The First Online Shakespeare Authorship Symposium: A Milestone for Oxfordian Outreach

by Heidi Jannsch

The centennial year celebration of J. Thomas Looney's *"Shakespeare" Identified* continued with a landmark event as the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's first online Shakespeare Authorship Symposium broadcast from Napa, California, on October 2 and 3, 2020.

Dedicated to the memory of Tom Regnier, past President of the SOF and Oxfordian of the Year in 2016, the symposium was live-streamed on the SOF YouTube Channel. It provided a safe alternative to the annual conference originally slated for Ashland, Oregon, which had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The virtual symposium format was the brainchild of Steven Sabel, SOF Director of Public Relations and Marketing and host of the SOF podcast series, "Don't Quill the Messenger" (*DQTM*). "Since part of my job description includes helping to arrange and present the annual conference," Sabel stated, "I felt it was only natural that I help provide an alternative when the decision was made to cancel our Ashland conference." He suggested the event would be best orchestrated by hiring professional technical assistance and recommended the SOF utilize the talents of Jake Lloyd of Dragon Wagon Radio (producer of the *DQTM* podcast) to make it happen.

In collaboration with the SOF Conference Committee chaired by Earl Showerman, the virtual program model was developed; funding was provided in Tom Regnier's memory by several members of the SOF, enabling the Symposium to be offered at no cost to viewers. Registration for the two-day event was encouraged; more than 300 registrants were sent a schedule and syllabus prior to the event as well as an invitation to a Zoom Q&A with presenters on Sunday, October 4, 2020.

The program included both live-streamed and

SOF PR Director Steven Sabel and SOF President John Hamill

From the President:

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to hold a very successful annual meeting and symposium this year, dedicated to the late Tom Regnier and to the 100th anniversary of J. Thomas Looney's book, *"Shakespeare" Identified*. There were three separate events: the SOF Annual Meeting on September 26 (via Zoom); our first online Symposium on October 2 and 3 (via YouTube); and a Q&A session on October 4 (again via Zoom).

A full report of the Annual Meeting appears on page 34. Here are a few highlights. Three new trustees were elected: Bonner Cutting, Catherine Hatinguais and Robert Meyers; they succeed Wally Hurst, Don Rubin and Bryan H. Wildenthal. I was reelected President for my third and final year.

Treasurer Richard Foulke provided a detailed report. The current balance on the SOF checking account is $13,725 with future expenses of $10,650 for 2020. Membership stands at 465, which is a 13% increase in recent years, including ten new members in September alone. SOF investments total $178,500. Donations in 2020 are up, with $9,500 in the 3rd quarter and $6,000 already in the 4th quarter.

Thanks to our PR Director, Steven Sabel, our outreach is stronger than ever. Our "Don't Quill the Messenger" podcasts are getting around 800 listeners per episode; over forty episodes are available on Dragon Wagon Radio (see the SOF website). We add new material twice a month. Our press releases go to some 7,000 media contacts.

On October 2 and 3 we held a free online Symposium on YouTube, broadcast from the home of SOF Trustee Ben August in Napa, California. Steven Sabel was the emcee. The broadcasts integrated prerecorded content with live presentations. It was truly a watershed event, a new means of reaching out to new audiences. More than 330 persons registered for the program—far more than we would get at an in-person Conference.

Livestream audiences averaged between 150 and 200, but within days each program had over 1,000 separate views. Jake Lloyd, our on-scene YouTube technician and editor, also broke out individual presentations for future YouTube content; you can watch the presentations on YouTube at any time. See page 1 for a more complete report.

The Symposium also featured announcements of the 2020 Video Contest winners (see page 11) and the Oxfordian of the Year (see page 10). It concluded with a very moving tribute to Tom Regnier that was arranged by Jennifer Newton, our website guru, and Bryan Wildenthal. The raffle for the Oxford bust donated by Ben August during the Napa Symposium generated $5,700 in donations to the SOF during the first two weeks in October. SOF Trustees Bonner Cutting and I each donated $1,000 during this period. Please remember that there are substantial expenses involved in a virtual conference; we hope members and friends will donate to the SOF to help cover these costs, since they saved the attendees the costs of attending a conference, including the registration fee, transportation and hotel.

On October 4, we held a Zoom Q&A session, hosted by Bryan H. Wildenthal. More than forty persons attended. It generated vigorous discussions and we hope to repeat it at next years' conference. Online presentations/discussions are a new way to communicate more widely and effectively with the membership.

When the new Board of Trustees met on October 14, I nominated, and the board approved, the following Trustees to serve as officers: Julie Bianchi as Vice President, Richard Foulke as Treasurer, and Earl Showerman as Secretary.

While we have had successes this year, we need to improve our social media presence, especially if we are to reach younger audiences. But recruiting a social media coordinator is problematic, as is monitoring postings that are hostile to the mission of the SOF. This is important since the SOF has gained 400 new followers on Facebook in the past year. If you know of anybody who is qualified to volunteer for this position, please let me know.

Those of you who receive a printed copy of this newsletter are also receiving a brochure, "Exploring the Mystery." We are designing new brochures, but we didn't want the old ones to go to waste! If you want more information about our brochures, contact us at info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

Thank you all for your support of the SOF and its activities. Please let your family and friends know that we are an organization that promotes the idea that William Shakespeare, the most famous writer in the world, is really the pseudonym of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Once you know who really wrote the works of "Shakespeare," they gain a new dimension of appreciation and interpretation. A new and different understanding awaits us all!

John Hamill, President

From the Editor:

Goodbye 2020!

It hasn't been a year that many of us will want to revisit. COVID-19, wildfires, hurricanes, a divided electorate—the list goes on. Closer to home, we lost our dear friend and colleague Tom Regnier to the virus in April.

But there are some good things to report. Our membership has grown; our first online Symposium was a success (see Page 1).

2020 is the 100th anniversary of the publication of J. Thomas Looney's groundbreaking book, *"Shakespeare" Identified*. Six years ago the SOF formed a committee to plan and coordinate a series of events to commemorate the centennial; lots of good ideas emerged. Unfortunately, most of the events had to be canceled or postponed due to the pandemic (see page 16). Nevertheless, we were able to sponsor a public event in Washington, DC, in early March (see Spring 2020 *Newsletter*).

We've also published something connected to Looney in each issue of this year's *Newsletter*. This issue concludes that observance with a special section in the middle of the issue—you might say that Looney is our centerfold. Thanks to Linda Bullard for putting it together.

That's one reason why this issue again runs to 36 pages, rather than the usual 32. There is a lot more to cover as well. This issue contains letters and articles on two of the most contentious issues within the Oxfordian movement: hidden messages or codes, and the Prince Tudor (PT) Theory. On the subject of messages and codes, please see the two letters and the responses starting on page 4. On the PT Theory, there are two articles—one by Peter Rush (page 26) and one by Bill Boyle (page 23)—in response to John Hamill's anti-PT article that appeared in the Summer *Newsletter*. No doubt the debates will continue in future issues, hopefully in a respectful way. As stated in the box about this organization that appears in every issue of the *Newsletter*, the bylaws of the SOF provide that "The conferences, publications, and other educational projects of the Fellowship will be open forums for all aspects of the Oxfordian theory of authorship."

For decades Oxfordians have held differing views about the meaning of *Shake-speares Sonnets*, the 154-poem collection published in 1609. Despite their differences, however, there is a strong consensus among Oxfordians (and many Stratfordians) that the Sonnets do indeed tell a story, that they were published as a set, and that they were correctly ordered within that set. Most Oxfordians also believe that the 1609 publication was authorized.

Now, all of those are beliefs are under attack in *All of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, the new book by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells. Hank Whittemore will review it in the next issue. Edmondson and Wells argue that there is no "story" in the 1609 collection, that the poems are not in any "correct" order, and that we must consider them as part of a larger group of 182 sonnets, which, taken together, span Shakespeare's career, during which he continually returned to the poetic form he first toyed with as a teenager in Stratford (they argue that Sonnet 154 is his maiden effort from the mid-1580s).

Basically, Edmondson and Wells have performed a lobotomy on the 1609 collection. There's nothing to see here, folks, they assure us, because the notion that they contain any kind of "story" is "an eighteenth-century invention." Do any of the 1609 sonnets refer to any historical event, for example Sonnet 107, which just about everyone agrees refers to the death of Elizabeth in March 1603? Not necessarily, say Edmondson and Wells. "Nobody knows" if Sonnet 107 "refers to an actual political or personal moment."

It will be interesting to see how their book is received among mainstream Stratfordian academics. I agree with Hank Whittemore that it represents another threat to the Oxfordian cause, another attempt to avoid directly confronting the 800-pound gorilla that lurks in the middle of Shakespeare studies: Edward de Vere. By decontextualizing the 1609 publication of *Shake-speares Sonnets*, Edmondson and Wells hope to divert attention from the question of historical references in those poems and to make it more difficult to recapture them as a group. This is essentially the same tactic recently employed by James Shapiro and the editors of the New Oxford Shakespeare. In *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606* Shapiro sought to show that two or three Shakespeare plays were written in 1606; if so, then they couldn't have been written by Oxford (who died in 1604), and Shapiro "proves" his case without having to mention Oxford's name. Similarly, in the multi-volume New Oxford Shakespeare the editors now proudly announce that Shakespeare did have collaborators—perhaps as many as eleven, based on their computerized analyses—but none of them was Oxford.

So, even if we disagree on what "story" is told in *Shake-speares Sonnets*, can we at least agree that there is a story there, and that this collection of 154 poems was deliberately intended to be what it was?

Finally, I remind you that dues for some categories of membership will increase on January 1, 2021. This will affect those who received printed copies of the *Newsletter*. But if you join or renew before December 31, 2020, we will honor the current rates. Please see the insert with this issue for further details.

Alex McNeil, Editor

Letters to the Editor

Your last issue (*Newsletter*, Summer 2020) contained a letter by John Shahan and two interesting articles, one by David Roper and one by Janet Wingate. All three dealt with Sonnets' dedication encryptions while both articles referenced the same equal-letter spacing technique and rearranging the letters of the original form (three triangles) in the same way to form a rectangular grid of nineteen columns by eight rows.

As many readers will be aware, I have worked extensively and for many years on this same grid and have found within it nine relevant and interconnected pictorial glyphs, containing three important messages. The first message, which appears as a capital **I** in the very centre of the grid, informs the reader "In Iesum Veritas Ven[iet]" (The Truth shall come in Jesus), a rule which directs the reader to three symbols of Christ (IHS), each serving as a caption to a hidden pictorial glyph.

These three adjacent glyphs combine to form the second message: "To the Westminster at St. Peters South Cross Aisle EDV [**E**dward **D**e **V**ere] Lies Here" (see below). The most remarkable of these glyphs is the first, which takes the form of the ground plan of Westminster Abbey, with nave, transepts and cloisters, containing a perfect anagram of THE WESTMINSTER. The second is in the form of a Petrine cross (the cross of St. Peter), with "SOUTH ILE" written inside it, and the third, in column 9, is again in the shape of a capital **I** containing the revelation "E.D.V. LIES HERE," thus fulfilling the mandate of the central capital **I**: "In Iesum Veritas Veniet." All of this is connected to the hidden geometry of the title page first observed by Alan Green in 2016, to the message "THESE SONNETS ALL BY EVER THE FORTH T" in the dedication and, symbolically, to the column numbers in which each of the glyphs appears. The third message formed by three pictorial glyphs on the right side of the grid is referenced in Janet Wingate's piece.

Videos explaining all nine symbols and their relation to the title page and to the sonnets themselves, have been uploaded online by the Shakespeare Authorship Trust, by Brunel University and on my own YouTube channel, which have together exceeded 132,000 views. I have contributed two long explanatory articles to the *De Vere*
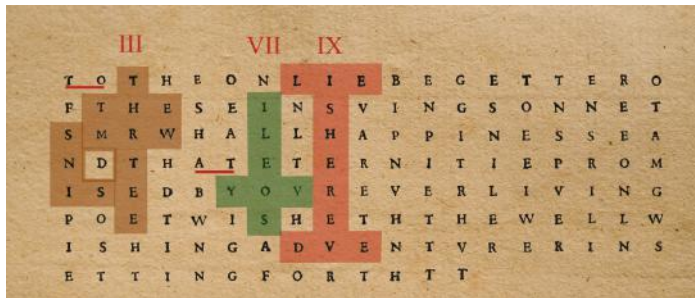
The Sonnets Dedication set into nineteen columns showing the first three (of nine) pictorial glyphs, each marked with the letters **I**, **H** and **S**, which I identified as bearing the first of three messages on this grid. From left to right: "To the Westminster at St. Peter's South Cross Ile, E.D.V. [Edward de Vere] Lies Here." The South Cross aisle of St. Peter's Church refers to the South Transept of Westminster Abbey where Poets' Corner and the Shakespeare monument are located.

Society Newsletter (vol. 24 no. 2, April 2017, and vol. 24 no. 4, October 2017) and have lectured on this subject for the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship in Chicago, for the De Vere Society and for the Shakespeare Authorship Trust in London, and at many other venues around the UK. This work has convinced a number of Baconians to transfer their allegiances to Oxford. So I was a little dismayed to note that both John Shahan and David Roper appeared to be unaware of these forward leaps. In June of this year Professor Peter Sturrock of Stanford University published in the *Journal of Scientific Study* an in-depth examination of Sonnets' dedication ciphers, again in apparent ignorance of these widely communicated advances.

My work is indebted to the discoveries of previous scholars, including John Rollett, David Roper, Alan Green, Kathryn Sharpe, Jonathan Bond, Charles Herberger, Arthur Neuendorffer and others, so I write not in pique at any personal affront, but to encourage all Oxfordians to make an effort to build, where possible, with or without acknowledgment, upon the advances made by their colleagues. Only in this way can we avoid slumping backwards in hapless circles of obsolete argumentation. I applaud David Roper, Peter Sturrock and John Shahan for their engagement with these problems, but they appear to be haggling over matters that are no longer pertinent. Surely we have moved beyond the point of debating the integrity of disconnected, non-messages like "To de Vere His Epigram" or proffering the possibility that the phrase "EVER THE FORTH" might be some peculiar Dutch way of saying "the Vere." We can do better than that.

Whoever encoded the dedication was imbued with the Hermetic philosophy made popular in learned

English circles by the works of Ficino, Bruno and Pico della Mirandola. These encryptions were constructed (like others of this period) on the Hermetic principle of "three times three" — *omne trinum est perfectum* ("everything in threes is perfect") and the triple-triangle formation of the dedication is the key to unlocking them. For a solution to be valid it must be triangulated in such a way that each and every part is corroborated from three different directions. The solution cannot then be dismissed as the decoder's personal preference. A valid encryption is built like a fortress such that when its message is discovered, it makes perfect sense, it is the only possible solution, and it can be shown to have been revealed by turning a key and following a strict set of rules which are demonstrably supplied by the encoder. All else is vanity.

Onwards and upwards,

Alexander Waugh,
Chairman, The De Vere Society, UK

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I am writing in response to the two articles dealing with cryptology by David Roper and Janet Wingate in your last issue (Summer 2020). Both focus on the dedication to *Shake-speares Sonnets,* accepting Rollett's two proposed solutions and claiming to have found a great deal of additional information in the dedication, and in several other texts in the case of Roper. I'd like to point out that Rollett made a major error in estimating the odds that the name "HENRY WR-IOTH-ESLEY" appeared by chance, and other Oxfordians involved with cryptology, including Roper, Jonathan Bond, and Peter Sturrock and Kathleen Erickson make the same error. (Janet Wingate did not bother to estimate the odds that any of her proposed solutions occurred by chance, nor does Alexander Waugh routinely do so for his proposed solutions, to the best of my knowledge.)

When Rollett's article, "The Dedication to Shakespeare's Sonnets," appeared in *The Elizabethan Review* in 1997, despite my skepticism about claims of ciphers in the works of Shakespeare, I could see that it was important. Over the next two years I communicated extensively with him about it; we also consulted non-Oxfordian experts in cryptology. Rollett calculated that the odds that Wriothesley's name occurred by chance are "of the order of 1 in (very roughly) 30 billion" (Rollett 1997, 104).

This is not correct. Rollett made two errors that greatly inflated his odds estimate. First, he multiplied his final estimate by an additional factor of 100 because it was not just *any* name that he had found, but that of the

leading candidate to be "Mr. W.H." This step was unwarranted. Second, and most importantly, David Webb, a mathematician at Dartmouth College, pointed out in an email to me that:

> Rollett only calculated the probability of chance occurrence of the particular way of dividing Southampton's name into shorter segments that he found; there are many other ways, e.g., "Wri-othes-ley," "Wrioth-esley," etc., and presumably he would have been just as [satisfied] to find any of those, yet he does not count them in determining the probability…. Rollett has made a very common but serious error here… He should have assessed the combined odds of all possible permutations of the letters in the name "Wriothesley" which might have occurred by chance which he would have considered *roughly equally or less likely to occur* than the permutation he found.

There are fifty-three ways that Wriothesley's name could have appeared that are "roughly equally or less likely to occur" as what Rollett found; all of them must be factored into the odds estimate, since, if *any* of them had occurred, Rollett would have found them acceptable. Taking these two errors into account, the odds of the name "Henry Wriothesley" appearing by chance are roughly 1,000 times greater than what Rollett estimated (approximately one in 30 million, not one in 30 billion).

Now consider David Roper's proposed solution to the inscription on the Stratford monument: "SO TEST HIM, HE I VOW IS E DE VERE, AS HE SHAKSPEARE: ME IB" (Figure 1, p. 15). Leaving out the references to "roan," and the punctuation, which is not in the inscription, we have two one-letter segments, eight two-letter segments, two three-letter segments, two four-letter segments, and the name "Shakspeare," which is read horizontally, not vertically. This comprises a large number of small segments, compared to just three segments in "WR-IOTH-ESLEY," only one of which is less than four letters. If the name Wriothesley could appear fifty-three different ways, I have no idea how many ways Roper's proposed solution could have appeared and been acceptable to him, but the number is enormous.

Roper does not take into account *any* of the numerous alternatives in his odds estimates. He only takes account of his *one proposed solution*. Taking into account the enormous number of alternative ways his message could have appeared and have still been acceptable to him, I suspect it occurred only by chance.

The foregoing is a statistical refutation. I would also point out the absurdity of the idea that any cryptographer would encrypt a message so long and convoluted to communicate the simple message that Edward de Vere wrote the works of William Shakespeare. Why write "SO TEST HIM"? What cryptographer would write that? "I VOW"? Why does the cryptographer have to give his word? What could it be worth anyway? "ME IB" treated as *fact* as meaning Ben Jonson? Would Ben Jonson have signed off that way, leaving it ambiguous?

The Roper and Wingate articles are devoid of rigorous methodology, and I see nothing of value in either of them.

John M. Shahan
Claremont, CA

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[Janet Wingate responds to Waugh and Shahan:]

The letters by Alexander Waugh and John Shahan reference my article on the Sonnets dedication ("Another Look at the Dedication to the Sonnets," Summer 2020 *Newsletter*). I totally agree with Alexander Waugh's letter. Firstly, some people's work may not be complete in itself, but can lead others to find the correct solution, so such work is not a waste of time, and Waugh indeed expresses his indebtedness to others. However, if one is to undertake such work it is a real pity not to keep up to date and build on what is already there.

Secondly, Waugh is right that no encryption can be believed unless built on a rock solid foundation. I would classify my findings as being of the first, incomplete, kind of work, which may lead others to something better. My findings are clearly there, they do appear to be repeated, the solutions are in the forms of religious symbols, etc., but with my totally non-mathematical brain I am quite unable to assess the likelihood of coincidence. I cannot claim to have built a "fortress," to use Waugh's words, but perhaps someone who comes after will be able to.

In response to John Shahan, I think we can all agree, as with Waugh above, that: "Surely we have moved beyond the point of debating the integrity of disconnected, non-messages like 'To de Vere His Epigram,'" etc. No one wants the Oxfordian movement to collapse in a shambles like the Baconian one due to supposed "hidden" messages. I don't believe, thankfully, that this is representative of what the Oxfordian movement has become. However, there is a place for this research among the very many other more "traditional" avenues which are being explored by our excellent Oxfordian scholars. Let's just not throw out a possible baby with the bath water.

Janet Wingate

[David Roper responds to Shahan and Waugh:]

My article in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Newsletter* ("A Scientific Approach to the Restoration of Oxford's Identity as William Shake-peare"), in which I wrote of cryptographic proof provided by Ben Jonson, Tom Nashe, Leonard Digges, William Marshall, Edmund Spenser, and even Edward de Vere himself, that it was he who wrote under the name of William Shakespeare, apparently has upset John Shahan.

Shahan did not note that Thorpe's dedication to the sonnets and the inscription on the Stratford monument are *both* cryptograms. Does he know how to compare a piece of ordinary text from a piece of cipher-text? If so, why did he fail to mention the challenging problem of combinatorics, which require the letters in a cipher to be at the precise distance which allows the secret's plain-text to be read? David Kahn's book on codebreaking explains how to compare cipher-text from ordinary text. As for plain-text secreted into cipher-text, Kahn writes, "The method's chief defect is the awkwardness in phrasing may betray the secret that that phrasing should guard: the existence of a hidden message." For example, Thorpe's dedication is asyntactic in its structure, which is why it is rarely shown in Stratfordian apologetics. As for the inscription on the Stratford monument, it even begins with a challenge: "Read if thov canst whom enviovs death hath plast with in this monvment Shakspeare." The unnatural inversion of "monvment Shakspeare," with its missing *e* in the name, is symptomatic of such "awkwardness in phrasing." Without this spelling and inversion, the *v* would not have spelt "Vere."

There are further tweaks in the inscription, compelled by the problem of combinatorics, such as the additional *e* in "whome," which is there to provide the *e* in "test," while also providing an *e* and *d* to complete the spelling of "de Vere," as well as correctly placing the *m* in "me." The plain-text then receives further assistance by an abbreviation of "this" to Y^s, so that the *s* may complete the word "test." The word "Whom" (but without the added *e*) therefore allows the initial *E* for "Edward" to be provided by the *E* in "Enviovs" (sic). Noticeably too, the abbreviated Y^s was spelt in full earlier. There is also the German imperative *sieh* instead of "see," so that the encoder of the cipher-text was able to complete the initial *I* of his surname (in the Latin alphabet, of course). These same initials appear under Ben Ionson's poem at the front of the First Folio, published within a year or two of the inscription appearing inside the parish church at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Shahan neglects any mention of keys. To mention a key would imply there was a real secret hidden within the Monument inscription, and that was never his intention. As he admits: "I suspect that it [the plain-text] only occurred by chance." Let me correct him. I discovered the entire message, as quoted in his letter, in the space of two hours. I used what is called a "crib," a word or name suspected to be encrypted into a piece of cipher-text. Using a mathematical algorithm (which I invented for that purpose in the mid-1990s, before computers did the task more quickly), I tested three cribs: "Bacon," "Marlowe" and "Vere." Neither of the first two names tested positive. But "Vere" did, with an equidistant letter spacing (ELS) of 34. Rewriting the inscription on squared paper using 34 columns, the plain-text fell into the position it still occupies. This is to be expected, because, as Sean Callery wrote in *Codes and Ciphers*: "Once the code breaker has a crib: a word or piece of text that they know is already repeated somewhere in the encrypted message ... the code breaker can then search for patterns that relate to it."

It was after this discovery that Dr. Bruce Spittle wrote to confirm that the line of Latin preceding the cipher-text had been inset. He noticed there were actually 34 characters in the line. The use of the digraph *Æ* (replacing *AE* in MÆRAT) reduced the number of characters from 35 to 34, thereby coinciding with the 34 revealed by the crib. A key of 34, i.e., 17 +17, corroborates the secret hidden in the cipher-text, because 17 is the number of the enciphered subject's earldom. Hence, once the key has been established, according to William & Elizebeth Friedman: "The experienced cryptologist looks for two things, and they are equally important. First, the plain-text makes sense, in whatever language it is supposed to have been written; it must be grammatical ... it must say something and say it intelligibly. [Secondly] Not only does the answer have to obey the rules of grammar and of logic; the cipher system and the specific key also have to obey certain rules." The rule for the key is that it corroborates the subject of the plain-text; thus 17+17 corroborates de Vere's earldom by emphasising it. This system of encryption is known as steganography. It allows each letter to retain its original position. Although the vertical alignment of these letters can be disguised, the actual ELS of 34 cannot be changed. Shahan falsely asserts there are many different ways the message can be read. He is wrong. The words are locked into position by the ELS, but their position can be camouflaged in different vertical alignments, which is the intention of a cipher of this type.

Shahan did not note that the Stratford monument's plain-text is grammatically composed in three clusters. Each cluster commences with a corroborative key. Clustering signals an intelligent construction. It also avoids accusations that words have been "cherry-picked" to construct an unintentional phrase or sentence. In the present instance, each cluster is keyed by signaling its first letter of plain-text, again corroborating the subject of the cipher. Thus, the eighth letter *o*, spelling "profecto," is Latin for "Vere"; the eleventh letter thereafter, *m*, spelling "septendecim," is Latin for seventeen. This is followed by the ninth letter, *n*, spelling seventeen: a translation of the previous key. The evidence for a genuine encryption by a man of Jonson's classical education and literary ability need not be doubted. Nor should Jonson be doubted as the encoder, for he loved to display his classical knowledge. His use of the word "Vow" is also perfectly consistent with the religious usage of the word in the age which he lived ("Vow, Solemn promise or engagement, especially in the form of an oath to God."—OED). This meaning has survived into the 20th century.

Jonson loved "Shakespeare" this side of idolatry. His testament to that devotion resides in his cryptic response, sent as a message to a distant future, and entrusted to an inscription that was likely to endure over time. It reveals that the history of English literature was in the process of replacing Oxford's anonymous plays and sonnets by a "scamp" named William Shakspere. Jonson has vowed—before God—that de Vere was the true poet. Continuing with a plain-text message in the inscription beneath the bust of Shakspere (sic), he unequivocally denounces him. To prove his point against future disbelief, Jonson also urges us—as J. Thomas Looney did a century ago—to "Test" Oxford as the true author of Shakespeare's work, and thereby discover his intimate knowledge of court life and the nobility, his knowledge of the law, the customs learned from his travels abroad, and the occasional cameos taken from his biography that reveal themselves in the plays. Then compare them with the barren life of a man— *"being an absolute Johannes fac totum"* —that was to become the first name in English literature. A tradition born from censoring the truth in the most devious age in England's history.

Therein lies the problem. Let it not be forgotten that Ben Jonson's attempt to inform posterity of the truth was united with those of his contemporaries named above, who used the same key of 17 in similar

ELS ciphers. Not least among them was Edward de Vere, who named himself in Sonnet 76, and which is endorsed by Tom Nashe, who is also named in the same poem. Truth itself can never disappear entirely, but it can fade due to neglect, and that is the opposition's most effective weapon.

I would also like to assure Alexander Waugh, whose oratorical skill in support of Oxford is very much appreciated, as are his excellent videos appearing on social media, that I was indeed aware of his work. It appeared, as he says, in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (vol. 24:2, April 2017). What I found so remarkable was that the article included (on pages 28 and 29) the grilles from the Sonnets' dedication (with 19 columns) and from the Stratford bust's inscription (with 34 columns). They are therefore identical in form to those published in my article. Those particular grilles possess corroborated "keys" that reveal VERE as the one vertical alignment spelling his name, since a key of 19 represents the number of letters in Thorpe's title —*Shake-speares Sonnets*—and the key of 34 twice emphasises Oxford's earldom (17+17). How can it be, I thought, that these grilles, which had been published earlier in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* (vol. 19:2, July 2012), but which date back even earlier, were now displaying the outline of a Masonic cross and the outline of a key, so that both figures enclose words of alleged secrecy about de Vere? Astoundingly, the steganographic plain-text messages —"To De Vere His Epigram" and "So Test Him He I Vow He Is E De Vere As He Shakspeare Me I B"— were both relegated to their original obscure status, replaced by two ornaments of questionable probity.

I cannot help but protest my dismay at this audacity: that Waugh, in concert with Alan Green, should participate in what can only be described as the hijack of another member's intellectual property. And for what purpose? To promote, without reference or attribution, their own ideas in place of what had previously existed. Were it not for my discovery of the secrets held by the 19- and 34-column grilles after 400 years of mute indifference during which their secret revelation of Edward de Vere's authorship as Shakespeare had lain hidden, there seems little reason to suppose that either grille would have occurred to these two gentlemen.

Upon a slightly better note, and referring to Alexander Waugh's geometric solution for Oxford's secret interment inside Westminster Abbey, I retain an open mind. It is certainly possible; I would be among the first to congratulate him if this proved true. But his

argument is not sufficient. An alternative location for interment in Westminster Abbey may be inferred from Ben Jonson's phrase on the Stratford monument: "whose name doth deck this tomb far more then cost." The de Vere tomb inside the Abbey (*this tomb*, re: Jonson?) commissioned in 1609 by Lady Vere for her husband, Sir Francis Vere, was immensely costly; it was modeled from a similar one in the Dutch (that word *sieh* again) town of Breda, and was designed by Maximilian Colt for the Count of Nassau. The crypt placed beneath the Vere monument would comfortably permit a secret addition, especially if it had been quietly recommended by King James—a not impossible conjecture, I would have thought, bearing in mind the King's respect for the man he called "Great Oxford."
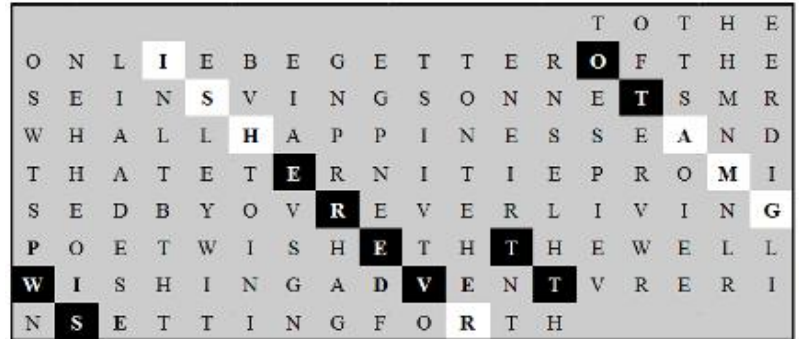
David L. Roper
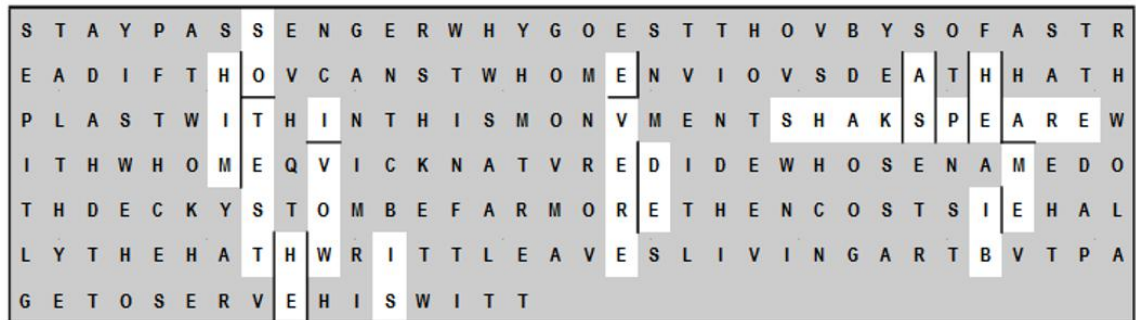
Research Grant Applications Due November 30, 2020

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is offering Research Grants for 2021.
Applications are due November 30, 2020.
For complete details, please go to our website:
https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/research-grant-apply-2020-1/

What's the News?

James Warren Named Oxfordian of the Year

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship has named retired diplomat and independent researcher James A. Warren the Oxfordian of the Year for 2020. Warren is the editor of the centenary scholarly edition of J. Thomas Looney's landmark book, *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, and *"Shakespeare" Revealed: The Collected Articles and Published Letters of J. Thomas Looney*, the first collection of Looney's articles and letters.

In addition, Warren has edited and published an invaluable general reference work, *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*; the fourth edition appeared in 2017 and the fifth edition is scheduled for 2021. In 2019, he published a scholarly edition of Esther Singleton's long-forgotten classic, *Shakespearian Fantasias* (1929), an Oxfordian-influenced book with which Henry Folger, founder of the Folger Shakespeare Library, was deeply fascinated.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, the 2019 Oxfordian of the Year and chair of this year's selection committee, announced the award during the SOF online Shakespeare Authorship Symposium on Saturday, October 3. The other members of the committee were Ramon Jiménez and Joan Leon (joint honorees in 2018), Alex McNeil (2014), Alexander Waugh (2015), and Hank Whittemore (2017). The late Tom Regnier was the 2016 Oxfordian of the Year.

Expressing the sentiments of the entire selection committee, and many SOF members who wrote to the committee, Eagan-Donovan quoted 2014 honoree McNeil: "In this centennial year of the Oxfordian movement, it's especially important for us to know our own history. Jim Warren has done more than anyone in finding and collecting documents that shed new light on J. Thomas Looney and his triumphs and struggles." She also quoted 2018 honoree Leon, who hailed the "intensive, multi-year effort on Jim's part, one that kept growing bigger as his research revealed more documents to be studied, analyzed, and incorporated into his opus … a magnificent accomplishment that is a worthy thank you to Looney."

On receiving the Award, Warren remarked: "I can't tell you how thrilled I was to receive the Oxfordian of the Year Award and to have my work recognized! Like so many other Oxfordian researchers and scholars, I've put so much work into my researches that it's great to know that the results of that effort is of value to others. I was especially glad to hear the comment on the value of understanding what happened in the past in order to make informed decisions about how the Oxfordian movement can be as effective as possible today and in the future in completing the Oxfordian revolution.

"As for *An Index to Oxfordian Publications* and the book I'm completing now, and all my other projects, I have written them because they're books that I want to read or consult, and since they hadn't yet been written, I had no choice but to write them myself!"

Warren's work has been partly supported by SOF research grants, but he has pursued it mostly at his own expense, including numerous journeys to libraries and archives in the United Kingdom. His dogged efforts led to the discovery of many previously unknown articles and letters written by Looney, some in local newspapers and obscure journals. In 2019 he met with J. Thomas Looney's elderly grandson and great-granddaughter, now residing in Scotland, who entrusted him with a previously unknown trove of Looney's personal letters and other documents, providing new insights about their ancestor's Shakespearean studies. Warren is arranging for their preservation in a suitable university archive, as well as appropriate publication. Looney's surviving family, while cherishing their privacy, have expressed their gratitude to the SOF and our British sister organization, the De Vere Society, for keeping his work and memory alive. Jim and former SOF Centennial Committee Chair Kathryn Sharpe deserve much credit for fostering our cordial relationship with the family.

On March 4, 2020, Warren was the keynote speaker at the SOF symposium in Washington, DC, celebrating the centennial of Looney's revolutionary book (see Spring 2020 *Newsletter*). He discussed how Looney's insights have changed our understanding of the author "Shakespeare," his plays and poems, the Elizabethan theatre and era, and the nature of genius and literary creativity. He also provided tantalizing glimpses of Looney himself—a brilliant, independent-minded, yet modest scholar.

At the recent online Symposium, Warren further

explored Looney's uniquely "difficult task" in seeking to overturn the long-established traditional belief about Shakespeare authorship, which had by then attained (and still has) the status of a dominant mythology. He is now finalizing a major biographical study of Looney and his importance to Shakespearean studies.

Warren was a Foreign Service officer for more than twenty years at eight US embassies. He also served as executive director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and regional director for Southeast Asia for the Institute of International Education. He was a member of the SOF Board of Trustees from 2015 to 2018.

He has published several scholarly articles, including "Oxfordian Theory, Continental Drift, and the Importance of Methodology" in *The Oxfordian* (2015), and "Engaging Academia" in *Brief Chronicles* (2016). He is also the author of *Summer Storm* (2016), a novel about the complications that arise when a literature professor is bitten by the Oxfordian bug.

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2020 SOF Video Contest Winners Announced

This year's video contest winners were announced on October 3 at the SOF's recent online Symposium. In a humorous twelve-minute report SOF Trustee and Video Contest Committee Chair Julie Sandys Bianchi announced the results directly from her kitchen.

The first-prize winner, who will receive $1,000, was Greg Buse, who wrote and starred in the hilarious "Earl of Oxford's March … Remixed!" recounting in rap style the highlights of the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and likely true author of the works of "Shakespeare." He was assisted by members of his family—spouse Natalie, daughter Chloe and son Sam Buse—and by the family dog, Wolfie. Greg Buse said, "I was watching the symposium live, along with my family members who are in the video, and all of us were thrilled!" Buse was later interviewed by Linda Theil of the Oberon Shakespeare Study Group, a Michigan-based Oxfordian group. Here is a link to that interview:
http://oberonshakespearestudygroup.blogspot.com/2020/10/greg-buse-wins-sof-1000-prize-for-rap.html

The $500 second-place prize went to Jonathan David Dixon for "Interview with a Stratfordian." The video, introduced as "Featuring actual quotes from real Stratfordians," was a mock interview with a composite Stratfordian, who kept warning his questioner not to "fall into the trap of supposing the works were autobiographical," while eagerly embracing any supposed links in the works to William of Stratford. Dixon also won second place in last year's video contest.

The third-place winner, earning $250, was Jonathon "Jono" Freeman for "The Mulberry Tree," which amusingly relates the history of the myth of the famous mulberry tree claimed by many Stratfordians to have existed on Shakspere's property during his lifetime.

The SOF thanks and congratulates all the contestants, finalists, and winners for their hard work and creativity. Inaugurated in 2017, the annual video contest is now open to residents of Canada (including Québec), the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, and Denmark. See the winning videos (and more) here:
https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/video-winners-unveiled-2020/

The mission of the contest is to explore evidence of reasonable doubts and promote discussion about the

Greg Buse, in "Earl of Oxford's March … Remixed"

Shakespeare authorship question.

Winning videos are chosen by online public voting from a field of finalists selected by the Video Contest Committee. The SOF follows strict security protocols to prevent anyone from voting more than once for the same video and to safeguard the overall integrity of the voting process.

Sky Gilbert's New Book Available

In his new book, *Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*, Professor Sky Gilbert encourages readers to stop yearning to find the "true meaning" of Shakespeare's texts because Shakespeare wrote at a time when poetry was not meant to be interpreted, but experienced as a window on the world.

Gilbert's Shakespeare is a rhetorician who was a key figure in the "style wars" that obsessed the early modern period. He places Shakespeare on the side of Lyly, Nashe, Sturm and the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes, against the new forward-looking, more scientific approach to literature as expressed by early modern philosopher Petrus Ramus (whose followers in England included Philip Sidney and Gabriel Harvey). In the end, Gilbert finds that Shakespeare was a post-structuralist, more concerned with form than content, confident of the dangerous magical power of words not only to persuade, but to construct our consciousness.

In his review posted at Amazon.com, Richard Waugaman (a frequent contributor to this *Newsletter*) wrote: "I'm utterly dazzled by its originality and scholarship. Just don't let yourself be put off by Gilbert's authorship heresy. Taking that in stride is a small price to pay for allowing Gilbert to open your eyes to profound new depths in the works of Shakespeare, and in the role of art in our lives. . . . Seldom have I read a book that is so original, while also being deeply learned."

Another reviewer ("Jeff") remarked: "This book will change the way you read Shakespeare forever. Gilbert presents fascinating evidence that Shakespeare was passionately involved with a contemporary debate regarding the role and meaning of rhetoric in the newly emerging English tradition. . . . [N]ot only will this book change the way you read and understand Shakespeare, it has the potential to transform everything you thought you knew about the man himself. A brilliant book that I plan to keep revisiting for a long time."

Sky Gilbert is a Professor in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph in Ontario. He is also a novelist, poet, director and filmmaker. He co-founded Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (North America's largest gay and lesbian theatre) and
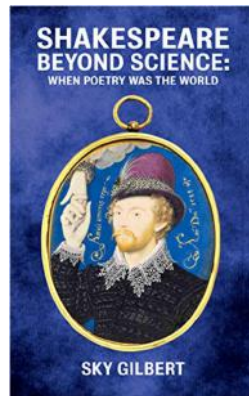
served as its artistic director for eighteen years. He has made presentations at several SOF Conferences, including this year's online Symposium (see page 31).

Volume 22 of *The Oxfordian* Now Available

The most recent volume of the SOF's peer-reviewed annual journal, *The Oxfordian*, has been published. Print copies are available on Amazon.com. SOF members have access to a pdf version of the journal on the SOF website.

The volume contains articles by Ramon Jiménez, Michael Hyde, Richard Waugaman, and Sky Gilbert, as well as five book reviews and the republication of five letters written by J. Thomas Looney in the 1920s, not long after the publication of his groundbreaking book, *"Shakespeare" Identified*.

The Oxfordian was founded in 1998 by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes. Gary Goldstein is the current editor.

Behind the Name SHAKESPEARE: Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal— My New Film Makes Splashes

by Robin Phillips

How did this award-winning film come about? For nearly forty years I've written, produced and starred in successful two-person plays and musical productions in the Washington, DC, area. I used the same skills to transform earlier versions of my film into an award winner.

Captivated by Roland Emmerich's eye-opening Shakespeare film *Anonymous,* I was determined to discover the truth about the true author. The stage show I created answered my own most burning questions. In an intimate sixty-five-seat theater in the Washington area, I put on two performances, using props, costumes, and visuals. Members of the Shakespeare Group from the revered Cosmos Club attended. Some called it "Scholarship brushed with humor"—exactly what I was shooting for.

Someone that night suggested, "Take it to the SOF

conference in Chicago." Lugging props, lighting, costumes? A logistical nightmare. So, at home, I filmed it, threw it on a thumb drive and presented it in Chicago in 2017 and in Oakland in 2018. It was still far from finished, so the next two years involved more research, filming, editing, ten-hour days, week after week; just two of us transformed that little stage show into my first feature film.

In my writing and performing career, melding solid research with lively theater has been my specialty. My vision was to create a definitive telling of Oxford's story, juxtaposing it with Shakspere's. The stunning contrasts between the two lives are accompanied by clever, contrasting "ages boxes" floating through the documentary. Also, it had to be entertaining because I wanted to reach the widest audience possible, knowing it would bring attention to the persuasive scholarship on Oxford that has been produced over the last few decades.

By far the most pleasurable part of transforming the film was layering in the music. My co-editor would tease me, "I think you've got something going on with that *Pond5* guy." He was referring to my online music, sound-effects, and b-roll provider. Each new bit of music we slid into a scene was almost mystical in the way it fit the moving images. My years as singer/musician, actor/playwright and graphic artist were gifts now, perfect for this project. I was able to direct every nuance, every bit of timing, every gesture, every image—then sync them with music in each scene. It felt almost magical.

In mid-September 2020 we purchased embedded subtitles and a global title search to protect us from lawsuits. I hired an entertainment lawyer through Women in Film and Video, and my co-editor documented the hundreds of graphics and procured standard "errors & omission" insurance.

I shared the rough cut with Don Rubin and Bonner Cutting of the SOF, who had been encouraging along the way. Their reviews were glowing. And then, Steven Ediger said that a trial lawyer must have structured the script. How deeply satisfying.

By the end of September, we had entered *Behind the Name SHAKESPEARE: Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal* in some film festivals. Within two weeks we received an extraordinary film review from the Rome Independent Prisma Awards. Here is an excerpt:

> [A] sensational experiment. . . . [It is] the result of a combination of skills and passions. . . . The research carried out by the director in this film is articulated as a fascinating and evocative narrative. A real storytelling, therefore, created with wisdom, which

finds its best expression in the interpretation of Robin Phillips, author, director and actress. . . . [It is] a film of impressive breadth, capable of reconciling the virtues of cinema and those of theater and uniting them with the depth of its story.

More awards began rolling in from all over the world. For the first six weeks our Film Freeway selection rate stayed at an astonishing 78%! As of late October, we've received more than thirty awards from fifteen festivals, as well as six finalist and seven semifinalist selections. Eight London festivals have given the film top awards. Here is a sampling of awards:

• *Best Original Concept* (WRPN Women's Film Festival, Delaware)
• *Outstanding Excellence* (WRPN Women's Film Festival, Delaware)
• *Best Documentary* (Flicks Monthly Film Festival, London UK)
• *Best Biographical Film* (Flicks Monthly Film Festival, London UK; Oniros Film Awards, New York; New York International Film Awards, New York)
• *Best Historical Film* (Screen Power Film Festival, London UK; Oniros Film Awards, New York)
• *Best Director* (52 Weeks Film Festival, Thousand Oaks, California)
• *Best Director, Experimental Film* (Best Director Awards, London, UK)
• *Best Female Director* (London Independent Film Awards, London UK)
• *Best Viewer Impact/Entertainment* (WRPN Women's Film Festival Delaware)

Robin Phillips a/k/a "Christina diMarlo"

Even more exciting is that *Hollywood Weekly* magazine will feature our film in a cover story with a four-page spread for its first international edition, in November, aimed at Great Britain.

But the best part of all is getting Oxford's story out to the entire world. Thank you all for helping to make this film possible. We are so grateful.

Shakespeare First Folio Auction Sale Sets Record

In mid-October a complete copy of the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio was sold by Christie's auction house for $9.98 million, thus becoming the most expensive literary work ever sold at auction. The last complete copy to be auctioned went for $6.1 million in 2001.

Pre-auction estimates were in the $4-6 million range. But after a six-minute telephone auction involving three bidders, American rare book dealer and antiquarian Stephan Loewentheil made the winning bid of just under eight figures. The First Folio "is the greatest work in the English language, certainly the greatest work of theater, so it's something that anyone who loves intellectualism has to consider a divine object," said Loewentheil, who also expressed doubts that another complete copy would ever "come to market again."

About 235 copies of the First Folio exist today (it is estimated that 750-1000 copies were originally printed), only 56 of which are considered complete; of the latter group, only five or six are known to be privately owned.

This particular copy was owned by Mills College in Oakland, California, which acquired it in 1977. It is housed in a binding from the early 19th century, and also includes an 1809 letter from early Shakespeare scholar Edmond Malone (1741-1812) to John Fuller, who then owned it, attesting to its authenticity.

We hope that the $9.98 million purchase price includes free shipping.

Oxfordian Wins Nobel Prize

One of the recipients of the 2020 Nobel Prize for Physics was Roger Penrose, the famed mathematician, physicist and professor at the University of Oxford. He was awarded half of the prize "for the discovery that black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity." (The other half-share was awarded

to Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghaz for the discovery of a supermassive compact object at the center of our galaxy.)

Interestingly, Penrose admits to being an Oxfordian. In a 2014 interview he recalled that his father was an authorship skeptic, and that among the books in his father's library was J. Thomas Looney's *"Shakespeare" Identified*. "[It] made a very strong case, and I was quite persuaded, I think I am rather persuaded [about] the case that . . . Shakespeare [of Stratford] who had no education, no books whatsoever! . . . I think the view that my father followed and I think it's the most probabl[e] one was that it was Edward de Vere. The Earl of Oxford. . . .

"[T]he case *for* any particular individual is much weaker than the case against Shakespeare [of Stratford], I was told this. . . . But the case for *any* particular individual was not so strong, but I thought the case of de Vere was not so bad; maybe, maybe that was the right answer.

"I went to see *The Tempest* with my family not so long ago, and that seemed to me very clearly a play where the author himself was revealing himself, and the person Prospero was clearly somebody who was in the aristocracy, he was not somebody who came up from nothing. So I think I do feel there was something in the case there."

Penrose has worked with the late Stephen Hawking, and is the author of numerous books on scientific and mathematical subjects, including the 1,100-page *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe* and *The Emperor's New Mind*, the latter of which explores the connection between physics and consciousness.

John Milnes Baker Gives Authorship Talk in Connecticut

On September 17, Oxfordian John Milnes Baker gave a talk (via Zoom) on the Shakespeare Authorship Question; it was sponsored by the Kent Memorial Library in his home town of Kent, Connecticut. Baker is author of *The Case for Edward de Vere as the Real William Shakespeare*, a short introductory book on the SAQ (see Spring 2020 *Newsletter*).

The talk attracted favorable advance publicity in two local newspapers, *The Litchfield County Times* ("Kent Author's New Book Challenges the Theory That Shakespeare Wrote His Own Plays") and the *New*

Milford Spectrum. Both articles featured interviews with Baker. In one, he says, "I wanted to demonstrate to my grandchildren that there are often two sides to every story. However, the project evolved from a children's book to what I call 'an elementary introduction to the authorship controversy.' . . . The book's objective is not to examine every aspect of the de Vere theory in detail, but to condense that material and present its essentials."

Baker is an award-winning architect who became an Oxfordian after reading Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*.

New Scholarly Publication on Academic Freedom and the SAQ

by Michael Dudley

I'm pleased to announce that I have contributed a peer-reviewed chapter on the Shakespeare Authorship Question to a new book on academic freedom from a major scholarly publisher. The chapter, "With Swinish Phrase Soiling Their Addition: Epistemic Injustice, Academic Freedom, and the Shakespeare Authorship Question," is Chapter 9 of the book *Teaching and Learning Practices for Academic Freedom*, which is volume 34 of the Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning series from the UK-based Emerald Group Publishing.

The focus of this chapter is on the marginalizing and disparaging *ad hominem* accusations wielded by orthodox scholars and sympathetic major media against authorship doubters—calling them "conspiracy theorists," accusing them of being "non-scholarly" and terming authorship theories "ridiculous" while never actually reading their work. However, rather than seeking to respond to any of these accusations with evidence for or against any authorship candidates, I instead situate this rhetoric in terms of theories of epistemic justice, vice and oppression. In other words, to
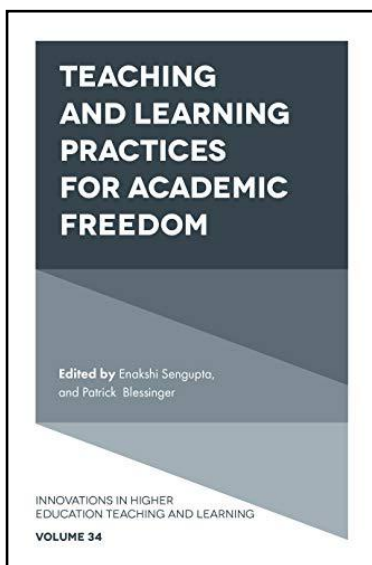
what extent does this rhetoric – in rejecting out of hand the knowledge production of other scholars—represent a form of epistemic vice on its own terms? Is this rhetoric itself unscholarly? Is it a threat to academic freedom?

To answer these questions, I turn not to the authorship literature but to external, objective criteria for sound scholarship in the form of the Association of College and Research Libraries' 2015 Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework), which is intended to inculcate in undergraduate students the philosophical dispositions necessary for academic study. It includes six criteria:

- **Authority Is Constructed and Contextual:** Be aware of bias, that "conventional wisdom" in a field may change over time;
- **Information Creation as a Process**: Information may be presented in a wide range of formats, so students should not assume that the processes behind each are the same;
- **Information Has Value:** Value is socially constructed, such that some publications may end up being marginalized while others are widely distributed;
- **Research as Inquiry:** The research process requires asking further and deeper questions depending on where the evidence leads;
- **Scholarship as Conversation:** Research should be a dialogue between scholars; excluding potential colleagues closes off lines of inquiry;
- **Searching as Strategic Exploration:** Research is iterative and leads the researcher to new sources and the use of varying terminology.

Analyzing Stratfordian rhetoric and publications according to these standards, I conclude that, by dismissing out of hand anti-Stratfordian and Oxfordian scholarship, they fail completely to meet the demands of sound scholarship. I believe that this publication will be significant because it cannot be easily refuted by adopting the very rhetoric it exposes.

Edited by Patrick Blessinger and Enakshi Sengupta, the book *Teaching and Learning Practices for Academic Freedom* will be released November 23, 2020. It is available on Amazon.

SPECIAL SECTION: THE J. THOMAS LOONEY CENTENNIAL

[Editor's Note: This year, each issue of the Newsletter has featured at least one item about J. Thomas Looney (1870-1944), the founder of the Oxfordian movement. We continue that celebration with "Faces of the Centennial,"an article by Linda Bullard accompanying the two-page photo spread she assembled, followed by articles by Bonner Miller Cutting and James Warren.]

Faces of the Centennial

by Linda Bullard, for the SOF Centennial Committee

Throughout 2020 the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship has been celebrating the 100th anniversary of the publication of *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford* by J. Thomas Looney, the book which unmasked the author who wrote under the pen name Shakespeare, thus launching the Oxfordian movement. In addition to a magnificent event held on March 4 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, the SOF Centennial Committee launched a campaign of local actions, inviting people to pay tribute to the brilliant literary sleuth, J. Thomas Looney, in whatever way they chose. Pledges came in from all across the United States and even from a few in Europe to carry out a local Centennial act sometime during the year. These ranged from the simple to the sublime, but no action was too small to count toward our goal of giving our members an opportunity to join in the celebration and at the same time bring our message to a wider audience.

Centennial actions ranged from tiny towns to international capitals like New York City and Brussels. Some actions were as easy as wearing a Centennial T-shirt on March 4, the date of publication of *"Shakespeare" Identified* in 1920, displaying a Centennial poster on office doors, or just promising to actually read *"Shakespeare" Identified*!

The prize for difficulty goes to Robin Phillips's film, *Behind the Name Shakespeare—Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal*, which she entered into hundreds of film festivals around the world. It has won numerous awards so far (see page 12). Congratulations, Robin, for really making a splash in 2020!

Earl Showerman offered a six-part course as part of of a lifelong learning program. Professor Michael Delahoyde pledged to introduce the authorship question to nearly 100 students in three of his classes, and another educator pledged to show a PowerPoint presentation about the authorship question. The Oberon Shakespeare Study Group in Michigan planned a luncheon party with readings from *"Shakespeare" Identified* by a local actor, birthday cake and toasts. There were private screenings for friends, family, and neighbors of documentary films about Edward de Vere such as *Nothing Is Truer than Truth* and *Last Will. & Testament*, bringing new converts to the cause. Copies of James Warren's Centenary Edition of *"Shakespeare" Identified* were presented to public libraries and individuals. Articles and letters related to the Looney Centennial were submitted to local papers and newsletters. There were champagne toasts to J. Thomas Looney on his 150th birthday, August 14th. And there were financial contributions, large and small.

In Brussels, Belgium, there was to have been a tour of places that existed when Edward de Vere was in the Low Countries, followed by discussion and dinner featuring foods from the 16th century. In Newcastle, England, there was a pledge to contact local authorities requesting that a special blue plaque be attached to the house where J. Thomas Looney lived. The De Vere Society organized a celebration at the Newcastle's "Lit & Phil," where Looney conducted most of his research for *"Shakespeare" Identified*, scheduled for July 4th.

But just as we were getting into the swing of things —COVID-19 hit. Although some had been able to carry out their pledged action before the pandemic, many had not; projects that involved some level of public outreach were stopped in their tracks. The virus tragically took the life of Tom Regnier, who, in addition to speaking at the National Press Club event, had pledged to give a lecture about J. Thomas Looney in Florida. For someone planning to give a talk in a nursing home, like Patricia Carrelli, there was no way to do so, but others, like John Milnes Baker, were able to use Zoom as an effective platform for a talk. Distribution of flyers and an authorship lecture had been planned in conjunction with annual productions of Shakespeare-in-the-Park in Indianapolis and Texas, but the performances were canceled due to COVID.

ForEVER

One type of action that was not affected by the virus was making the Oxfordian message a permanent and visible feature on the body—yes, by means of a tattoo! There were not one, but three, dedicated Oxfordians who made this extraordinary commitment to the cause. Ethan

Kaye, who works for an advertising company in New York City, had the striking Marian Crown from Oxford's signature tattooed on his wrist. He comments, "I wanted my first tattoo to be something visually appealing but something with a lot of meaning behind it. Choosing the abstract mark above Oxford's signature fulfilled both needs, and it reinforces a position I've passionately held for a number of years: Edward de Vere wrote the works of Shakespeare. Plus, it's a fantastic conversation starter that gets me talking about the authorship debate to new people." Heidi Jannsch and her daughter got flowery, eye-catching matching green mother-and-daughter tattoos on their ankles with the motto of Edward de Vere, "*Vero Nihil Verius*,"—which Ramon Jiménez brilliantly rendered as *"Nothing Truer than Vere"* in his article in the Winter 2018 issue of the *Newsletter*.

Although the Centennial Local Actions Campaign may have been stopped midstream by COVID, the effort revealed the enormous creativity of SOF members and their desire to shine a light on the truth about Shakespeare in their own communities. Their enthusiasm was inspiring, and we sincerely thank all those who came forward to pay tribute to J. Thomas Looney and *"Shakespeare" Identified* in the Centennial year. A number of organizers consider their actions only to have been postponed; they are committed to rescheduling them in 2021, which is still a Looney Centennial Year, because it will be the 100th anniversary of the publication of Looney's second book, *The Poems of Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. On *p*ages 18 and 19 are the Faces of the Centennial.

A Retrospective Look at John Thomas Looney's Discovery of Shakespeare

by Bonner Miller Cutting

It would seem that there was nothing particularly remarkable about John Thomas Looney. He was the headmaster of a boarding school in Gateshead-on-Tyne. His name would long be forgotten had it not been for the fact that he proposed an answer to the question: Who wrote the works of William Shakespeare? His discovery of the true identity of "Shakespeare" was the result of an exhaustive, methodical investigation conducted in the early decades of the twentieth century. As the readers of this newsletter know, the Shakespeare Oxford

Fellowship held a centennial celebration in Washington, DC, on March 4, 2020, to give this unassuming man the credit he deserves for the most important discovery in literary history.

It is not unusual for an artist's career to be divided into early, middle and late periods, and Looney saw the life of the Stratford man (hereafter called "Shakspere") from this perspective. Shakspere spent his early period in Stratford-upon-Avon, the town of his birth. In his middle period, he ventured to London to become an actor, dramatist and poet (in the conventional view). During this time he produced a body of remarkable literature, described by Looney as "among the highest literary achievements of mankind" (3). He then had a closing period in which he returned to Stratford-upon-Avon.

According to Looney, if Shakspere wrote the Shakespeare canon, then the progression from his early to his middle period is "the greatest work of self-development and self-realization that genius has ever enabled any man to perform." However, he finds it "impossible to believe" that after the "glorious achievement" of his middle period, this same genius retired to Stratford (as the accepted story goes), busying himself with property, money, and malt—living without any known intellectual, literary or cultural interests. This *self-stultifying closing chapter* of the Stratford man's life is "a situation which altogether stands outside general human experience." For the traditional narrative to be true, this individual accomplished two "stupendous and mutually nullifying feats" (36).

Looney knew the Bacon and Derby authorship theories, but he thought they resulted from a "pick and try" method to look for a candidate (78). He resolved to search for Shakespeare systematically; to this end he developed a Shakespearean "profile." Developing a profile to find an unknown person is commonplace today. However, the use of a profile to guide a search for "Shakespeare" had never been done before, and would never be done again.

In the opening chapters of *"Shakespeare" Identified* Looney recites how he devised a profile of eighteen characteristics that he felt the author must possess. Looney understood at the outset that it would be a difficult task to find someone who fit all eighteen features of his profile (81-82).

Looney realized that the sheer passing of time would be a problem in the search for someone who lived centuries earlier. It was possible, if not highly likely, that this person's identity was concealed during his lifetime.

Faces of the Centennial

Heidi Jannsch

Earl Showerman

Linda Bullard

The Oberon Shakespeare Study Group

Zooming with the Centennial Committee (clockwise from top left): Bob Meyers, chair Linda Bullard, former chair Linda Theil, Roger Stritmatter and Shelly Maycock, Jonathan Morgan, Joella Werlin, James Warren, Earl Showerman, Richard Joyrich (not pictured: former chair Kathryn Sharpe, Jennifer Newton)

Susanna Maggi

At the National Press Club (l-r): Bonner Miller Cutting, Roger Stritmatter, Tom Regnier, James Warren, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, Bob Meyers

Joella Werlin

Patricia Carrelli

. Tom Regnier

Kathryn Sharpe

Bart Simpson

John Milnes Baker

Richard Waugaman

Robin Phillips

Jannsch mother-daughter ankle tattoos

Ethan Kaye's wrist tattoo

Michael Ivey

(Continued from p. 17)

The author himself may not have wanted to be found (73). Steps may have been taken by his peers to protect the writer from detection. Conversely, there may have been an effort then, or in subsequent generations, to suppress his identity. Though Looney fully recognized the magnitude of the obstacles in his way, he decided to move forward with a research plan.

Looney needed a search criterion—what he called a "crucial test." He chose the six-line stanza form of Shakespeare's narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* as his point of departure. Looney agreed with the traditional view that *V&A* was an early Shakespeare work, but he thought it "too lengthy and finished a work" to be the author's first try at poetry, as Stratfordians surmise (*Riverside* 48). To Looney *V&A* showed "a practiced hand," and he hypothesized that the author had previously written poetry in this *ABABCC* rhyme scheme and iambic pentameter form (107), and that some of it might have been published. If so, would this early poetry —perhaps apprentice work or juvenilia—still be extant? Would any such verses have been published with the author's true name?

Consulting anthologies of English Renaissance poetry, Looney came upon several poems in the six-line *ABABCC* rhyme scheme of *V&A*, but only one stood out. The poem on "Women's Changeableness" by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, not only met his search criteria but, better yet, had a "sense of harmony" with Shakespearean themes (109).

Who was Edward de Vere? The eminent Shakespearean scholar Sir Sidney Lee had an account of de Vere's life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Looney writes that he "felt some elation" as he read it (111). Surprisingly, it quickly became apparent that Edward de Vere ("Oxford") fit all eighteen of the profile characteristics, both general and specific (114-120).

For more of Oxford's poetry, Looney was able to locate a volume of poems published by Dr. Alexander Grosart, a distinguished editor of early English literature (123). Grosart's volume was part of a set called the *Miscellanies of Fuller's Worthies Library*, a book only available to private libraries by subscription (only 106 copies were printed in 1872).

The volume included poetry from four authors; by way of introduction, Grosart commented on the life and work of each of them. He must have sensed that something was missing about Oxford, for he wrote that "an unlifted shadow somehow lies across his memory." This insightful comment was made half a century before

Oxford was proposed as Shakespeare. Another of Grosart's comments is equally striking. About Oxford's poems, he wrote that "there is an atmosphere of graciousness and a culture about them that is *grateful*." In nineteenth-century artistic settings, the quality of "gratefulness" meant that the work is meritorious and expected to have enduring value.

Looney expressed his hope that future researchers would find more evidence for his hypothesis that Oxford was the true author of the Shakespeare canon:

> When a theory that we have formed from a consideration of certain facts leads us to suppose that certain other facts will exist, the later discovery that the facts are actually in accordance with our inferences becomes a much stronger confirmation of our theory than if we had known these additional facts at the outset. (4)

Since the publication of *"Shakespeare" Identified* in 1920 we have seen an abundance of research supporting Looney's conclusions, as shown in James A. Warren's *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*. Special mention should go to a few of these entries: (1) Bernard Ward's discovery in 1928 of Oxford's £1,000 annuity is a powerful indicator that Queen Elizabeth recognized Oxford's worth to her royal administration. (2) In the 1990s, Dr. Roger Stritmatter discovered Oxford's Geneva Bible, and in his doctoral dissertation, he correlates the marginalia in this Bible with the Shakespeare canon. (3) In *"Shakespeare" By Another Name* (2005), Mark Anderson reveals new information and connects the events of Oxford's life with his literary development as "Shakespeare." (4) Richard Roe's *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (2011) shows how specific places that Oxford visited in his 1575-76 trip to Italy became the settings of Shakespeare's plays.

When Looney was writing his book, he knew that Oxford's eldest daughter Elizabeth was to have married the Earl of Southampton, and he was aware of the importance of Southampton in the Shakespeare story. However, shortly after his book was published, another remarkable relationship came to Looney's attention. He learned that William and Philip Herbert—"the incomparable pair of brethren" to whom Shakespeare's First Folio was dedicated in 1623—were connected to Oxford's other two daughters. The Herberts had wanted their older son and heir to marry Bridget Vere, Oxford's middle daughter. The merger of families was achieved

with the marriage of William's younger brother, Philip, to Oxford's youngest daughter, Susan Vere.

Looney was prescient when he wrote: "the parts of the mosaic keep fitting in."

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"Shakespeare" Identified and the Oxfordian Claim in Australia and New Zealand

by James Warren

Searching databases of publications in Australia and New Zealand for Oxfordian items in the years just after J. Thomas Looney's *"Shakespeare" Identified* was first published, I recently found several things of interest to Oxfordians today. One was that the book was reviewed more than a dozen times in Australian newspapers and at least four times in New Zealand during those years. Most reviews were more positive than those in London had been—and, as a result, more forward-looking in thinking through the consequences of acceptance of the Oxfordian claim. One reviewer, for instance, wrote that this book "is going to set the whole literary world by the ears, and this time shake the foundations of Shakespeare's claims to immortality" ("Out and About," *Avon Gazette and York Times* [Australia], May 22, 1920, p. 2).

A second finding was that an Australian edition of *"Shakespeare" Identified* was published in Sydney on May 12, 1920, by the Angus and Robertson Company. This finding brings to three the number of editions of the

"Shakespeare Identified," by J. Thomas Looney; London, Cecil Palmer; Sydney, Angus and Robertson.

* * * *

book published in 1920, the other two being the Cecil Palmer edition published in London on March 4 and the Frederick Stokes edition published in New York on May 8. (The Cecil Palmer edition was issued in three printings, one of which, markedly different is size and coloring of its cover from the other two, was done especially for the Times Book Club.) Unlike the other two editions, no copy of the Angus and Robertson edition has yet been found.

Perhaps most important of all was the discovery of a letter that J. Thomas Looney sent to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1921 in response to the mention of *"Shakespeare" Identified* in a recent article. It is one of the most important of the twenty responses that Looney sent to editors whose publications had run reviews of his book in 1920 and 1921, in part because of the psychological insights he presented in it. The Oxfordian thesis goes beyond merely claiming that Oxford wrote "Shakespeare's" plays, Looney explained; it also includes the claim that Oxford was the actual prototype for "outstanding characters like Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Berowne, Bertram, Prince Hal, Timon, and King Lear." Once that insight is accepted, the study of Shakespeare's plays "undergoes a profound revolution. . . . Furnished for the first time with this key principle of interpretation, the real study of 'Shakespeare,' as distinct from the merely literary and academic, is only now in its early stages."

Below is the full text of Looney's fascinating letter published on page 12 of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Friday, July 15, 1921:

"Shakespeare's" Identity
To the Editor of the Herald

Sir,—A friend, resident in Sydney, has kindly forwarded to me a copy of your article on "Shakespeare's Birthday," in which appreciative mention is made of my work, *"Shakespeare" Identified*. This constrains me to send you a few words. If only by way of grateful acknowledgment. What, I feel, is not sufficiently realized is that the "ingenuity," which you so generously attribute to me, is much more apparent than real. As readers of the work see the extraordinary way in which all the details of the case fit in with one another they carry away, at first, an exaggerated impression of skilfull manipulation. The actual cause of this seeming ingenuity is, however, the fact that the personality and career of Edward de Vere permeates the whole of the Shakespeare literature in a way that has frequently surprised me. Having first devised my method of research, and then alighted on the name of the Earl of Oxford, all the biographical material subsequently discovered fell into its
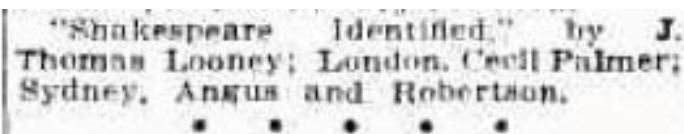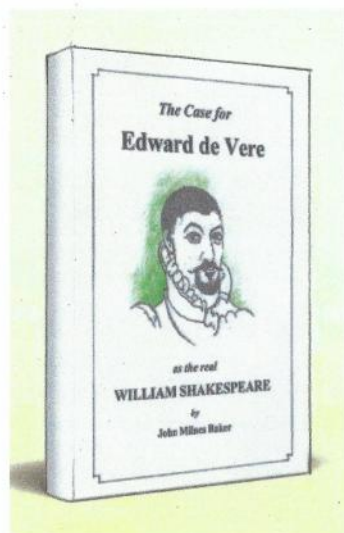
place easily, naturally, obviously, and with but little assorting and arranging on my part. So evidently does the personality of Edward de Vere run through the plays that opponents have already conceded that "Shakespeare" used him as his model for Hamlet. One scholar and author writes to me: "Even if your identification of De Vere with Shakespeare were wrong, it would still stand clear that you have made the most important discovery re the Shakespearean literature that has yet come to light; for here (in De Vere) is a poet who, if not Shakespeare, was Shakespeare's model, and exercised, indubitably, the most profound influence on his style and thought."

Shakespearean study has of late all tended to show that a certain psychological unity, a single personality under different moods and aspects, with many variations of external detail, runs through outstanding characters like Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Berowne, Bertram, Prince Hal, Timon, and King Lear, along with the general assumption that this personality represents "Shakespeare" himself. Now, the singular fact in that this personality corresponds psychologically with the mentality revealed in Edward de Vere's poems; and the known details of Oxford's life are represented in such combinations in the plays that, on a simple mathematical calculation of probabilities, he may be proved the actual prototype. Then, with Oxford as the key, this literature, which for over three centuries has been regarded as wholly impersonal, is found to be packed with delineations of Elisabethan personalities, and the study of it undergoes a profound revolution. Indeed, we may say that, furnished for the first time with the key principle of interpretation, the real study of "Shakespeare," as distinct from the merely literary and academic, is only now in its early stages.

Strong as is the initial probability that Oxford was author as well as prototype, special confirmation is found when we turn to the sonnets. These poems, which, as you remark, "so often resemble self-revealings, (yet) have baffled innumerable students who have sought to pluck out the heart of their mystery," become for the first time simple and intelligible when Oxford is accepted as their author. They fit him exactly and literally in a way that they do not fit anyone else to whom it has been sought to attribute them. Once this is realised, in conjunction with Oxford's position in the Shakespeare dramas, the world will be unable to withhold longer from him his rightful honours. The work and the man are more inseparable now than they have ever been before.

I am, etc, J. Thomas Looney, Low Fell, Gateshead, England, June 4 [1921]

Reasonable Doubts, Reasonable Theories
by William Boyle

The last three issues of the *Newsletter* have featured three articles about the Sonnets, a favorite subject for anyone engaged in Shakespeare studies: (1) Peter Rogers's article, "The First Seventeen Sonnets" (Winter 2020); (2) Peter Rush's response to Rogers, "The First Seventeen Sonnets—Their True Hidden Meaning" (Spring 2020); and (3) John Hamill's response to Rush, "Looney and Mythmaking" (Summer 2020). Two articles in this issue continue the conversation: Peter Rush's response to Hamill (page 26) and this one.

Virtually all studies of the Sonnets revolve around one simple proposition: Are these verses the real thoughts of the poet about the life he is living, or are they just exercises of imagination, bearing little or no connection to the poet or his life? If they're "real," how much can we rely on them to learn something about the poet who authored them?

Within the Oxfordian movement the Sonnets have become a "third rail"—powerful, yet deadly. As one who has been engaged in this movement for forty years, I can say with confidence that the debate over the "reality" of the Sonnets is more important than that of any of the plays, and—if they're accepted as "real"—more important than many of the documents of the era.

With that in mind, I found the above series of three articles to be both intriguing and maddening. All three discuss the "Prince Tudor" theory, the first two accepting it as true. Though they differ on how to interpret the first seventeen Sonnets, Rogers and Rush are both Oxfordians, accepting Oxford as Shakespeare (the Poet); both state that they accept the theory that Southampton (the Fair Youth) was the son of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth (the Dark Lady), i.e., the Prince Tudor theory.

In the third article, SOF President John Hamill wrote that Rogers and Rush were, in his view, claiming that the Prince Tudor theory was "factual." Hamill characterizes the Prince Tudor theory as an example of "mythmaking" based on "facile thinking" and urges that we Oxfordians should be done with it, once and for all.

I believe that the Sonnets are "real" and that the Prince Tudor theory offers a reasonable explanation of what that reality is; I've written, published and presented on it a number of times over the past twenty-five years. I write here to address three points that Hamill raised:

1) Where is the documentary evidence?
Hamill wrote**:**
> Two recent pieces in the Newsletter postulated PT theory as factual, and as the ultimate solution to

understanding Shake-Speare's Sonnets. But where is the documentary evidence?. . . The lack of historical documentary evidence supporting any version of PT theory undercuts many assumptions implicit in Rush's statements.

"Where's the documentary evidence?" is the very question most frequently hurled by Stratfordians against the entire case for Oxford as Shakespeare. While there exists documentary evidence (i.e., evidence outside the plays and poems) linking Oxford to having written plays and poems and to having sponsored acting troupes and other writers, there is no "documentary" evidence that irrefutably links him to have written the Shakespeare canon; to establish their case, Oxfordians rely largely on the Shakespeare works themselves—"literary evidence"—citing their innumerable connections to events and people in Oxford's life. It seems disingenuous for an Oxfordian leader to issue such a challenge to other Oxfordians.

Turning to the Sonnets, Hamill himself is deeply invested in certain Sonnet theories that (necessarily) draw heavily on literary evidence and speculation in arguing that a homosexual or bisexual Poet (Oxford) is involved with the Fair Youth (Southampton) and two Dark Lady candidates, first Elizabeth Trentham (Oxford's second wife), and more recently Penelope Rich (Earl of Essex's sister). Without the Sonnets, there probably would not be either a Prince Tudor theory or a homosexual/bisexual theory.

Hamill did not discuss the eighty-year history of the Prince Tudor theory and the heated controversy it has engendered. In April 1939 the Shakespeare Fellowship (England) newsletter editor, in a supplement debating what was then the new theory about Southampton as royal son, writes:

> The purpose of the pamphlet [Percy Allen's and B.M. Ward's *An enquiry into the relations between Lord Oxford as 'Shakespeare,' Queen Elizabeth, and the Fair Youth of Shakespeare's Sonnets*] was to show contemporary documentary evidence existed …. Some members, however, have disagreed with the evidence and the deductions advanced in the pamphlet and articles. This is all to the good, because we all feel that free and open discussion is the surest way to arrive at the truth.

After World War II the authorship debate heated up

again, and along with it the Prince Tudor debate. Dorothy and Charlton (Sr.) Ogburns' *This Star of England,* which promoted the theory, angered many Oxfordians in the early 1950s, especially in England. Newsletters from 1953 and 1954 contain quite a few articles and letters about it, most of them firmly against it.

A few decades later, in the Fall 1982 *Newsletter*, editor Warren Hope introduced an article by William Plumer Fowler with this note:

> Editor's Note: The following ingenious and literarily sensitive reading of two of Shake-speare's sonnets … relies in part on the author's acceptance of some rather controversial speculation—that is, the hypothesis that the Earl of Southampton was the illegitimate son of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and Queen Elizabeth. While this hypothesis has been misused as a ground for attacking the Oxfordian case at large, and though far from all Oxfordians accept or even seriously entertain the hypothesis, *Mr. Fowler's work is of enough importance and interest to deserve a hearing.* (emphasis added)

Following publication of Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1984 the Oxfordian movement reignited. Along with this resurgence in the movement the Prince Tudor theory continued as an integral part of the debate over how and why the authorship mystery existed in the first place.

SOS President Betty Sears's *Shakespeare and the Tudor Rose* (1991) led the way in bringing the Prince Tudor debate back into the movement. Another twenty years of back and forth on the issue followed. Things came to a head in 2011 with the movie *Anonymous* (which suggested not only that Oxford and the Queen were the parents of a royal child, but also that Oxford was the Queen's son). At the film's American premiere (September 2011, at the Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference in Portland, Oregon) a panel about the Prince Tudor theory was held, entitled "A Declaration of Reasonable Theorizing." While some found it a useful and informative moment, no minds were changed.

It is also worth noting that, because of *Anonymous*, both the Shakespeare Oxford Society and the Shakespeare Fellowship issued statements about the Prince Tudor controversy. Both of those "political" statements struck a balance between the two sides of the debate and called for open debate to continue.

Important "documentary evidence" on this issue has recently been unearthed. In 2011 a newly-discovered

poem written by the Earl of Southampton, begging for mercy after his Essex Rebellion conviction, was published (Lara Crowley, "Was Southampton a Poet?" *English Literary Renaissance*, Winter 2011). It seemed to support Hank Whittemore's view (as developed in his 2005 book, *The Monument*) that the middle one hundred sonnets (27-126) are about Southampton being in prison, with the Poet begging for mercy for him. Whittemore wrote about this, and its implications, several times in 2011 and 2012. John Hamill challenged Whittemore's arguments ("Just a Plea for Mercy," Spring 2012 *Newsletter*), to which Peter Rush responded ("Answering Hamill," Summer/Fall 2012 *Newsletter*).

Perhaps most importantly, in 2019 came Robert Prechter's discovery of a new document ("A Clear declaration in 1606 that Prince Tudor existed," Summer 2019 *Newsletter*). They key sentence, found in an obscure 1606 history book, is:

> Hence Englands Heires-apparent have of Wales bin Princes, till Our Queene deceast conceald her Heire, I wot not for what skill.

This is a straightforward statement that Queen Elizabeth *hid* a Prince of Wales, her heir apparent, and the writer wonders why ("I wot not what skill"). If this one sentence from 1606 holds up to close analysis, the "no documentary evidence" argument in the Prince Tudor debate should be retired, once and for all. Surprisingly, there has been no commentary about it in the ensuing year, either in Oxfordian publications or online.

2) We don't need to know "why"
Hamill wrote:
> We [Oxfordians who do not subscribe to the Prince Tudor theory] don't have the unnecessary burden of proving the Shakespeare attribution had anything to do with political succession.

In his post-argument remarks at the 1987 Moot Court on the authorship question held before a panel of three US Supreme Court Justices, Justice John Paul Stevens stated his view that, for the Oxfordian thesis to prevail, Oxfordians needed to come up with an overall narrative of *what happened and why*:

> I would submit that, if [the Oxfordian] thesis is sound, . . . one has to assume that the conspiracy— [and] I would *not hesitate to call it a conspiracy,* because there is nothing necessarily invidious about the desire to keep the true authorship secret , . . . the

strongest theory of the case requires an assumption, for *some reason we don't understand,* that the Queen and her Prime Minister decided, "We want this man to be writing under a pseudonym." . . . Of course this *thesis may be so improbable that it is not worth even thinking about;* but I would think that the Oxfordians really have not yet put together a concise, coherent theory ... that they are prepared to defend in all respects. (Boyle, "The 1987 Moot Court Trial," *Newsletter*, Summer 1997, p. 7, emphases added.)

What did Justice Stevens have in mind when he said, "Of course this thesis may be so improbable that it is not worth even thinking about," and that "Oxfordians really have not yet put together a concise, coherent theory that they are prepared to defend in all respects"?

Perhaps he was aware of the Prince Tudor theory (having encountered it in his research leading up to the moot court), but then saw that even if it were true, it presented a problem. So he considered a conspiracy involving Burghley and the Queen as the likely reason we have an authorship mystery. He suggested that it occurred "for some reason we don't understand," and that the reason "may be so improbable it's not worth even thinking about." That is a clear, concise statement of the conundrum we have long been up against, but which—when considering any version of conspiracy (including succession) theories about the what's and why's of the authorship mystery—is a burden we must bear. I submit that we do need to know "why" in order to move the Oxfordian case forward.

3) Blaming Prince Tudor theory for the failure of the Oxfordian movement to gain wider acceptance

Hamill wrote:

I also believe that the PT theory is one of the reasons Oxfordians are ignored by both academia and the media. I believe it undermines our mission to develop coherent arguments proving that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was the real author of the Shakespeare canon.

This point has been made before; Hamill is certainly not alone in his belief that the Prince Tudor theory has prevented a wider acceptance of the case for Oxford. But to maintain that "If we'd just abandon this one belief, we'd be somewhere" is wishful thinking. In four decades of discussing the Shakespeare Authorship Question with interested persons of all stripes, I have yet to encounter anyone who said, "Your case is interesting, but I can't give it any credence because you think that Oxford and

the Queen had a child." I am also convinced that, even if the 2011 movie *Anonymous* had steered far clear of the Prince Tudor theory, it would still have been a box office failure and would have received no better reviews or broader attention. It is the resistance to the core idea that someone other than the Stratford man was the true Shakespeare that has held us back, not the particulars of the case.

The Prince Tudor issue has been a part of the Oxfordian movement for most of the history of the movement; it is not going away. It is an attempt to figure out the "why" behind the authorship mystery. It has not been proven or disproven, any more than any of the other theories about "what happened" and "why it happened" have been proven or disproven.

In a 2017 "From the President" column the late Tom Regnier addressed the objection that the Prince Tudor theory has held back acceptance of the Oxfordian case:

It has been suggested that Oxfordians can never prevail over Stratfordians until we come to a consensus on such questions. It has also been suggested that some of the more radical Oxfordian theories (such as the "Prince Tudor" [PT] theory, which posits that Southampton was the illicit child of an affair between Oxford and Queen Elizabeth) subject the Oxfordian cause to ridicule and that PT advocates should be banished, repudiated, or otherwise shunned.

Let me register here my opinions that (1) Oxfordians do not need to arrive at a consensus in order to dethrone the Stratfordian theory, (2) radical Oxfordian theories are not the primary threat to our movement, and (3) it hurts our cause to suppress and blame others in the movement, rather than concentrate on spreading the Oxfordian message to the world. ("An Oxfordian Consensus," *Newsletter*, Winter 2017, pp. 2-4)

Some of us thought then—and now—that this was an excellent statement, and perhaps should be a standard for our movement, i.e., to have a "big tent" philosophy about how we deal with controversy and even to say so in writing. I hope that President Hamill's 2020 article was not intended to supersede what former President Regnier wrote in 2017. Let's stick by Regnier's statement and build on it.

The PT Theory:
Let the Real Debate Begin

by Peter Rush

In the Summer 2020 issue of the *Newsletter* John Hamill took aim at the "Prince Tudor" or "PT" theory—the view that Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the royal son of Queen Elizabeth and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. In "Looney and Mythmaking," he characterized PT as "an unquarantined virus that keeps spreading among those who don't have the vaccine of historical truth." He appealed for an end to discussion of the matter: "Please, my friends, no more mythmaking."

I would caution any Oxfordian against claiming for themselves "the vaccine of historical truth." In support of our claim for Oxford as Shakespeare we have *literary* evidence, bolstered by a lot of circumstantial evidence for Oxford and against Shakspere. But what we have cannot be defended as indisputable "historical truth"; if we had that, our debate with the Stratfordian faction would be over.

Likewise, what exists in support of PT Theory is literary evidence, bolstered by some historical anomalies and mysteries, and evidence that Southampton's royalty was an open secret in Elizabeth's Court in the early 1590s. What needs to be investigated, therefore, is the *quality* of that collective evidence. I hope that Hamill's article affords us the opportunity to engage in this long overdue examination of the merits of PT Theory, the central divide in our movement. It needs to be carried on by all sides respectfully and with all the cards on the table. Neither side should claim "historical truth."

Hamill's argument against PT Theory rests on two main pillars. The first is a handful of long-standing arguments made by opponents of the PT Theory that, to them, prove that it couldn't be true. Paul Altrocchi's article, "A Royal Shame: The Origins and History of the Prince Tudor Theory," *Shakespeare Matters*, Summer 2005 (and other articles) adequately refutes these arguments.

The second pillar is the claim that there is "no evidence" for the PT Theory. Assuming that Hamill is referring to "non-literary evidence" (i.e., evidence from sources other than poems and plays), there are a significant number of documents dated between 1590 and 1594 that strongly imply that Southampton must have been royal (I cite several later in this article).

If Hamill means to exclude "literary evidence," then he is excluding the same type of evidence that undergirds some of the strongest arguments in favor of Oxford as Shakespeare. If literary evidence is good enough to be a bedrock of our case to the world that Oxford wrote Shakespeare, then it is surely good enough to warrant consideration in arguments over the meaning of the Sonnets.

Ever since the PT Theory first emerged in the 1930s, proponents have drawn the arguments for it principally from *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609), with ancillary evidence from the two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* (and their dedications), and Shakespeare's (Oxford's) "Phoenix and Turtle" poem in the 1601 anthology *Love's Martyr* (1601). Thus, the validity of the PT Theory turns on the meaning of the Sonnets, the only work that Oxford wrote under the alias "Shakespeare" in the first and second person, and in which he poured out his soul.

The Great Sonnet Mystery

When a writer of such towering excellence as Oxford writes poetry such as this, it behooves us to read it carefully, take it seriously, and seek to understand it to the best of our ability. Stratfordians since the 18th century have struggled to explain what the Sonnets mean, starting with the significance of the fact that a majority of them are from an older man to a young man in words that suggest a homoerotic attraction. Theories abound within the Stratfordian camp as to the identities of the young man, the "Dark Lady," the "rival poet," and, above all, what is the narrative of the two- and sometimes three-person relationship among the three principals that carries from sonnet to sonnet and ought to make sense, but doesn't.

The most honest Stratfordian commentators conclude that the true meaning of the sonnets is an enduring mystery that may never be solved. Shakespeare scholar and Yale professor John Holland expressed it best, writing in 2002, "And yet the sonnets as a whole are a great puzzle… full of enigmas of various sorts… [which] seem to be nested one inside the other." Unlocking the meaning of the sonnets was, for Hollander, like "unlock[ing]…a cabinet containing a coffer with its own lock whose combination no one has been able to discover…thus leaving us, too, with the possibility that it isn't really a combination lock at all, but a dummy set into a door that has been welded shut by circumstances."

What he and other Stratfordian scholars lack, however, is the correct starting place: The identity of the true author.

Towards an Oxfordian Theory of the Sonnets

It is perhaps understandable, then, though ironic and unfortunate, that neither Looney nor most Oxfordians since have made any more headway than the Stratfordians in understanding what the Sonnets are all about. Most Oxfordians, implicitly or explicitly, accept the Stratfordian interpretation, with its important consequences. Oxfordians are forced to take sides on whether the relationship between the poet and the young man is homoerotic or is based on "manly love," and on who the "Dark Lady" and the "rival poet" may have been. Under any interpretation of the nature of the poet-young man relationship, why would Oxford write so many poems to and about Southampton? I know of no effort to address this question other than by proponents of PT Theory. The Sonnets have been effectively quarantined or orphaned by mainstream Oxfordians.

In the late 1930s, B.M. Ward and Percy Allen became the first Oxfordians to recognize that the Sonnets contained anomalies when read conventionally, and that a striking number of passages strongly suggested that Southampton had to have been the royal son of Elizabeth, and Oxford his father. This implied that Elizabeth and Oxford conceived the child in 1573 and that he was placed as a changeling in the Southampton household in 1574. Thus was born the "PT Theory," which has been further developed by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn Sr., Betty Sears, Hank Whittemore and Katherine Chiljan, among others.

I submit that the literary evidence from the Sonnets and the poems mentioned above in support of the theory is strong, and cries out for an interpretation. If it does not point to the royalty of Southampton, then to what does it point? Oxfordians are free to dispute the conclusions of PT Theory, but they must deal with the strongly suggestive evidence for it and find alternate explanations for that evidence, rather than asserting that Southampton simply couldn't have been a royal changeling.

I also submit that even the traditional case made for PT Theory is incomplete, because it relies on picking out dozens of passages from as many sonnets, isolating them from surrounding passages. The traditional PT argument does not pertain to *all* of the sonnets or to *all* of the lines in them. The PT camp has been as unable as the anti-PT camp to derive a consistent, coherent theory of the Sonnets as a unified work, rather than as a collection of poems at best loosely connected to each other.

Whittemore's Breakthrough Discoveries

With this backdrop, Hank Whittemore's announcement in 1999 that he believed he had finally cracked the basic mysteries of the Sonnets with a unified theory of what they were all about should have been greeted by Oxfordians with excitement and enthusiasm. If he had solved what 300 years of Stratfordianism had not, the benefits to the Oxfordian cause should have been recognized as immense.

It took Whittemore another five years to complete his book. In *The Monument* (2005) he laid out his new thesis, supported by a prodigious amount of research into Shakespeare's use of hundreds of words and phrases in the Sonnets; he provided transcriptions of all 154 verses with his suggested true meanings of each. Whittemore's work led me to write my own book on the Sonnets, *Hidden in Plain Sight* (2011 & 2019), in which I corroborated Whittemore's theory with additional interpretation and research and in which I demonstrated the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the standard Stratfordian interpretations of the Sonnets.

Regrettably, the response to *The Monument* in the pages of the *Newsletter* and *Shakespeare Matters* was (with some exceptions) largely dismissive, even hostile. Some of the responses were based on article-length summaries by Whittemore and others, not on the full development of his argument in *The Monument*. To this day, there has been almost no written response to the case as fully laid out in *The Monument* (and none at all to *Hidden in Plain Sight*). Perhaps many feel that they know enough to ignore or dismiss the case that Whittemore elaborated without having carefully examined it, or even read it.

I fear that a significant reason why Whittemore's discoveries have not received the attention they deserve is prejudice against the PT Theory, leading people not to recognize that Whittemore's thesis makes a largely new and more persuasive case for it. A novel and powerful basis for supporting the theory has gone by the wayside. This article is a plea for Oxfordians to finally examine his thesis in detail, because they may be surprised at how persuasive the full argument is. Below are some of the key points.

The Historical Context: The Essex Rebellion and the Tower of London

The foundational breakthrough emerged because Whittemore did what no one else had done: He worked backward from Sonnet 107, which clearly celebrates Southampton's release from the Tower of London on April 10, 1603, on orders from the newly minted King James. Whittemore hypothesized that the immediately preceding sonnets might also relate to the twenty-six-month period of Southampton's incarceration, and that if

so, there might be a sonnet marking the beginning of this period (Southampton was arrested and detained on February 8, 1601, the date of the failed Essex Rebellion).

The argument that this inaugural sonnet was Sonnet 27 is extremely strong. That sonnet introduces a dark and despairing tone not evinced in the previous poems; it describes the poet's anguish at something awful that has happened to the young man; the dark tone remains for the next seventy-nine sonnets. Sonnet 35 laments "that which thou hast done," some grievous act—surely Southampton's participating in the Rebellion. In Sonnet 30 the poet grieves for "precious friends hid in death's dateless night," a reference to being in prison if ever there was one. Sonnet 34 refers to the poet's grief over a transgression for which the young man has "repented." Sonnet 35 also paints the poet acting simultaneously as the young man's "adverse party" and his "Advocate," a precise description of Oxford's anomalous situation as the first lord on the jury that must condemn Southampton to death, even as he is working behind the scenes as his "advocate," pleading his case.

Viewing the eighty-sonnet sequence (Sonnets 27-106) as "Prison Sonnets," Whittemore saw how sonnet after sonnet supported and enhanced this reading. "Wherefore with infection should he live" (Sonnet 67) records Oxford's mixed reaction to learning that Southampton won't be executed, but will remain imprisoned as a traitor (having "infection") and a commoner ("doth common grow," Sonnet 69).

Sonnet 87 identifies the legal mechanism employed to spare Southampton's life—commutation of his sentence for treason to that of "misprision" of treason. Legal terms abound in the Sonnets, all best explained under the "prison sonnet" premise. Sonnet 44 locates Southampton in "the place," a euphemism for the Tower of London. Sonnet 49's "Against that time [Southampton's eventual release] (if ever that time come)," written before the commutation, laments the possibility that Southampton will be executed. Sonnet 50 describes Oxford's sadness in journeying away from Southampton, likely returning from his first visit with him in the Tower. Sonnet 97 mentions "the fleeting year" of Southampton's confinement (with an echo to the Fleet Prison)—no doubt written in early 1602.

Whittemore's identification of Sonnets 27-106 as "prison sonnets" is surely correct. Prejudice against the PT Theory must not prevent close examination of this foundational shift of context, truly a paradigm shift.

Allusions Hold the Key to the Sonnets
Now with the correct context, Whittemore recognized how hundreds of words and phrases that make little

sense when taken literally make sense when taken as allusions and support the new context. Allusion was the language of those seeking to say forbidden things in a police state. Oxford's telling of Southampton's story could not have been told any other way.

Three allusions would have been transparent to a contemporary audience, as they are references to the respective mottos of Elizabeth, Oxford and Southampton: "ever the same" (Sonnet 76) and "ever so" (Sonnet 105) for Elizabeth (*Semper Eadem*, always or ever the same), "true", "truth" and "ever" (as in E. Ver) for Oxford (motto: nothing truer than truth), and Southampton, "to one, of one" (Sonnet 105) for "all for one and one for all."

As used in the Sonnets, "beauty" never refers to physical beauty, but rather functions as an allusion in several contexts. Sonnet 14's "truth and beauty shall together thrive" if Southampton will procreate, or else they meet their "doom and date" when Southampton dies, can only be a reference to Elizabeth and Oxford—in Sonnet 101, truth and beauty depend on "love" (an allusion to Southampton). Any doubt over the identity of "Truth" and "Beauty" is removed by considering the threnos to Oxford's poem in *Love's Martyr*: the poem first describes a Phoenix (Elizabeth) and a Turtledove (Oxford), then states that a "new, Princely Phoenix" had arisen after her death (Southampton, presumably). It later replaces Phoenix with "Beauty" and Turtledove with "Truth," and says that "truth and beauty buried be" (echoing Sonnet 101) and that "truth, beauty and rarity [their child, Southampton]…here enclosed in cinders lie"—exactly where the succession lay if Elizabeth continued to refuse to acknowledge Southampton as her heir. These allusions confirm that the sonnets are only about Elizabeth, Oxford and Southampton (the "Dark Lady" being Elizabeth).

In Sonnets 1-17, "Beauty," typically read as the young man's physical appearance, is clearly something inherited. It is an allusion to Southampton's royal blood —substituting "Tudor blood" for "beauty" yields clear meaning otherwise obscure in sonnet after sonnet.

Other allusions are to Robert Cecil, who controlled Southampton's fate—the "Captain Ill" and "limping sway" of Sonnet 66, "crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight" (Sonnet 60), and puns on his name in other sonnets. The context makes him the creator of Oxford's and Southampton's woes, as he truly was during this period.

The Sonnets as Oxford's Testament for the Ages
Whittemore's reading also solves two other mysteries. It shows that the price Oxford had to pay to Robert Cecil to

ensure Southampton's survival was agreeing not to associate publicly with Southampton after he was released, and, more importantly, *to never claim authorship of the works of Shakespeare*. The so-called "rival poet" sonnets (Sonnets 78-86) refer to this deal. Simply put, Oxford's only genuine "rival" was his own pen name, "Shakespeare," which he had linked uniquely to Southampton and which could write publicly, while Oxford himself was "tongue-tied by authority" (Sonnet 66). Oxford's lamentations that "My name be buried where my body is" (Sonnet 72) and "Though I, once gone, to all the world must die" (Sonnet 81) also reflect the consequences of the deal.

The Sonnets proudly announce that they will make Southampton famous for ages to come: Southampton "shall…pace forth…(and)…find room even in the eyes of all posterity…out to the ending doom" (Sonnet 55); the poems will constitute a monument to Southampton that will outlive the brass and stone monuments of all previous sovereigns of England (Sonnet 107). No Stratfordian has come close to explaining why the Sonnets would be deemed to be of interest to future generations, much less why such hyperbolic claims are made for them. Only if Southampton were royal do these passages have any plausible explanation.

Southampton's royalty is the only explanation for the copious use of words in the Sonnets suggesting royalty: "king" or "kingly" (seven uses); "crown" (six); "grace" or "gracious" (twenty); "succession" (three); "sovereign" (four); "majesty" (two). It is also the only explanation for Oxford's dedication of *Lucrece* to Southampton, where he writes that "my duty… is bound to your Lordship." Such language is inexplicable as coming from the first nobleman of the realm to one of the least, unless Southampton was his sovereign—a reference made explicitly in Sonnet 57: "Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you."

Southampton's royalty is also the only explanation for the numerous references in the writings and speeches of others in the years 1590-1594 that proclaim him, a lesser noble of no achievement (aged 17-21 during those years), as "most famous" and "most distinguished" (John Chapham, Lord Burghley's secretary, in *Narcissus*, 1590), "a great hero of the rich House of Southampton" (a blatant lie by the chaplain of Oxford University in a poem to Elizabeth), and a reference to Southampton as *dynasta,* Latin for "prince" (also in the Oxford chaplain's poem), an appellation that would otherwise have been scandalous, if not fatal. Katherine Chiljan catalogues many other references that are consistent only with the hypothesis that Southampton

was indeed royal, including one from Thomas Nashe describing Southampton as "the fairest bud the red rose (Elizabeth) ever bore," all but explicitly saying that Southampton was her son.

The Promise
Whittemore's novel reading of the Sonnets goes a long way toward explaining why Oxford could not, and did not, proclaim his creation of the Shakespeare pseudonym (and why it was not done after his death). It explains the entire sequence of the Sonnets, and it locates Oxford at the center of the dynastic issue of the succession to Elizabeth and as a prime mover in saving Southampton's life. The consistency and elucidative power of Whittemore's readings of every sonnet further commend the likelihood of his theory being correct.

Above all, Whittemore's discovery of the historical context of the sonnets proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Oxford was Shakespeare, making a stronger argument for our case against Stratfordianism than any other argument we have. It therefore demands the deepest consideration, and analysis by Oxfordians.

A Note from John Hamill

In the next issue I will respond at length to the articles by Peter Rush and Bill Boyle. I don't think that they adequately address three critical points raised in my article in the Summer 2020 issue, "Looney and Mythmaking": "[First,] we would have to accept that documents created over a range of years during the sixteenth century were falsified. Second, there was no open time for the Queen to have been pregnant and have borne a child in secret during 1573-1574. Third, why would the Protestant Queen have her child, the future heir to the Throne, raised in an openly Catholic and potentially treasonous home?" So again, when and where was the Queen when she allegedly bore a child in secret during 1573-1574? There were not even rumors at the time that Southampton was the son of the Queen and Oxford. Without evidence for this, there is no reason for a PT Theory. Proponents of the Prince Tudor theory rely on literary interpretations and deny the validity of contemporary documents that do not fit it. This is not a scientific approach.

(Continued from p. 1)

recorded presentations on the following topics: "Shakespeare and Politics from the 16th to the 21st Centuries" by Earl Showerman; "J. Thomas Looney's Difficult Task" by James Warren; "Stratfordian Blind Spots" by Mark Andre Alexander; "Shakespeare Auteur: Creating Authentic Characters for the Screen" by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan; "Shakespeare: Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World" by Sky Gilbert; "The Mentors to Genius" by Steven Sabel; "Lord Prospero in the Tempest and Lord Prospero Visconti" by Katherine Chiljan; "Early Authorship Doubts: The Oxfordian Connections" by Bryan H. Wildenthal; and "Toward an Epistemology of Attribution: A Comparison of the Shakespeare and Kurbskii Authorship Controversies" by Donald Ostrowski. For full descriptions and links to each presentation, see below.

Ably emceed by Sabel, the weekend's presentations were interspersed with reminders to support the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship from SOF President John Hamill, and Ben August, SOF trustee and host of the Symposium. On Friday evening, August proposed raffling off a resin bust of Edward de Vere that he and his wife, Simi, had commissioned by artist Paula Slater as an incentive for viewers to donate to the SOF. Every $250 donated qualified for one chance in the raffle, raising a total of $5,700! Nancy Lucht was the winner of the raffle; she will also receive an Oxfordian T-shirt designed by Julie Sandys Bianchi.

The weekend's planned programming included only one schedule change, necessitated by speaker Ramon Jiménez's unfortunate absence. The open timeslot on Saturday was filled with a live version of a *Don't Quill the Messenger* podcast, in which Steven Sabel and Earl Showerman discussed Jiménez's slated topic, "Shakespeare in Stratford and London: Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing" as well as his book, *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works*, centering on early versions of five Shakespeare's plays. The hour was afterward referred to by delighted viewers as "The Earl and Steven Show."

Saturday afternoon's programming also included a memorial to Tom Regnier (1950-2020), in which Bryan H. Wildenthal introduced a video assembled by Jennifer Newton, SOF website design and technology editor. In a touching tribute to one of the pillars of the SOF, the memorial featured photos and clips of Regnier's lectures and interviews focusing on his Oxfordian studies. Following the memorial video, John Hamill announced

the establishment of the Tom Regnier Veritas Award. This special award will be presented by the SOF Board of Trustees from time to time to recipients who have displayed exceptional service to the Fellowship and the Oxfordian movement during their lifetime.

Julie Sandys Bianchi, SOF Trustee and chair of the SOF Video Contest Committee, announced the winners of the 2020 "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" Video Contest (see page 11).

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan announced that the 2020 Oxfordian of the Year award was being presented to James A. Warren (see page 10).

John Hamill and Steven Sabel brought the Symposium to a close by encouraging viewers to continue their exploration of the authorship question and their support of the SOF. Following the broadcast, there was much enthusiastic discussion among those of us who were physically present in Napa of how the SOF might continue to employ virtual means in the future. Presenter Katherine Chiljan called the event a "watershed moment for the SOF," demonstrating the extent to which we can expand our outreach by integrating technology into our programming.

Virtual attendance during the live broadcast surpassed 160 viewers on Friday and 140 viewers on Saturday. On the SOF YouTube channel, the original three live-stream videos have (as of mid-October) each surpassed 1,000 views: the Friday evening presentation had 1,800 views; the Saturday morning session had 1,100 views; and the Saturday afternoon session had 1,700 views. The three longer videos have since been edited by producer Jake Lloyd into individual presentations and posted separately, providing viewers with direct access to each presentation. The individual videos have each exceeded 100 views since being posted, and can be accessed by following the links below.

On Sunday morning following the Symposium, Bryan H. Wildenthal conducted a two-hour Zoom question, comment, and answer session for symposium registrants. Most of the program faculty were able to participate in a wide-ranging, lively discussion with more than sixty participants.

The Zoom program can be accessed here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1AzAPIy4b3uTcE1_73r1dPN7C-55fwGv8?usp=sharing.

The presentations, described on the following page, can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyAA_HbOJZ_-quwmcLIKNXA/videos.

2020 Symposium Presentations

Access them here: **https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyAA_HbOJZ_-quwmcLIKNXA/videos**.

(1) **"Shakespeare and Politics from the 16th to the 21st Centuries," by Earl Showerman, MD**—How have the works of Shakespeare affected American politics and presidents? This lecture links that question to the role of the history plays as Tudor political propaganda, the author's unique poetic license in writing subversive and satirical dramas, and the politics of the Shakespeare authorship question.

(2) **"J. Thomas Looney's Difficult Task" by James A. Warren**—This lecture explores how Looney, launching the modern Oxfordian theory in 1920, approached the unusual challenge of seeking to change people's minds about an authorship legend most already believed to be true.

(3) **"Stratfordian Blind Spots" by Mark André Alexander, MA**—How can orthodox scholars fail to see the evidence in front of them? This lecture explores how the human mind spins reality and creates blind spots to the truth: pitfalls that Oxfordians as well as Stratfordians must work to avoid.

(4) **"Shakespeare Auteur: Creating Authentic Characters for the Screen" by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, MFA** — Shakespeare was the original "auteur," fusing archetypes with his own lived experience to create unique yet iconic characters. This lecture compares his work with some of the greatest modern film directors and screenwriters.

(5) **"Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World," by Professor Sky Gilbert, PhD**—This lecture explores how Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, writing as "Shake-speare," was not only at the center of a "euphuistic" Elizabethan literary circle, but was also steeped in the ancient Greek rhetorical tradition of Hermogenes.

(6) **"The Mentors to Genius," by Steven Sabel**—Shakespeare is widely viewed as a "natural" genius, sometimes compared to Mozart or Einstein. This lecture explores how such geniuses are typically recognized at an early age by mentors who foster their education and development. The mentors of the author "Shakespeare" are easily found if we open our minds to the idea that he was not a glover's son from Stratford.

(7) **"Lord Prospero in *The Tempest* and Lord Prospero Visconti" by Katherine Chiljan** —It has long been speculated that Prospero may represent, in part, the author "Shakespeare," a magus conjuring plays on his theatrical "island." Is he also based on an actual historical Duke of Milan who sought refuge in the arts? This lecture explores an excellent candidate, proposed by an art historian in 1950 whose insight has been ignored by orthodox scholars. Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, may well have met this Duke during his 1575–76 European tour.

(8) **"Don't Quill the Messenger" aka "The Earl and Steven Show" – Earl Showerman and Steven Sabel**— Originally scheduled as Ramon Jiménez's "Shakespeare in Stratford and London: Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing," Earl and Steven review Ramon's work on early versions of Shakespeare's plays and discuss some of the eyewitnesses who left no hint that they connected the Stratford man with those literary works. To read Ramon Jiménez's "Shakespeare in Stratford and London: Ten Eyewitnesses Who Saw Nothing" you may purchase *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* here: https://bookshop.org/books/shakespeare-beyond-doubt-exposing-an-industry-in-denial/9781537005669 or visit: https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/ten-eyewitnesses/

(9) **"Early Authorship Doubts: The Oxfordian Connections" by Professor Bryan H. Wildenthal, JD**—This lecture explores some of the dozens of early published doubts about the authorship of the Shakespearean works—doubts forming an integral part of Shakespeare's own time and culture. Many suggest the author was an aristocrat. Some point specifically to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

(10) **"Toward an Epistemology of Attribution: A Comparison of the Shakespeare and Kurbskii Authorship Controversies" by Donald Ostrowski, PhD, Lecturer in History, Harvard University Extension School**—This lecture is drawn from Dr. Ostrowski's new book, *Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov* (reviewed in the Summer 2020 *Newsletter*). Dr. Ostrowski, who finds the Oxfordian theory of Shakespeare authorship convincing, explores twelve points of comparison between that controversy and the dispute over works attributed to Russian Prince Andrei Kurbskii (d. 1583). He evaluates the two controversies and shows how they advance the overall scholarly study of literary attribution.

(11) **"Who Wrote Shakespeare?" Video Contest by Julie Sandys Bianchi**—Includes the announcement and screening of winners of the SOF 2020 "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" Video Contest.

(12) **Remembering Tom Regnier (2020 Shakespeare Authorship Symposium) introduced by Professor Bryan H. Wildenthal, JD**

(13) **2020 Oxfordian of the Year Award presented by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan** —Announcement and celebration of James A. Warren as the 2020 Oxfordian of the Year.

Behind the Scenes at the Shakespeare Authorship Symposium

by Heidi Jannsch

After deciding to move forward with my travel plans to the West Coast despite the cancellation of the Ashland conference, I offered to report on the Symposium for the *Newsletter.* A wildfire burning about fifteen miles to the north of Ben and Simi August's home in Napa, California — the Symposium site — made the outside air quality less than ideal, but was deemed to not be a threat to the immediate area and so the event was able to proceed as planned. I was delighted to have a "backstage pass" as our first online symposium became a reality. Actually, it turned out to be more than a backstage pass, as I was soon recruited to also serve as production assistant during the broadcast.

During the event those on site were able to view the presenters from the back of the room, but the prerecorded presentations were not projected for the in-house audience. However, I was able to view some of them directly, as one of my tasks as PA included periodically checking my phone to confirm that the SOF YouTube Channel stream was working. I was also charged with shushing anyone who made noise during the live presentation segments. This task soon became unnecessary, as we all became attuned to producer Jake Lloyd's body language and knew, as Earl Showerman keenly noted, "If he just looks up, we're OK. If he takes off his headphones, we're in trouble!"

Absolute quiet was a challenge as, at any given time, the "set" — Ben and Simi's living room — was occupied by the Augusts, their two German Shepherds (Romeo and Caesar) and four or five enthusiastic and chatty Oxfordians. Ever-present (but cooperatively silent) was the spirit of Edward de Vere himself, busts of whom could be found throughout the house and whose portrait overlooks the dining room table.

Ben and Simi August were the quintessential hosts, not only providing the space for the broadcast, but also homemade gourmet meals and wine for the speakers and production crew throughout the weekend. Many thanks to them for their hospitality! Their generosity, combined with the enthusiasm of the presenters and the talent of the production team, helped make the Symposium a successful and inspirational event.

Jake Lloyd talks with Romeo as Steven Sabel prepares the Symposium set on Friday morning

Symposium Host
Ben August

The author poses with "The Author" 😉

Steven Sabel and Jake Lloyd making it happen

Your Contribution to the SOF May Be Tax Deductible
Even if You Don't Itemize Deductions

by Joan Leon

My husband Ramon and I discovered that a provision of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allows an individual taxpayer to make a tax-free donation of up to $300 to a charity or nonprofit ($600 for couples who file jointly). We are doing that this year when we renew our SOF membership. We mentioned this unusual tax-free opportunity to John Hamill and his husband, Jose Caratini, and they are doing the same.

For the tax year 2020, contributions made to qualified charitable or non-profit organizations, up to the $300/$600 limit per taxpayer, can be deducted from your gross income on your return, and you can still take the standard deduction.

So, both our families are once again benefiting, even though we don't itemize our deductions. We're not complaining, since it is an attempt on our government's part to help us all be generous during this alarming downturn in the economy.

Check with your tax accountant for details or look at: https://blog.taxact.com/cares-act-new-300-charitable-contribution-tax-deduction.

Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Annual Meeting Report

by Earl Showerman, Secretary

The virtual Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (SOF) annual membership meeting was held on September 26, 2020, with a quorum of members logged into Zoom for the ninety-minute program. Prior to the Annual Meeting, a 28-page document with detailed committee reports was emailed to all members of the SOF. The contents of this document included:

- President John Hamill's introduction, the President's Report
- 2020 Annual Membership Meeting Agenda
- 2019 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes
- Treasurer's Finance Report by Richard Foulke
- Centennial Committee Reports by Bryan H. Wildenthal and Linda Bullard
- Communications Committee Reports by Bryan H. Wildenthal and Bob Meyers
- Membership and Fundraising Committee Reports by Bryan H. Wildenthal and Joan Leon

Please contact info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org if you wish to receive an emailed copy of this document. A number of SOF committee reports were summarized by President Hamill in his President's Report and commentaries, or delivered orally by the respective committee chairs during the meeting.

The Zoom meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM (Pacific time). President Hamill explained that while the COVID-19 pandemic had prevented us from having an in-person conference and annual meeting in 2020, the present meeting, and the Shakespeare Authorship Symposium scheduled to be broadcast over the SOF YouTube channel October 2 and 3, reflect a commitment to fulfilling the conditions of the bylaws and the SOF's mission of providing educational content to the membership and public at large. Hamill expanded on his President's Report with commentaries on SOF board turnover, membership numbers, website developments, the *"Shakespeare" Identified* Symposium at the National Press Club in March 2020, and the upcoming increase in the SOF membership dues for those receiving the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* in print.

Hamill also commented on the SOF podcast series, *Don't Quill the Messenger*, SOF publications, the cancellation of the 2020 National Conference of

Teachers of English program (at which the SOF had expected to be present again), and the new Verus Publications series of plays and poems identifying the 17th Earl of Oxford as author of the Shakespeare canon with a short biography by Kevin Gilvary included in each edition. Winners of the 2020 SOF Video Contest and the recipient of the Oxfordian of the Year award were to be announced during the forthcoming Symposium. Finally, Hamill offered to make a $1,000 matching grant donation to the SOF to be announced during the Symposium.

The minutes of 2019 SOF Annual Meeting in Hartford, Connecticut, were approved by consensus, pending any of corrections submitted by members to info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

A detailed Treasurer's Finance Report was provided by Richard Foulke prior to the Membership Meeting. Foulke reported that the SOF budget and available funds are satisfactory. At the end of 2019 the SOF had $136,000 in available funds; the current available funds total was $132,000. In 2019, $25,000 was transfered out of cash reserve investments to cover the budget, but in 2020 there was no need to transfer funds to cover expenses.

Membership and Fundraising Committee Reports were provided by Bryan H. Wildenthal (former chair) and Joan Leon (current chair). SOF Membership has shown a 20% increase over the past two years. The success of the Hartford Conference and the Centennial Symposium has augmented membership and benefited fund raising. Leon described the results of a survey of eighty new members to establish how they became interested in the SAQ and Oxford; new members come to the SOF primarily through social media and personal connections. Current membership is now 472. A survey of lapsed members is also planned for the future, as well as an investigation of the Patreon platform for educational content and revenue generation. Leon also noted that past projects, including the Research Grant Program and the Public Relations Director position, were initially funded out of SOF reserve funds. The upcoming Shakespeare Authorship Symposium in Napa on October 2-3 has been entirely funded by donations to the SOF in the memory of Tom Regnier out of the canceled conference refunds.

The Communications Committee is responsible for numerous SOF endeavors, including *The Oxfordian*, the *Newsletter*, the Brief Chronicles book series, the SOF website, and related social media. Bryan H. Wildenthal (former chair) and Bob Meyers (current chair) submitted written reports prior to the meeting. Wildenthal indicated that Bob Meyers is interested in receiving feedback from

members regarding any communication issues. President Hamill also reported that two SOF brochures are being reprinted and will be available to members in the near future.

Steven Sabel, Director of Public Relations and Marketing, delivered a PowerPoint presentation covering news media PR, marketing, and outreach activities since the Hartford Conference. Twenty-seven press releases have gone out, covering a number of SOF projects and publications. Promotion of the Centennial symposium in March at the National Press Club included six press releases over a ninety-day period, and numerous regional media telephone invitations. The SOF media email contact list has registered over 9,800 contacts; over 7,300 are currently on the list. The top five states of SOF media contacts are Texas, Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota.

The video contest and the *Don't Quill the Messenger* podcast series generated the most media coverage. The SOF Facebook page gained over 400 new followers in the past year. More than twenty episodes in the podcast series have been recorded this past year and listenership to *Don't Quill the Messenger* averages around 800 per episode. Registrations for next weekend's Symposium were approaching 300, with numerous persons registered who have not attended previous SOF conferences. There is a plan to provide and promote Zoom-based educational content to community groups using members of the SOF Speakers Bureau.

The Data Preservation Committee Report was summarized by Catherine Hautinguais. This year the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library (NESOL) has gained 501(c) (3) nonprofit status, and a search has begun to establish a relationship with a library to house the collection of books and documents already available through NESOL. The Shakespeare Oxford Authorship Resource (SOAR) database project continues to expand. Another project under consideration is participating in online data storage through Internet Archive, which could handle scanned books, articles, letters, and other resource documents. To date the personal papers of Oxfordians Ron Hess, Richard Paul Roe and Richard Kennedy have been secured. Work is proceeding on creating a Document Preservation page on the SOF website that will provide information on safeguarding documents and website data. An offer of $1,000 has been made by the SOF to purchase the indenture document signed by Edward de Vere from Concordia University, which has closed; the document was donated to the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre at Concordia by Oxfordian Russell Des Cognets.

The Centennial Committee Report was shared by Bryan H. Wildenthal and Linda Bullard, with most details provided in the written report previously sent to the SOF membership. Wildenthal reported that the media coverage for the *"Shakespeare" Identified* Centennial event in March was disappointing, but there was excellent attendance and enthusiasm expressed by those who were present during the four-hour symposium. Jennifer Newton has curated and posted on the SOF website each of the five excellent presentations given at the event. Bullard noted that the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of many of the activities planned for 2020 to celebrate the anniversary of *"Shakespeare" Identified*. Copies of the Centennial brochure were sent to all SOF members who receive print copies of the *Newsletter*. A revised Centennial brochure is being developed and supported by the local campaigns funds. Further publications by James Warren and Roger Stritmatter are expected in the coming year that reflect will directly on the achievement of J. Thomas Looney. Bullard concluded her remarks summarizing the history of Centennial Committee achievements, further noting that the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio is just three years away; she recommended that an ad hoc SOF group be formed to plan for an Oxfordian tribute in 2023.

The Education Outreach Report was provided by committee chair Theresa Lauricella. The committee had its first meeting in June, and had planned to support participation in the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) conference in Denver in November, which was cancelled due to the pandemic. The virtual NCTE conference could not accommodate the planned presentation by Peter Frangel. While there is a plan to participate in the 2021 NCTE program in Louisville, currently the committee is developing initiatives aimed at reaching out to educators virtually. Among the ideas are lesson plans in the authorship question for secondary school educators. The goal will eventually be to have educational materials available to educators for kindergarten through 12th grade, and, for higher education, cross-curricular development into theater and history departments, as well as English departments.

Earl Showerman provided the Conference Committee Report. The prospect of holding our 2020 Shakespeare Authorship Conference in Ashland, Oregon, was unfortunately undone by the social distancing restrictions imposed by the public health threat of COVID-19. The Oregon Shakespeare Festival was obliged to cancel its entire 2020 season in March, which prompted the SOF to cancel its conference and refund

early registration fees and theatre ticket purchases. The generosity of those members who declined refunds resulted in more than $2,500 in donations to the SOF dedicated to the memory of Tom Regnier; this sum was used to support the online Shakespeare Authorship Symposium scheduled for October 2-3. See page 1 of this issue for a report on the Symposium.

Plans remain in place for the SOF to hold its next annual conference in Ashland, Oregon, from September 30 to October 3, 2021, at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites. If the Oregon Shakespeare Festival does not have Shakespeare plays in production in 2021, alternatively the SOF has reserved the dates September 22-25, 2022, for its next conference in Ashland.

Julie Bianchi reported on the 2020 SOF Video Contest. This year the specific topic of "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" was included in the contest directions, and the committee has agreed to continue to pose specific questions for future video contests. A record number of submissions have been reviewed by the committee, and the winners will be announced during the Symposium next weekend. See page 11.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan provided the Oxfordian of the Year Committee report. The award will be announced during the Symposium (see page 10).

John Hamill gave the Research Grant Program Report. Due to COVID-19, much of the activity of the recent grant recipients James Warren and Eddi Jolly has been temporarily suspended. Warren's discoveries have resulted in a series of publications on the work of J. Thomas Looney, and Jolly has submitted encouraging reports to the committee on her research on "Oxford's missing last play" at the public record offices in England. An interim report on this research for the *Newsletter* is anticipated.

Don Rubin provided the Nominations Committee Report. As no SOF Board nominations have been submitted by petition, Rubin made two motions: (1) That Robert Meyers, Catherine Hatinguais, and Bonner Miller Cutting be elected to three-year terms and Julie Bianchi be elected for a two-year term to the SOF Board of Trustees; and (2) That John Hamill be re-elected for a one-year term as President of the SOF. Both motions were deemed passed by acclamation.

John Hamill then asked for further comments or questions from the Membership. There being none submitted, and business of the meeting concluded, the 2020 Membership Meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was adjourned at Noon (Pacific time).

SOF Secretary Earl Showerman

In this issue:

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