous evidence, including the First Folio and the Stratford monument, “riddled with ambiguity,” the mysterious silence of friends and family regarding Shakespeare’s literary career, and finally the “profound mismatch between his life, background, education and career compared to the knowledge, attitudes and perspectives permeating the works.” Wildenthal shared his top reasons for favoring Edward de Vere’s authorship claim. Although de Vere was hailed as a superb poet and playwright by his contemporaries, there are no surviving plays and only a few poems published under his name. In 1589, Oxford was cited as a writer of “excellent” works not made public. The circumstantial evidence of the many parallels between Oxford’s life, letters, and poetry, and the connections between the canon and annotations in his Geneva Bible is compelling. Further reasons explain why his family wanted to preserve Oxford’s anonymity: “Many of Shakespeare’s plays and poems deal with sexually scandalous and politically sensitive themes,” the stigma of print among nobility who “suppressed” their writing or “suffered it to be published without their own names,” and the personal troubles associated with Oxford. Wildenthal focused on Thomas Nashe’s 1589 introduction to *Menaphon* where he refers to “English Seneca,” “Hamlets,” “handfuls of tragical speeches,” and “blood is a beggar,” which echoes “beggared of blood” in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 67. Wildenthal then listed a series of commentaries that suggested the poet Shakespeare was dead before 1616: “the late English Ovid” (1605), the “ever-living” poet in the *Sonnets* dedication (1609), and John Davies’s epigram referring to “our English Terence” (1611).

Next was **Cheryl Eagan-Donovan**, whose documentary film, *Nothing is Truer than Truth*, is now available on DVD as well as on several streaming services. Her subject was “The Lives of Poets in Late 16<sup>th</sup> and Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century London.” In *Shakespeare Sex & Love*, Stanley Wells credits Mary Bly with discovering evidence of a “self-aware homoerotic community in early modern London.” Wells proposed that the Earl of Southampton, “the only person to whom Shakespeare personally dedicated any of his writings,” belonged to a similar group of poets in the 1590s. Eagan-Donovan noted that John Hamill has argued that Southampton was part of a group of homosexuals and bisexuals that included Francis and Anthony Bacon, Robert Devereux, Roger Manners, Charles Danvers,

Henry Howard, and Don Antonio Pérez (this circle also included Penelope Devereux Rich). There is an extant poem attributed to Southampton, apparently written when he was in the Tower of London awaiting trial for treason for his involvement in the Essex rebellion. Lara M. Crowley, who discovered the poem, wrote that “Investigating texts such as ‘The Earle of Southampton prisoner, and condemned to Queen Elizabeth’ within their manuscript contexts also can afford valuable insights into the composition and circulation of literary works and can offer discoveries, including ‘new’ Renaissance authors.” A new play commissioned by Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, *Emilia*, depicts Emilia Bassano Lanier as the poet who inspired Shakespeare and also provided him with some of his best one-liners. Lanier was known to have shared her poems with friends, patrons, and fellow poets including Susan Bertie, Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Arbella Stuart; Lucy Harrington Russell, Margaret Russell Clifford, Katherine Howard, and Lady Anne Clifford. Eagan-Donovan also recounted the many documented intimate relationships among the male writers; the School of Night’s Chapman, Marlowe and Raleigh, Wyatt and Surrey, co-founders of the English sonnet, as well as Spenser and Sidney. Finally, in 1598, Francis Meres suggests that Shakespeare’s “sugared” Sonnets were meant for a small, private group of friends and fellow poets.

Actor, director, playwright and educator **Ted Lange** came to national prominence playing bartender Isaac Washington on the TV series *Love Boat*. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, he has received the NAACP’s “Renaissance Man Theater Award” and the Paul Robeson Award. Lange was the first American black actor to be featured in a film version of *Othello*. In his first presentation at an SOF conference, he focused on the creation of his award-winning play, *The Cause, My Soul, The Prequel to Othello*, which premiered in 2016 to rave reviews. In preparing to play Othello, Lange was struck by a number of unanswered questions about the characters’ relationships: How could Iago deceive everyone for so long? How did the various characters meet? What was the big deal about Othello being a Christian? Those questions led Lange to write a prequel. *The Cause, My Soul* opens with Rodrigo ineptly wooing Desdemona while claiming, “I am a wonderful writer, ’tis true. I am full of words. Long words, short words, too,” and then launching into a ridiculous limerick which underlines the incompatibility of the foolish suitor and the sophisticated maiden. Lange’s interpretation of Iago’s motivation for his villainy and his hatred of the Moor is that Iago believes that Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia: “twixt my sheets he’s done my office.” While this aside is glossed over in many American productions, Lange’s prequel indulges a deception played upon Iago by Emilia, who puts him off so she can bed Othello in another scene. Lange has Cassio increase Iago’s suspicions when he shares, “’Tis a rumor his passion



Ted Lange

satisfies the wife of one of his men, frequently” and that “he gives her his gold,” which will prove a telltale prop, much like Desdemona’s handkerchief in Shakespeare’s tragedy. Lange’s next problem was how to make Othello a hero out of a commander who had been cuckolding another man. “How do I change that perception? There has to be a purity of intention for the relationship to work, and for the audience to have sympathy for the Moor.” When Othello and Desdemona decide to wed, Othello must convert from Islam to Christianity. Lange took some pleasure in writing a scene in which Othello argues with a Priest “over the Holy Bible versus the Holy Quran.” The plot of *Othello* is taken from Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi*, which, Lange argued, was written out of prejudice and racism in an effort to dissuade white Italian women from becoming romantically involved with dark-skinned men like Othello. Lange’s Priest is horrified at the prospect of marrying the Moor to a white woman (“I’ll be the laughing stock of other priests,” and “Bishops will know me and snicker”) but also realizes that “this cathedral will become famous for having that black heathen ape sitting here among my clean white Christians. I will be famous as the child of God who brought this heathen to the bosom of our Christ.... I

alone will stand separate from the crowd. I will have converted a Muslim to Christ. Thank you, Jesus, for showing me the way.”

**Earl Showerman** has presented frequently at SOF conferences on Shakespeare’s use of Greek dramatic sources. In “Shakespeare and Greece Revisited: A Review of Recent Literature,” he briefly summarized the scholarly neglect of this subject during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and proceeded to critically review two recent titles, first Professor Jonathan Bate’s *How the Classics Made Shakespeare* (2019), in which Bate asserts, “Shakespeare was steeped in the classics. Shaped by his grammar school education in Roman literature, history, and rhetoric, he moved to London, a city that modeled itself on ancient Rome. He worked in a theatrical profession that had inherited the conventions and forms of classical drama, and he read deeply in Ovid, Virgil, and Seneca, that, more than any other influence, the classics made Shakespeare the writer he became.” Showerman noted that Oxfordians would agree with Bate about the preeminence of the classical influence on the canon, but would be skeptical about Bate’s gross overestimation of the quality of the classical collection that the Stratford grammar school would have possessed. “Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was a schoolboys’ book,” Bate asserts, and “the dramatization of scenes from classical myth and history was a common schoolroom task.” He does not cite any evidence to support either claim. Bate notes the importance of *The Arte of English Poesie*, and makes extensive references to William Webbe and Francis Meres, all without a single mention of the role played by Oxford. More importantly, he belies the verity of his title by completely neglecting to include Greek dramas as likely sources of inspiration for Shakespeare.

A far more important recent contribution to Shakespeare studies is Brooklyn College’s Professor Tania Pollard’s radical departure from a century of denial, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages* (2017). Pollard deservedly won the Roland Bainton Book Prize for this study, which posits a complete rethinking of how Shakespeare was arguably “encountering and Englishing Greek plays.” Her work includes an overview of the history of Greek play productions and publications in England and on the Continent, plus chapters on “Queen of Troy,” “Iphigenia in Illyria,” “Bringing Back the Dead,” and “Parodying Shakespeare’s Euripides.” Pollard believes that Shakespeare was influenced by George Peele, who translated Euripides’s tragedy, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and wrote *The Tale of Troy* (1580) and *The Arraignment of Paris* (1581). She speculates that Peele “brought his Greek dramatic training to a collaboration with the younger writer William Shakespeare on *Titus Andronicus* (1592), a play that frames its depictions of loss, grief, and rage with self-conscious allusions to Hecuba, the

period’s most prominent representative of Greek tragedy.” Showerman concluded his talk with a catalog of Greek literary connections to the Earl of Oxford and the documentary record of his “greater Greek.”

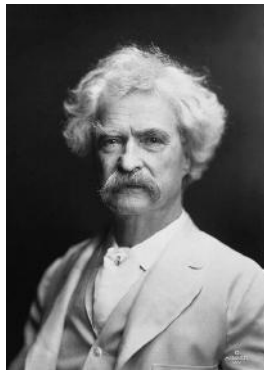
**Marc Lauritsen**, a Massachusetts lawyer, educator, and specialist in knowledge systems, gave his inaugural conference presentation, “Mapping the Authorship Arguments.” More and more raw material pertinent to the Shakespeare authorship question is available online and easily searchable. Yet, Lauritsen notes, we seem no closer to conclusive answers that more than one camp can embrace. The arguments themselves and their relationships often remain buried in arcane texts. Scholarship on the structure and dynamics of argumentation has long been part of work in the international Artificial Intelligence and Law community. Even simple diagrams and conventional databases can be used to elucidate complex debates. Maps and other structured approaches of this sort do not appear to have been used extensively in the authorship world.

Lauritsen’s talk reviewed ideas raised in an AI & Law paper that explored the premise of a “simple holistic argument kiosk” (SHAK) that could serve as a shared framework for collecting and reacting to the accumulating material in an open-spirited and mutually respectful fashion. Clearly, such an environment could be useful, even desirable. “Are there insights we might gain from the ‘forest’ that have eluded us because we’ve been too focused on the trees? For example, the very plasticity of the overall evidence vis-à-vis a given theory may be significant. False premises, holes in reasoning, and unspoken assumptions can be more obvious when arguments are decomposed and diagrammed.” Lauritsen concluded that such a model could promote greater civility among the contending factions and make it easier to counter fallacies.

Professor Emeritus **James Norwood** concluded the afternoon presentations with “Mark Twain and ‘Shakespeare’: Soul Mates.” Norwood summarized his belief that “Mark Twain intuitively recognized a kindred spirit in the Elizabethan author, who had miraculously transformed the English language in the same way that Twain was reinventing the American idiom in the nineteenth century.” T.S. Eliot called Twain “one of those rare writers who have brought their language up to date.” Ernest Hemingway wrote that “all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain” and William Faulkner called him “the father of American literature.” Such accolades could equally apply to Shakespeare. “A pattern that emerges from Twain’s autobiography is that in his literary creations, he was writing from direct, personal experience in order to evoke the human realities of his fictional characters,” an argument that Oxfordians often make for their own candidate. Twain’s lectures and after-dinner speeches

were prepared and delivered with the precision of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter verse, according to Norwood. In the final year of his life, Twain sought to fill the vacuum of Shakespeare's known biography by writing *Is Shakespeare Dead?* Twain's interest was inspired by a personal visit paid to him by twenty-eight-year-old Helen Keller, who herself had recently become interested in the Baconian theory. Twain was urged not to publish the work for fear that he would be ridiculed for challenging "the romance of the boy, Will Shakespeare, who had come up to London and began by holding horses outside of the theater, and ended by winning the proudest place in the world of letters," but Twain insisted on publishing it. While Twain wanted it included in his monumental autobiography, the editors of the 2,000-page, three-volume modern edition by the University of California Press chose not to include *Is Shakespeare Dead?* in the printed version. Nonetheless, Twain's writing allows us a glimpse of his soul as a literary artist, the understanding of which may bring us closer to the identity of the true author of Shakespeare's works. [Norwood's earlier presentation on this topic was published in *Brief Chronicles VI* (2015).]

Norwood's presentation was a perfect introduction to the evening entertainment.



James Norwood

Available from  
**Laugwitz Verlag**

**New!**

A. Bronson Feldman

*Early Shakespeare*

Edited by Warren Hope (2019)

Feldman, a scholar with wide-ranging interests, uses biographical, historical and psychological approaches to analyze Shakespeare's first ten plays. The result is a book that sheds light not only on the plays themselves, but also on their author, the court of Elizabeth, the conflicts of the time, and the culture of the period. Though completed just prior to Feldman's death in 1982, this book is a major contribution to the scholarship associated with J. Thomas Looney's discovery that Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, was the true author behind the pen name William Shakespeare.

Sten F. Vedi / Gerold Wagner

*Hamlet's Elsinore Revisited* (2019)

New discoveries about Shakespeare's knowledge of Denmark, arising from a thorough analysis of historical documents, confirm the Oxfordian Theory.

**Also Available**

Gary Goldstein

*Reflections on the True Shakespeare*

Edited by Gary Goldstein (2016)

Noemi Magri

*Such Fruits Out of Italy: The Italian Renaissance in Shakespeare's Plays and Poems*

Edited by Gary Goldstein (2014)

Robin Fox

*Shakespeare's Education: Schools, Lawsuits, Theater and the Tudor Miracle*

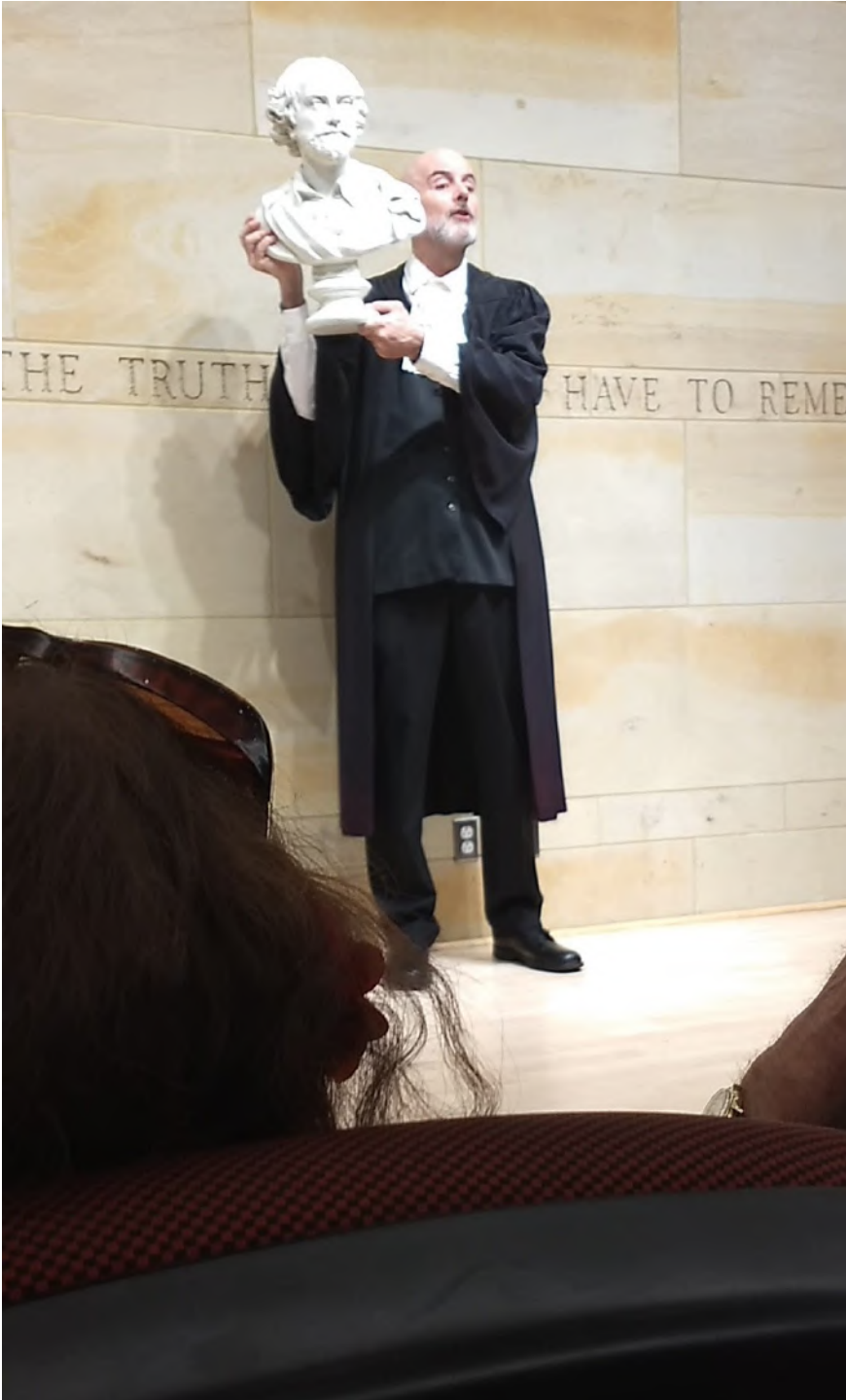
Edited by Gary Goldstein (2012)

Peter R. Moore

*The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised*

Edited by Gary Goldstein (2008)

These books are available from [www.laugwitz.com](http://www.laugwitz.com), and also from the German branch of amazon, at [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de). New and used copies of some of the older books are also available from amazon in the United States, at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).



Keir Cutler

Following the dinner break attendees were treated to a performance of “Is Shakespeare Dead?” by award-winning actor **Keir Cutler**. The one-man show was open to the public, and was sold out. Cutler, who first adapted Twain’s book in 2002, specifically tailored this presentation—a humor-laced examination of the case for Will Shakspere of Stratford as the true Bard—for the largely Oxfordian audience. Cutler has also written several other monologues and plays, including “Teaching

Shakespeare,” which he presented at a previous SOF conference.

#### Day Four: Sunday, October 27

**Bonner Miller Cutting** led off with “Connecting the Dots—How a Man Who Could Scarcely Write His Name Became Revered as the Greatest Writer in the English Language?” She divided the process into three phases:

- (1) “The Suppression” (c. 1580 - c. 1700)
- (2) “The Scrubbing” (c. 1700-1769)
- (3) “The Maintenance” (1769 onward)

Phase One (“The Suppression”), of course, began with the emergence of works under the pen name Shakespeare and anonymously (with many of the latter group later bearing the Shakespeare name). It involved the Queen’s awarding to Oxford a thousand-pound annuity in 1586 with its unique provisions that no accounting need be made. It continued with the First Folio in 1623, with its attempts to point the unknowing reader toward William Shakspere in Stratford-on-Avon. Cutting spoke of the “Great Tew Circle” of the 1630s, where several VIPs discussed the merits of Shakespeare; did they travel to Stratford to pay their respects? No. Did they invite Shakspere’s daughters to attend? No. Perhaps they stayed away because people who knew the truth about the name were still living in that town. But by about 1700 all those people were dead, which ushered in Phase Two, “The Scrubbing.” Nicholas Rowe was a major contributor to this phase, with his purported biography of Shakespeare in 1709; Alexander Pope was a good friend of Rowe. Pope was literary executor of actor Thomas Betterton, who supplied some (hearsay) theatrical lore about Shakespeare. Phase Three, “The Maintenance,” can be said to have begun with the Jubilee in 1769, organized by David Garrick. This event solidified

Stratford-on-Avon as a major tourist attraction, a reputation which it enjoys today (to the tune of several hundred million pounds annually).

Presenting what he described as a “footnote” to his 2011 book, *Bardgate: Shake-speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard*, author **Peter Dickson** began his talk on the “The Politics of *Venus and Adonis*—1593” with the exclamation: “No Catholic could have written this poem!” He outlined the challenges posed for Stratfordians by the poem and its dedication to the scion

of a recusant Catholic family: the curious timing of its publication aligning with new crackdowns on English Catholics, the contemporaneous politicking by the reigning Tudors against the House of Montagu, and ultimately what Dickson termed a “Political Earthquake” involving the marginalization of the Queen’s “token loyal Catholic,” Viscount Anthony Browne, the maternal grandfather of the poem’s dedicatee, Henry Wriothesley. Dickson explained that *Venus and Adonis* was challenging for Oxfordians, too. In Dickson’s view, identifying the author of the dedication to the poem is complicated by the allusions in lines 997-1010; such imagery could not have been written by Oxford unless he truly was against the proposed wedding between his daughter Elizabeth and the Earl of Southampton, or he was offended by what was legally termed “disparagement” (i.e., a tool that could be used to facilitate the breaking of legal contracts) in the form of the slanderous language cast upon his character by the Wriothesleys’ uber-Catholic kinsmen. Dickson believes that the poem and the historical record of the enmity between Oxford and the Catholic Brownes, Howards and particularly Charles Arundel, all work together to demonstrate that Oxford never would have “wanted his daughter to marry into a family linked by blood and religion to his premier political enemies.” Dickson noted further that in the year following the publication of *Venus and Adonis*, Lord Burghley and the Queen were pressing the Earl of Southampton to make a decision on his potential marriage to Elizabeth de Vere because they now wanted Oxford’s eldest daughter to marry William Stanley instead.

For those who have considered volunteering for the SOF Speakers Bureau, or those who have wondered how they might more effectively broadcast our message, retired journalist and longtime President of the National Press Foundation **Bob Meyers** showcased his methods

and techniques for introducing the Shakespeare Authorship Question. Using a series of witty and easy-to-understand PowerPoint images, Meyers led the audience through a 45-minute presentation of facts designed to answer his first question to them: “Was it Really William?” With a consistently good-humored delivery, he answered the question with a rhetorical device that emphasized the magnitude of the contributions the 16<sup>th</sup> century author made to English literature: “Does it matter who wrote the thirty-seven plays, 154 sonnets, two major poems and some minor ones?” he asked with a smile and raised eyebrow. He then laid out the basic “Authorship 101” case, using a fact-based approach, comparative evidence from the plays, again delivered in a friendly, conversational speaking tone. The speech and PowerPoint slides used in Meyers’s presentation will be available for use by any Oxfordians. The language of the speech and series of images also can be edited or rearranged to suit the individual speaker or the audience. If you’d like to become an SOF speaker, contact [publicity@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org](mailto:publicity@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org).

The session ended with a panel discussion on the upcoming 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of J. Thomas Looney’s “*Shakespeare Identified*,” the book that launched the modern Oxfordian movement. The SOF plans to mark the official centennial date on March 4, 2020, with a special event at the National Press Club in Washington, DC (see page 6). The De Vere Society is planning an event in England in early July. Details on both events will be provided soon. Local members are urged plan an event in their own communities.

Just before adjourning for lunch, Tom Regnier announced the winners of the 2019 SOF Video Contest (see page 6). The Conference closed with the traditional luncheon banquet, at which the Oxfordian of the Year award was presented to Cheryl Eagan-Donovan (see page 7).

## Plans Underway for 2020 Conference!

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship’s 2020 Annual Conference will be held in **Ashland, Oregon**, from **October 1 to 4, 2020**. Previous conferences have been held there in 2005, 2010, and 2015. Ashland is the home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and attendees will be able to attend productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*, with tickets available at a discounted rate.

The Conference itself will take place at the Ashland Hills & Suites Hotel (not at the Ashland Springs Hotel, site of previous conferences). The SOF has obtained special room rates beginning at \$139 per night. The rate includes breakfast buffet, free Wi-Fi and free parking. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel directly at

541-482-8310 or 855-482-8310; to get the special rate callers should identify themselves as attending the SOF conference; the SOF group ID number is 240854.

Although the Conference itself will not start until Thursday, October 1, there will be a two-day “Pre-Conference Seminar” on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 29 and 30, 2019. This will enable attendees to see both parts of *Bring Down the House*, a two-part adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* trilogy performed by the Upstart Crow Company with an all-female cast at the Thomas Theatre. This special program will include tickets to both performances (matinee on September 29 and evening on September 30) as well as a full-day educational seminar at Southern Oregon University in Ashland and lunch on the latter date.

More details will be announced.



**SOF  
CONFERENCE  
2019**

**Top left:** Bonner Miller Cutting, Patricia Carrelli;  
**Top right:** Jim Warren, Hank Whittemore, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes;  
**Center:** Bill Boyle, Marty Hyatt, Shelly Maycock;  
**Bottom:** Hank Whittemore, Patricia Carrelli, Patricia Keeney, Ted Lange, Don Rubin, Tom Regnier, Steven Sabel.



## Oxford's Reputation: A Note

by Warren Hope

At the recent Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship conference in Hartford some of the presenters drew attention to the negative reputation Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, has had throughout history. Often this reputation is attributed to a possible sexual scandal perhaps involving Queen Elizabeth, the Earl of Southampton, and potentially others. Hearing these views reminded me that Dr. A. Bronson Feldman, in his recently published book *Early Shakespeare* (Laugwitz Verlag, 2019), makes a strong case for Oxford's reputation being damaged by his documented attempt to expose Lord Henry Howard, Francis Southwell, and Charles Arundel as enemies of the crown—and connects that politically relevant attempt with Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.

Feldman quotes from an English version of an account sent to the King of France by Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissière, the French Ambassador, on January 11, 1581, which reads in part: "Oxford again threw himself on his knees before her [Queen Elizabeth] in my presence pleading with her to pray me for the truth. And he begged me at the same time that I should do him the kindness of remembering something that concerned him a good deal...." Feldman then provides this commentary:

The reader...will easily recall how Titus Andronicus knelt to the Roman tribunes and afterward to the stones of the street to plead for some gesture of pity.... De Vere tried in vain to convince Castelnau that he was a true friend of France. It may have been in honor of the ambassador that he selected the names that he gave the two heroes of his tragedy, the names by which the play was first known. Castelnau had two brothers named Titus and Vespasian. If he saw the play he should have recognized the plea for salvation from the masquerading enemies of Tudor England and Valois France. But how could the rather obtuse Frenchman tell that the subtle Howard and adroit Arundel were disgusted with the French courtship of their Queen and had resolved on a new political path—subservience to Spain?

To this very day, despite the revelation of Lord Howard's name and Charles Arundel's on the payroll of the Spanish secret service, the life and personality of the man who strove to unmask them are recorded in official biography from their point of vantage and calumny. (541)

In March of 1604, just months before Oxford's death, King James elevated Lord Henry Howard, once a traitor to Queen Elizabeth and a paid agent of Spain, by making him the first earl of Northampton.



## Hartford Conference Receives Favorable Coverage in Local Newspaper

Thanks to the hard work of SOF PR Director Steven Sabel, the 2019 conference received some good publicity. On October 10, the *Hartford Courant* ran an article by reporter Christopher Arnott, which fairly described the event ("a bunch of people who believe that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare are holding a conference at the historic home of one of the all-time great believers in that theory"), highlighted a number of the scheduled events and indicated they were free and open to the public. The article included a brief excerpt from Mark Twain's 1909 book, *Is Shakespeare Dead?* "The author of the plays was equipped, beyond every other man of his time, with wisdom, erudition, imagination, capaciousness of mind, grace and majesty of expression. Every one has said it, no one doubts it. Also, he had humor, humor in rich abundance, and always wanting to break out. We have no evidence of any kind that Shakespeare of Stratford possessed any of these gifts or any of these acquirements. The only lines he ever wrote, so far as we know, are substantially barren of them — barren of all of them."

Arnott also interviewed actor Keir Cutler about his


one-man show, "Is Shakespeare Dead?" based on Twain's book. He quoted Cutler in part as follows: "I have a PhD in theater. In theater studies, if the authorship question comes up, you're told it's nonsense, or a hoax, like the moon-landing conspiracy. When I did some research on it, I got angry. There's a very solid argument that the man from Stratford did not write these plays. I don't support any alternate writer to Shakespeare. My position is that we just don't know."

"I wanted to do a one-man show on the Shakespeare authorship question. I wanted it to be humorous. Because it's so entertaining, it's disarming. I didn't know at first where the humor was in this story, but Twain sure did. Only 60 percent of the play is Twain. The rest is information or jokes from other sources. . . . [My show has] been well-received everywhere I've performed it, partly because it's so funny. Hopefully, Mark Twain's ghost will rise for the occasion."

No doubt the advance coverage attracted an audience, because several local people attended many of the presentations, and Keir Cutler's show was sold out.



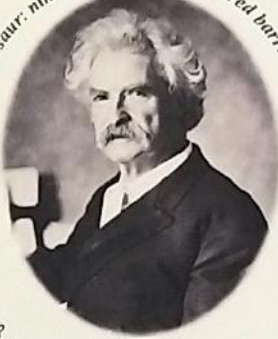
*Well done!*


**SHAKESPEARE**  
 OXFORD FELLOWSHIP

**2019 Shakespeare  
 Authorship Conference**

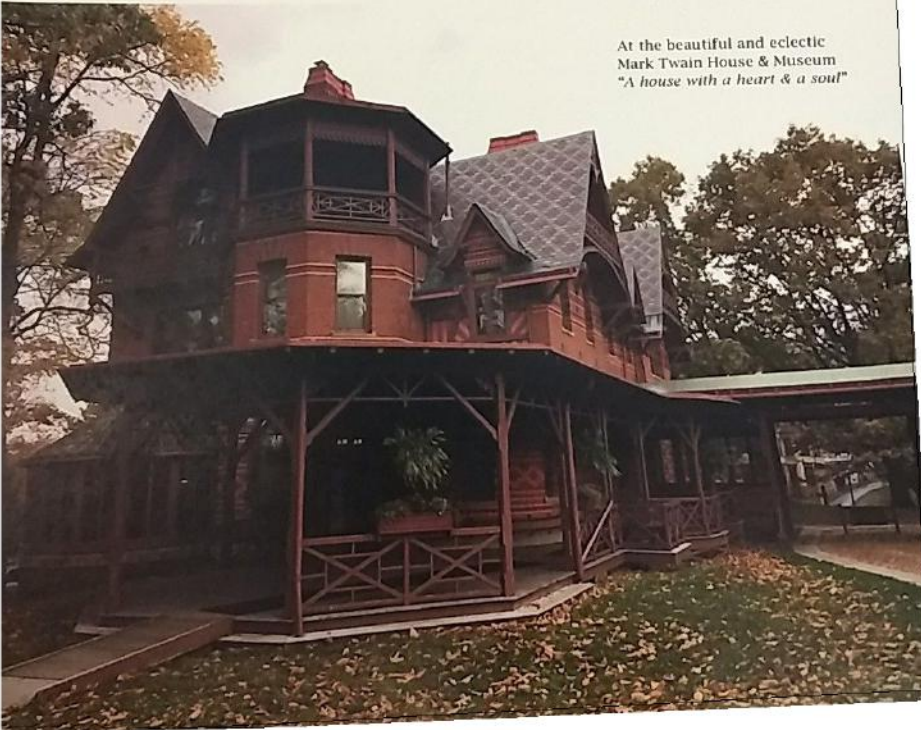
October 17-20, 2019  
 Hartford, Connecticut

*"He is a brontosaur: nine bones and six hundred barrels of plaster."*



**IS SHAKESPEARE DEAD?**  
*"Shall I set down the rest of the great Conjecture which constitute the Giant Biography of William Shakespeare? It would strain the Unabridged Dictionary to hold them."*  
 ~Mark Twain

At the beautiful and eclectic  
 Mark Twain House & Museum  
*"A house with a heart & a soul"*



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