THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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SOF Conference in Ashland, Oregon, Combines In-Person Attendance with Live-Streaming

by Dorothea Dickerman, Heidi Jannsch and Alex McNeil (photos by Lucinda Foulke)

After a three-year hiatus, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship held its annual conference in person. About seventy persons attended the event in Ashland, Oregon. Another fifty persons signed up to watch a video live stream of the proceedings.

Filmmaker panel (see page 34)

Day One: Thursday, September 22

After brief welcoming remarks from Conference Committee Chair **Don Rubin** and SOF President **Bob Meyers**, the first two presentations were aimed primarily at persons new to the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ).

The first, "Teaching the Authorship," was given by **Tom Woosnam**, an SOF Trustee. It was based on a course he teaches at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in Ashland. Woosnam delivered several well-reasoned and practical approaches that he has found successful in discussing the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ) both in and out of the classroom. In keeping with his experience that establishing reasonable doubt about the identity of the Bard is a necessary preliminary step to any discussion of alternative authorship candidates, Woosnam concentrated on the life of William of Stratford and on effective responses to the typical skepticism encountered by Oxfordians when broaching the SAQ with non-Oxfordians. One of the most common questions is "Why should we care about who wrote the Shakespeare Canon?" to which Woosnam replies: "If the SAQ is not important, then no biography of any writer is important; if you get the identity of Shakespeare wrong, then you get the entire Elizabethan age wrong." His curated examples of pairs of contemporary well-known individuals who share the same name and profession demolish any argument that such a coincidence in the 16th century would have been impossible. Most convincing were Woosnam's charts (derived from Diana Price's book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*) showing that twenty-four contemporary Elizabethan peots and dramatists were known, from documentary sources such as letters, literary dedications, etc., as writers before their deaths; but there is no primary evidence in any of the several dozen historical records referring to William of Stratford to indicate that he was known as a writer, poet or playwright during his lifetime. All existing "evidence" that he was a writer, a playwright or a poet was created posthumously by biographers who took impersonal evidence praising a writer named "Shakespeare" and misapplied it personally to him. No effort at researching his biography took place until 153 years after his death.

Bob Meyers

Don Rubin

Tom Woosnam

(Continued on page 28)

Advertisement

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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

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

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

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

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From the President

I want to thank the SOF Nominations Committee, and the membership, for the support I received through the process of our first contested presidential election. Steven Sabel's candidacy made me a more thoughtful, committed, and expressive nominee in preparation for holding this honorable office, for which I have already been "paid forward" by this respect from so many patrons.

That the SOF is a vibrant and successful educational organization was never more evident than during our recent four-day conference in Ashland, Oregon, the fourth conference to be held at the home of the award-winning Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). For the very first time, plenary sessions of the conference were livestreamed, allowing more than fifty SOF members to view the scholarly presentations and panel discussions from the comfort of their homes. The production of *The Tempest* at the OSF Elizabethan Theatre was outstanding; four cast members joined us the next day for a discussion that went on for several hours and culminated with all of them leaving with complimentary copies of Mark Anderson's *"Shakespeare" By Another Name*.

The spirit of collegiality at the conference and excitement over the prospects for the coming year were truly refreshing. On two evenings after dinner, attendees were treated to three outstanding documentary videos: Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias's *Last Will. & Testament*, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, and Robin Phillips's most recent project, *Shakespeare: Loitering in Italy.* Just two days after the conference concluded, the authors of one of the most provocative papers, "Tongue-tied by Authorities: Library of Congress Vocabularies and the Shakespeare Authorship Question," delivered by Michael Dudley and Bill Boyle, received notice that their paper (written with SOF Trustee Catherine Hatinguais) had just been accepted for publication by a peer-reviewed journal, *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly.* Clearly we are making progress on multiple fronts!

At the outset of the conference, former President Bob Meyers recounted that, since its creation in 2014, the SOF website has had over a million visits from persons in more than 200 countries, with anywhere from 500 to 3,000 daily inquiries. The strategy to increase traffic on the website through the process of "Search Engine Optimization" was detailed during the

Meeting by Trustee Dorothea Dickerman; it will be a major focus of our initiatives in the coming year. Another initiative approved by the SOF Board is the promotion of Lifetime Memberships; all current SOF Trustees have pledged to become Lifetime Members (see page 16).

What became clear during the SOF Ashland Conference was the amazing profusion of new publications addressing the Shakespeare authorship challenge. The co-recipients of the 2022 Oxfordian of the Year award, Stephanie Hopkins Hughes and Richard Malim, have completed important new editions of their respective books, *Educating Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare's Revolution*. Former SOF President John Hamill has released *The Secret Shakespeare Sex Scandals: Bisexuality and Bastardy,* and Ramon Jiménez has completed annotated Oxfordian editions of *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and The *True Tragedy of Richard III*. James Warren continues his prodigious output, through Veritas Publications, with the seven-volume collection of Percy Allen's *Complete Writings on Shakespeare* and Esther Singleton's *Shakespearian Fantasias.* Robert Prechter's online opus, *Oxford's Voices: What Shakespeare Wrote Before He Was Shakespeare*, and Roger Stritmatter's new Brief Chronicles edition of *Shakespeare and the Law* are further proof of an ongoing ferment in Oxfordian research and publications.

The coming year is no less promising. Journalist Elizabeth Winkler's critical investigation on the response to the authorship question, *Shakespeare Was a Woman & Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature*, will be published by Simon and Schuster this spring, with the publisher's online promotion: "The theory that Shakespeare may not have written the works that bear his name is the most horrible, vexed, unspeakable subject in the history of English literature. …[T]o doubt the god of English literature is unacceptable, even (some say) 'immoral'—a sordid conspiracy theory. Fascinated by this taboo topic as much as by the mystery, journalist and literary critic Elizabeth Winkler set out to probe the origins of this most incendiary controversy."

Equally important, November 2023 marks the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio, the collected plays of Shakespeare. Professor Roger Stritmatter is preparing another SOF-sponsored Brief Chronicles edition, *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma*, a collection of Oxfordian essays on this seminal and problematic key to the question of attribution. Professor Rima Greenhill's book, *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan: The Role of English-Russian Relations in Love's Labour's Lost* is about to be published by McFarland. Dr. Michael Delahoyde continues to produce annotated Oxfordian play editions, with forthcoming studies of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and SOF Trustee Don Rubin is serving as general editor for a collection of Oxfordian essays to be published in the summer of 2023 in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*.

Professor Rubin will once again serve as Chair of the Conference Committee, and has already secured a venue for our next Annual Conference, which will take place in the New Orleans French Quarter from November 9-12, 2023. Information on lodging, room reservations, and the call for papers will be released in early 2023.

Finally, I encourage all of you to reach out to me by email at info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org if you have any questions, comments or concerns about our organization. We are always looking for means of engaging our more than 500 members in educational activities and other means of promoting the authorship claim of Edward de Vere. If you'd like to get more involved—to volunteer your expertise and time to the SOF—we'd be happy to add you to one of our many committees working to spread the word.

Earl Showerman

Letters

I'm reading through the summer issue of the *Newsletter*, which is superb. I am writing about the lead article by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Bonner Miller Cutting: "Does the 17th Earl of Oxford 'lieth buried in Westminster'?"

Not mentioned in the article is the fact that Percival Golding, who wrote a short biography of the de Vere family (British Library, MSS 4189 in the Harleian collection), also noted in that document about the 17th Earl of Oxford: "and of the Privy Council to the King's Majesty that now is…." This would mean that Edward de Vere served as a member of the Privy Council during King James's reign, which could only have been between May 1603 and June 1604 (the month of de Vere's death).

However, on May 10, 1603, King James wrote a memorandum to Parliament notifying them of twenty-four candidates he would consider for service on his Privy Council (see National Archives, Kew, SP 14/1/73, dated Howard House, 10 May 1603). Other nobles are listed, such as the Lord Treasurer, Lord Chief Justice, Lord Admiral and Lord Keeper, the Archibishop of Canterbury, the Earls of Cumberland, Marre, Northumberland, Shrewsbury, and Worcester. Even listed were eight knights. But not Oxford!

It is odd that Golding would write such a categorical statement to Sir Horatio Vere, a prominent English general and public official, since it could easily be refuted and Golding humiliated for daring to make such

an egregious error. Yet my search through the British National Archives has not yet revealed proof of Oxford's service on the Privy Council.

Gary Goldstein (Editor, *The Oxfordian*)
Boca Raton, FL

In response to the article on the photo of Katharine Eggar that I "discovered" on the Internet (*Newsletter*, Summer 2022, p. 4), due credit should go to Professors Angela Annese and Orietta Caianiello, of the Conservatorio Niccoló Piccinni in Bari, Italy, where Eggar's *Idyll* was performed for video. The professors coordinate a research and performance series on long-ago women composers, "The Shadow Illuminated. Women in Music."

Katharine Eggar was a clear thinker, as we see even outside her Oxfordian activity. According to James Warren *(Shakespeare Revolutionized,* p. 198) Eggar first read Looney's *"Shakespeare" Identified* late in 1921. In November of that year her interview with composer Arnold Bax appeared in *The Music Student.* In it Eggar and Bax converse about the "difficulty" of Bax's melodic counterpoint, something musical experts should easily comprehend. Eggar concludes:

> It is strange, but I really believe that, with the best will in the world, *actual musical training can be an obstruction in the way of coming into contact with modern thought and inspiration.* Education should, of course, give an open mind and make the trained person more receptive than the untrained; but in our own mysterious art, it really seems as if knowledge could be a barrier to further knowledge. (emphasis added)
> Bax readily responds:
>
> Yes. . . . The prejudices of learning are hard to overcome, and the result of that is that music is helped on to new positions by the sensitive amateur who listens without preconceived objections.

(From Eggar's "The Piano Pieces of Arnold Bax," pp. 161-162, quoted by Lewis Foreman in Bax's *Farewell, My Youth and Other Writings,*1992)

Substitute "traditional thinking on Shakespeare" for "actual musical training," and we get a clear impression of Eggar's open-mindedness, making her receptive to both Bax's and Looney's new directions. Arnold Bax's brother, author Clifford Bax—never quite convinced of the new Shakespeare paradigm—co-edited *The Golden Hind,* in which Looney's 1922 article, "The Earl of Oxford as 'Shakespeare': New Evidence," appeared.

Tom Goff
Carmichael, CA

In her article in Volume 24 of *The Oxfordian*, "The Grand Deception of the First Folio," Katherine Chiljan concludes:

> The Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery could have simply employed the [Shakespeare] pseudonym to conceal the Earl of Oxford's identity in the First Folio, but they took the supplementary steps of adding a false face and incorporating clues that he was William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery were the sons of Mary Sidney, Philip Sidney's sister and defender of his memory. The rivalry between Oxford and Sidney (who was disparaged many times by Oxford: as a "puppy" in the tennis quarrel, as Slender in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as Boyet in *Love's Labours Lost*, and as Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*) extended to the publishing of the First Folio, I believe.

Susan Vere and others in Oxford's circle wanted his plays published and memorialized. The Sidney faction did not (especially Mary Sidney). A compromise was probably struck between Susan Vere and her husband, the Earl of Montgomery. They employed Ben Jonson, known for his doublespeak, to hide Oxford's authorship, yet subtly allude that he was the true author. In essence, Jonson served two masters. He also was jealous of Oxford and probably relished the job.

And so, the Folio was years in the making, but couldn't be published until after Mary Sidney's death in 1621. The result was a Janus production: words, words, words that depicted the true author and a portrait that (also in Oxford's own words) "made myself a motley to the view."

Orda Hackney
Frederick, MD

My deepest appreciation to the Fellowship, particularly to those who primed the pump, kicked the tires and perhaps went back to the drawing board a few times before rolling out our warm and engrossing Conference out for inspection (see page 1). The papers, panels and films were extraordinarily edifying. There were even moments that gave the "provocative meter" a good nudge: (1) Sundra Malcolm—was "A Lover's Complaint" written by Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton? (2) Bonner Miller Cutting—was Susan Vere, Countess Montgomery, the model for the Droeshout engraving of "Shakespeare"? (3) Dorothea Dickerman—was Anne Cecil Vere's first child (Elizabeth Vere), the product of a rape (perhaps by Robert Dudley)?

The "Strategizing the Future" debate prompted the following thought, which I share on the off chance that it's either forward thinking and/or strategic. To date,

Oxfordians have become adept at pointing out the deficiencies of the Stratford Myth, and at plausibly offering that Oxford wrote the works under the pseudonym "William Shakespeare."

But the elephant in the room is the existence of an **actual** Stratford Man who (1) has an extremely similar name to the one on the works, and (2) was a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the Globe and Blackfriars theatres. *Discrediting* the Stratford Man doesn't make him go away**.**

Oxfordians need a straightforward, nuts-and-bolts, counter-narrative to the Stratford Myth. It must explain how Oxford wrote the works under the pseudonym and how the similarly named Globe shareholder, the Stratford Man, emerges as the author.

I could attempt an explanation, but in its briefest version, it would necessarily begin with the John Stubbs woodcut, end with the Spanish Marriage Crisis, and require some encrypted, hermetic, Rosicrucian digressions mixed in with the dynastic succession thrust.

Edmund Wilkinson (Ομορφιά)
New York, NY

I call attention to two upcoming events, one rare, one unique.

On November 17-20, 2022, the Resurgens Theatre Company is presenting a performance of *The Spanish Tragedie* at the Pythagoras Masonic Temple in Decatur, Georgia. The play is purportedly by Thomas Kyd, but it contains numerous signs of Oxford's authorship, as argued by Oxfordian Chuck Berney. For more information: www.resurgenstheatre.org.

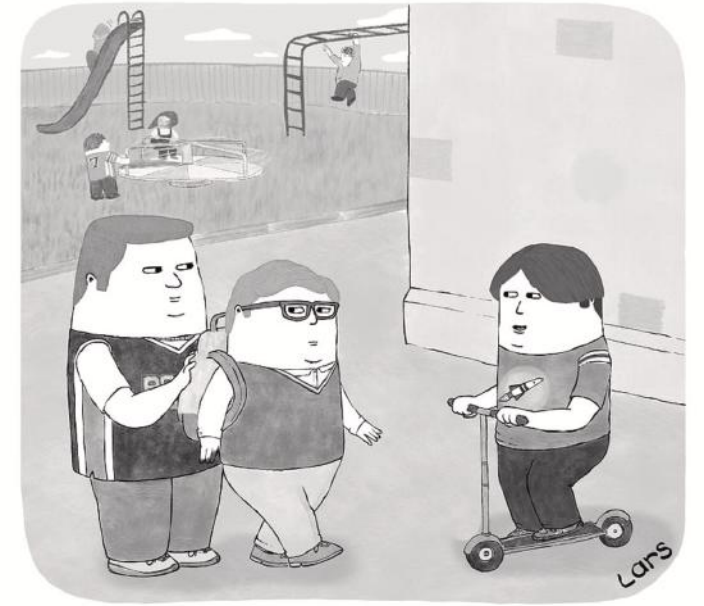
In April of 2023, the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse in Atlanta will debut a play on the Shakespeare authorship question, which was daringly commissioned by Artistic Director and Board President Jeffrey Watkins, a lifelong Stratfordian. *By My Will* is by award-winning playwright and screenwriter Douglas Post. I was given the opportunity to read the script, and I found it to be fun, poignant and even-handed. Sixteen performances will be given between April 6 and 30. You can learn more about it at www.shakespearetavern.com.

If any out-of-towner wants company attending either production, let me know (bob@oxfordsvoices.com)!

Bob Prechter
Gainesville, GA

What's the News?

New Yorker Cartoon References SAQ



"Word around school is you've been attributing Shakespeare's works to Edward de Vere."

Quite a few people noticed the above cartoon on page 28 of the October 31 issue of *The New Yorker*, in which two schoolyard bullies threaten a nerdish bespectacled student because he's "been attributing Shakespeare's works to Edward de Vere." The drawing is by Lars Kenseth, one of the magazine's stable of contributing cartoonists.

Note the simplicity of the caption—there's no reference to the "Earl of Oxford." This suggests that *The New Yorker* assumes that its readers are already familiar with the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

This is not the first time that the magazine has run an authorship-related cartoon. About fifteen years ago it published one (by Paul Noth) in which, during a conference with young Will and his parents, the local schoolmaster tells them, "In fact, the work's been so good that we question whether it's Will's own."

New Oxfordian Edition of the Original *Richard III* Now Available

Scholar Ramon Jiménez informs us that his Oxfordian edition of *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* is now available. In it, a young Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, painted a portrait of a power-hungry nobleman who stopped at nothing to seize the crown—not even the murder of his two nephews, one of whom was the legitimate King of England. In this first version of the canonical *Richard III*, Oxford dramatized the series of betrayals, kidnappings and murders that brought Richard to power and, finally, defeat and death at Bosworth Field at the hands of Henry VII, Earl of Richmond, the first Tudor to take the throne of England.

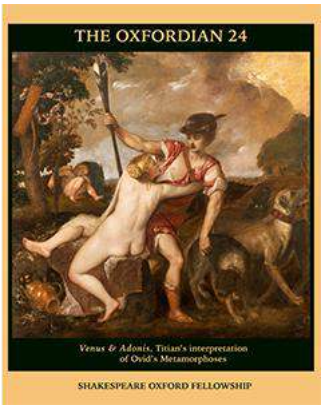
Later, using the same plot and characters, and much of the same language and dramatic devices, Oxford refined, enhanced and expanded his youthful work—transforming it into the stirring *Richard III* that remains his most popular history play.

The True Tragedy of Richard the Third was published in 1594, with no author's name. The canonical *Richard III* was first published in 1597, again with no author's name. As Jiménez notes, *True Tragedy* has received relatively little attention from mainstream academics; some of them do cite it as a likely source for Shakespeare's history play. Jiménez makes a powerful case not only that both were written by the same author—Oxford—but also that both were written long before their respective publication dates. Jiménez maintains that *True Tragedy* was written by a teenage Oxford, "before [he] began his legal training at Gray's Inn in February 1567," and that the canonical *Richard III* was written "less than ten years later."

Included in this edition are a brief life of Edward de Vere, an essay on the Shakespeare Authorship Question, and a comprehensive Introduction to the play.

Available on Amazon or from the editor ($20).

The Oxfordian Volume 24 Published



by Gary Goldstein

The 24th volume of *The Oxfordian*, the Fellowship's annual peer-reviewed journal, is now available to members and other Shakespeare scholars in both print and electronic formats. The online version is available to members as part of their membership, while non-members will have access to three items online. The print version available for purchase on Amazon.com at $14.99. The current volume—at 302 pages, the second biggest—contains thirteen research papers, essays, and notes, and six book reviews.

"Given the approaching 400th anniversary of The First Folio in 2023," said editor Gary Goldstein, "I am pleased that we can present two superlative papers on that historic achievement. The first, by Katherine Chiljan, is a detailed examination as to how the prefatory materials of the First Folio prove that its backers deliberately designed it to deceive readers regarding the authorship of Shakespeare's works. The second paper, by James Warren, takes a different view. He proposes that the First Folio was designed by the brother Earls [Pembroke and Montgomery] to enable Edward de Vere to be easily revealed as William Shakespeare at a future date—when a different political environment would facilitate its acceptance."

Other papers build upon existing evidence that prove de Vere's authorship of the canon. Two short articles by Matt Hutchinson show how topical references further the Oxfordian hypothesis. In the first, he demonstrates that the reference to "a companion for a King" in John Davies's epigram, "To Our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare," shows that Davies considered Shakespeare to be an Earl. The second presents several topical allusions from the 1590s, including one by Ben Jonson, showing a character being compared to a crow, as well as to several poems by Edward de Vere.

Sky Gilbert gives a superb analysis of Ancient Greek and Renaissance philosophy in the works of Shakespeare, Gorgias and Jerome Cardano, as he seeks to determine the identity of the book that Hamlet is seen reading on stage. Is it Cardano's *On Comfort*, or Gorgias's *On Nature*?

In a brilliant comparison of de Vere's biography with a Shakespeare tragedy, the late Warren Hope analyzes the hero of *Timon of Athens* and Edward de Vere, showing how similar they are in terms of interests, psychology and public behavior.

Roger Stritmatter examines a rare Jacobean reference to Shakespeare by poet Michael Drayton. He explores the application of Jacobean aesthetic doctrines associated with the idea of "triumphal forms" to Drayton's encomium to Shakespeare in his 202-line poem, originally printed in Drayton's 1627 *The Battle of Agincourt.*

Michael Dudley delves into how we know what we know about the Shakespeare authorship question, and to what extent the modern scholarly community is ethical in how it pursues an answer to that question.

In a pathbreaking paper, Paul Chambers proposes that the disciplines of Machine Learning and Bayesian mathematics can be successfully employed to demonstrate the probability that Edward de Vere was the true author of the Shakespeare canon—and proceeds to do so.

Heidi Jannsch investigates to what extent the paratexts of Ben Jonson's play *Sejanus* praise Edward de Vere after his demise in 1604, when his reputation was being censored by the state.

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes examines the knowledge revealed in *Shake-speares Sonnets*, often seen as private letters written in verse, for what it can tell us about the author and his social circle of friends and lovers.

A final pair of research papers looks at what is true and what is occult in the Shakespeare canon. Richard Waugaman explores the principle of Shakespeare's "truth" as he employs it in the plays, then examines how Shakespeare uses it in *All's Well That Ends Well*. In a different vein, Richard Malim traces de Vere's interest in the occult as it appears in Giordano Bruno's works, in Dr. John Dee's work (Dee was a proponent of both the scientific method and occult practices) and how both appear in the Shakespeare plays.

The book reviews examine two Oxfordian critical editions of *Twelfth Night* and *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* as well as a collection of papers by Bronson Feldman that investigates the authorship issue in tandem with works of other Elizabethan writers. The concluding three reviews are of Stephanie Hughes's new book, *Shakespeare's Education*, Richard Malim's new book, *Shakespeare's Revolution*, and Robert Prechter's 3,000-page electronic opus, *Oxford's Voices*, which explores whether de Vere wrote under numerous other pseudonyms and allonyms.

The de Vere Ball Held in New York City

by Hank Whittemore

Edward de Vere would have loved it. On the evening of August 13, 2022, in Manhattan's West Village, about 100 millennials gathered in the elegant ballroom on the second floor of the Alger House, an elegant townhouse built in 1915. In colorful, festive attire, they raised glasses in toasts to the Earl of Oxford as the true author of the Shakespeare works.

Underway was *The De Vere Ball*, organized and led by multitalented Phoebe Nir, a young scholar, playwright and screenwriter who is also an SOF member. She has become an indefatigable social media producer and host, turning out TikTok videos about the Authorship Question (@phoebe_devere) and the Oxfordian movement, using creative visuals and providing information with rapid-fire delivery that the fast-talking Earl himself would applaud.

"As an amateur Oxfordian enthusiast," Nir said, "I'm throwing this Ball in the hopes of building an Oxfordian discourse community within New York's downtown creative scene, and to target various influencers (such as Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova, co-hosts of the hugely influential Red Scare podcast) to join us as guests."

These artists, scholars, writers and filmmakers in their twenties and thirties represent a new generation drawn not only to the great poems, plays and sonnets of Shakespeare, but also to the exciting prospect of exposing the myth of the Stratford man as the author and, thereby, replacing centuries of false history with the truth. The crowd included hipsters who had come out of curiosity to learn about the "Oxford Theory," while others were already well acquainted with the Shakespeare works, the Authorship Question, and Edward de Vere himself.

On tables were stacks of a new compact magazine titled TAKE THE DE VERE PILL: *Explorations in Oxfordianism*, designed by Sammy Dalati of the magazine *Antiques* with creative director Josefa Westerman, and edited by Phoebe Nir with associate editor Larisa Golovko. It contained a dozen essays from various angles, by longtime Oxfordians such as Professor Felicia Londré of the University of Missouri at Kansas City and me, and from individuals in other fields such as Katherine Dee, who contributes "The Daily Scroll" for *Tablet* Magazine, and Daniel Cowan, a Canadian researcher and expert on Hermeticism. Bob Meyers, president of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, provided a welcome.

The toasts to Oxford began with beautiful Elizabethan singing by Salome (aka Pariah the Doll), accompanied by Dan Keene on the lute. As an invited guest from the Oxfordian community, I recited two sonnets (55 and 81), having chosen them primarily because they appear to express Oxford's urgent need to preserve the high stature of the younger man (whom I believe to be Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton) for future generations of readers. Further comments came from Curtis Yarvin, who runs the blog *Gray Mirror*, and Jack Mason, host of the perfume podcast *The Perfume Nationalist*.

All this was followed by more lively chatter, music, dancing and discussions of how, as Nir writes in her "Letter from the Editor" of the new magazine, "Oxfordianism can deepen the bliss, and even the mystery, of engaging with Shakespeare." Why does it matter who wrote Shakespeare? In the open letter, Phoebe Nir provides her answer:

Edward de Vere gives me hope. And in these trying and uncertain times, humanity's best path forward is the one in which we're able to draw inspiration from the greatest poet who ever lived. Just as the Founding Fathers modeled themselves after heroic examples from Plutarch's *Lives*, perhaps we might navigate the unique challenges of the 21st century by harnessing our own creativity, compassion, and genius – qualities that no one has ever embodied more fully than Edward de Vere.

[Note: This is an abridged version of an article that first appeared on the SOF website.]

2022 Oxfordians of the Year Announced

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes and Richard Malim were chosen as Oxfordians of the Year for 2022. The annual award usually goes to one person, but, as Selection Committee Chair Cheryl Eagan-Donovan explained, "This year, two candidates are so eminently qualified in exactly the same ways, that we all agreed that the award must be given to both of them, in recognition of their extraordinary work to advance the Oxfordian movement through scholarship, outreach, and publication. . . . Both have engaged in decades of dedicated and effective work on behalf of the Oxfordian cause, publishing more than 100 articles or blog postings as well as several books or booklets, and both have published an important new book this year."

Stephanie Hopkins Hughes's book, *Educating Shakespeare*, is the culmination of many years of research and analysis. It was published in April 2022 and is available on Amazon. "In seeking answers to what exactly he knew and where and from whom he learned it, Hughes tells the fascinating story of how the supreme genius of the Elizabethan age created the London Stage and the English language we speak today." Hopkins Hughes also founded *The Oxfordian*, a peer-reviewed annual journal, in 1998 and served as its editor for ten years. Her blog Politicworm is an important resource for Shakespeare scholars, with hundreds of articles or as downloadable PDF files.

Richard Malim's *The Shakespeare Revolution* was published in June 2022 and can also be purchased on Amazon. The book, "in corroborating Mr Looney's original thesis, launches a torpedo at academia's ramshackle position in logic and establishes the unassailable debt that all of us owe to the author's towering achievement in a vast field covering human psychology, politics, economics and literature." A retired attorney, Malim served as secretary of the De Vere Society, and earlier wrote *The Earl of Oxford and the Making of "Shakespeare:" The Literary Life of Edward de Vere in Context.* He also edited *Great Oxford: Essays on the Life and Work of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, 1550-1604.* An expanded edition of the latter book is now in the works.

Neither recipient was able to attend the 2022 Annual Conference, where their names were announced, but each had been notified previously and submitted remarks. Stephanie Hopkins Hughes said, "Many thanks for this honor, which must be shared with the indefatigable James Warren. Without Jim's encouragement the information my book provides on Oxford's childhood and whereabouts before he came to Cecil House would have remained tucked away on my blog. By publishing *Educating Shakespeare*, he provides the Authorship Community with the sources for Shakespeare's imagery that so obviously reflect the years Oxford spent as a boy with his tutor, the great Sir Thomas Smith, at Smith's home on the Thames in Berkshire, and later at Hill Hall in Essex, both places I visited while in England in 2004, and easily accessed by anyone living or visiting in England. I'm equally delighted to share the honor with my English colleague, Richard Malim, who provides innumberable instances where Oxford's identity can be tied to passages in the plays. Equipped with both our books, both available on Amazon, you'll have a satisfyingly comprehensive answer to give friends who may be curious about the Authorship Question."

Richard Malim stated in part: "I am immensely flattered to be honoured and bracketed with Stephanie. . . . I am not sanguine about any immediate breakthrough the ranks of 'orthodox' Academia. Indeed I rather aim my books at the first year University students of English, for they are the soft underbelly of 'orthodoxy.' [But] the battle is in fact won, and it remains only the victory to be conceded. I shall not see it, but maybe there are some aunts who will give a book (perhaps mine – hope springs) to a fresher nephew or niece, who will help explode the bomb that will lighten up the sky for ever. Those future students will find that the path is well maintained in America by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, to whom we all owe so much, and now I in particular for the singular honour you have given me."

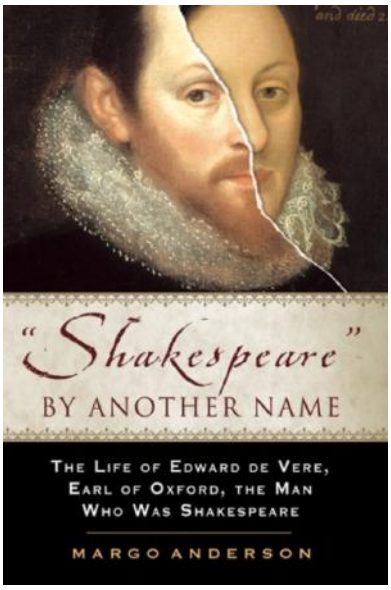
Anderson by Another Name

by Margo Anderson

In September I posted a note to the ShakesVere Facebook group celebrating an arrival and the culmination of something that I'd been building toward for several years. It's this: I'm transgender, and I'm finally ready to share this fact with the world.

In brief, my name is Margo, and my pronouns are *she*, *her*, and *hers*. I'm still the same passionate researcher, writer and proud author of *"Shakespeare" by Another Name.* I'm now gathering materials for a projected second edition of that book.

For the readers of *SBAN*'s 2005 first edition, I offer here a small but significant revisionist hack of the book jacket cover.



The cover design that, in retrospect, according to the author, should have appeared on bookstore shelves in 2005.

Perhaps to some Oxfordians, this might seem an unwelcome intervention. For many people today, discussion of gender transitions and recognition of one's true gender identity feels unprecedented and foreign, perhaps even scandalous or outré. Anti-transgender polemics today resound with a familiar rage found in pamphlets from 400 years ago, in which scribblers railed about the sins of people assigned male at birth assuming feminine identities. (The pamphleteers were Puritans, to be clear. They were inveighing against the theater, and would have loved to see no "Shakespeare" anything, in print or on the stage.)

But, at a broader level, what's essentially at stake here is a *metamorphosis*. As we all know, Ovid's epic poem *The Metamorphoses* profoundly influenced the Bard's entire canon; it's specifically mentioned in two plays (*Cymbeline* and *Titus Andronicus*), while Ovid is called out by name in a third (*Love's Labor's Lost*). So the news I'm now sharing is, in at least one crucial sense, elementally Shakespearean.

Moreover, the notion of an inward reality overruling an outdated, exterior trapping would be well known to those who study Shakespeare's obsession with "inner truth" versus "outward show"—what scholars refer to as Shakespeare's Neoplatonism.

Maybe your response to all this is that it's just so much over-intellectualizing. (For me, it certainly wouldn't be the first time!). But there is still a core truth that remains.

By the mid-2010s, I was facing down that core truth. After a series of personal crises, I realized that I needed either to stop running from myself or find some other way to cease that incessant and increasingly self-destructive impulse to evade and conceal my own deeply-held feelings about who I actually am. I'd run out of any motivation or compulsion to continue avoiding myself. I was done shirking, done pretending.

That's when I returned to the words I'd used to describe my conundrum back when I was just three years old. "There's been a mistake," I told my astonished mother. "I'm a girl." It's funny how kids can sometimes describe things so starkly and plainly—and sometimes so pointedly truthfully, too. I needed to listen to that girl. She was onto something.

Between 2017 and 2020 I wrote a memoir (still unpublished) tracing a lifetime's worth of encounters with gender dysphoria, the clinical term describing the frustrations and anguish trans people experience in being what I call "misembodied." Then, reimagining that memoir in fictional form, I wrote a novel. I hope to publish it one day, too.

Today, however, I come to fellow Oxfordians and post-Stratfordians with the present announcement and a plea for open-mindedness. Transgender and nonbinary people, as with all too many queer folks of all stripes, regularly experience prejudice and intolerance in the workplace, in school, in the home, in the criminal justice system, in medical care, in our communities and in countries around the globe.

As seen from our more scholarly/literary perch, the grave ironies are at least twofold, in addition to the metamorphic and Neoplatonic notes above. First, it is hardly original to observe that Shakespeare is the ultimate artistic expression of all that it means to be human. Anthropologists recognize today how universal and timeless gender diversity is: the two-spirit traditions of numerous indigenous cultures of North America, the *muxe* of present-day Mexico, the *waria* of Indonesia, the *hijra* of India — to name just a few—all represent ancient traditions worldwide that recognize, and even celebrate, a culture's gender-nonconforming individuals.

Second, of course, any lover of Shakespeare knows how profoundly fluid was the Bard's grasp of gender and gender representation. Moreover, Oxfordians scarcely need reminding how camp and feminine their alternative Shakespeare candidate could at times be throughout his life and writings.

All of this makes a gender transition in our midst to be, in fact, a representation of something far more familiar than might have appeared at first glance.

In sum: A member of the Oxfordian movement today proclaims herself to be LGBTQ+ and proud of it. (My

wife, Penny, and our two children wholly support me in this; our family is only strengthened through my transition.) Diversity—anathema as some traditionalists might have reflexively presumed—fundamentally enriches our community.

Lastly, to any closeted LGBTQ+ readers reading these words who might be going through challenging times, I want to share that those PSAs are true. Things really do get better! It may take time and patience to get yourself to a place where you can fully share your own truth with the world. But you can get there! Please believe me when I say that finding and living as your own truest self is worth every effort you can expend.

All happinesse,
Margo Anderson

Margo Anderson (photo by Penny Leveritt)

[For those who'd like more information, I find WebMD's brief, medically peer-reviewed account of gender dysphoria and the trans experience to be evenhanded and informative: https://www.webmd.com/sex/gender-dysphoria]

SOF 2022 Video Contest Winners

The SOF's 2022 Video Contest, administered by Trustee Julie Sandys Bianchi, solicited videos to support the upcoming 400th anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio. Entrants were invited to submit a short video focusing on one of three categories pertaining to this vitally important book:

- Foreground: the machinery and mechanics of the 17th century book trade
- Background: promoters, "grand possessors," collectors, dedicatees and others
- Underground: coded references, allusions and the curious frontispiece of the Folio).

The winners—one in each category—were announced and their videos shown at the Farewell Banquet at the recent annual conference.

WINNERS:

Tom Price won the prize in the Foreground category with "Hark, the Fine First Folio Sings!"

Frank Lawler won in the Background category with "The Filthy Folio."

Christopher Carolan won in the Underground category with "Finding Shakespeare."

Each winner received $1,000 and a free SOF membership for 2023. All three winning videos, and some others that did not win, will be available for viewing soon on the SOF website.

Unpublished (but Unforgettable) Authorship Letters

by Kathryn Sharpe, chair, Data Preservation Committee

The fact that gatekeepers can, and do, block Oxfordian voices is nothing new. Since 1920, when J. Thomas Looney published *"Shakespeare" Identified*, our scholars routinely have their thoughtful, factual letters responding to magazine or news articles ignored. Important points made in unpublished letters should be part of our publications archive and accessible to future researchers. The SOF's Data Preservation Committee is collecting some of these letters to publish in the *Newsletter*, link from our website, and list in the SOAR database. We agree with SOF Trustee Ben August, who said, "I was wondering if we shouldn't just publish all these letters ourselves instead of letting them disappear. We can use social media and the SOF site to memorialize all the wonderful points being made as well as to illustrate the deafening silence from the other side."

We kick off this effort by publishing letters from Bryan H. Wildenthal and Elisabeth Waugaman, written in response to a *Washington Post* critique of the SOF Centennial Symposium on March 4, 2020, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. In a 300-word piece, book critic Ron Charles blithely dismissed the Oxfordian movement as "the weirdest and most tenacious conspiracy theory in English literature" and trivialized the authorship question as a "nonexistent mystery."

Bryan H. Wildenthal's letter to *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2020
(not published; revised and updated in December 2021 for independent publication)

The *Post*'s book critic, Ron Charles (*Washington Post Book Club Newsletter*, March 6, 2020), calls the Shakespeare authorship mystery "nonexistent," but the greatest conventional Shakespeare scholars do not agree. Samuel Schoenbaum conceded the "vertiginous" gap between the "sublimity" of the works and the "mundane ... documentary record" about the Stratford man. Sir Stanley Wells admitted that "despite the mass of evidence" available from his lifetime, "there is none that ... incontrovertibly identifies" him as the author of the works. Yet scholars have proven we have far more evidence for the literary careers of every other significant writer of that era.

Mr. Charles dismisses the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship symposium held at the National Press Club on March 4, 2020, celebrating the centennial of J. Thomas Looney's book *"Shakespeare" Identified*, as a bunch of religious cultists, equivalent to "an L. Ron Hubbard birthday party." We authorship doubters take the jab in good humor (we're used to such inane attacks). But doth Ron Charles protest too much? He mentions Walt Whitman and Mark Twain among the many great minds who have doubted the traditional authorship story —for centuries now! He could add Sigmund Freud, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry James, William James, Helen Keller, Malcolm X; the early 20th-century French literary scholar Abel Lefranc; presidential advisors William Elliott and Paul Nitze; film and theatre artists Orson Welles, Sir Charlie Chaplin, Sir John Gielgud, Sir Tyrone Guthrie (founder of Canada's Stratford Festival), Sam Shepard, Vanessa Redgrave, Sir Derek Jacobi, and Sir Mark Rylance; historians Hugh Trevor-Roper and David McCullough; and five US Supreme Court justices spanning the ideological spectrum.

When so many reasonable doubts have persisted—*for so long*—might there be *something* rotten in Denmark? Mr. Charles mocks us doubters for being sparse in numbers and thinking "time is on our side," snarkily concluding: "Four hundred years is nothing to the faithful"—an odd way to describe *skeptics*. The reality is that Mr. Charles is among many who cling to a mostly faith-based traditional legend. Yes, it's true, doubters are currently few and the faith-based majority seems large (most are unfamiliar with the evidence on the issue, which most academics refuse to study)—and since when, historically, has crowd size been a reliable measure of who's right?

Anyway, we're glad Mr. Charles attended the symposium and got at least a few things right in his flippant commentary. As he says, doubts have indeed been "tenacious" (for centuries!) that the deeply learned and widely experienced author "Shakespeare" was somehow an actor and businessman from an illiterate family in Stratford who never had a chance to get a university-level education or travel outside England.

Is it all just a "weird conspiracy theory"? Conspiracies do happen. I recall the *Post* investigated one called "Watergate." But there's actually no need to imagine any vast conspiracy about "Shakespeare," which may have been merely a pen name, perhaps an open secret (a polite public fiction?), during what scholars agree was a Golden Age of Pseudonyms. Mr. Charles concedes the "historical content" of the symposium with many "Elizabethan documents." This documented historical evidence proves that decades before the Stratfordian theory was first promoted in the 1623 First Folio (posthumously and with many puzzling features and ambiguities), dozens of doubts and hints were published indicating that someone else was the author (as discussed in my 2019 book, *Early Shakespeare Authorship Doubts*).

So go ahead, make fun of Looney's name if your inner child can't resist. But much evidence unknown to

that thoughtful scholar in 1920 has dramatically corroborated the thesis of his insightful book, including hundreds of uncanny linkages between the Shakespearean works and the life, early poetry, private letters, and personal Bible of Edward de Vere (Earl of Oxford). Just one example: a 1595 published reference (noticed in modern times only in 2013), linking "Sweet Shak-speare" to a very odd phrase ("courte-deare-verse") forming a perfect anagram: "our de Vere a secret."

Sincerely,
Bryan H. Wildenthal
Professor of Law Emeritus
First Vice President, Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship

Elisabeth Waugaman's letter to *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2020 (not published):

Greetings, Ron,

I came to the Shakespeare authorship question from a very different route than most—from the French as opposed to the English point of view. I have a PhD in French medieval lit. When my Oxfordian husband asked me to look at the French influence in the plays, I was stunned by what I found. The French influence is never addressed by traditional English scholars because Shaksper of Stratford did not know French; however, the author of the plays certainly did. In *The French Renaissance in England* (1910), the highly respected English scholar Sir Sidney Lee noted that Shakespeare coined more words based on French than any other English Renaissance writer. In 1918, two years before Looney, the well-known French Renaissance scholar Abel Lefranc published a two-volume study of the French influence in Shakespeare—*Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare"*....[*Behind the Mask of "William Shakespeare"*...], in which he examines French locations, literary works, politics, history, and royalty—a mass of information not available to anyone who had never spent time in France and did not know the language. Lefranc thought the author was most probably the Earl of Derby, Oxford's son-in-law. Naturally, Lefranc's book has been totally ignored by English scholars despite the fact it enriches our understanding of the plays enormously, reveals Shakespeare to be a Renaissance man rather than the "monument to Saxendom" "created by Nature," to be "worshiped," as Thomas Carlyle admonishes in his enormously popular *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841), which is still influential to this day. The Folger has a very famous painting of the nativity—but the baby in the manger is Shakespeare. This ethos does make questioning the authorship a religious question, which helps explain why that imagery is used to attack people who have questions about authorship.

Even though Carlyle strangely asserted that you "do not meddle with Shakespeare," people have been meddling with him since the 16th century—asking who Shakespeare really was. The question is not going away. In fact, shockingly, the "meddlers," "doubters," "conspiracists," are becoming more and more numerous. How ridiculous is it to think a major playwright could exist under a nom de plume? Molière, the great French playwright often described as the French Shakespeare, was a nom de plume. His real name was Poquelin. Marcy North has written an entire book on anonymity in the Renaissance because it was so prevalent.

If you take off the blinders of what Shaksper could not have known and just look at the plays, there is a new world of information hiding in plain sight. More and more academics are moving towards a multiple authorship theory, which was first suggested by Delia Bacon in 1857—a theory for which she was mercilessly mocked despite the support of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. They are even now saying Shakespeare knew French, read French books, knew the latest French royal gossip, etc.—despite 350 years of adamantly denying he knew French.

You are absolutely correct, it does take a long time for accepted ideas to change. If you want to increase your enjoyment of Shakespeare, read Lefranc. Frank Lawler's translation of Abel Lefranc's *Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare" (Behind the Mask of "William Shakespeare")* is available on Amazon. If that's too much, consider looking at *100 Reasons Shake-speare Was the Earl of Oxford* by Hank Whittemore. Even if you don't agree, it will enrich your understanding of the bard's œuvre—whoever he was. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Elisabeth Waugaman, PhD
New Directions Writing Program
Washington Center for Psychoanalysis

P.S. To be fair, I was wondering if you would allow comments, like mine, to be seen in answer to your post.

Next, we hope to collect and share unpublished letters responding to Elizabeth Winkler's authorship article in the July 2019 issue of *The Atlantic*.

If you wrote a well-developed, unpublished reply an important article related to the SAQ—especially one with pertinent information for the Oxfordian cause—please submit it to be considered for publication, to *communications@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org*.

In Memoriam: Warren Hope (1944-2022)

by Bob Meyers

Warren Hope, former editor of the *Newsletter* and co-author of *The Shakespeare Controversy*, died May 23, 2022, as the result of lung disease. A true scholar and man of letters, his life's vocation included research, writing, editing, publishing, and teaching.

Born in Philadelphia in 1944, he began his higher education at Community College of Philadelphia, where he was taught by Dr. A. Bronson Feldman, an influential figure in his life both intellectually and personally; Hope later became his literary executor.

Hope later attended Temple University, earning a BA, MA and PhD in British Literature. His dissertation was on Scottish poet Norman Cameron. He went on to write the definitive biography of Cameron and recently completed a revised edition, *Norman Cameron: His Life, Work and Letters* (Greenwich Exchange).

A Shakespearean scholar, he was fascinated by questions surrounding the authorship of Shakespeare's plays and became a devout Oxfordian. As a result, he was involved for decades with the Shakespeare Oxford Society, now the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. To that end, he served as editor of the *Newsletter* from 1981 to 1984, and later co-wrote *The Shakespeare Controversy* with Kim Holston, published in 1992 and 2009 by McFarland Publishers, a book which explores and analyzes the authorship question. In a 2011 online review, scholar Roger Stritmatter wrote, "If you are looking for a serious study of the history of the authorship question, this is the book—along with Ogburn's The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality—to read."

Hope wrote about three dozen articles and book reviews for Oxfordian publications between 1978 and 2010, most of them for the *Newsletter* and *The Elizabethan Review*. He was also a published poet; several volumes of his poetry have appeared in print, culminating in his collection, *Adam's Thoughts in Winter 1970-2000*. He published biographical study guides on Robert Frost, Philip Larkin and Seamus Heaney for the Greenwich Exchange. A publisher himself, he produced a poetry newsletter entitled "Drastic Measures" and founded Fifth Season Press, publishing work that he felt deserved readership.

He served in the United States Air Force from 1963 to 1967, including time as a medic in Vietnam. He was a long-time employee of the Institutes, an insurance education organization in Malvern, Pennsylvania. He retired in 1999 and went on to pursue a second career as a professor. He taught at several Philadelphia area universities, including Temple University, University of the Sciences and Holy Family University.

Warren Hope is survived by a daughter and stepson. Memorial gifts in his honor may be made to Delaware County Literacy Council, where he volunteered: Delaware County Literacy Council, 2217 Providence Avenue, Chester, PA 19013 or delcoliteracy.org/donate.

In Memoriam: Margaret Robson (1928-2022)

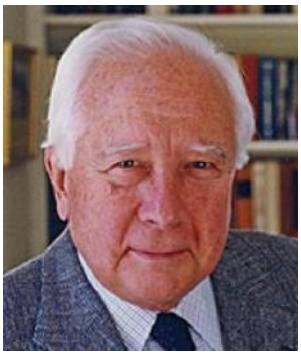
by Bonner Miller Cutting

Margaret Wood Doty Robson died July 29, 2022, at her home in North Palm Beach, Florida, at the age of 93. Born in Daytona Beach, Florida, and raised in Oelwein, Iowa, Margaret graduated in 1950 from the Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa). Returning to Florida, she taught at a junior high school and soon met and married architect Norman N. Robson. She left her teaching job to raise a family and resumed her career in 1968, serving as an instructional television teacher and teaching language development until 1990 in the Department of Exceptional Student Education.

Both Margaret and Norman Robson, who predeceased her, were longtime members of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and the De Vere Society. The Oxfordian friends with whom Margaret corresponded included author Verily Anderson (*The Veres of Castle Hedingham*), Derran Charlton, and Ruth and M.D. Miller. Margaret organized a Shakespeare authorship study group in North Palm Beach, which met regularly for many years. She was an avid collector of Oxfordian materials and had an extensive authorship library.

In addition to her authorship activities, Margaret was President of the Board of Trustees of the South Florida Science Museum and State President of Florida Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Margaret and Norman were founding members of the Unitarian Fellowship of Palm Beaches in 1954.

Margaret is survived by four children, ten grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.



In Memoriam: David McCullough (1933-2022)

David McCullough, one of America's most popular historians, died August 7, 2022, at his home in Hingham, Mass., at the age of 89. He was best known for his popular, and highly readable, books such as *The Johnstown Flood* (1968), *The Great Bridge* (1972), *Truman* (1992), *John Adams* (2001), and *The Wright Brothers* (2015). He won Pulitzer Prizes for his biographies of Presidents Truman and John Adams. He was also well known to television audiences, serving as host of PBS's *The American Experience* from 1988 to 1999, and as principal narrator of several of the TV documentaries produced by Ken Burns, including "The Civil War" and "The Statue of Liberty."

He will be especially remembered by Oxfordians for the Foreword he contributed to Charlton Ogburn's influential book, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth & the Reality* (1984; second edition 1992). In it he revealed that he had met Ogburn almost twenty years earlier, when he first learned of Ogburn's interest in Shakespeare. "He was absolutely spellbinding," McCullough wrote of that encounter. "The case he made against the man from Stratford-on-Avon seemed to me astonishing, overwhelming, and the more he went on the more impressed I was by both his penetrating mind and his phenomenal grasp of the subject. . . . Now comes *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* and this brilliant, powerful book is a major event for everyone who cares about Shakespeare. . . . Nothing comparable has ever been published. . . . The strange, difficult, contradictory man who emerges as the real Shakespeare, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is not just plausible but fascinating and wholly believable. It is hard to imagine anyone who reads this book with an open mind ever seeing Shakespeare or his works in the same way again."

David McCullough graduated from Yale in 1955 with a major in English literature. He worked for several magazines in the late 1950s, and was hired by the U.S. Information Agency in 1961. After the success of *The Johnstown Flood* in 1968, he focused full-time on writing books. "History matters. That's what I've tried to convey," he said in a 2017 interview. "It's essential to understand our nation's story, the good and the bad, the high accomplishments and the skulduggery. And so much of our story has yet to be told." In another interview, he observed that "Discovery comes most often not from finding something unknown or long hidden, but from seeing afresh what has been on the table all along," and described himself as a "foreign correspondent whose task was to report, not from another country, but from the past."

Please consider . .

* No more annual dues! Special gifts! Prices reflect Edward de Vere's lifespan from 1550-1604 ($1550 for individual, $1604 for family) https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/product/membership/

George Peele's Letter: Who Wrote It?

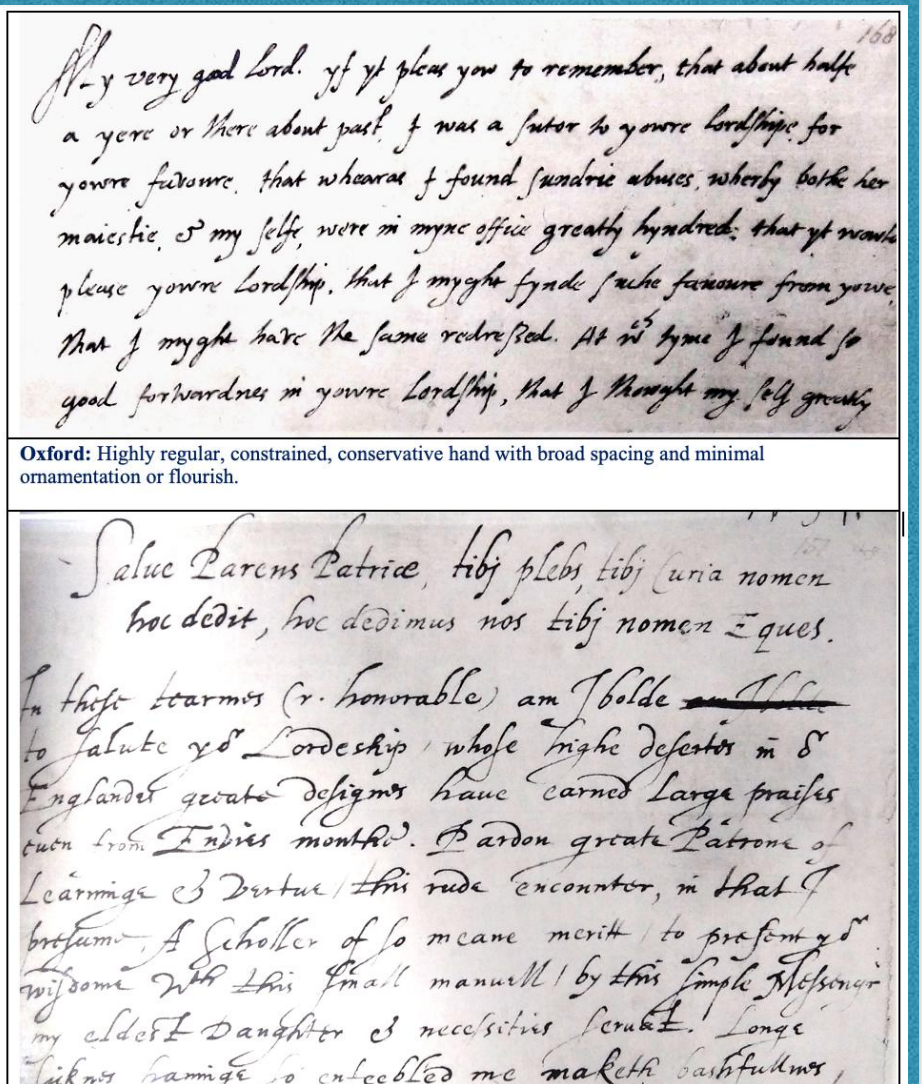
by Roger Stritmatter

In a recent article, "Who Wrote George Peele's 'Only Extant Letter?'" (*Newsletter*, Winter 2022) Robert Prechter suggests that the Peele letter was written by the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford. I respectfully disagree.

First, let's review some principles and best practices for forensic handwriting analysis, the branch of handwriting analysis that deals with how to determine whether any two samples of handwriting are by the same or different writers.[1] After extensive inquiry and debate, forensic handwriting analysis is recognized as a science by American courts, in part because studies show that trained analysts make only about one-sixth as many errors as amateurs.

I. Search for and study the prior scholarship and analysis

W.W. Greg's 1925 book, *English Literary Autographs 1550-1650*, remains the most authoritative and comprehensive study of the handwriting of early modern English literary writers. In my 2002 University of Massachusetts dissertation, *The Marginalia of Edward de Vere's Geneva Bible*, I included an appendix (prepared with the assistance of Mark K. Anderson) comparing the available letters from the annotations in the de Vere Bible to the handwriting of Oxford in his letters, and compared both to exemplars from two other contemporary poet-playwrights, John Lyly (Greg XVII) and George Peele. Anderson and I chose Lyly and Peele for comparison precisely because their samples correspond more closely to Oxford's than any others in Greg's book. But resemblance is not identity, and the close comparisons in the tables of my dissertation appendix (pp. 517-537) show, for many reasons, that Oxford's hand is not the same as Peele's. Some further reasons are explained below, with the advantage now of better images of original materials. It is unfortunate that Prechter was unaware of, or did not consult, this work.



Oxford: Highly regular, constrained, conservative hand with broad spacing and minimal ornamentation or flourish.

Peele: Large flourishes often extending far below the baseline e.g. *k*, *g*) or in reverse (counterclockwise) arcades (e.g., *d*), and some letters (e.g., *s*) showing strong cursive elements.

Figure 1

II. Fit the quality of the illustrations used in the argument to the seriousness of the inquiry

One problem with Prechter's treatment is that the quality of the reproductions he used is often insufficient to support his sweeping generalizations. Accurate forensic analysis requires access to original documents when possible, and if not possible, reproductions must be of sufficient resolution and clarity to draw conclusions based on observable analysis. An argument unsupported by visible evidence is an argument from authority, either explicitly or covertly so.

In keeping with this principle, note **Figure 1**, showing two reasonably high-resolution images of the samples of Peele and Oxford reproduced in Greg's 1925 book. The reader may already observe several generic discrepancies between Oxford's hand and Peele's.

Even at this level of comparison, Peele's hand appears to be more expansive and flourished and Oxford's more conservative. However, these are very general terms of comparison and are not sufficiently particular in their descriptions to furnish proof.

III. Use multiple exemplars of letters for comparison

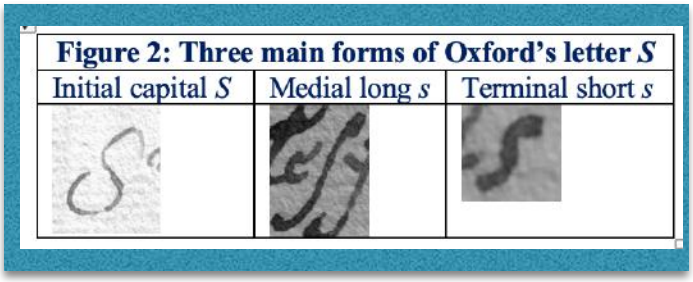
Samples from all writers exhibit, to a greater or lesser degree, **natural variation**—a term of art in forensic study that describes how particular letters and combinations of letters (exemplars) deviate from their statistical norms within the known population of that writer's production. Showing multiple exemplars is necessary to draw reliable conclusions about range of variation and determine if this variation matches or diverges in any two samples used for comparison. A systematic approach that balances the search for common patterns with close observation of potentially relevant differences is necessary. At least half a dozen letters or combinations of letters should be extracted for comparison, with at least three exemplars of each. A positive identification cannot be made on the basis of a few characteristics that are alleged to be identical when other forms in the sample that are discrepant have been ignored.

Instead, Prechter seems to cherrypick a handful of letters, e.g. capital *E*, which he believes are sufficient to demonstrate that the Earl of Oxford is responsible for the letter signed "George Peele" that is accepted by Greg and other authorities as by Peele, not Oxford. I believe that the evidence contradicts Prechter's conclusion and confirms Greg's.

The letter *S* is a good place to start, because of its various forms and large range of variation, both natural and systematic. **Figure 2** illustrates the three main forms this letter takes in the Earl of Oxford's surviving handwriting samples.

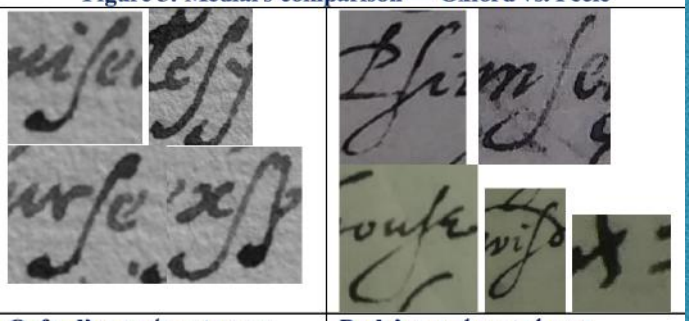
Figure 2: Three main forms of Oxford's letter *S*

Initial capital *S*	Medial long *s*	Terminal short *s*



Compare Oxford's medial long *s* to Peele's (**Figure 3**). Oxford almost always uses a classic long *s* in the medial position. His use of the short *s* is confined to the terminal position, where he almost always uses it. By contrast, Peele consistently prefers a cursive long *s* or (rarely) a small *s* in a medial position.

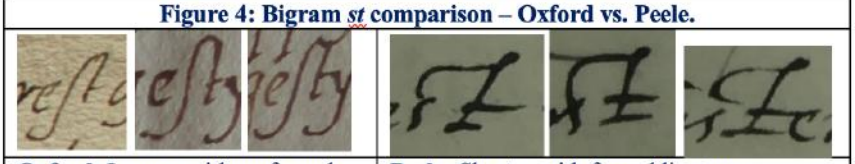
Figure 3: Medial *s* comparison — Oxford vs. Peele



Oxford's are almost never "cursive" or small in form.	**Peele's** are almost always "cursive" and sometimes small in form.

Bigrams (combinations of two adjacent letters) reveal characteristic forms of connection between letters that are also subject to various individualized patterns (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Bigram *st* comparison – Oxford vs. Peele.



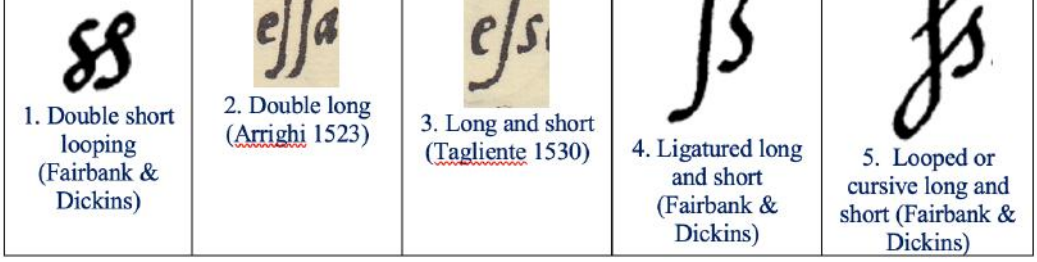
Oxford: Long *s*, with no formal ligature.	**Peele:** Short *s*, with formal ligature.

These bigrams illustrate dramatic differences in construction and emphasis. Not only is the letter *s* formed differently, but the form of the connector and the styling and emphasis of the *t* exemplars are distinct and cannot possibly be by the same writer. Oxford's bigram uses two complete and disconnected strokes starting with a long *s*. Peele begins his combination with a small *s* and then joins it with a ligature to the *t*. Peele's *t* is also different in multiple ways from Oxford's: in every instance it has a broad foot at the base, an equally broad crossbar, and a loop at the top where the ligature crosses over itself before descending to form the descender of the *t*.

The double-*s* can be equally revealing. In Tudor Italic handwriting, it is a complex and highly variable construction that has at least five major subtypes identified by handwriting analysts such as Fairbank and Dickins in *The Italic Hand in Tudor Cambridge* (1962) (**Figure 5**).

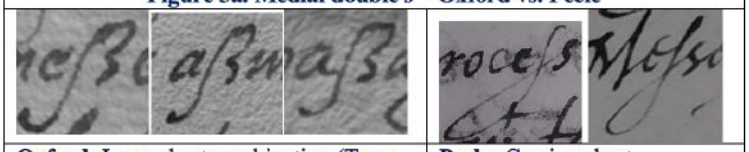
Oxford consistently uses Types 3 and 4, a long and short combination, with or without a ligature. By the 1590s, these forms were becoming archaic and had been superseded by the looped or cursive form joined to a short *s* as seen in Type 5 (**Figure 5a**) in two exemplars of Peele's hand.

Figure 5. Five main types of double *s* in Tudor hands



1. Double short looping (Fairbank & Dickins)
2. Double long (Arrighi 1523)
3. Long and short (Tagliente 1530)
4. Ligatured long and short (Fairbank & Dickins)
5. Looped or cursive long and short (Fairbank & Dickins)

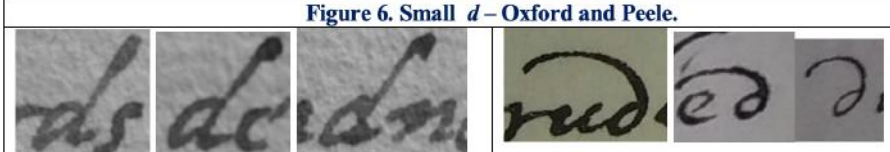
Figure 5a. Medial double *s* – Oxford vs. Peele



Oxford: Long-short combination (Type 4, above) connected at the top

Peele: Cursive-short combination (Type 5, above) connected at the bottom

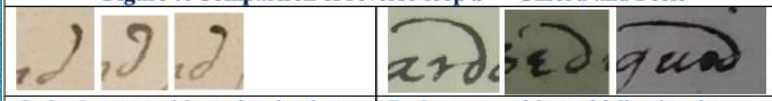
Figure 6. Small *d* – Oxford and Peele.



Oxford: Straight-backed *d* predominates.

Peele: Reverse loop *d* predominates.

Figure 7. Comparison of reverse-loop *d* — Oxford and Peele



Oxford: reversed-loop *d* under the stress of high emotion (less than 10% of total Oxford sample). The forms are truncated and rarely extend even one letter back to the left.

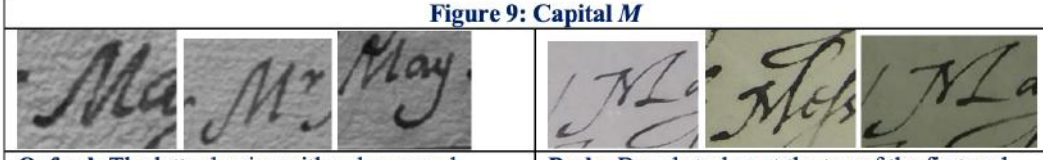
Peele: reversed-loop *d* following the norm (more than 90% of total Peele sample). The forms are sweeping and terminate as many as three letters to the left.

Figure 8: Small *k*

Oxford: The *k* descender is constrained and does not jut out under subsequent letters.

Peele: The *k* descender juts out under subsequent letters.

Figure 9: Capital *M*



Oxford: The letter begins with a downward stroke that ends usually with a slight clockwise loop. It is followed by three strokes (down-up-down) concluding in a counterclockwise hook or loop.

Peele: Broad strokes at the top of the first and bottom of the last line clearly distinguish the exemplars from Oxford's. The expansive foot follows the same pattern seen above (Figure 4) in the exemplars of the letter *t*.

As with his single medial *s*, Peele consistently favors a looping or cursive initial *s* when forming a double-*s*. This double letter is formed using only one continuous stroke, a different pattern of hand motions from Oxford's, which are usually composed in three strokes —one for each letter and a third for the ligature, as indicated by the thickening of the lines where two strokes overlap.

These distinctive variations in the formation of the letter *s* in its several permutations including bigrams can be duplicated for many other letters in the two samples. Oxford's usual *d* forms a straight back at about 110 degrees, terminating in a clockwise hook at the top, but Peele prefers a reverse loop *d* that hooks strongly back, counterclockwise, to the left (**Figure 6**). The hand motions involved in creating these two forms could not be more distinct.

IV. Test one's assumptions and prejudices

Under conditions of constraint (handwriting that is very small, written in the margins of books, or written under the influence of great emotion)[2] Oxford sometimes does employ the reverse-loop *d*. In this case, including exemplars of these forms (**Figure 7**) strengthens the argument distinguishing Oxford from Peele by showing that even when Oxford does employ such forms, they differ from those used by Peele.

Over time the analyst will observe that handwriting is composed less of discrete letters than of combinations of types of strokes that tend to replicate themselves across various letter forms. Oxford's letter *k* is distinguished by a very modest termination which often meets or runs into the next letter, especially when it is an *e*. By contrast (**Figure 8**), the termination on Peele's *k* forms a sweeping flourish that extends out under the successive letter(s), even in the *ke* combination.

This expansive motion in the formation of Peele's *k* replicates the dynamic motions seen in the sweeping backward loop of his *d* and the cursive form of his long *s*. Such individual elements, when repeated in various letters, support the generalization made above in **Figure 1** that Peele shows a more expansive, and Oxford a more conservative, hand.

Finally, let us examine the capital *M* (**Figure 9**). Capitals are often better points of comparison than lower case, because they are larger, often involve more strokes, and have a wider range of features that can exhibit structural patterns of consistency (indicating shared writership) or variation (indicating more than one writer).

The description included in the figures explains the evident discrepancy in the visual evidence of the comparison of these letters. Again we see that Peele's hand is more expansively dynamic than Oxford's, making much freer use of large ornamental strokes. In contrast, Oxford's hand is precise, controlled and aesthetically balanced.

V. Examine as many letters as needed to form a definitive conclusion

If natural variation is the variety in how letters are formed within a body of writing by a single writer, systematic variation is the type of difference that indicates that two samples are by different writers. The above examples show variation of this second type. Were the evidence more ambiguous, further comparisons might be warranted or even required. As it is, examining these eight letters and bigrams supports the conclusion that W.W. Greg was not mistaken in 1925 when he included documents written by both Peele and Oxford without raising any question about the possibility that the two men were somehow the same or that one was responsible for writing the letters of the other.

Endnotes

[1] For a classic introduction to the study, see Huber and Headrick (2018 2nd ed). Although technologically obsolete, Osborn (1929) remains the most important study of general forensic method. Srihari et al (2002) was a landmark work in establishing the scientific validity of forensic analysis, and Tom Davis's "The Practice of Handwriting Identification" (2007) is the most sophisticated consideration of handwriting analysis from the perspective of the humanities scholar. (See bibliography.)

[2] E.g., Oxford's 1583 "I am that I am" letter to Burghley, from which these exemplars are drawn.

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Robert Prechter Replies to Roger Stritmatter

My two-part case for Oxford's authorship of George Peele's January 1596 gift note to Lord Burghley (*Newsletter*, Winter 2022 and Summer 2022) comprises ten solid elements:

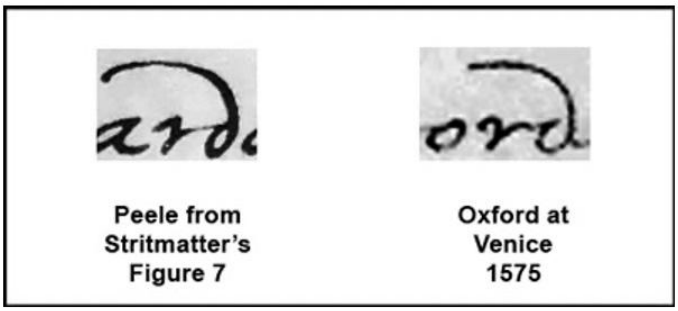
1. Peele's gift note is packed with Shakespearean language. (So is the ms. of *Anglorum Feriae*.)
2. The addressee of the note was the Earl of Oxford's father-in-law.
3. The note was delivered by the writer's "eldest daughter." Peele's father's records show that George was childless through 1585, rendering the orthodox scenario virtually impossible.
4. Oxford had the required three daughters; his eldest, Elizabeth, age 20, was old enough to be an emissary.
5. Elizabeth was on hand for the task. She was visiting Oxford at Hackney in August 1595, while her husband stayed behind with Lord Burghley.
6. The note's salutation plays on the Latin word for *grandfather*. The addressee was Elizabeth's grandfather, to whom she would have delivered the note upon her return home.
7. Peele's note states that he was ill and unable to travel. In personal letters dated August 1595 and June 1599, Oxford stated that he was ill and unable to travel.
8. Oxford's handwriting matches Peele's in numerous ways, most notably their letters *E*, *sT* and *L*, whose distinctive constructions are rare to nonexistent in the other 140 handwritten items reproduced in W.W. Greg's *Literary Autographs*.
9. The signature on the note is the same as that on Peele's receipt for producing *Dido* for the entertainment of Count Laski in 1583, a performance to which Will Shaksper would never have been admitted. Shakespeare's Hamlet reminisces about that very performance.
10. In 1575, the Earl of Oxford signed a permission slip (discovered in 2015) to visit the Doge's palace in Venice. He decorated it with a signature flourish resembling a tornado. Peele's receipt for *Dido* and his note to Burghley feature that same unique flourish.

Roger Stritmatter's rebuttal addresses only element #8, leaving the rest of them undisturbed. He accuses me of "sweeping generalizations," yet the list above comprises one straightforward fact after another.

In his challenge, Stritmatter alleges that less-than-pristine reproductions from old documents equate to the dreaded argument from authority. Then he presses an argument from authority, declaring that editor W.W. Greg came to a "conclusion" about the authorship of Peele's letter. Like everyone else, however, Greg simply took the signature at face value and made no effort whatsoever to examine the matter.

Stritmatter's charge that my argument is "unsupported by visual evidence" is strange given that my articles present twenty-three images, fourteen of which directly serve the argument. Oxfordian Geoff Williamson has since pointed out that on a document signed in 1603, Oxford penned another version of the distinctive tornado-shaped flourish that he used in 1575 and which Peele used in 1583 and 1596.

Stritmatter complains that I cherry-picked pictures, then cherry-picks his own. Let's examine some of them. In his Figures 6 and 7, Stritmatter correctly observes that Oxford usually employed a straight-backed *d*; he then



Peele from Stritmatter's Figure 7 — Oxford at Venice 1575

states that Oxford never used the "sweeping…reversed-loop *d*" whose leftward arc terminates one to three letters to the left. On the contrary, the permission slip that Oxford filled out in Venice—reproduced in full in my second article—displays that very form. As you can see in the illustration above, Peele's *ard* and Oxford's *ord* are very close to identical. (The mark to the right of Oxford's *d* is not a tail, but the start of the next letter, *e*.)

Stritmatter's argument for *k* in his Figure 8 is likewise based on forms that are similar except for an elongated stroke at the bottom. Oxford made elongated strokes at the bottom of letters when writing grandly, as in the Venice slip (*Newsletter*, Summer 2022). In Stritmatter's Figure 3, the *s*'s in the center pictures are identical. His Figure 4 is misleadingly selective, ignoring the array of compatible *sT*'s that I showed in Figure 4 of my second article. In his Figure 5a, although only one set is of the cursive variety, Peele and Oxford both use the "long and short" double *s* as opposed to the "double short" or "double long" form. Their second *s*'s are virtually the same, but different from the one in the generic example provided in Stritmatter's Figure 5. So, Peele's and Oxford's second *s* differs from the experts' standard *in the same way*. These proffered counterexamples, then, are either null or equivocal.

To be sure, there are some differences among the samples. So what? A person's handwriting can differ depending on the purpose—such as business correspondence versus gift notes and poetry—as several examples in Greg's *Literary Autographs* demonstrate. A pertinent example is the crabbed lettering in Oxford's tin

letters versus the decorative hand displayed in the Venice permission slip. Moreover, in the case at hand, Oxford (I submit) was deliberately posing as someone else. Playing the role of a lofty court poet might well incentivize a person to craft a few compatibly elaborate letter forms.

As Stritmatter himself conceded, George Peele's handwriting (purportedly along with Lyly's) "*correspond[s] more closely to Oxford's than any others in Greg's book*." As my second article demonstrates, Peele's language from the 1590s also *corresponds more closely to Shakespeare's* than one finds even in Oxford's early poems. These two observations fit together.

After reading my work on Peele's note, a fellow Oxfordian wrote cheerfully to say, "Case closed!" You are invited to review my two articles and see if you agree. You are also welcome to view "George Peele, His Only Surviving Letter," presented to the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, posted on YouTube and recently augmented. If you care to explore further, the 71-page George Peele chapter in my online book, *Oxford's Voices,* reviews Peele's suspect biography and discusses all seventeen of his extant compositions.

Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Annual Meeting Report

by Bonner Miller Cutting, Secretary

The annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was called to order by President Robert Meyers at 10:00 AM Pacific time on Sunday, September 25, 2022. Forty-one members were signed in at conference room of the Ashland Hills Hotel and Suites, and many were in attendance via the Zoom call. President Meyers declared a quorum and began the meeting by asking attendees to look over the committee reports that were distributed.

Board members Ben August and Dorothea Dickerman reported that the SOF membership has now reached 548.

Cheryl Eagan-Donavan, chair of the Oxfordian of the Year Committee, reported on the selection for this year's award. Vice president Don Rubin proposed restructuring the relationship between the committees and the Board of Trustees to facilitate better communication and streamline the organization. He noted that this may necessitate some changes in the by-laws.

Shelly Maycock, chair of the First Folio Committee and the Education Committee, submitted a written report noting the issues due to COVID-19 and organizational structure. The main goals of the First Folio Committee are to plan for the First Folio's 400th anniversary celebration at the 2023 SOF conference (which will be in New Orleans) and develop the SOF website to promote the Committee's materials. Maycock cited the SOF's participation and positive reception at the 2019 conference of the National Council of Teachers of

English (NCTE); the Education Committee will pursue this again, now that issues with conferences and COVID-19 are being resolved. Educational outreach also includes strategies to promote Roger Stritmatter's *Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook* (a new edition of which has been published) along with additional materials to introduce students in grades 6-12 to Oxfordian readings of the most frequently taught plays.

In her report of the Data Preservation Committee, chair Kathryn Sharpe went over its many projects, made possible by the active support of committee members Bill Boyle, Michael Dudley, Catherine Hatinguais, Ron Roffel, Renee Euchner, Terry Deer, James Warren, Jennifer Newton, Pam Varilone and Bob Meyers. Boyle, Dudley and Hatinguais collaborated on a scholarly paper to set out the reforms needed at the Library of Congress Name Authority and Subject Headings Files (see page 32). If taken, these measures will provide better access to books and articles related to the authorship question. In addition, the DPC is seeking a permanent home for the expanding collection of Oxfordian books, papers, and articles now held by the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library (NESOL). Earlier this year NESOL signed a partnership agreement with the Internet Archive (IA) to allow it to directly upload digitized materials to the IA's Lending Library. Its SOAR database now contains over 8,400 records covering a century of Oxfordian research. A downloadable preservation guide is being developed, and Oxfordian interviews are being conducted to maintain a living record of the Oxfordian movement.

Concern was expressed by an SOF member about the status and whereabouts of Oxfordian books donated in the 1990s to the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation, then located at the University of Mississippi. Gary Goldstein was asked to draft a proposal to follow up on this matter with the Gertrude C. Ford Foundation. Outreach to survivors of Elizabeth Sears, an early Oxfordian author, was also discussed.

SOF Treasurer Richard Foulke gave the Treasurer's Report. He reviewed the details of the revenues, expenses, assets and liabilities along with the balance totals in each category. Revenues in 2021 were $86,263, an 8% growth over 2020. Expenditures were $77,323, resulting in an $8,940 increase in funds. The motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was made and seconded. It passed unanimously.

Reporting on the Communications Committee, SOF President Bob Meyers provided updated statistics for website visits and podcasts. Since its inception, the SOF website has had over one million views from people in over 200 countries. Between September 2021 and September 2022, of the 484 articles and topics posted on the SOF website, the homepage has had over 30,000 views, and the "18 Reasons Why Oxford Was Shakespeare" was watched the most, with 14,559 views. Meyers further noted that the "Don't Quill the Messenger" podcasts are no longer sponsored or financed by the SOF, due to the lack of a contract renewal agreement with Steven Sabel. Meyers provided a list of books being marketed by the SOF, the total number of units sold, and the royalty income. Gary Goldstein, editor of *The Oxfordian*, explained that there has been a 50% increase in sales of *The Oxfordian* journal between 2020 and 2021 and gave several possible reasons for this.

Conference Committee Chair Don Rubin gave a detailed report on the Spring Symposium held on April 9, 2022. The Zoom Seminar had 320 registrants from sixteen countries, and the cost was approximately $2,500. The two papers on the First Folio were timely, and Alex McNeil's introductory talk, "Shakespeare 101," was specifically crafted for new authorship audiences. Ben August gave a preview of the new Zoom event, "The Blue Boar Tavern," which was developed for members only. Rubin summarized the difficulties in planning for the 2022 Ashland Conference, with the lingering uncertainties of the COVID pandemic. It was projected that the conference would break even with about fifty registrants; fortunately, more than seventy persons registered for the in-person conference, and many others paid for a live-streaming video feed. Rubin hoped that future conferences will provide a similar "hybrid" of in-person presentations, prerecorded videos presentations, and live-streaming.

Bonner Cutting, chair of the Nominations Committee, announced the official slate of nominees for the Board of Trustees and the office of President, and read the biographies of Earl Showerman, Richard Foulke and Ben August. As there were no opposing candidates (a petition candidate withdrew in late August), all three were elected by acclamation for three-year terms as Trustees, and Earl Showerman was elected by acclamation for a one-year term as President.

Bob Meyers gave additional remarks, noting the recent death of Warren Hope (see page 15). He thanked outgoing Trustee Julie Bianchi for her service on the BOT and her work to develop the SOF Video Contest. He asked the attendees for announcements, comments, questions and suggestions, of which there were many. The meeting was adjourned by President Earl Showerman.

John Shakspere's Grant of Arms: Three Curious Aspects (Part One)

by Joseph Hanaway and John Milnes Baker

Introduction

John Shakspere (c.1531-1601) of Stratford-upon-Avon was the father of Will Shakspere (1564-1616), the reputed dramatist "William Shakespeare." In the 1570s John Shakspere petitioned an officer of the College of Arms for a coat of arms, but the application was never completed. In 1596, however, his son Will revived his father's dormant appeal and succeeded in achieving the arms for his father. This confirmed John's status as a "gentleman" because of his civic roles, but now his son Will could be styled "gentleman" as well, although technically not until his father's death.[1] The subject of John Shakspere's coat of arms raises several puzzling questions. We will examine three of them:

1) The protocol for seeking a coat of arms, the Officers of Arms involved and the terminology used for labeling an achievement of arms in late 16th century England;
2) The 1596 Draft Grants I and II and Letters Patent for John *Shakespeare* and the College of Arms York Herald's challenge to their validity;
3) The line drawings and blazons for John Shakspere's arms in Draft Grants I and II.

SHAKspere vs. *SHAKEspeare*

Before we begin, it is critical to understand that the family name was not *Shakespeare*. The most common spelling of the family name in official Stratford records was *Shak*spere. Other variations were *Shagsper, Shaxpere, Shakspeyer, Shaksbere, Shaxberd,* etc. John Shakspere could not write his name. He "signed his name with a mark, as did several other town officials."[2] John *Shak*spere's name was typically spelled with the first syllable as some variation of *SHAX*. This is confirmed in the numerous examples of his name in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church records as well as in the municipal records found in the Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection.[3]

There are thirty entries in the Stratford Holy Trinity Church's christening, marriage and burial records of the Shakspere family. The entry for Will's daughter Susanna's christening in 1583 was the *only* instance in which the name was randomly spelled "*Shake*speare." However, when she was married twenty years later, her maiden name was recorded as *Shaxpere.*[4]

The Holy Trinity Church website, apparently bowing to commercial expedience, simply changed the spelling of the family name to "Shakespeare." However, the record states that Will was christened on April 26, 1564, *Gulielmus filius Johannes Shaksper(e)*—not "Gulielmus, filius Johannes Shakespeare." And he was buried as *Will. Shakspere gent*—not "Will Shakespeare, Gent" as so stated on the website.

The only examples of Will Shakspere's writing are six scrawled signatures—three on legal documents and three on his will. There are five different spellings: *Shakp, Shakspe(r), Shaksper, Shakspere* (twice) and *Shakspeare.* Not one example has the letter ***e*** in the middle. (Indeed, there is evidence that those "signatures" were made by clerks, not by Will himself. See Matt Hutchinson, "The Slippery Slope of Shakspere's 'Signatures,'" *The Oxfordian* 23 [2021], 81).

As there continued to be random spellings in the Stratford records and in William Dethick's two Draft Grants in 1596 and 1599, it is apparent that there was never more than a random phonetic spelling of the Stratford family's name well into the 17th and even the 18th century.

The Elizabethan literacy rate was possibly as high as 25% for men and was much lower for women.[5] There was no compulsory educational system. Although the rudiments of reading and writing were taught in the various elementary schools, the curriculum did not foster literary proficiency. Also, there was a general lack of print media for the public outside of the large cities. Communication was intermittent and unreliable, so even those who could read did not see the way prominent surnames were properly spelled. When hearing "Marlowe" or "Raleigh" pronounced, for example, scribes simply spelled the name phonetically. Consequently, the spelling of Elizabethan surnames was often random and inconsistent.

The difference in the spelling of *Shakspere* and *Shakespeare* is crucial. Scribes in Stratford-upon-Avon often spelled proper names differently in the same document or even the same line. They were not as competent as heraldic *scriveners,* who were better educated and were members of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners, a London Guild founded in 1373.[6]

The poet/dramatist's name, Shakespeare, first appeared in 1593 with the publication of the narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*. Over ensuing years, the author's name was consistently spelled either "Shakespeare" or, about half the time, "Shake-speare." In Elizabethan times the hyphen often indicated that the name was a pseudonym. In the case of Will Shakspere, the name was never hyphenated.

As Whalen notes, "Even more striking is the total lack of any references during his lifetime to Will Shakspere of Stratford as an author in any letters, notes, essays, diaries, or any written communication by his

friends, relatives, neighbors, or critics, whether in London or Stratford. The record is silent."[7]

There are innumerable references to "William Shakespeare" the author, but, as Whalen adds, "not one of them ever links the author to Will Shakspere of Stratford, or, indeed, to any identifiable person who was alive at the time of the reference."[8]

The questionable strategy to "normalize" or "modernize" all references to the man from Stratford and to the poet-playwright as "Shakespeare" conflates the two names and intentionally obfuscates the persistent Shakespeare Authorship Question.

Whalen again: "The businessman was Shakspere; the writer was Shakespeare."[9]

When did *SHAKspere* become *SHAKEspeare* in the conventional narrative?

The name "Shakespeare" as a *playwright* first appeared in 1598 with the publication of *Love's Labours Lost*. But at least a dozen of his plays had been performed without attribution in the 1580s and early 1590s. The same spelling was also used in the First Folio of thirty-six plays published in 1623.

The theatrical impresario David Garrick (1717-1779) was responsible for inexorably linking the author William Shakespeare to Stratford, the backwater Warwickshire market town, when he organized a three-day Shakespeare Jubilee there in 1769.[10] However, many orthodox scholars of the 19th century continued (correctly) to note that "Shakspere" was the author's correct name; it was scholar J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps (1820-1889) who led the charge to apply the "Shakespeare" spelling to both the writer and the Stratford man.


1769

SHAKESPEARS JUBILEE,

at Stratford upon Avon.

This TICKET admits one on the

The Oratorio.

The DEDICATION ODE.

The ODE.

Figure 1: A ticket for the 1769 Shakespears [sic] Jubilee (from the Folger Shakespeare Library)

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, founded in 1847, has capitalized on "William Shakespeare" as "The Bard of Avon" since the very beginning and remains a powerful force in refuting any challenge to the Stratfordian premise that Will Shakspere was William Shakespeare. It is an enormously successful commercial enterprise and understandably resists with exasperation any challenge to Stratfordian orthodoxy. Bardolatry is indeed a formidably entrenched faith in the Shakespeare world of conventional wisdom.

1. Heraldic Protocol for Petitioning and Granting of Arms in the Late 1500s

The College of Arms in London established traditional heraldic protocols in England. Founded in 1484 by royal charter, it is supervised by the Earl Marshal, the eighth highest ranking Officer of State. The College is charged with administrating the Law of Heraldic Arms. Anyone interested in applying for a personal grant of arms must be of some eminence and be able to pay the College of Arms fees. In the late 16th century the cost was approximately £20-30, which was the typical annual salary of a schoolteacher.[12] (In 2021 a personal grant of arms cost £6,600.)

Petitioning for a coat of arms

In the 16th century the term *gentry*, *gent* or *gentleman* implied the right to bear arms. In 1577 William Harrison stated in his *Description of England* that "it was held that anyone who could afford to live without manual labour could for money have a coat of arms and be reputed a gentleman ever after." The process for obtaining arms was as follows.

First: The Earl Marshal's Order in 1568 stipulated that a petition for arms like that of John Shakspere in 1596 be sent to the Earl Marshal with sufficient supporting documents for his approval and warrant. If the Earl Marshal approves the application, it was assigned to one of the three Kings of Arms, depending upon whether the petitioner lives north or south of the River Trent.

Next: An applicant confers with a Herald in Waiting of the College, or directly with one of the Kings of Arms, who guides him through the petition process. The Earl Marshal's Warrant stipulates that payment for the arms is due at this phase. The fee covers the general overhead costs of the College: the herald, his staff and the numerous people involved in research, checking registries and relevant municipal records as well as the heraldic scriveners and artists employed by the College to inscribe and depict the final Letters Patent of Arms in color.[13]

This protocol was not always followed. For example, the Clarenceux King for southern England, Robert Cooke (1535-1592), had the authority to grant arms but often ignored the protocol. Evidently, he granted a number of petitions without consulting the Earl Marshal and kept the fees for himself. Records at the College revealed that Cooke granted some 900 grants of arms and crests during his period as Clarenceux King of Arms, from 1567 until his death in 1592.[14]

Then: Having obtained the warrant from the Earl Marshal, or contacting one of the Kings of Arms directly, the petition now reaches the design phase. The Herald in Waiting, or a King of Arms familiar with designing arms, makes preliminary suggestions, following the petitioner's wishes. Once accepted by all parties, the petition passes to one of the Kings of Arms, who prepares a draft grant containing a blazon of the arms.

The long-winded draft grants typically contain an elaborate greeting, followed by an effusive description of the King of Arms who wrote it and a list of his credentials. Then there are usually many lines of irrelevant comment, high praise for the Monarch, the Crown's titles and worldwide realm, a blazon of the achievement of the petitioner's arms, and general remarks about the petitioner's important relatives.

The final version is written as Letters Patent on parchment by a scrivener in tiny letters which may occupy as many as fifty or sixty lines. A heraldic artist then depicts the Achievement of Arms in color, usually in the left-hand margin, and decorates the rest of the sheet according to the petitioner's wishes.

It is then signed by officials of the College and pendant seals affixed.

Finally: The grant is given to the petitioner and a copy entered into one of the College Registries for Arms and Bearings as a permanent record.

The College of Arms has no record in its archives that affirms John Shakspere's petition in the 1570s. However, two paper draft grants did survive from 1596 (Figs. 5 & 6), as well as a copy of the Letters Patent (Fig. 7) published in the late seventeenth century. These documents of John Shakspere's petition are crucial to our examination. Sir William Dethick (1542-1612) was Garter King of Arms in 1596 and was the key person in the granting of arms to John Shakspere.[15]

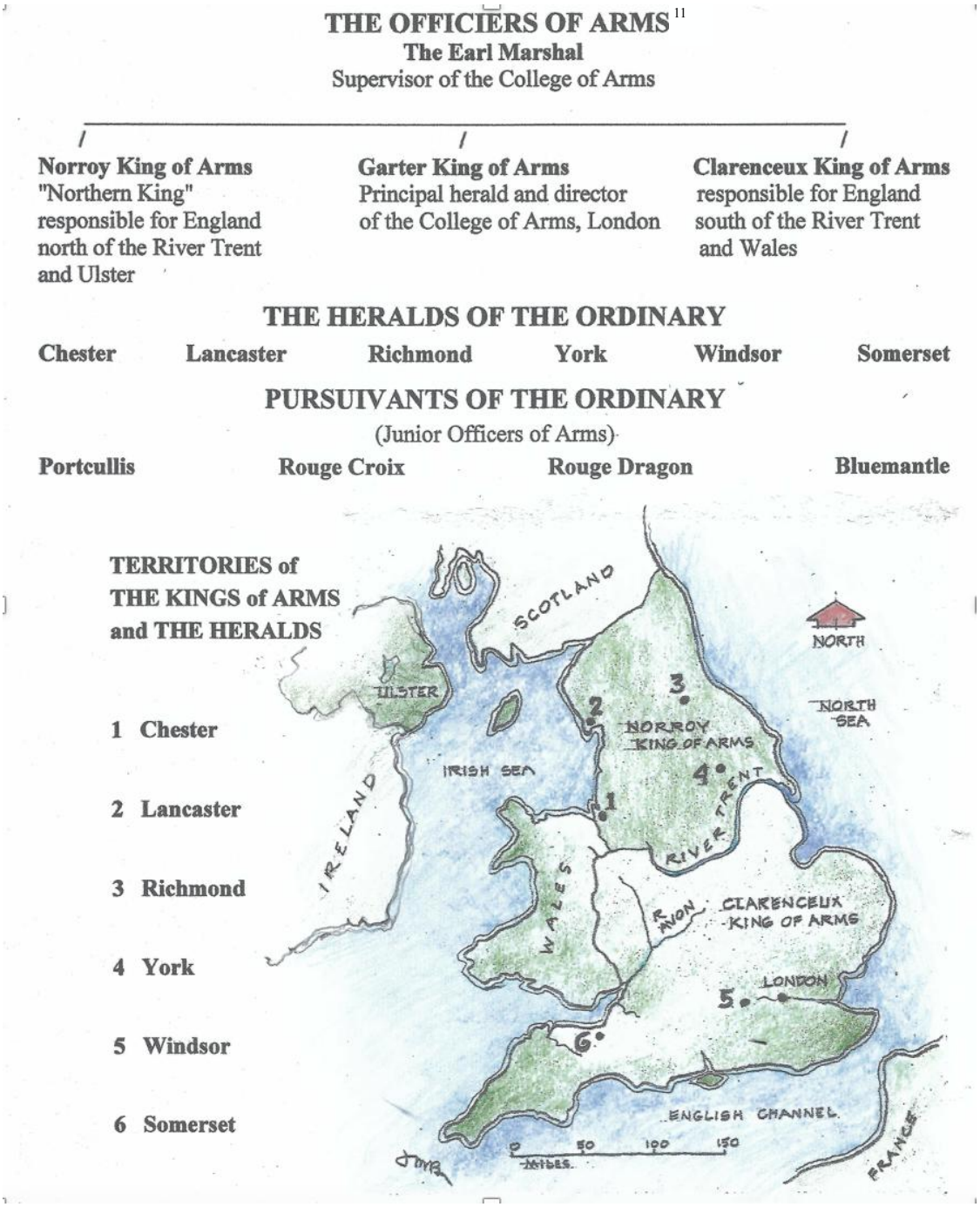


Figure 2: The River Trent divides the territories of the three Kings of Arms

[Part Two of this article will appear in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.]

[The authors have been friends since their teenage years and have shared skepticism of the conventional narrative for most of that time.

Joseph Hanaway, MDCM, FAAN, earned a BA and a medical degree from McGill University. A fellow of the American Academy of Neurologists, he has authored numerous articles in medical journals. He was the co-author with Richard Cruess of two volumes of *McGill Medicine* (1996) and wrote the biography of Sir Thomas George Roddick MDCM (1846-1923), distinguished graduate of McGill and founder of the Medical Council of Canada, for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. He also wrote *The General: A History of the Montreal General Hospital.* (2016). As a student in the Medical Faculty, Hanaway wrote the first comprehensive history of McGill's coat of arms. He had an exchange with the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Scotland, who commented, "Not bad for a fourth-year medical student in Canada." A skeptic of the Bard of Avon since his undergraduate days at McGill, John Shakspere's coat of arms caught his attention. He is a resident of Webster Groves, Missouri.

John Milnes Baker, AIA**,** an architect and writer, was a 2018 recipient of the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis *Who's Who in America* "as a leader in the field of architecture." A graduate of Middlebury College, he received his master's degree in architecture from Columbia University. He is the author of *How to Build a House with an Architect* (1977/1988) and *American House Styles: A Concise Guide* (1994/2018). In 2020 he published an elementary introduction to the Shakespeare Authorship Question in his booklet, *The Case for Edward de Vere as the real William Shakespeare*. Mr. Baker has lectured on American House Styles and has recently recorded a four-part Webinar on "The History of the American House" for the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He lives in South Kent, Connecticut.]

Endnotes:

1. Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem***.** Westport CT: Praeger Publishers (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 67.
2. Richard Whalen, *Shakespeare: Who Was He?: The Oxford challenge to the Bard of Avon.* Westport CT: Praeger Publishers (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 8.
3. Shakespeare Documented: https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/family-legal-property-records. This is a record of more than ten pages of examples of John Shakespeare's name copied in Holy Trinity Church, civic and personal records.
4. Charlton Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality.* New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. (1984), 73-74.
5. Whalen, 31. Estimates of Elizabethan literacy are conjectural at best. Possibly 25% by some accounts. https://www.worldhistory.org suggests: "Perhaps around 30% of men and 10% of women were able to read and write in late-Elizabethan England although figures varied wildly in regard to urban and rural populations, class, wealth, and amongst certain trades. Literacy in London may have been as high as 80% as many people were attracted to the city for the very reason of the educational opportunities offered in the capital."
6. Worshipful Company of Scriveners website cited in Wikipedia http://www.scriveners.org.uk
7. Whalen, 17.
8. Id. at 19.
9. Id. at 32.
10. Mark Anderson, *"Shakespeare" by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford – The Man Who was Shakespeare.* New York: Gotham Books (Penguin, 2005), xxvi.
11. Stephen Slater, *Illustrated Book of Heraldry*, London: Lorenz Books (2009), 39. A page depicting the thirteen names of the Officers of The College of Arms, London, each with a coat of arms; The College of Arms - The officers of Arms.. https://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/about-us/heralds-officers
12. College of Arms- the Granting of Arms, at 1-5, https://www.collegearms.gov.uk/services/granting-arms. Slater, at 244-245.
13. Id. at 244-247. College of Arms-Granting of Arms, at 2. The College of Arms is not supported by the British government, but survives on private funds for services: Genealogical research, archival research, design of arms on badges, motor vehicles, rings, flags, the process of designing arms, writing draft grants and letters patent, answering questions daily (Herald in Waiting). The officers get a small salary set by the Crown many years ago. T. Woodcock & J. M. Robinson, *The Oxford Guide of Heraldry*. Oxford University Press (1988),141.
14. Id. at 35-38. An excellent account of Robert Cooke's behavior as Clarenceux King of Arms (1567-1592) in the 1500s and of the corrupt system of granting arms used by many of the Kings of Arms.
15. Dictionary of National Biography, 1889-1900/Dethick, William, at 1-3.Dethick was also the ultimate heraldic bad boy. He exemplifies the incredible immunity from prosecution for members of the Royal Circle who violate civil law and common decency and are protected by the Crown. After many abuses physical and mental, and being expelled from the College of Arms, he was knighted.

SOF Conference Report (Continued from p. 1)

Tom Townsend used the first half of his lecture, "Finding Our True Shakespeare," to discuss why William of Stratford could not have written the works attributed to William Shake-speare. He gave us a snapshot of the Elizabethan age, contrasting the life of the common people with that of the nobility. He discussed the seriousness of grain hoarding, a practice that enriched William of Stratford considerably and helped enable his real estate purchases. Townsend discussed governmental control of printing presses and the common use of pseudonyms by writers. He noted Thomas Vicars's reference in the 1620s to several named poets, followed by an unnamed one who "takes his name from 'shaking' and 'spear,'" and cited Oxfordian Matt Hutchinson's recent research about the six "signatures" purported to have been made by William of Stratford on legal documents (see "The Slippery Slope of Shakspere's 'Signatures,'" *The Oxfordian* 23 [2021]). The second half of Townsend's lecture addressed the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, beginning with his early education with Sir Thomas Smith, Arthur Golding and Lawrence Nowell. Townsend maintained that Oxford learned to treat women equally with men through William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Golding because they were Puritans. Townsend noted Oxford's facility with words and the "Inkhorn Controversy," in which scholars debated how best to add words to the English language; much of it took place at Cecil House, where the young de Vere may have been able to observed and perhaps even participate. Townsend also noted Richard Roe's book, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* (showing that the Bard had actually been there) and the mathematics behind Francis Meres's 1598 listing and pairing of ancient and Elizabethan poets and playwrights.

Gabriel Ready's presentation, "On the 400th Anniversary of the First Folio: A Short History of Fixing," was based on four concurrent themes centering around perceived needs to "fix" the history of the now famous book originally produced in 1623 intended for purchase (and possible ostentatious display) by noblemen and educated professionals. First, he showed how perceptions of the actors Heminges and Condell have evolved over time in response to a need to obscure the extended de Vere family as the source for much, if not all, of the material in the First Folio. While the two part-time players, who made their livings largely as businessmen, had historically been harshly criticized for working from bastardized texts, beginning in the 19th century they began to be eulogized as the editors of the playtexts despite the lack of any evidence that either of them was a writer or an editor. Secondly, Ready discussed the initial reception of the First Folio and how subsequent editors of later editions reorganized the plays, often inserting new stage directions, spellings and syntax that corrupted the Bard's meaning. The years 1632 to 1765 were a "dark age" for the First Folio because the Second Folio, published in 1632, pushed the original aside as obsolete for 130 years. Each subsequent edition of the Folio (there were four) effectively pushed aside the prior editions. Ready then explored the tools used to conceptually reconstruct the mystique of the First Folios in later centuries. Refurbishing copies of the First Folios themselves included rebinding, cutting margins, reshuffling of the original order of the plays and the prefatory material, and sewing in new pages, all obviously changing the intent of the original publishers. Ready highlighted the illusory nature of the concept of the "perfect exemplar," or ideal copy, of the First Folio. Finally, Ready discussed the recasting of the members of the Stationers Company themselves as businessmen in the 1770s as part of the story that has evolved about the First Folio. Like the recasting of the players Heminges and Condell as editors, the incorrectly elevated role given the Stationers in subsequent centuries helped bolster the myth of the small-town grain merchant as a genius writer and ignores the political events of the late 1610s and early 1620s and the role of the de Vere family in the social and cultural history of the First Folio.

In "Objectives and Limitations of the First Folio," **Ernest Rehder**, a retired professor of modern languages at Florida State University, gave his perspectives on the publishing of the First Folio. Drawing on his expertise in Hispanic and Brazilian literature and theater, he contrasted the censorship of plays during the "Golden Age" of Spain with that of Jacobean England. His insightful details, such as the Spanish requirement that all references to clergy be excised—including the novitiate Isabel in *Measure for Measure*, when that play came to Spain—gave depth and texture to the world of early modern theater. From Rehder's perspective, the primary objectives of Ben Jonson and the other persons involved with producing the First Folio were preserving the

works in their best completed form, promoting English patriotism, defending Protestantism and the glorification of the author, *even if his identity were unknown or masked*. The larger objective was to enhance England's reputation as a nation abroad. Rehder highlighted his talk with details from the Canon's English history plays, *Lear, Hamlet* and the comedies, as well as sharing insights such as Mary Sidney's being known by her choice of preferred symbol—the (sweet) swans swimming in front of her home on the River Avon.

Continuing her superb reporting, **Shelly Maycock**, chair of the SOF's First Folio and Education Outreach Committees**,** began her talk, "Folger and the First Folio: An Update," with a brief recap of the Folger Shakespeare Library's 2014 symposium on the biography of the author of the Shakespeare canon and the 2016 tour that it sponsored which exhibited copies of its First Folio editions in all fifty states. Both were conducted by the Folger without an Oxfordian perspective. Maycock described how the Folger selectively treats information in its presentations of its First Folios, marginalizing the contributions of Ben Jonson, exaggerating those of Heminges and Condell, and completely ignoring the Earls of Montgomery and Pembroke, the brothers who financed the expensive book and form the historical link to the Earl of Oxford through betrothal and/or marriage to two of his daughters. Maycock provided an overview of the Folger's current $51.5 million campaign to finance its programming and renovate its building in Washington, DC (originally designed by Paul Cret in 1932). Included in the plans are new public spaces, a new display case for all eighty-six copies of its Folios, a new gift shop and new shelving space for its collection, some part of which has not yet been catalogued. She finished her presentation with information on Ayanna Thompson, the newest member of the Folger's Board of Trustees, who supports a collaborative authorship theory. Maycock recommended that SOF members explore the events planned for celebration of the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio on the British website, https://folio400.com.

Day Two: Friday, September 23

The morning session began with a welcome back from SOF President Bob Meyers, who then introduced the first speaker, **Sundra Malcolm**. In her presentation, "The Complaint in *A Lover's Complaint,"* Malcolm shared her affinity for the poem and posed three questions that she and other researchers often have about the 350-line poem that was printed in the 1609 edition of *Shake-speares Sonnets*: What is it about? Why is it printed with the sonnets? Who wrote it? She considers the poem to be a "myth of origin," in which the inconstant, charming youth becomes the "Monarch of Poets." She identified the youth described in the poem (and also described in other contemporary poems such as "Pamphilus" in Sidney's *Arcadia*) as Edward de Vere. She believes the that the author of *A Lover's Complaint* was not "Shakespeare," but rather was Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, who was coming into his own as a lyric poet after receiving the "blessing" from de Vere in the dedication to *Rape of Lucrece.*

Next came a video presentation from **Kristin Bundesen**, Associate Dean for the School of Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Studies at Walden University in Minneapolis. In "Oxford's Women," she pointed out that female and male characters have approximately equal representation in Shakespeare's works in both heroic and villainous roles, and that Shakespeare's female characters are almost always portrayed as literate. Bundesen proposed that this indicates that the author existed in an environment where women were as highly educated and as influential as the men. She then mentioned some of the women surrounding Edward de Vere who were well known to have these attributes, such as Mildred Cooke Cecil, Queen Elizabeth, Anne Cecil, and Anne Vavasour. Mildred Cecil, who was the wife of William Cecil, knew several languages, and spent much time managing her husband's estates while he was preoccupied with matters of state. Bundesen concluded that Shakespeare's representation of, and attitude toward, women in his works reveals significant clues to the author's personality.

Bonner Miller Cutting followed with another female-focused connection to the Shakespeare Mystery with her talk on "The Portrait That Time Forgot." Following up on her extensive research on the Van Dyck mural at Wilton House, the seat of the Earls of Pembroke (see "A Countess Transformed: How Lady Susan Vere Became Lady Anne Clifford," *Brief Chronicles* IV [2012/13]), Cutting indicated that another portrait at Wilton House may provide an important connection between Edward de Vere and Shakespeare. Cutting presented compelling evidence that the sitter in this portrait, previously identified as Althea Talbot or Lady Anne Clifford (second wife of Philip Herbert, 4th

Earl of Pembroke) is actually Susan Vere (1587-1629), Edward de Vere's youngest daughter and Philip Herbert's first wife. Cutting then compared the likeness to the Droeshout engraving in Shakespeare's First Folio and detailed a number of striking similarities between the two images. Perhaps most striking is that the sitter in the Wilton House portrait has a prominent bump, or rounded protrusion, on the left side of her forehead, just as does "Shakespeare" (if one looks carefully at the engraving, it becomes apparent from the shading above the left eyebrow that Droeshout was depicting a bump, not just shadows from the reflection of light). As the daughter of Edward de Vere, Susan's likeness in the First Folio portrait would give new meaning to the familiar lines in Jonson's prefatory poem, "Looke how the fathers face/ Lives in his issue."

Before breaking for lunch, Board members **Ben August** and **Dorothea Dickerman** briefly described plans to increase the SOF's social media presence, make changes that would improve search engine optimization, encourage visitors to spend more time on the SOF website, and include additional resources in a new members-only section of the website. They also announced an additional membership level of Lifetime Membership, with prices reflecting the years of Edward de Vere's lifespan from 1550-1604 with donations of $1550 for individual lifetime membership or $1604 for lifetime family membership.

The afternoon session began with a presentation from lawyer and SOF Trustee **Dorothea Dickerman**. In "The Roar of the Mouse: Anne Cecil de Vere and What She Tells Us about Shakespeare," she began by noting (as had Kristin Bundesen earlier) that Shakespeare depicts approximately equal numbers of male and female heroes, and male and female villains. His heroines solve problems, get angry and banter, which indicates his understanding and championing of women against the inequities of Tudor era law. Dickerman stated that, like her aunts and her mother, Mildred Cecil, Anne Cecil was well educated, but unlike them she began her life as an "obedient mouse." Fifteen-year-old Anne was supposed to marry Edward de Vere in September 1571, but the event had to be postponed when the groom failed to show; the wedding took place December 1571, but the marriage seemed troubled from the outset, for which Oxford has traditionally been blamed. By 1573 Queen Elizabeth was a rival for Oxford's affection; Dickerman cited the testimony of disinterested contemporary witnesses to the affair and suggestions that the Queen's had had a son by Oxford. Focusing on Anne's first pregnancy, Dickerman argued the evidence indicates that she was likely raped in October 1574. Thomas Smith wrote to Mildred Cecil in late 1574 that he had supplied medicine with abortifacient components to Oxford for her. When Oxford wrote a will before leaving for the Continent in early 1575, he gave Anne only her statutory share of his estate and left nothing for an unborn child. Anne made a second attempt at obtaining an abortifacient in her fifth month from Dr. Richard Masters. Her father, William Cecil, had sent Masters to inform the Queen of the pregnancy, instead of delivering the "joyful" news himself. All this indicates that Anne's pregnancy was unwanted. When Oxford wrote to William Cecil in March 1575 that he was "a glad man" on being informed of the pregnancy, Dickerman maintains that his tone is brilliantly sarcastic, as he had known of the pregnancy for months. To support of theory Dickerman finds much in *The Rape of Lucrece*, the second work published under the "Shakespeare" name, to suggest that Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, may have been the rapist (*Lucrece* contains numerous references to Tarquin's eyes, while Leicester's nickname at court was "eyes"). Dickerman also noted that, in *Lucrece*, "the strumpet that began this stir" (line 1471) and Helen of Troy are allusions to Elizabeth, and that in one of the poems Anne wrote following the death of her newborn son in 1583, Anne lashes out at Elizabeth (Venus/Aphrodite/goddess in the poem) and expresses her bitterness about the queen having had a son by Oxford (Papheme/Cupid in the poem).

Former SOF President **John Hamill** was next, asking "Is Southampton the Key to the Authorship Question?" This was an update to his 2019 presentation. Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, was the only person to whom the author Shakespeare dedicated anything: *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). Many scholars also believe that he is the "Mr. W.H." to whom *Shake-speares Sonnets* were dedicated in 1609, and is the so-called "Fair Youth" to whom Sonnets 1-126 were addressed. Southampton was a favorite of the queen until about 1595, after which she seems to have had nothing to do with him. He became very close to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and Devereux's sister, Penelope Rich. Penelope Rich (c. 1562-1607) had five children by her first husband, Robert Rich, and also had an intimate relationship with Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, which produced six more children. Hamill argued that Essex, who was praised as a poet, is the "rival poet" of the *Sonnets*, that Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) is about Southampton and Penelope Rich, that the purple

flower of the poem (which comes from Adonis's blood) is a meleagris flower (also known as guinea hen flower or Penelope) that connects Oxford, Southampton and Rich, and that the 1594 book *Willobie His Avisa* "is a libel against Penelope Rich." Hamill further argues that Penelope Rich is the "dark lady" of the Sonnets, and that Southampton and Penelope Rich were the biological parents of Henry de Vere (b. 1593), who was raised as Oxford's son by his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham. Hamill noted that the son is the only known Henry in the entire de Vere line, that the first seventeen sonnets entreat the Fair Youth to reproduce for the poet's sake, and that a portrait of Henry de Vere shows him with Southampton's face and holding a baton diagonally above his breastplate, which was a recognized sign of bastardy.

James Warren, the SOF's de facto historian, discussed "Foundations of the Oxfordian Claim." He stressed the importance of the work done by the "first generation" of Oxfordian scholars between 1920 and 1940; that group included J. Thomas Looney, Bernard R. Ward, Bernard M. Ward, H.H. Holland, Percy Allen, Gerald Rendall, and others. Warren credits them with developing eleven distinct lines of evidence in support of the Oxfordian case, some of which are well remembered today, while others are not.

The first category includes the biographical evidence laid out by Looney and others showing that Edward de Vere's life is "just what we should expect to find of [the writer] Shakespeare's life"; a second line of biographical evidence, i.e., allusions in the Shakespeare works to events in de Vere's life; the similarities in themes and phrasing between Oxford's known verses and Shakespeare's; and certain topical allusions in the works to historical events of the 1570s and 1580s. The latter category—the lines of evidence generally less well-known today—includes the historical/political conditions in which the works were prepared (continuing war with Spain, high taxes, periods of famine, and the need for writers to disguise any comments about these issues); another line of biographical evidence concerning references to Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare" by other writers such as Jonson, Chapman and Spenser; an expanded line of topicality—that entire scenes and plays, rather than just an occasional line or word, alluded to contemporary events; the several portraits of Edward de Vere and "Shakespeare"; orthographic evidence (developed mainly by Rendall) that the spelling and usages of words in the Sonnets closely match those of Edward de Vere; and two lines concerning the Dynastic Succession (or Prince Tudor) theory, one that Oxford and Elizabeth had a love child (as laid out in the Sonnets), the other that Jonson, Chapman and Spenser all alluded to this in their own works. Warren has just published a seven-volume anthology of virtually all of Percy Allen's writings on Shakespeare; his books have been out of print for decades and his shorter pieces were never previously collected. Allen concluded in 1939 that the case for Oxford as the true Shakespeare was "overwhelming." He and other early Oxfordians expected academic resistance to it to crumble, but eventually came to realize how fiercely orthodox scholars would resist examining—or even acknowledging—it.

The afternoon's final presentation was a conversation between **Earl Showerman** and **Prof. Roger Stritmatter** about *The Tempest*. Showerman noted that J. Thomas Looney and Percy Allen doubted that the play was actually written by "Shakespeare." He cited a recent article by Katherine Chiljan in *The Oxfordian* suggesting a real-life model for Prospero; he

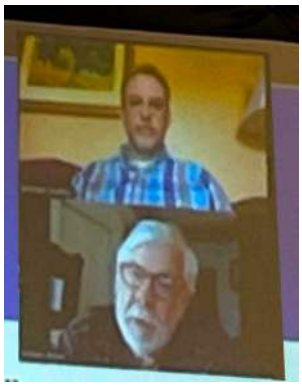
mentioned that, although many orthodox scholars believe the reference to "the still vexed Bermoothes" is to Bermuda (and thus to the written report of a 1609 shipwreck there), there was also a district in London known as "Bermoothes." It is clear from the text of the play that it takes place on an island in the Mediterranean Sea; the model for the island could possibly be Lampedusa (a small island southwest of Sicily, about halfway between Malta and the coast of Tunisia) or Vulcano (a small island only 25 kilometers north of Sicily). Stritmatter recounted that in their 2013 book, *On the Date, Sources and Design of Shakespeare's The Tempest*, he and co-author Lynne Kositsky made a strong case that the major historical source for the play was Richard Eden's *The Decades of the Newe World*, published in 1555 (long before 1609, and thus not an obstacle to Oxford as having written the play), and that the play's design strongly indicates that it was intended for a Shrovetide performance; Shrovetide marked the end of festivities and immediately preceded Lent, a time of fasting (and during which the theaters were closed). They agreed with the suggestion originally made by Richard Malim in 2004 that the play we know as *The Tempest* may have been the same play as *The Tragedy of the Spanish Maze*, which was performed on Shrove Monday in 1605. The text of *The Tempest* uses the word "maze," and the characters wander around the island in disparate groups.

The session concluded with a few impromptu remarks by SOF member **Phoebe Nir**, who described her work on TikTok, the popular short-form video app (search for Phoebe_DeVere). She said, "It's not about being funny. People want the facts; they're tired of being sold things." She also recommended that (at least in discussions and presentations aimed at outsiders) Oxfordians should consistently use "Edward de Vere," rather than "Oxford," as it's clear to the listener that "Edward de Vere" is referring to a real person, whereas "Oxford" has multiple meanings.

Following dinner, most conference attendees made their way to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival to see a production of *The Tempest* at the OSF's Allen Elizabethan Theatre, an outdoor venue.

Day Three: Saturday, September 24

The program began with a thought-provoking presentation by SOF members **Michael Dudley** and **William Boyle**, both of whom are professional librarians. Together with SOF Trustee Catherine Hatinguais, they submitted an article to the peer-reviewed scholarly journal *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, arguing that, "despite the existence of a vast literature reflecting hundreds of years of scholarship questioning the authorship of the works of Shakespeare, the conventional Library of Congress Name Authority File and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are unable to accurately describe this literature owing to their assumption that the author was William Shakspere of Stratford-upon-Avon." [The article was accepted for publication and is available for purchase online: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2022.2124473?src=.]



In the presentation, Dudley outlined the library science theory behind the "controlled vocabulary" of subject headings, including such factors as the state of knowledge in the discourse, "aboutness," social epistemology, ethics (i.e., respect for the autonomy and judgment of users), pragmatism (i.e., ease of use), philosophical realism, and what Foucault termed "the author function" (i.e., that an author's name includes that author's works). Boyle provided a brief history of the "name game," showing that most scholars in the early to mid-19th century agreed that "Shakspere" (with no *e* immediately after the *k*) was the author's correct, legal name, and that "Shakespeare" was a title-page publication name, i.e., a sort of pen name. Many books and articles during that time therefore used "Shakspere" (or sometimes "Shakspeare") rather than "Shakespeare." This practice gradually changed (perhaps spurred by Delia Bacon's 1857 book questioning Shakspere's authorship), and by the end of the century the name "Shakespeare" dominated and continues to do so. The current Library of Congress name authority record is: "Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616," which ignores all differences in spelling and pronunciation, and appears to accept as fact that the man from Stratford (who lived from 1564 to 1616) is indeed the author. Various subcategories (including "Authorship") appear beneath this heading, but, the authors suggest, the effect is to keep the authorship issue well buried. They propose that the name authority record be changed to "Shakspere, William, 1564-1616" (his real, legal name) and that a second record for "Shakespeare, William" (with no dates) be created to reflect that it is a pen name; the two records would cross-reference each other. Such a change

is consistent with how the Library of Congress treats pseudonyms and pen names of other authors. They also propose the adoption of a new top-level heading, "Shakespeare authorship question," in order to bring the authorship debate to wider attention.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan spoke on "Henslowe, Alleyn, Burbage and Shakespeare: Staging the Myth."

She reminded us that the traditional authorship view sees Henslowe, Alleyn and Burbage as theatrical impresarios who were instrumental to Shakespeare's success. Modern stage plays follow that tradition as well—Tom Stoppard's *Shakespeare in Lo*ve (though Eagan-Donovan opined that Stoppard may be a doubter) and Lauren Gunderson's *The Book of Will*. Richard Burbage (c. 1567-1619) was a well-known actor, as well as a theater owner and entrepreneur. Edward "Ned" Alleyn (1566-1626) was also a famous actor; he married Henlsowe's daughter, and entered into business ventures with his father-in-law before retiring from the stage at age 31. Philip Henslowe (c. 1550-1616) got into "showbiz" in 1587, when he and a partner built the Rose theater in London. He is best remembered for his diary, which contains many details about payments to authors, actors and others, theatrical performances, box office receipts, etc., spanning a period from 1592 to 1609; the diary never mentions "Shakespeare," though it does mention several Shakespeare-related play titles. The diary now resides at Dulwich College in London, which Alleyn founded; Eagan-Donovan (who received an SOF grant for the purpose) visited there recently, and found the materials to be "especially problematic." Pages had been removed (probably in the late 18th and 19th centuries), and it is possible that spurious additions have been made to it. Eagan-Donovan concluded by expressing agreement with Alexander Waugh's belief that the year 1591 was a pivotal one, marking the end of Edward de Vere's "reign" as the center of the London theatrical world and the emergence of persons such as Burbage, Alleyn and Henslowe as the key figures.

The morning session concluded with "An Actors' Talkback," moderated by **Earl Showerman**, featuring four actors who had appeared in the previous night's performance of *The Tempest* at OSF: Geoffrey Warren Barnes II (Ariel), William Thomas Hodgson (Ferdinand), Michael J. Hume (Gonzalo) and Amy Lizardo (Trinculo). All offered interesting insights into their roles and their preparation. Barnes said that he viewed the relationship between Prospero and Ariel as "father-son related." Hodgson remarked that his performance had become "more nuanced" during the show's run. Hume related that the director (Nicholas Avila) had asked the actors to bring themselves to their roles (and not do "bad

Polonius," as Hume put it); he also warned against "over-intellectualizing the actor's process." Lizardo stressed the importance of "understand[ing] every word you're saying," and observed that, because Trinculo's speeches are all in prose, she has more leeway to vary her delivery from one show to another. All four actors stressed the important role that the audience plays as an "extra cast member."

The afternoon session got underway with "Filming the Authorship," a forum moderated by Bob Meyers. It featured a panel (see p. 1) of four filmmakers—Laura Wilson Matthias and Lisa Wilson (*Last Will. & Testament*, 2012), Cheryl Eagan-Donovan (*Nothing Is Truer Than Truth* [aka *Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Name*], 2018), and Robin Phillips (*Shakespeare: The Truth Behind the Name*, 2020; *Shakespeare: Loitering in Italy!*, 2022); Many topics were covered, and interesting anecdotes shared. Eagan-Donovan explained that her biggest challenge was raising money for her film; she was able to raise $12,000 via a Kickstarter campaign, which enabled her to film for seven days in Italy. She stressed that her main "interest is Edward de Vere, not the authorship question. . . . I believe in the power of storytelling." The Wilson sisters noted that they didn't really have a budget problem, as their film was underwritten by Roland Emmerich, director of the 2011 feature film *Anonymous*, and was intended as a companion piece to his film. They had full access to the *Anonymous* set. They also filmed twelve hours of interviews with Charlton Ogburn shortly before his death; they hope that excerpts from the interviews can be made available in the near future. Phillips stated that her expenses are low because "my studio is in the basement." She stated that her first film started out in 2016 as a stage show, intended as a fundraiser for Eagan-Donovan's film. She emphasized that her films are intended as a "gateway for people who've never heard of the authorship question" and expressed amazement at how many awards her first film received. All four filmmakers agreed that there continues to be interest in the authorship question (as Lisa Wilson put it, "It's not the authorship question, it's Shakespeare Authorship Studies") and that social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok must continue to be utilized. "Keep the message simple, with an emotional moment," Laura Wilson Matthias advised. "Oxford's story is one of downward mobility; that should draw in people," commented Lisa Wilson. [Note: the 56-minute edit of Eagan-Donovan's film, *Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Name*, was screened at the Conference on Thursday evening; the Wilsons' film, *Last Will. & Testament*, and a substantial portion of Phillips's new film, *Shakespeare: Loitering in Italy!*, were screened on Saturday evening.]

In "Subtler Scents in Oxford's The Taming of the Shrew," **Prof. Michael Delahoyde** began by showing a few examples of "perspective art," in which paintings or

drawings look like one thing when viewed from one angle, and something quite different when viewed from another angle. He argues that Oxford/Shakespeare does this regularly in his works. For example, *Henry V* can be interpreted as a "flag-waving glorious play about a great hero," but it can also be seen as "a damning condemnation of a soulless Machiavellian." Is *The Merchant of Venice* a display of vicious anti-Semitism, or is it an expose of "faux Christians who persecute dissent"? Turning to *The Taming of the Shrew*, often viewed as sexist, he urged us be the "better dogs" and to detect the "duller scents," or sense, in the play. Delahoyde points out that the wedding of Petruchio and Katherina takes place in Act 3, not at the end of play; Petruchio arrives on an old horse, wearing odd clothes, and has to leave immediately afterward. Throughout the play Petruchio gets away with revealing little about himself, and easily plays the Paduans for the money-focused fools they are. He "tames" Kate by outdoing, or mirroring, her outrageous public and domestic behavior. Instead of breaking her spirit, as less perceptive audiences and critics expect, Petruchio teaches her about behaving, another word for which is "acting"; and, in loving coordination with her husband, Kate successfully "plays" her audience in the finale.

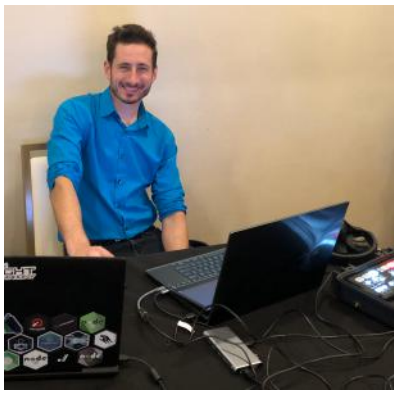
The session closed with a discussion on "Strategizing the Future" between **John Shahan**, founder of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, and **James Warren**, moderated by Don Rubin. Though it was styled

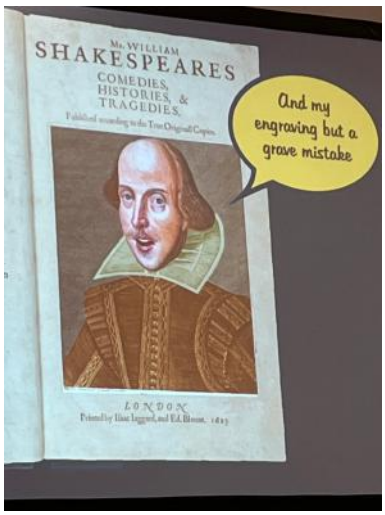
as a "debate," Shahan and Warren were actually in agreement about many things. Warren advocated a strategy grounded on three "foundational beliefs": that we must change the mindset of institutions such as university literature departments and the Folger Shakespeare Library; institutions won't change unless they are forced to; the Oxfordian movement itself is too

small to effect such change, and thus needs allies. Warren argues for direct engagement with English literature departments, calling them to account for their lack of objectivity, and feels that other academic departments (e.g., departments of history, psychology, and drama, as well as librarians) could be recruited in support. Shahan observed that the complexity of the case for Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare makes it hard to discuss. He stated that opposition to the Oxford case is not just from within academia, but is also waged fiercely by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, a "quasi-religious orthodoxy" whose leaders are "paid truth deniers." He agreed with Warren that academics will only change their position when it becomes untenable. Shahan maintains that it is essential to first call into question the case for Shakspere of Stratford as author, which he has done with the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt (https://doubtaboutwill.org). The Declaration itself does not argue for any particular alternate candidate, but Shahan stated that he does "not advocate that we defer consideration of candidates until some future date."

Day Four: Sunday, September 25

The day began with the official business meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (see report of SOF Secretary Bonner Miller Cutting on page 22). It was followed by the traditional closing banquet, which featured remarks from incoming SOF President Earl Showerman, the announcement of the winners of the 2022 SOF Video Contest (see page 12), and the presentation of the awards for Oxfordian of the Year (see page 10). The festivities concluded with the announcement that the 2023 annual conference will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana.





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