THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

Vol. 59, No. 4 | Published by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship | Fall 2023

NOLA Hoopla!

by Alex McNeil

The SOF's 2023 annual conference was held from November 9 to 12 at the Hyatt Centric Hotel in the historic French Quarter of New Orleans. It attracted a large audience, both in person and online. SOF Conference Committee Chair Don Rubin stated that he was expecting about 75 or 80 persons to register; instead, 105 persons signed up to attend the full conference (a few others registered for one or more days). Dozens more signed up for the livestream feeds of the presentations.

Although the conference didn't get underway until Thursday, early arrivals were able to attend a panel discussion on the authorship question held on Wednesday evening at Tulane University (see page 14).

Note: Most conference presentations will be available to conference and livestream attendees for viewing until December 15, 2023. Notification was sent by email on November 15. For further information, email info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

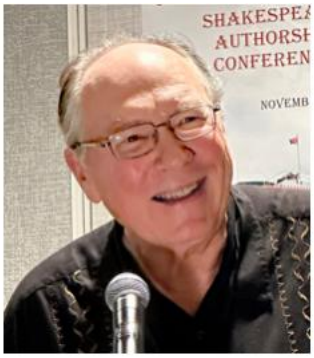
Day 1: Thursday, November 9

Tom Townsend was the first presenter. His talk, "Finding the True Shakespeare—An Historical Perspective," was styled as an "Authorship 101 Introduction," aimed primarily at those who are new to the subject. He highlighted the numerous weaknesses in the traditional case for Will Shakspere of Stratford as the author Shakespeare (lack of a literary paper trail, no evidence of education, etc.), and summarized the evidence in favor of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the true Bard (well educated; hailed during his lifetime as an skilled poet and playwright, etc.).

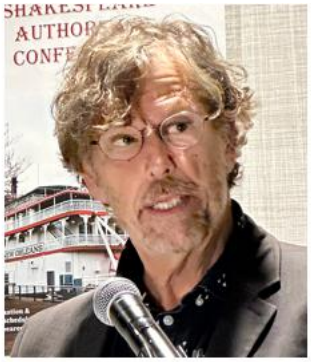
In "Employing Mathematics to Identify the Real Shakespeare," **Paul Chambers** discussed various mathematical and statistical methods that support the case for Oxford as Shakespeare. He referenced a 2007 study by three Dartmouth students that compared known works of Oxford, Marlowe and Bacon; applying several tests they found that Oxford's style was indistinguishable from Shakespeare's. Chambers was intrigued. Using Bayesian analysis, Chambers started with the assumption of a five percent likelihood that Oxford was Shakespeare. After factoring in (1) a pause in Shakespeare's known literary output in 1604 (the year of Oxford's death), (2) the findings of the Dartmouth study; and (3) a "dendogram" from a "clustering matrix" that he'd constructed, Chambers concluded that it's 99.9% likely that Oxford was Shakespeare (put another way, he was 3,000 times more likely than Shakspere of Stratford). After noting that his analysis did not use any

Tom Townsend

Paul Chambers



Ralph McDonald



Guy Sprung

of the factors considered by Peter Sturrock in his 2013 book, *AKA Shakespeare: A Scientific Approach to the Authorship Question* (which also employed Bayesian analysis), Chambers stated, "I consider the matter proven," and offered to debate any Stratfordian on the topic.

Bookbinder and conservator **Ralph McDonald** spoke on "The Shakespeare Brand of 1623," in which he observed that, although the name "Shakespeare" is on the First Folio of 1623, the Shakespeare name, or "brand," didn't really take off until the 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford organized by actor David Garrick. McDonald also called attention to the emblems that appear at the top of several pages of the Folio; many of the emblems include the calygreyhound, a mythical creature that appears in the de Vere family heraldry. Conversely, the emblems do not display a falcon crest, which would have been associated with the Shakspere family. Although modern readers pay little or no attention to the emblems, early modern readers surely would have. "They [the calygreyhounds] will always be visible to those who look," said McDonald.

The final presenter of the day was theater director **Guy Sprung**. In "Shakespeare and the Theatre: An Actor Prepares (300 Years Before Stanislavski?)," Sprung argued that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is "a double-barreled play, with a tragedy on top and a new handbook for actors underneath," seeking to train them in a new style

(Continued on page 29)

Rollin' on the river

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

Published quarterly by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, P.O. Box 66083, Auburndale, MA 02466-0083.
www.ShakespeareOxfordFellowship.org

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 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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Printed by Minuteman Press, Waltham, MA.

From the President

This fall has been full of amazing Oxfordian productions, including the publication of Volume 25 of our annual journal, *The Oxfordian* (see p. 11) and the newest book in our Brief Chronicles series, *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma* (see p. 9), as well as two superb conferences on both sides of the Atlantic attended by record numbers of participants.

For the very first time, the DeVere Society and the Shakespearean Authorship Trust (SAT) cosponsored a daylong program on October 14, "Mysteries of the First Folio," to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's collected dramas. It took place in the historic Great Hall of the Charterhouse, which was built in 1371 as a Carthusian monastery and flourished through the early Tudor period. Following the dissolution of the monasteries, the Charterhouse became a central London mansion for noblemen and a refuge for royalty. Queen Elizabeth met her Privy Council here in the days before her coronation in 1558.

The event was capably hosted by Kevin Gilvary, and seminal passages from the Folio were read by an illustrious band of theater professionals, including Sir Derek Jacobi, Sir Mark Rylance, Annabel Leventon, Richard Clifford, and Costa Chard. Presenters included Julia Cleave on "Stratfordian Maneuvers," Phoebe Nir on "TikTok and the SAQ," Fabrice Collot on John Florio's influence on the Folio dedicatory epistle, and Alexander Waugh, who gave the keynote address "On Ben Jonson's Encomium, 'To the memory of my beloved, the AVTHOR.'" Video presentations by Elizabeth Winkler on the reception of her book, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Oher Heresies*, and by Roger Stritmatter on "The Dedicatees and the Spanish Marriage Crisis" were additional highlights.

At the conclusion of the program it was my distinct pleasure to bestow the Tom Regnier Veritas Award upon Alexander Waugh, the Chairman of the De Vere Society. This award is bestowed from time to time by the SOF board of trustees upon individuals "who best demonstrate through their creative endeavors, dogged scholarship, and overall tenacity the potential to make a lasting impact on the history of the Authorship Question." Alexander's video series on the DVS website has generated well over a million views, and he is co-editor (with Roger Stritmatter) of the forthcoming two-volume *New Shakespeare Allusion Book*, another potential game-changer.

Less than a month later, the SOF New Orleans

Conference was held (see p. 1), preceded by an evening panel discussion at Tulane University arranged by Dr. Lyle Colombo and attended by many students and conference registrants (see p. 14). A grant from the Newcomb Institute enabled Dr. Colombo to recruit speakers, including moderator Elizabeth Winkler, two Tulane faculty members (Scott Oldenburg and John Ray Proctor III), lecturer, novelist and SAT Trustee Ros Barber, and myself for a ninety-minute presentation that was livestreamed to a large audience in ten different countries.

Winkler began the Tulane event by capturing in a few sentences what has been the experience of authorship skeptics since the days of Delia Bacon: "The Shakespeare authorship question—the theory that William Shakespeare might not have written the works published under his name—is the most horrible, vexed, unspeakable subject in the history of English literature. Among Shakespeare scholars, even the phrase 'Shakespeare authorship question' elicits contempt—eye-rolling, name-calling, mudslinging. If you raise it casually in a social setting, someone might chastise you as though you've uttered a deeply offensive profanity."

Fortunately, the Tulane event was extremely collegial. I believe the two Tulane professors came away with a new perspective about what is behind the movement challenging the traditional attribution of Shakespeare. Dr. Colombo was also successful in providing opportunities for Bonner Cutting and me to address secondary school students at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and the Willow School, where faculty and students were wonderfully receptive to our measured—but nonetheless subversive—messaging.

My personal observation from the SOF Conference was that there is a newfound excitement as well as an enduring legacy in play. Presentations by longtime activists and writers such as Margo Anderson, William Niederkorn, Richard Waugaman, and Roger Stritmatter were proof that even two decades from their seminal publications, all four remain ardently engaged in exploring the SAQ. More books and journals were sold or donated in New Orleans than at any previous SOF Conference. We now have 670 libraries subscribing to *The Oxfordian*. Our words, words, words are getting out!

Our musical experience in New Orleans was enriched by both Mississippi River boat jazz sets, as well as a superb presentation by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan with audio clips of numerous Shakespeare songs. The musical possibility within Shakespeare's poetic soul was expressed most beautifully by Phoebe Nir's choral arrangement of Sonnet 17, sung by the "Ox-Tones" with accompaniment by Bonner Cutting on piano. As the final act in our conference, it was perfect.

Finally, it was my privilege to once again bestow the Tom Regnier Veritas Award, this time upon our decade-long newsletter editor, postmaster, and informal *consigliere*, Alex McNeil (see p. 5). Together with Bill Boyle's award of Oxfordian of the Year (see p. 13) the accolades due to those two longtime supporters in the Boston area have never been so greatly appreciated and acknowledged. Both Alex and Bill have been instrumental in writing, editing, and ultimately preserving the Oxfordian legacy.

Several days after the New Orleans conference concluded, we received notice that one attendee had developed mild respiratory symptoms and tested positive for COVID-19. Over the next few days we learned that several others had minor symptoms and had also tested positive after returning home. All conference attendees were promptly notified of their exposure risk to coronavirus infection and advised to home test and contact their healthcare providers if they become symptomatic or are at risk and test positive. Procedures to prevent similar episodes of coronavirus transmission at our future programs have already been implemented.

Earl Showerman

It's (Almost) Time to Renew Your Membership for 2024!

Most SOF members prefer to renew online. We're simplifying that process, and we'll notify you by email when the new web page is ready, hopefully by mid-December.

In the meantime, if you'd prefer to renew or donate by check (or submit your credit card info by mail), you can use the mail-in form that's included with this issue.

Please note that membership dues have increased for 2024. We've managed to hold the line for several years, but increased costs across the board have necessitated a modest increase. Basic Membership (providing online access to our publications) is still a bargain at $49 per year ($64 for two persons in the same household).

Newsletter Membership (providing printed copies of the quarterly *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*) is $89 per year ($104 for two in the same household) for U.S. addresses, $96/$111 for Canada, and $107/$122 for other countries. (The latter figures accurately reflect higher postage costs).

Or consider Lifetime Membership ($1550/$1604 worldwide).

We look forward to having you with us in 2024 as we can continue to make the world aware that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is the true Shakespeare!

From the Editor

I'm sorry that I wasn't able to attend the New Orleans Conference in person. But I did watch all the presentations via the livestream feed. Needless to say, it came as quite a shock on the last day of the Conference to learn from the SOF Board of Trustees that I was being given the Tom Regnier Veritas Award! The next day I wrote to the Board to express my appreciation:

> I want to thank all of you for this honor. Sitting here at home today, I just finished transcribing Bill Boyle's remarks in connection with his receiving this year's Oxfordian of the Year award. I would echo much of what he said. When I first got into this after reading Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* in 1992, I never would've dreamed that the SAQ would occupy so much of my time and interest. But it has all been worth it. If I've helped in advancing the case for Edward de Vere as the true Shakespeare, I'm proud to have done so. Also, as Bill said, within our movement there have been some bumps along the way, but that is to be expected when no one can definitively answer all of the myriad issues that have to do with ultimately "solving" the authorship mystery.

Receiving this award also made me think once again of the person for whom it's named. Tom Regnier was a great leader of the SOF, and gave much of his time and energy to it. I first met him around 2006, when the Shakespeare Oxford Society (SOS) and the Shakespeare Fellowship (SF) were separate organizations. We got to know each other pretty well. One of the most memorable days of my life was in late 2009, when Tom and I, representing the SF, and two persons from the SOS, traveled to Washington, DC, to present the Oxfordian of the Year Award to Justice John Paul Stevens at the Supreme Court.

As SF President In 2013, Tom worked closely with then SOS President John Hamill to effect the merger of the two organizations into the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. At that time I offered to edit the newsletter of the new organization, and the first issue of the SOF's *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* came out in early 2014. Forty issues later it's still coming out, but, as I'd informed the Board earlier this year, I felt that ten years as *Newsletter* editor was enough and it was time for someone else to take the reins. I do hope very much to continue being involved with the *Newsletter*.

Four issues have come out each year; thanks to our contributors, most were 32 or 36 pages of short items and long, more scholarly articles. I want to thank everyone who's contributed, whether by way of a letter to the editor, a news note, a book review, or a lengthy article. I've often had more material on hand than can fit, so I especially want to thank contributors for their patience.

Hope to see you in Denver in 2024!

Alex McNeil

[Special thanks to **Lucinda Foulke, Heidi Jannsch, Felicia Londre and Linds Gray** for providing the conference and extracurricular photos in this issue.]

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Letter

From time to time I discover recently published books on Shakespeare and the Tudor Age at my local public library. I want to let other Oxfordians know about one of interest.

Tired of reading dull scholarly works on Shakespeare? Then try *Stalking Shakespeare* by Lee Durkee (Scribner, 2023). It reads like a pulp fiction novella and is written by a self-described neurotic, drinker and drug user with ADHD, occasional paranoia and OCD. The latter characteristic seems to define the author's obsession with discovering what Shakespeare "really looked like," i.e., a hoped-for portrait from when he was still alive.

Durkee is in love with things Tudorian, and rather well-read. He collected better-known images of Shakespeare online and evaluated them, from the monstrous 1623 First Folio figure to the Chandos, Lumley and Ashbourne paintings. His approach is modern; where possible, he favors use of paint analyses, X-ray, infrared, and high-quality imaging. Given a natural (or developed) suspiciousness, he discovers all kinds of secrets, particularly involving the use of overpainting, which seems to have occurred from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The author urges museums and curators to dig deeper using these technologies. His detective sense is often quite charming, as are sagas of his short-lived love lives.

Having begun with the Stratford-upon-Avon Shakespeare images, the author becomes increasingly dissatisfied with the outcomes. Profitable use is made of Oxfordian scholarship, including that of J. Thomas Looney, Paul Altrocchi, Charles Wisner Barrell, Barbara Burris, Margo Anderson, Alexander Waugh and others. Durkee notes the duplicity of the Folger Library concerning the Ashbourne portrait—"provenance" is so important, except when ignored! He makes a great deal of the murder of Peter Michaels, who was working on "restoring" the painting in the 1970s so that the sitter would be claimed to be Sir Hugh Hamersley, a haberdasher and Lord Mayor of London. (Coincidentally, I see that Bill Boyle, this year's Oxfordian of the Year, said that he plans to revisit and reanalyze the murky, tangled history of the Ashbourne portrait and its alterations.)

Durkee also takes on the Shakespeare Authorship Question, and positively assesses Oxfordian theories, including the controversial Prince Tudor hypothesis. His travels take him to Castle Hedingham, where he spends some time with local knowledgeable people. By this point, he has dismissed Will of Stratford and Francis Bacon, but offers some interesting possibilities for Fulke Greville, Mary Sidney Herbert and a suggestion of combined authorship of the plays. In the end, he opts for an agnostic point of view as to the SAQ.

Beneath his projected "wild-and-crazy guy" image is a serious and dedicated author pursuing his quest. His one major gaffe was identifying J. Thomas Looney as "an American schoolteacher." But as a compilation and analysis of many of the most notorious Shakespeare "portraits," it is a fascinating adventure. It is heartening to find an independent researcher of Shakespearean issues who takes Oxfordians' efforts seriously and finds agreement on many points.

Mike Gansecki
Longmont, Colorado

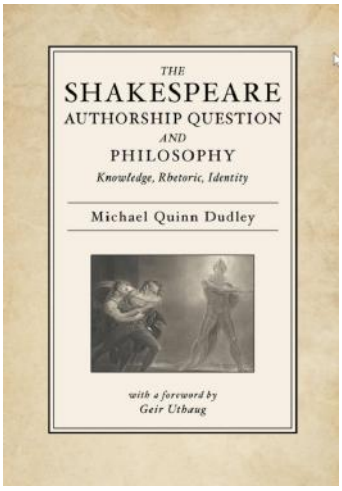
Corrections

1. In the print copies of the Summer 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*, the article on pp. 30-31 ("A Smoking Gun: George Peele's *Anglorum Feriae* Manuscript," by Robert Prechter) was published by mistake. That article was a preliminary version of two articles by Prechter that had been published previously ("Who Wrote George Peele's 'Only Extant Letter'?" Winter 2022 issue, and "George Peele's Personal Note from Shakespeare," Summer 2022 issue). We apologize to Bob Prechter for the goof. [Note: the article was removed from the online version of the Summer 2023 issue now on the SOF website.]
2. In the print copies of the Summer 2023 issue, in "Tales from the Archives: Mad north-northwest," by Bill Boyle, p. 17, right column, second paragraph, the two references to *Shakespeare Matters* (the quarterly newsletter published by the Shakespeare Fellowship from 2001 to 2013) should be to *Shakespeare Quarterly* (the quarterly published by the Folger Shakespeare Library). [Note: the references were corrected in the online version of the Summer 2023 issue now on the SOF website.]
3. In the Summer 2023 issue, in "The How and Why of the Coverup: My Two Cents," by Ron Roffel, p. 22, left column, third paragraph, the reference to "Richard II" should be to "Richard III."

Advertisement

What's the News?

Michael Dudley's New Book Takes on Mainstream Academia's Intransigence



In *The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy: Knowledge, Rhetoric, Identity,* Michael Dudley examines the SAQ, but not in an effort to identify the "real" Shakespeare. Rather, Dudley uses the SAQ as a case study to examine much deeper questions, such as who gets to decide whether alternate theories of authorship are worthy of serious consideration.

As Geir Uthaug writes in his introduction to the book:

> It is not so that the anti-Stratfordians or doubters are illogical, unreasonable or prone to delusional phantasmagoria, as they have so often been presented by the Stratfordians. On the contrary, the majority of them—and certainly the most important ones—have been empirical in their approach and methodical in their reasonings, whereas the Stratfordians . . . have often laid logic and empiricism aside and substituted rhetoric for knowledge, assumptions for facts, while claiming to possess the truth. It may seem a harsh verdict, but Dudley shows in unambiguous terms that what has been presented as factual truth in the Shakespeare question does not hold up under scrutiny.
>
> This is a devastating verdict on the mainstream effort to defend the mythology and to denounce any attempt at solving it which does not point in the desired direction from an orthodox point of view. Dudley goes to the roots and lays all speculations aside. He analyzes in a radical way the contrary principles upon which Stratfordianism and anti-Stratfordianism are based. While the Stratfordians claim to be the wise and the knowledgeable, guided by the principles of reason and logic, Dudley shows by numerous examples and revealing quotations that the reverse is the case. . . .
>
> It is not a book about the authorship as such, but about the *right to question* the authorship and to explain to the defenders of the proposition that the authorship is so unsure in terms of indisputable facts and sound historic evidence that it is only natural that it *should* be questioned. All the same, the self-proclaimed experts of Shakespeare, mostly professors in English departments, have theoretically at least, refused the doubters this right, thus showing a dismissive and authoritarian attitude to doubt itself, which is not in accordance with academic standards.

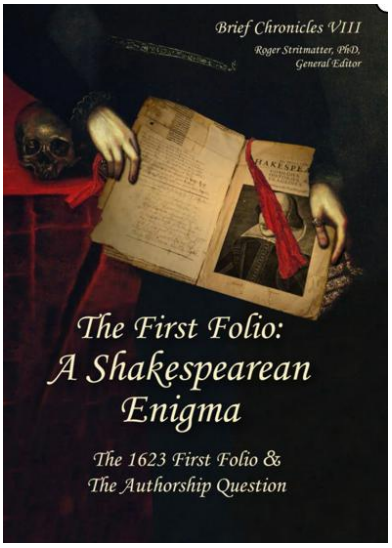
In a way, this book may be read as a scholarly companion volume to Elizabeth Winkler's recent book, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies* (Simon & Schuster, 2023). In her book Winkler, like Dudley, does not argue for or against any particular authorship candidate, but instead investigates why so many mainstream academics continue to accept the case for the man from Stratford despite its obvious inconsistencies and weaknesses. (Winkler herself cites an earlier work from Dudley in her book.) Dudley goes deeper, "beyond the question of authorship," as he puts it, into the fields of philosophy, epistemology and rhetoric.

Michael Dudley holds Master's Degrees in Library and Information Studies and City Planning. He is the librarian for history, theater and film, and disability studies at the University of Winnipeg. He was recently elected a Trustee of the SOF.

The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy: Knowledge, Rhetoric, Identity is published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. It is available for £72.99 (about $88 US) from the publisher: https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-3935-8?fbclid=IwAR2jVT6Q9JeQp_xtadbtyZF9uSvcTqkR5pUy9dKIbHn_YYS-NetoGaPew5U

[Special note: At the recent SOF Conference, President Earl Showerman stated that he'd been provided a special promotional code from the publisher that SOF members can use to purchase the book at a discount. For details, contact info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.]

The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma Published



The latest volume in the SOF's Brief Chronicles book series coincides with the 400th anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio. *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma: The 1623 First Folio & the Authorship Question* takes a deep dive into that famous collection of the Bard's plays, demonstrating conclusively that it is not what orthodox scholars assume it to be.

The volume, edited by Roger Stritmatter, PhD, includes twenty-three articles from thirteen contributors, covering a wide variety of topics. In addition to Stritmatter, the contributors include William Boyle, Katherine Chiljan, Bonner Miller Cutting, Michael Dudley, Michael Hyde, Heidi Jannsch, Bruce Johnston, Shelly Maycock, Gabriel Ready, John Rollett, Alexander Waugh and Richard Whalen. Some of the articles have been published previously, while others were prepared specially for this volume.

The contributors demonstrate how the Folio was designed both to conceal and reveal the real "Shakespeare." Uncovering the real history allows us to witness "literary politics" on the ground while it is happening. We learn that the First Folio was born in a moment of national crisis over the so-called "Spanish Match," King James's plan to marry his son Charles to the heir to the Catholic Hapsburgs. This political nexus is largely ignored by mainstream scholars.

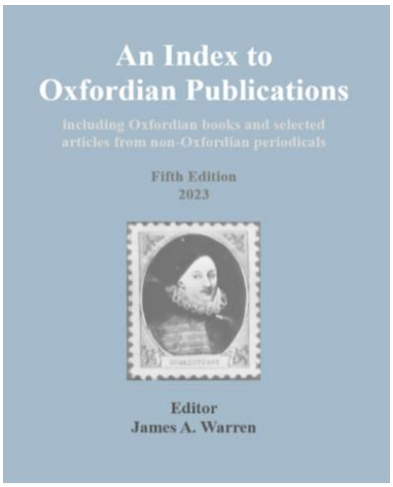
During the approximately twenty months of printing of the Folio (c. March 1622-November 1623), Henry de Vere, the 18th Earl of Oxford and son of Edward de Vere, was imprisoned in the Tower of London for speaking against the match. The Folio's two patrons and dedicatees, brothers William and Philip Herbert, the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, were connected to Oxford and were themselves staunch opponents of the Spanish Match. All were Protestants. The four "editorial" names associated with the First Folio by their authorship of prefatory poems—Ben Jonson, Hugh Holland, Leonard Digges and James Mabbe—were members of the international intelligentsia. At least two of them were translators of Spanish literature.

In *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma* we see how orthodox Shakespeare scholars minimize Ben Jonson's role in the production of the First Folio, and the Folio's connections to international events and social networks created through marriages (i.e., in orthodox works on the First Folio, one seldom learns that one of the two dedicatees, Phillip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, was married to Susan Vere, a daughter of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford).

While the traditional biography of Shakespeare depends on taking the Folio at face value, the Folio itself does not support such a naïve reading, but rather invites attention to its own oddities of construction to raise doubts about the origins of the plays. Consider Ben Jonson's epigram to the Droeshout engraving, in which he advises the reader to ". . . Looke/ Not on his Picture, but his Booke." According to orthodox scholar Leah Marcus, this exhortation should "set[] readers off on a treasure hunt for the author. Where is the 'real' Shakespeare to be found?" The Droeshout engraving itself, with its numerous oddities, is a prime indicator that things are not what they seem, as contributor John Rollett shows in "Shakespeare's Impossible Doublet: Droeshout's Engraving Anatomized."

The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma is priced at $22, and is available through Amazon.

Newest Edition of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications* Is Now Available



James Warren has announced that the Fifth Edition of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications* has been published. It is a complete index to more than 12,000 articles, commentaries, reviews, letters, books, pamphlets and audiovisual productions addressing the Oxfordian theory that have been published during the 103 years since J. Thomas Looney first made the case for Edward de Vere as the true Bard in *"Shakespeare" Identified* in 1920. The Fifth Edition is priced at $35 and is available on Amazon.

In addition to its author and title indexes, this volume reprints the tables of contents for all periodicals issued by Oxfordian and selected other authorship organizations, past and present, and provides listings for more than 3,600 articles published in non-Oxfordian periodicals (such as *The Washington Post* and *The Times Literary Supplement*). It also lists more than 500 non-fiction books

of special interest for those investigating the Oxfordian idea, as well as more than 100 works—novels, plays, musicals, song cycles, etc.—inspired by the idea that Edward de Vere was the real "Shakespeare."

Current through mid-2023, the new edition is almost 800 pages, and contains some 3,000 items added since the Fourth Edition was published in 2017. In addition to Oxfordian items published since then, these include more than 2,000 older items uncovered by James Warren during five research trips to the United Kingdom beginning in 2018. As he explained after completing work on the Fifth Edition, "I now feel like a free man, having worked on the *Index* ten hours a day, every day, for four months to add the new listings gathered over the last six years. The five editions over the past dozen years have cost me more than 8,000 hours of my life. I hope it will be as useful for others as I know it will be for me."

Mainstream Book Casually Mentions Oxford as Shakespeare

(contributed by James Warren)

I was taking a break from Shakespeare for a while to read books on other subjects, when, in Alexander Blackburn's *The Fire Within: Reflections on the Literary Imagination* (2019), a book that hardly mentions Shakespeare, I came across this passage (p. 129): "It is quite possible that publication and perpetuity didn't matter very much to Edward de Vere. While it's true that some of his sonnets claim immortality for what he is writing, he could hardly have believed he had thus conquered Time and Death. . . . That Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, was the man who was 'Shakespeare' is nowadays, for an increasing number of scholars and dramatists, pretty much a proved fact."

Stritmatter Article Published in Mainstream Journal

Roger Stritmatter reports that his article, "Francis Meres Revisited: Wit, Design and Authorship in *Palladis Tamia* (1598)," was accepted for publication and appears in the Autumn 2023 issue of *Critical Survey* (Vol. 35, No. 3). *Critical Survey* is published by Berghahn Journals; the editor is Graham Holderness of the University of Hertfordshire. Founded in 1962, its primary focus is on Renaissance and Modern writing and culture. The twenty-four-member editorial board includes Stanley Wells of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, actor Sir Derek Jacobi, and a number of prominent academics such as Dympna Callaghan, Leah Marcus and Annabel Patterson.

As Stritmatter notes, Meres's *Palladis Tamia* "has long been considered an essential document for Shakespeare biography." In the best-known section, "Comparative Discourse," Meres devotes fifty-nine paragraphs to comparing contemporary English writers to their Greek, Roman or Italian counterparts; one of the salient features of these comparisons is that most (but not all) of them are symmetrical, i.e., in most paragraphs Meres is comparing a given number of English writers to the same number of ancient writers.

In this section Meres mentions twelve Shakespeare plays, several of which had not been published as of 1598. Meres also mentions the Earl of Oxford as a writer of plays, a fact that mainstream scholars trumpet as proof that Shakespeare and Oxford were two different persons.

However, Stritmatter demonstrates that, like so many literary works of the era, *Palladis Tamia* offers much deeper insight into the authorship question than is to be gleaned from a mere surface reading. "[W]hile Shakespeare biographers have celebrated Meres' testimony and partly investigated the circumstances of the book's production," Stritmatter writes, "they have also consistently deprecated his learning, ignored or belittled his other publications, and sometimes savaged his intellect." Stritmatter reminds us that Meres was a skilled logician and mathematician, and that particular attention must be paid to the relatively few asymmetrical comparisons in Meres's "Comparative Discourse," several of which involve Shakespeare. To a knowledgeable reader, these provide valuable clues indicating (among other things) that the name "Shakespeare" is a pseudonym.

Stritmatter tells the *Newsletter* that "I consider this article the most important thing I've done, with the possible exception of my dissertation. I worked on Meres for almost twenty years before getting the giant clue of Robert Detobel and K.C. Ligon's 2009 *Brief Chronicles* article ("Francis Meres and the Earl of Oxford") on his use of symmetry in his similitudes; after another dozen years assimilating, checking, and extending their work, I believe that in this article, I have shown that Meres provides a direct and ultimately unambiguous testimony that Oxford wrote Shakespeare and in the process shows Shapiro et al. for the humbugs that they have been."

The Oxfordian 25 Published

Volume 25 of *The Oxfordian*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, has been published in print and electronic editions. Edited by Gary Goldstein, the 320-page volume contains ten articles, seven book reviews, an interview, and two in-depth letters. It is available on the SOF website electronically. SOF members have access to the entire issue. The print edition can be purchased for $14.99 plus postage via Amazon. Contributors include:

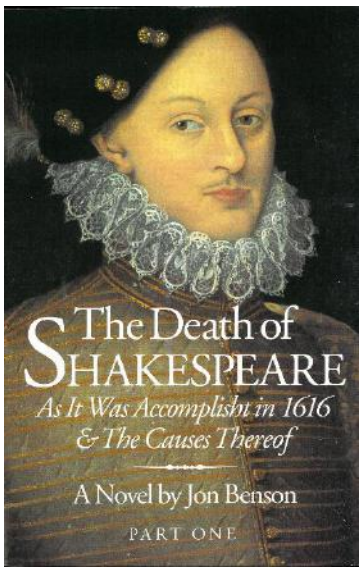
- Earl Showerman, who argues that Arthur Golding's 1564 translation of Justin's *Abridged Trogus Pompeius* (the first book ever dedicated to his nephew, Edward de Vere) should be included among the classical sources for *Titus Andronicus*.
- Elisabeth Waugaman, who traces the French influence in *Hamlet*, examines the profound influence of Belleforest's *Amleth*, whose psychological influence has not been fully appreciated; Montaigne's *Essais*; and the contemporary historical and political background as they relate to the story of the play.
- Michael Hyde, who looks at how Shakespeare transformed the anonymous chronicle of *King Leir* into the tragedy of *King Lear*. He explains how the Bard employed the vogue for Senecan tragedy in this dramatic metamorphosis and offers evidence that Shakespeare was also the author of the original *King Leir* play.
- Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, who discusses Shakespeare's influence on early modern theater, incorporating her recent research at Dulwich College, which houses the Henslowe-Alleyn papers.
- Katherine Chiljan, who makes a detailed examination of a 1567 portrait of a young woman, offering documentary and circumstantial evidence that the sitter, long identified as Susan Bertie, is actually Mary Vere, the sister of Edward de Vere.
- Matt Hutchinson, who investigates the contentious topic of Shakespeare's death. There was no literary notice given of the death of William Shakspere of Stratford in 1616. On the other hand, there are numerous veiled allusions, beginning in late 1604, which suggest that the great writer had passed and had been involved in scandalous behavior.
- James A. Warren, who delves into the fateful year of 1576, when Edward de Vere came to believe that he was not the father of the daughter, Elizabeth, born to his wife, Anne Cecil, while he was traveling on the continent. De Vere would go on to portray aspects of the events of that year in nearly half of his plays and poems.
- Richard Waugaman, who provides psychological insight into a different aspect of the authorship debate. In his view, the ongoing controversy over who wrote the works of Shakespeare illustrates the tension between simplicity and complexity. Sigmund Freud believed that connecting the Shakespeare works with the Earl of Oxford's life would deepen our psychoanalytic understanding of those works. This Oxfordian theory, backed by far more evidence than the traditional theory, remains surprisingly unfamiliar to Shakespeare scholars, who dismiss it without having studied it objectively.
- Robert Prechter, who offers a refutation of the theory that the 1594 book *Willobie His Avisa* is a libel against Penelope Rich, that she is the "dark lady" of the *Sonnets*, and that she and the Earl of Southampton were the biological parents of Henry de Vere (b. 1593), who was raised as Oxford's son by his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham.
- Charles Mercier, who provides a detailed examination of hendiadys (the expression of an idea using two words connected by "and") as used in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Golding's English translation of it.

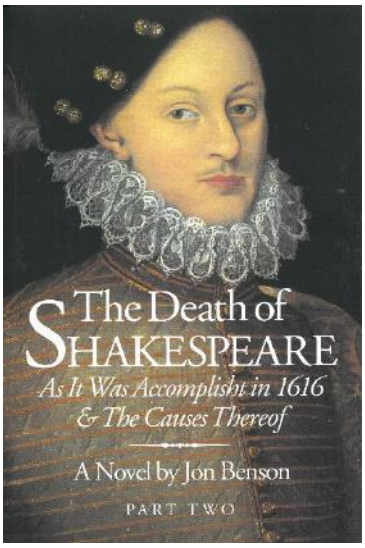
The Oxfordian 25 features reviews of seven books:

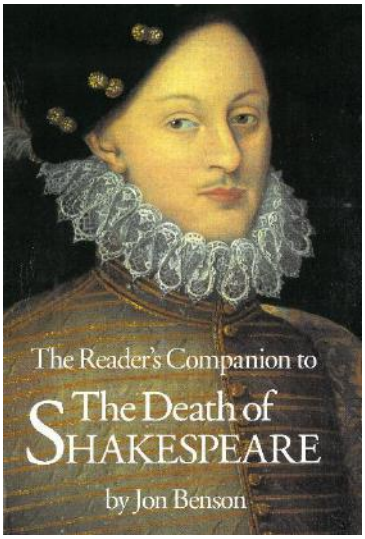
- Elizabeth Winkler, *Shakespeare was a Woman and Other Heresies*.
- Rima Greenhill, *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan*.
- Chris Laoutaris, *Shakespeare's Book: The Story Behind the First Folio and the Making of Shakespeare*.
- Bernard M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604* (new edition edited by James A. Warren).
- Ramon Jiménez, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third***.**
- Percy Allen, *The Plays of Shakespeare and Chapman in Relation to French History* (Volume 5 of Allen's *Collected Writings on Shakespeare*, edited by James A. Warren).
- Abel Lefranc, *Behind the Mask of William Shakespeare* (new English translation by Frank Lawler).

Also included in the volume are "A Conversation with author Jon Benson (aka Doug Hollman)," who is interviewed by Phoebe Nir, and two long letters: one from John Hamill and John Shahan, addressing James Warren's article in the previous volume; and one from Earl Showerman, taking issue with Sky Gilbert's article in the previous volume on what book Hamlet is reading in the play.

Advertisement







The Death of Shakespeare (now available on Amazon in paperback and ebook versions) unveils how the plays and poetry attributed to William Shakespeare were written by Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford - with occasional help from the Bard of Avon.

The Reader's Companion, a separate volume, contains research gleaned over two decades by the author of *The Death of Shakespeare*, a graduate of Columbia Law School and a former New York assistant district attorney and federal prosecutor at the Department of Justice, as he sought answers to how Shakespeare got the credit for what Henry James called "the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world."

The front matter and opening chapters of each volume can be downloaded free of charge at www.doshakespeare.com.

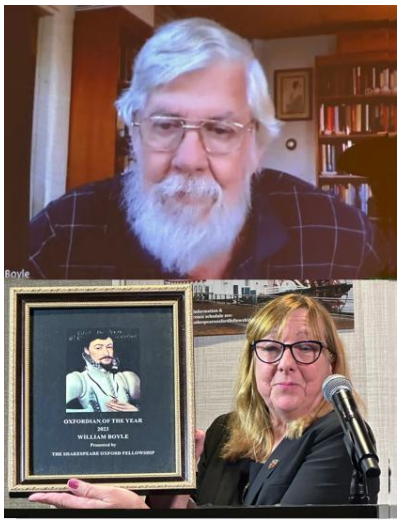
A review of *Part One* in *The Heythrop Journal* concluded that "the novel is clever, well-written, and a delightful journey," and that *The Reader's Companion* "provides many useful tidbits and casts more than enough doubt on the traditional stand on authorship to make the reader seriously re-consider the identity of William Shakespeare."

The Historical Novel Society thought *Part One* a "big, immersive novel … [that] never forgets to entertain its readers while challenging their preconceptions."

If you love the plays, open *The Death of Shakespeare* and discover who actually wrote the plays Shakespeare claimed as his. Watch Oxford joust with Queen Elizabeth, pursue Aemilia Bassano (the Dark Lady of the Sonnets) fend off Lord Burghley, and deal with Shakespeare, of course, all the while penning the greatest plays and poetry ever written.

Bill Boyle Named 2023 Oxfordian of the Year

William "Bill" Boyle has been named this year's Oxfordian of the Year. Announcing the award, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, chair of the Oxfordian of the Year Committee, cited Bill's many years of service to the Shakespeare Oxford Society and later to the Shakespeare Fellowship, the two organizations that merged in 2013 to form the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship.



In the mid-1990s Bill was instrumental in modernizing the operations of the Shakespeare Oxford Society: first, by transforming its then typewritten Newsletter into a professional publication and editing it for five years; second, by launching the Society's website, one of the very first Shakespeare-related websites to appear on the Internet, which made a wealth of information about the Oxfordian claim instantly available; and third, by launching and editing *The Ever Reader*, an online publication that brought important articles to the attention of SOS members.

In 2001 Bill was one of the founders of the Shakespeare Fellowship, and edited its newsletter, *Shakespeare Matters*, for four years. He has published more than 130 articles, reviews, interviews, and other pieces that have greatly increased understanding of the Oxfordian idea. He has published several important books, including his own *A Poet's Rage: Understanding Shakespeare through Authorship Studies*, Hank Whittemore's *Twelve Years in the Life of Shakespeare*, and the first four editions of James Warren's *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*.

In 2005 Bill established the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library and the Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources, or SOAR, a database of thousands of articles of special interest to scholars of the Oxfordian idea published over the past century. SOAR also includes brief summaries of hundreds of the most important articles, and hyperlinks to searchable full-text versions of many articles for which copyright restrictions do not apply. The SOAR database is continually updated by a dedicated team of volunteers. To volunteer or learn more about this resource send an email to: info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

Bill and his brother, Charles Boyle, are storing Oxfordian works in their apartments —an estimated 2,500 of their own books and those from the collections of Dan Wright, Ron Hess, and Betty Sears. Bill is eager to find a permanent home for these materials.

In sum, Bill Boyle's ongoing work has resulted in significant progress toward the day when Edward de Vere will be widely regarded as "Shakespeare."

As Bill was unable to attend the SOF Conference in person, he prerecorded his acceptance remarks. Below is a transcript of those remarks:

> When I was contacted last week about receiving this year's Oxfordian of the Year award, I was pretty surprised, to tell you the truth. It's about the last thing I was thinking of. At the time I was in the midst of several projects that I've been working on this year, which reflects what I've been doing for many years, many decades now.
>
> Which is—probably like many of you at the Conference—dedicating a large part of your lives to this issue, which long ago, in your younger days, you never in a million years dreamed you would be doing. I was one of those, a former English major who was aware of the authorship debate; my mother was into it and sort of an Oxfordian in the 60's, of all things. As I went off to college she gave me a book on Marlowe; years later she told me she did it because she thought I'd like a murder mystery, even though she had the Dorothy Ogburn book from the 60's that she could've given me.
>
> It wasn't until the early 1980s that I had my own "becoming an Oxfordian" moment. Even then, little did I know that, from that moment on, more than forty years ago, this is the major thing I would be doing with my life. But I do not regret a moment of it. It's been an amazingly interesting, fun adventure; I've met lots of interesting people, like all of you guys out there in New Orleans right now. And, you've come to appreciate that this is something important. It's not just a small matter of "this guy or that guy many or may not have written these works." It's a huge issue, larger than the works themselves, about history and truth.
>
> I've been glad to have been part of it all these years. Despite all the bumps along the way—some of you older folks out there, you know what I mean, the 90's, the oughts, on and on; we've had many steps and missteps, adventures, et cetera—it's all been worth it.
>
> And here we are today, with this issue actually gaining some traction. Once again, as before, getting some national attention. I hope that all of us are going to be part of seeing that we push it over the top, that the "Strat man" is pushed off his pedestal, and that (I personally believe) Edward de Vere—Hamlet—is the guy and is recognized as such.
>
> Meanwhile we all soldier on; we're all having a great time doing it. I'll just say once again I really do appreciate receiving this award. I'm sorry I could not be out at this year's Conference, but maybe next year. Who knows? So thanks much!

Authorship Panel at Tulane

by Alex McNeil

Dr. Lyle Colombo, organizer

Panelists Dr. Earl Showerman, Dr. Ros Barber, Dr. Scott Oldenburg, and Dr. Ray Proctor

Authorship-related events in New Orleans got started a day before the SOF Conference. A panel discussion, "Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: The State of the Shakespeare Authorship Question Today," was held on November 8 at the Stone Auditorium at Tulane University. Organized and introduced by Dr. Lyle Colombo of the Tulane faculty, it was moderated by Elizabeth Winkler, author of *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies*, published by Simon & Schuster earlier this year. The panel included two members of the Tulane faculty—Dr. John (Ray) Proctor, assistant professor of theatre, and Dr. Scott Oldenburg, professor of English—as well as Dr. Ros Barber, author, poet and Director of Research at the Shakespearean Authorship Trust, and Dr. Earl Showerman, president of the SOF.

Elizabeth Winkler, moderator

In her introductory remarks Winkler called the Shakespeare Authorship Question a metaphor for epistemology (how do we know what we know?) and authority (who decides what we're supposed to know?). She gave a summary of the 1964 UK court case involving a bequest to the Francis Bacon Society to find Shakespeare's manuscripts (the decedent believed that Bacon was the true author Shakespeare). The bequest was challenged by the decedent's next of kin. They presented expert testimony in an effort to prove that Shakspere of Stratford was the true author. The judge upheld the bequest, finding that the authorship was not "closed," that "the evidence in favour of Shakespeare's authorship is quantitatively slight."

Each panelist made an opening statement. Proctor stated that "authorship doesn't interest me in the slightest." In his view, Shakespeare "stole wildly," and excelled at taking works that were popular and made them more exciting. "What interests me is what we do with the plays," he said. Proctor also shared his belief that Shakespeare's acting company put the plays together and published them in order to make money.

Oldenburg admitted that although he was not an expert on authorship, "I do tend to lean Stratfordian." He was not concerned with any particular gaps in our knowledge of Shakespeare, as there are huge gaps in the historical record of the time, and the 1666 London fire probably destroyed many valuable documents. He recited the usual items offered by Stratfordians as evidence of Shakspere's authorship, such as Meres's references to Shakespeare in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), the connection between Richard Field (who printed *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*) and Stratford-on-Avon, etc. Finally, he asked "What does it matter [who wrote the works] as long as we have 'Shakespeare'" as a common factor tying the works together.

Barber began by stating that her interest, for the purposes of this discussion, is for the authorship question to be taken seriously within academia. She cited Diana Price's chart in *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* showing that, alone among two dozen contemporary writers, there was no corroborative evidence to link Shakspere to a literary life. She also noted that Shakspere's two daughters were illiterate, yet the playwright regularly depicts educated female characters. She believes that Shakspere was involved in the theater, but functioned as a playbroker.

Showerman related that he came to the authorship question as a theatergoer, "a lover of Shakespeare on stage more than on the page." He believes that the author was familiar with Greek drama and knew the Greek language, as many Greek dramatic works had not been translated even into Latin, let alone English, during his time. Greek was not taught in English grammar schools.

Showerman also noted that the playwright had "unparalleled poetic license" to lampoon members of the nobility, including William Cecil and the French Duc d'Alençon.

There was time for brief discussion of some other topics. Winkler asked what the panelists thought of the idea of co-authorship. Proctor replied, "It's not heretical." Barber thought it was "very likely" that there may have been some co-authors, but was highly critical of the methodologies used by the editors of the new edition of the Oxford Shakespeare to claim that perhaps eighteen plays were co-authored. Showerman cited Thomas Vickers's mysterious 1628 reference to Shakespeare as the writer who "takes his name" from "shaking" and "spear."

Winkler asked when doubts about Stratford Shakespeare as author first arose. Barber replied that they began almost immediately after the publication of Venus and Adonis in 1593, and cited the Marston and Hall "Labeo" satires of 1597-98.

In response to a question from Winkler about why one would use a pseudonym at that time, Barber reminded the audience that it could be "extremely dangerous" to use one's own name in print, especially if the writing was deemed critical of the crown. It was against the law to write about the matter of succession to the throne.

In addition to the live audience, the program was livestreamed to more than 170 persons, from eleven nations, who had registered for it.

The Keeper of the Vest

An informal highlight of the Conference was the passing of "the vest." Joella Werlin wore the handmade Oxfordian-themed vest to the Conference this year, and entrusted it to Bonner Miller Cutting.

Some background may be helpful. Here's what we've been able to piece together. According to Carole Sue Lipman, the vest was made by Oxfordian Anne Todd, probably in the 1990s. "I met Anne Todd at the first Oxfordian conference in Carmel (California)," Lipman recalled. "I admired the vest she was wearing and she told me she had made it and that she hoped her son would wear it but that he just wasn't interested. . . . [S]he wanted to give it to me since I had the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable in Los Angeles. After protesting she just insisted and I ended up taking it back to L.A. I have worn it at Oxford conferences in many cities over the years, but the weather is usually quite warm in L.A. I was worried that this marvelous vest was spending too much time in the closet."

In 2016 Lipman brought the vest to Earl Showerman at an Oxfordian seminar in Ashland, Oregon. Showerman thought it would be a good idea to auction it off. Joella Werlin, the lucky purchaser, picks up the story. "I wish I had kept a list of everyone who has had the vest. Originally it circulated in Seattle: Kathryn Sharpe, Jennifer Newton, myself. Most recently it made the rounds among members in the San Francisco area: Coleen Moriarty, Joan Leon, Katherine Chiljan, and Rima Greenhill. . . . I passed the vest on to [Bonner's] keeping for a period of time. I only care that it eventually comes back to me so that I can make sure that I know where it is and can pass it on again."

So, in addition to serving as Secretary of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, Bonner Miller Cutting can add the title of "Keeper of the Vest."

Joella Werlin wearing the embroidered de Vere vest (now entrusted to Bonner Cutting)

Oxfordians "Pass a Good Time" at New Orleans Conference

by Heidi Jannsch

This year's gathering included opportunities for attendees to experience the sights, sounds, and flavors of the "Big Easy."

Following an afternoon of presentations on the first day, attendees enjoyed an evening bus tour through the French Quarter and Garden District neighborhoods. Along the way, our tour guides shared information on the rich culture and unique architecture of each neighborhood while also addressing local residents' biggest concerns: where to find the best food and drinks in each area! It was fascinating to learn about the city's history, especially its important contributions during World War II, when it was home to Higgins Industries, a small boat company that designed and produced the amphibious boats that were instrumental in the Allied victory.

The tour continued through the beautiful wooded City Park, where we had an opportunity to take a brief stroll and enjoy coffee and beignets at the iconic Café du Monde. It concluded at the edge of the Mississippi River, where our group members boarded one of two paddlewheelers—the *Creole Queen* or the *City of New Orleans*—for a two-hour dinner and jazz cruise. We enjoyed a plentiful buffet dinner of Cajun and creole selections in the indoor dining room and were entertained by a live jazz band on an open-air deck while chatting with fellow Oxfordians and taking in the nighttime views.

Bourbon Street

Cemetery from bus tour

The *City of New Orleans*

For booklovers, a highlight of Friday's schedule was a panel discussion featuring authors Margo Anderson, Ros Barber, Elizabeth Winkler, and James Warren. Afterward, panelists were available to sign their works, and throughout the conference, a variety of SOF books as well as issues of *The Oxfordian*, the *Newsletter,* and other goodies were available for purchase during breaks. Even more Oxfordian and Shakespeare-related options were available for purchase from the pop-up bookstore provided by Eddy Nix, owner of Driftless Books in Viroqua, Wisconsin.

Friday and Saturday's agenda included both morning and afternoon presentations and each session included a refreshment break to keep everyone well-fed, hydrated, and caffeinated. Saturday's midday meal took place at the nearby Deanie's, a seafood restaurant which prides itself on serving the freshest locally caught wild seafood available. Some of us only grabbed a quick bite at Deanie's, however, as we had agreed to be part of an impromptu choir practice during the lunch break; all conference attendees had been invited to become members of the Ox-Tones and perform a choral rendition of Shake-speare's Sonnet 17*,* beautifully arranged by Phoebe Nir and Bonner Miller Cutting, who also accompanied the choir on keyboard.

At the closing session on Sunday, following the Ox-Tones' jovial first-and-final public performance, the festivities concluded with a banquet at the Red Fish Grill, where attendees enjoyed one last opportunity to chat with friends and colleagues in person until our next annual gathering, currently scheduled to take place in Denver, Colorado, from September 26-29, 2024.

Many thanks to the SOF Conference Committee for helping us "*Laissez les bon temps rouler"* with such an informative and entertaining event!

Michelle Williams at the
City Park Café du Monde

Jazz band aboard the *Creole Queen*

The *Creole Queen*

Rima Greenhill, Earl Showerman, Heidi Jannsch, Jan Scheffer

The True Testimony of Barnabe Rich: Countering Another of B.M. Ward's Unfounded Charges

by Robert Prechter

In his 1928 book, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604*, B.M. Ward promoted the Earl of Oxford's cause, but he also set it back. To support his supposition that Oxford produced *A Hundreth sundry Flowres* (1573), Ward wove a tapestry of dubious and manufactured evidence to charge Oxford with nefarious actions against Christopher Hatton and George Gascoigne. Numerous Oxfordians have accepted Ward's thesis and have woven it into Oxford's biography, but it melts away under scrutiny.[1]

B.M. Ward's[2] conjecture led him to perpetrate another injustice when he alleged that Barnabe Rich's description of an effeminate fop in the prefacing address titled "To the noble Souldiers" within *Riche His Farewell to the Militarie Profession* (1581, hereinafter *Farewell*) is a caricature of the Earl of Oxford. His thought process went like this: Because Oxford and Hatton were enemies, and because Barnabe Rich dedicated his *Farewell* to Hatton, Rich's lampoon must have been composed at Hatton's instigation and "directed against Lord Oxford…."[3] Ward's speculation is breathtaking in scope:

> Hatton, as we know, was no friend of Lord Oxford [there are indications to the contrary], and although he does not appear to have taken part in the Areopagos controversy [which is evidence against Ward's claim], we may be sure that he would lose no chance [yet there are no other examples] of ridiculing the man he secretly detested [*secretly* because of the void of evidence]. Such an opportunity occurred when Lord Oxford fell temporarily from the Queen's high favour in January 1581, and there can be no doubt that Riche's lampoon, so obviously directed at Oxford a month after his disgrace, was instigated [no evidence] by the Vice-Chamberlain.[4]

"As we know," "we may be sure," "no doubt," "so obviously"—one must be utterly convinced to use such language in just two sentences. Ward was emphatic, but was he right? I don't think so. The whole supposition is not only far-fetched, but is also contrary to a mass of evidence.

Rich's Target Is an Army Man

Berating effeminate men was one of Barnabe Rich's staples. He elaborated upon the incident later the same year, in *Don Simonides*. Here are his two descriptions:

> It was my fortune, at my last beyng at London, to walke through the Strande towardes Westminster, where I mett one came ridyng towardes me on a footclothe nagge, apparailed in a Frenche ruffe, a Frenche cloake, a Frenche hose, and in his hande a greate fanne of feathers, bearying them up (verie womanly) against the side of his face.
> — "To the noble Souldiers" prefacing *Farewell* (1581)

> The last daie as I passed the Streate, I mett one Signior Andrucio, Captaine of our Castle Sainct Angello, bravely beset upon a horse of force, in steede of Armour… meete for a Soldier, he was aparrelled in Crimsin Velvet, imbrodered with Pearle and Stone, in steede of a Launce, he bare in his hands a Fanne of Feathers…. Alas, I am sorie to make you privie to the antique fashion of our foolishe, and effeminate captaine.
> –*The Adventures of Don Simonides* (1581), Piii-Piv

It is important to recognize that Rich is talking to and about soldiers. The description in *Farewell* appears in an address "To the noble *Souldiers*." In *Don Simonides*, Rich clarifies that his disgust pertains to a "foolishe, and effeminate *captaine*." The object of Rich's scorn was not a nobleman, but one of his own profession, specifically the Italian captain of a castle in Rome.

Rich had penned a similar description of dandies three years earlier in *Allarme to England* (1578):

> And in their apparel, they must be verie nice and neat, with their ruffes finely set, a greate bundle of feathers thrust into a cappe… so painted forth in their colours….

Rich continued to deride effeminate men in numerous later pamphlets, such as *Faultes, Faults, And nothing else but Faultes* (1606), where he complains of peacetime's effect on men: "it maketh them become Hermaphrodites; halfe men, halfe harlots…that are not worthie the name of men."

Rich was a soldier to his toes. One of the visions he disrelished all his literary life was that of a mincing man of arms.

The Description Fails to Fit de Vere

An objective assessment demonstrates that Rich's description in *Farewell* cannot pertain to the Earl of Oxford:

1. The description says and implies nothing about a nobleman.
2. Throughout his massive canon of some thirty items, Rich never wrote ill of any member of the nobility. Nor would he have dared do so. His typical targets were professionals, merchants, crooked churchmen and inadequate soldiers. The only man of power about whom he complained was Adam Loftus, the corrupt Archbishop of Dublin.
3. Oxford would never have placed himself atop a "nagge" (defined as "An old, useless horse"[5]) for public view. In 1562 he had paraded proudly with "seven score horse, all in black, through London."[6] In 1581, the publishing date of *Farewell*, Oxford was still extremely wealthy and a decade away from being the

butt of poverty jokes. Ogburn[7] tried to claim that only a nobleman would drape his horse in a footcloth ("an ornamental cloth draped over the back of a horse to reach the ground on each side"[8]), but surely a captain from Rome could do it.

4. No one, even among Oxford's enemies, tagged him with dressing as a Francophile from head to toe. In *Speculum Tuscanismi* (1580), Harvey tagged him with wearing "French Camarick ruffs," but he did not have him, head to toe, in "a Frenche ruffe, a Frenche cloake, a Frenche hose." As Harvey's very title testifies, Oxford's adopted dress was not French, but Italian. Fittingly, the style of the doublet he wears in the Chiljan portrait "is Italian in origin,"[9] and under his arm is "a gilded Italianate rapier…."[10]
5. Certain bits of French fashion provide no evidence of feminine affectation. Two portraits show Oxford wearing "French cambric ruffs,"[11] but so do portraits of other manly courtiers, including Edmund Spenser, Sir Amias Paulet and the Duc d'Anjou.[12] Ironically, the ruffs aren't even French. "The English referred to them as 'French ruffs,' but the French called them 'the English horror.'"[13] Ditto wisps of feather. The Chiljan portrait shows Oxford wearing a black velvet cap that Queen Elizabeth had just given him, in 1581. "Portraits of Christopher Hatton and Robert Dudley," two macho dudes, likewise "depict them as wearing black feathered velvet hats like this, a fashion inspired by the French court…."[14] Sporting such accessories was not akin to peeking coyly from behind a fan of feathers.
6. Oxford never conveyed a simpering attitude in either demeanor or action. On the contrary, in the same year as Rich's first complaint (1578), Gabriel Harvey publicly said of Oxford (in Latin), "Courage animates thy brow, Mars lives in thy tongue" and "thine eyes flash fire." Oxford's actions fit that masculine image. He participated in tournaments, which are not a fop's arena, and consistently won them. He repeatedly entreated the Queen to give him a military command. No carpet knight has that burning desire.
7. Rich's complaint in *Farewell* goes on to condemn the converse practice of women adopting men's apparel. "I… rather thought it had bin some shamelesse woman, that had disguised herself like a man, in our Hose, and our Cloakes: for our Dublettes, Gounes, Cappes, and Hattes thei had got long agoe." In other words, Rich took a stand against all manner of cross-dressing. His motivation was not to condemn or embarrass one individual, but the righteous upholding of what he saw as proper social mores.
8. Other authors of the day echoed Rich's language. In "Of manie famous pirats," appended to *William Long beard* (1593), **Thomas Lodge** pens a nearly identical complaint about the same type of horseman, saying, "when he rides you shall know him *by his fan*; & if he walke abroade, & misse his mistres favor about his neck, arme, or thigh, he hangs the head like ye *soldier* in the field yt is disarmed" (emphases added). He goes on to grumble, "it is monstrous in our opinion to see an old man become *effeminate*" (emphasis added). In *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), **Phillip Stubbes** complains of those who display "effeminat... Nicenes[s]."[15]
9. In *Oxford's Voices*, I make a case that Oxford edited and contributed to six of Rich's books, including *Farewell*. A champion of traditional sex roles would not likely have welcomed working side by side with the object of his scorn, and Oxford would not have contributed to a book in which he was scorned.
10. It would have been impossible for a lowly soldier to have mocked the Earl of Oxford in print and gotten away with it. When Gabriel Harvey did just that in *Speculum Tuscanismi* in 1580, he had to hide out for weeks in a nobleman's house to avoid severe punishment. That incident occurred the year before Rich's description came off the press and would have been fresh in writers' minds. With respect to drama, Jonathan Bate wrote, "it is absurd to suppose that any Elizabethan play might contain satiric references to any aristocrats of the day.… [T]he author of the portrait would have found himself in prison before he could turn round."[16] Yet Rich, who lived another thirty-six years after the publication of *Farewell*, suffered no retaliation and published freely right up to the time of his death in 1617.

Rich Extols the Earl of Oxford

Now we come to the final refutation of Ward's claim. The literary value of Rich's *A Souldiers Wishe* (1604) is low, but its historical value became inestimable upon discovering that it contains a buried gem. Within a discussion of the subject of "Artes," Rich takes a break to say this to King James:

> But now if the goodnesse of a Prince may promise a gratious consideration to the wel deserving: England is made happy in him, whose name is alreadie consecrated to immortalitie, whose Magnificence equalled with Vertue, is able with Caesar, with one hand to holde the Speare in the rest, and with the other to hold the pen: whose Imperiall seate is no lesse renowned by Mars, then beautified by the Muses.
>
> I could wade farther, but it were better for me to conceive in silence, then not being able to utter, might seeme indiscrete. I will therefore heere stay my selfe….

This is a remarkable passage. In previous books, Rich had freely named high-ranking contemporaries whom he wished to praise, as in *Dialogue, betwene Mercury and an English Souldier* (1574), *Epitaph on William Drury* (1580), *A Martial Conference* (1598) and *A looking[-glass] for… Ireland* (1599). But this time, he omits his subject's name. Rich's capitalization of *Vertue* and *Speare* identifies him: *Ver* is Oxford's family name, and *Speare* implies Shakespeare. That the man holds a *Speare* in one hand and a *pen* in the other fits the Earl of Oxford, who was not only **Shakespeare** but also the primary pen-holding Elizabethan about whom contemporaries, in order not to "seeme indiscrete," were uniformly "not able to utter" publicly a single translucent word, much less could they celebrate his clandestine accomplishments. Rich's discretion likewise prevents him from saying anything overtly about this "wel

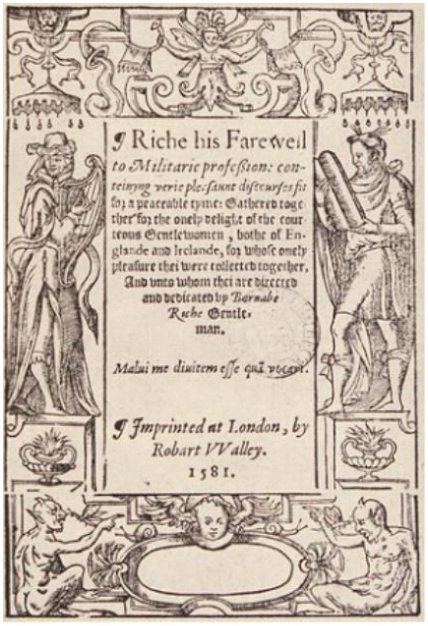
deserving" man of England, a man "whose name is alreadie consecrated to immortalitie." His words are yet further evidence that Oxford's role as a covert writer was an open secret.

I believe that the context established in *Oxford's Voices*—in which Barnabe Rich was one of Oxford's protégés and co-authors—explains the heartfelt feeling Rich expresses here. Rich loved his literary facilitator right up to the end and admired him as a man of both arms and letters, "no lesse renowned by Mars, then beautified by the Muses." That pair of mythological links fits not only Oxford's social image but also Rich's personal experience, because he and Oxford had served England's military in Scotland and collaborated, by my estimation, half a dozen times for the press.

The man who Rich declares was "renowned by Mars" could not possibly be the same solider he described mincing behind a fan of feathers. It is ironic that an ugly quote from Barnabe Rich provided fodder for a false construct, whereas a beautiful quote from Rich reveals his true attitude toward Edward de Vere.

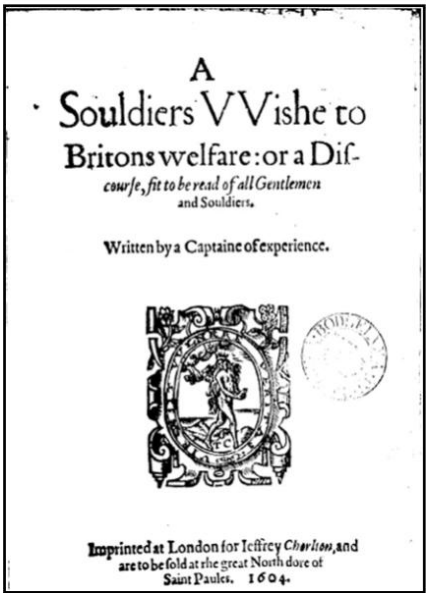
Time for Biographical Revision

Sadly, Clark,[17] Ogburn[18] and the Ogburns accepted Ward's fantastical charge, and other Oxfordians have continually repeated it. As late as September 2021, an Oxfordian asserted that Rich's "description…of an unnamed English nobleman [sic]…*fits de Vere in every detail*."[19] As we have seen, it does nothing of the sort.


¶ Riche his Farewell to Militarie professions: conteining verie pleasaunt discourses fit for a peaceable tyme: Gathered together for the onely delight of the courteous Gentlewomen, bothe of Englande and Irelande, for whose onely pleasure they were collected together, And unto whom they are directed and dedicated by Barnabe Riche Gentleman.

Malui me divitem esse quàm videri.

¶ Imprinted at London, by Robart Walley. 1581.


A Souldiers Wishe to Britons welfare: or a Discourse, fit to be read of all Gentlemen and Souldiers.

Written by a Captaine of experience.

Imprinted at London for Ieffrey Charlton, and are to be sold at the great North dore of Saint Paules. 1604.

Speculations based on Ward's errors have spread like cancer and become part of the tapestry of illusion relating to Oxford's supposedly suspect nature and character. Alan Nelson, using every brush to paint Oxford in a negative light, quoted the entire Rich passage and gloated, "it may conceivably point at Oxford, *as argued by his apologists*."[20] Score a three-pointer for Nelson. He turned some Oxfordians' meritless caricature of Oxford against them, and unlike said apologists, he did so with responsibly guarded language.

B.M. Ward's unfounded derogatory claims about Oxford have made their way into Oxfordian literature. After nearly a century, it's time to expunge them from his biography.

[This article is excerpted from the George Gascoigne, Barnabe Rich and Those Who Knew chapters of *Oxford's Voices* (www.oxfordsvoices.com).]

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[3] Id. at 192.
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[5] Wiktionary.
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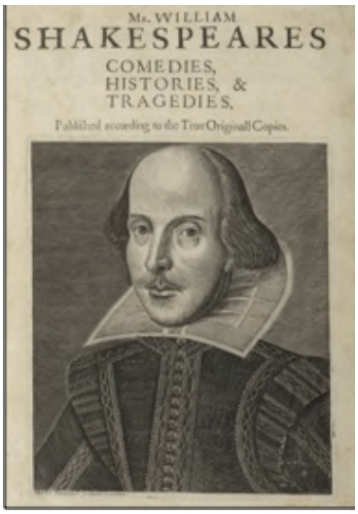
[7] Charlton Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (2nd ed.). EPM Publications (1992), 642-643.
[8] Merriam-Webster Dictionary.
[9] Elisabeth Waugaman, "Analyzing the Chiljan Portrait," *The Oxfordian* Vol. 23, (2021), 321.
[10] Id. at 325.
[11] http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/Nashe/Three_Proper_Witty_Familiar.pdf.
[12] Waugaman, 319.
[13] Id. at 318.
[14] Id. at 317.
[15] *Oxford's Voices*, moreover, argues that Lodge and Stubbes were allonyms of the Earl of Oxford. If Rich's quote had described Oxford, Oxford's Voices (i.e., his allonyms) would not have berated people who fit it.
[16] Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, as quoted in Rita Lamb, "Does Nashe's only surviving play contain satire?" https://sicttasd.tripod.com/theory.html#4.
[17] Eva Turner Clark, *The Man Who Was Shakespeare*. New York: AMS Press (1937), 546-547.
[18] Ogburn, 642-643.
[19] William Farina, *De Vere as Shakespeare*. McFarland & Co. (2006), 84.
[20] Alan H. Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, Liverpool University Press (2003), 228.

The First Folio, Anti-Puritan Disinformation

by Thomas Millar



Over the last twenty years, exciting new research has drawn our attention to a cluster of events that occurred in late 1623. Within a two-month span Shakespeare's First Folio was published, the heir to the English throne returned home from Spain after failing to negotiate a marriage with the daughter of King Philip III of Spain, and the son of the 17th Earl of Oxford was released after a twenty-one-month imprisonment in the Tower of London.

In several insightful articles Peter W. Dickson identified these rapid-fire developments and suggested the timing was likely not a coincidence. Roger Stritmatter in his groundbreaking paper, "Small Latine and Lesse Greeke," suggested that the Folio project was spearheaded by the Herbert brothers—the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery—with the goal (perhaps among others) to discourage King James from pursuing a marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta.

In his exhaustively researched paper, "The Production of the First Folio Reconsidered," Gabriel Ready suggests that the close timing between the Spanish marriage failure and the publication of the First Folio may have indeed been a coincidence. Lastly, in her paper, "The Grand Deception of the First Folio," Katherine Chiljan postulates that the publication of the Folio was intended by the Herbert brothers to deceive the public into assuming that Will Shakspere of Stratford was the author of the Shakespearean works.

If we step back to consider the broad state of affairs in England at the time, we may see a way that elements from all of these scenarios fit together in a new theory. Perhaps the publication of the First Folio was an effort by a savvy group to send a message of reconciliation to King James by unleashing disinformation that would work against the growing and, to the King, troublesome power of Puritans in 1620s England.

First Folio Organizers

Most Oxfordians agree that three key persons were responsible for the First Folio project: (1) William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household from 1615 to 1625. In the latter position Pembroke controlled many Court activities, including the staging of plays. (2) Philip Herbert, 1st Earl of Montgomery, the younger brother of Pembroke. In 1623 Montgomery was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber (the King's private apartment), a Knight of the Bath, a Knight of the Garter, a Member of Parliament and High Steward of Oxford University. (3) Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery, wife of Montgomery, and the youngest daughter of the late Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and half-sister to the 18th Earl of Oxford. Susan and her husband were a power couple of 1600s England. When they were married in 1604 Susan was escorted to the chapel by the then heir to the throne, Prince Henry. King James gave away the bride. Court festivities for the wedding included performances of seven "Shakespeare" plays (Hank Whittemore, *100 Reasons Shake-speare was the Earl of Oxford*).

In addition, two important men not directly involved in the production of the First Folio were closely associated with Pembroke and Montgomery as opponents to the Spanish marriage, opponents of Spanish influence in England, and opponents of the Marquis of Buckingham, the King's favorite and a proponent of stronger ties with Spain: (1) Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, In 1623 Southampton was a Knight of the Garter and an active supporter of the theater. He was a close friend of the 18th Earl of Oxford and Susan Herbert. (2) Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, son of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and his second wife. In 1620 he was a Knight of the Bath and had commanded English naval vessels. He and Southampton had fought alongside each other against the Spanish in Bohemia. He was an outspoken opponent of the proposed Spanish marriage.

Reconciliation

Why did the organizers of the First Folio feel a need for reconciliation with the King? Because the organizers, along with Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford,, had been active opponents of the Spanish marriage and the King was increasingly hostile to such opposition.

A marriage between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta Maria Anna was suggested by the Spanish Ambassador Gondomar to King James in 1614. Gondomar hinted that a dowry of £600,000 could be provided if the marriage were to occur. This would go far toward solving James's fiscal problems. The King's favorite, Buckingham, supported the idea, but few others did. There was strong pushback from English factions, high and low.

The opposition of Pembroke, Montgomery, Oxford and Southampton to the Spanish marriage had pitted them against the King and the increasingly influential Buckingham. The King's position was that the marriage was nobody's business but his and the Prince's. From

1614 to 1621 arguments against the marriage gradually intensified. In July 1621 Oxford and Southampton were arrested for intemperate speech. Both were released after about two months.

In January 1621 James had called a Parliament to try to raise badly needed funds. The Puritan-influenced Parliament approved a subsidy bill, but declined to pass other proposed legislation. At one point Parliament advised James that Prince Charles should marry a Protestant. The King responded that it was not their business to express opinions on royal marriage or foreign policy. Eventually, on December 18 the House of Commons issued a Protestation to the King, asserting a right to free speech. Furiously, the King had the journal book brought to him, ripped the Protestation out of the book and tore it up. Then he dissolved Parliament.

James's descent into rage must have sent shivers up the spines of Pembroke, Montgomery, Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford. Their thoughts could easily have ranged back three years, to when James had reinstated a death sentence for Sir Walter Raleigh. Was the King angry enough to order more executions? Pembroke and Montgomery were among England's wealthiest men, with large country estates and income generating holdings throughout the kingdom. Samuel Gardiner referred to Pembroke as the richest nobleman in England. As Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household, Pembroke was among the King's top three advisors.

Montgomery was considered a favorite of the King when, as a nineteen-year-old, he had first appeared at court. While the King had moved onto other favorites, Montgomery was still a close personal advisor, the only non-Scot appointed a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber. Pembroke was intensely ambitious, calculating and unusually attentive to the details of government.

Throughout his life he attended sessions of the House of Lords about ninety percent of the time, more than any other member (Briley). He was also highly litigious; British National Archives list thirty-three lawsuits filed by Pembroke between 1604 and 1630 mostly asserting ownership and license rights in conjunction with his far-ranging real estate holdings. Akrigg describes the Jacobean court as having "all-pervasive graft and corruption." Pembroke's success in legal actions would have depended on his status and contacts at the royal court. The First Folio organizers probably came to the realization that they weren't going to change the King's mind about a Spanish marriage.

Regardless of whether a marriage might occur, what course of action should they undertake in late 1621? How could they repair their relationship with the King?

The Rising Tide of Puritanism

The dispute with the Puritan-influenced Parliament must have been a focusing event for the King as well as for the Folio organizers. The King had long been wary of Puritans. In 1605 Nicolo Molin, the Venetian Ambassador in England, reported to the Doge:

> The King left London yesterday for Royston. He stayed here some days longer than he intended, as he had to settle some differences between the Puritans and the Bishops. These differences present new difficulties every day, for the Puritans are firmly resolved not to submit to the Bishops. This attitude causes his Majesty and the Council much anxiety, all the more that their number is very great and they are led by chiefs of great position. His Majesty has been occupied every day in Council upon this subject, and pays attention to nothing else.

In 1616, in his *Political Works*, James instructed his justices of assize not to let "the Church nor Church-men bee disgraced in your Charges, nor Papists nor Puritanes countenanced."

By the time of the 1621 Parliament, the Puritans had started to view the King with equal disdain. According to the 18th-century Puritan historian Daniel Neal, writing of the events of 1621, "All who opposed the king's arbitrary measures were called at court by the name Puritans; and those that stood by the crown in opposition to the parliament, went by the names of Papists and Arminians (in this context essentially Anglicans). These were the seeds of those factions, which occasioned all the disturbances in the following reign." The King's experience with the 1621 Parliament may have convinced him that Puritans were no longer just an annoyance, but his biggest threat. While James had been preoccupied with striking just the right relationship with Spain, the Puritans had been steadily gaining power and confidence. The rising tide of Puritanism was restricting his access to funds and threatening his authority to control English foreign policy.

As Puritanism grew in England so did Puritan protestations against the theaters. In 1577 the first printed tract on the subject appeared, John Northbrooke's *A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes with Other Idle Pastimes*. Complaints continued from pulpits and printing presses. The two main criticisms were that the theater was mind-polluting, and that if people spent time in theaters they wouldn't be attending sermons. In 1615 I.G. wrote the following in *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*:

> Idlenesse is the Mo|ther of Vice, and many vitious Persons when they know not how any longer to be idle, for variety of Idlenesse goe to see Plaies. Doe they not draw the people from hearing the Word of God, and Godly Lectures? For you shall haue them flock thick and three-fould to the Play-houses, and withall Celerity make speed to enter in them, least they should not get place neere enough vnto the Stage (so prone and ready are they to euill;) when the Temple of God shall remaine bare and empty.
>
> And those that will neuer come at Sermons will flow thither apace. . . .

By 1621 James had few effective ways to push back against the Puritans. Elizabeth had responded to poison-penned tracts by chopping off the occasional head, but by 1621 the Puritans had become powerful enough to make execution counterproductive. The King needed cooperation from Parliament to raise funds. Beginning about 1575 and continuing through the reign of James, two major conflicting trends in English society were the growth of Puritanism and the popularity of theater. Preachers and playwrights were competing for the same audience.

The Plan

Pembroke and Montgomery were among the wealthiest men in England, both with high government positions. Southampton and the 18th Earl of Oxford still had their heads, along with substantial wealth and position. What could they all do to repair their relationships with the King and preserve their status? As skillful political operators Pembroke and Montgomery likely recognized that the King's most pressing problem was rising Puritanism. At that precarious moment they may have realized that their most useful tool against the Puritans was the treasure trove of unpublished "Shakespeare" plays in the possession of Susan Herbert, Montgomery's wife. Those plays were, of course, penned by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, Susan's late father.

Between 1593 and 1623, ninety-five quarto editions of Shakespeare's works had been published, making him, by far, the most popular author in England (Eric Rasmussen, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's First Folio*). If the Folio organizers could combine Susan's unprinted plays with improved versions of previously published works into a complete Folio, that could stoke theatrical activity. More support for theater would mean less support for Puritanism. Such a development would do much to improve their standing with the King.

It was delicate business. Attributing works to the 17th Earl of Oxford that had previously been attributed to Shakespeare would raise questions about who had authored the Sonnets, which had been printed over the name of "Shake-speare" in 1609. As others have noted, questions about the relationship between the 17th Earl of Oxford and the "faire youth" of the sonnets could be raised, which would give the Puritans something else to complain about. It certainly wasn't a topic King James would want to have exploited by Puritan pamphleteers.

If the organizers had only wanted to deflect attention away from the 17th Earl of Oxford, they would have simply put "Shakespeare's" name on the title page and been done with it. However, if publication of the plays was done in a way to bolster the fiction of the Stratford man as the author, the Folio could be celebrated as the brilliant works of a self-made master, thus leveraging the established Shakespeare brand and maximizing the Folio's usefulness as a tool against Puritanism. The misattribution of the works to Shakspere of Stratford—something that had begun as a playful reference to the 17th Earl's heraldic symbols, evolving into a joke hinging on the similarity between those symbols and the name of a local theater manager, thereby creating a useful ambiguity for Queen Elizabeth—had now become a political weapon that James could use.

Implementation

Producing a 900-page book of plays in the 1620s was a monumental task. It was probably clear from the beginning that actual sales could not be made until the end of 1623. During that time the King had to be confident that the organizers were working on his behalf, not plotting a last-minute trick to shift attribution to the 17th Earl of Oxford. That would have been a good reason for the organizers to engage Ben Jonson to manage the details. Jonson was popular at court and no fan of the Puritans. Furthermore, Jonson was well connected in the London theater community and with London printers. He was known to be self-centered and ambitious. Jonson would be highly motivated to make a success of the project both for the sake of his standing at Court and for his image with the theatergoing public. Jonson's engagement in the project may have begun as early as the fall of 1621, when his yearly court retainer was increased by Pembroke from 100 marks to £200, a threefold increase.

But there was a loose cannon. How could the headstrong Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford, be controlled during the long publishing process so as not to further agitate the King and jeopardize the project? Among the First Folio organizers he had been the most vocal against the Spanish match. According to independent researcher Nina Green, during the first session of the 1621 Parliament, the 18th Earl delivered an intemperate speech against the Spanish marriage, causing him to be imprisoned in the Tower in July 1621. He was released two months later, but his public invectives against the King's plan had caused a stir. In November 1621 it was announced that he was assigned to be Vice-Admiral of a small fleet patrolling for Spanish transports in the English Channel (letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Charleton). This may have been an attempt to remove the 18th Earl from the London scene so that he couldn't cause more trouble. However, Oxford rashly captured a friendly Dutch commercial vessel and was relieved of his command by Buckingham. This triggered more intemperate speech; he was again imprisoned in the Tower in early April 1622. Gabriel Ready suggests that he may have been held in a "luxury room" in the Tower. Perhaps the 18th Earl's confinement until the completion of the First Folio project was mutually agreeable to the King and the First Folio organizers.

One of Jonson's first steps was probably to enlist Henry Condell and John Heminge to serve as figurehead editors, to be listed prominently in the prefatory pages. Both men were known to be friends of Shakspere and were probably acquaintances of Jonson. Many scholars believe that Jonson wrote the dedication to Pembroke and Montgomery and the Shakespeare eulogy, both printed over the names of Condell and Heminge. The two pieces are skillfully composed, but no other examples of writings from Condell or Heminge are known to exist. In Shakspere's will, Condell and Heminge were each given small bequests for mourning rings. Perhaps this verifiable tie to the Stratford man recommended them to Jonson.

Another early step would have been to call attention to Pembroke and Montgomery as the Folio's patrons. If the Folio succeeded in boosting theatrical activity, Pembroke and Montgomery wouldn't want the King to forget their contribution. Also, their designation as patrons in the Folio would suggest support from the Court for a brilliant talent (Shakspere) raising up from a common background, a useful ploy.

The selection of the printer, Jaggard, and the publisher, Blount, were logical choices. Jaggard probably held rights to some of the previously published plays and his large print shop provided needed capacity for a 900-page book. Edward Blount was a respected publisher, poet and translator. He had previously published works by Jonson and had twice, prior to the First Folio, dedicated books to Pembroke and Montgomery. Blount's involvement would ensure a high standard of editing.

In addition to the dedication and eulogy ascribed to Condell and Heminge, Jonson wrote a two-page eulogy over his own name. Not satisfied with these measures, three other writers with contacts at Court—Leonard Digges, I.M. (thought to be James Mabbe) and Hugh Holland— were enlisted to write additional eulogistic verses. No effort was spared to link Shakspere of Stratford to the works.

Printing of the first quires (twelve-page sections) began sometime between February and May 1622. While typesetting and printing continued for almost two years, the Spanish marriage negotiations proceeded with twists and turns. The climactic stage was reached in March 1623, when Prince Charles, escorted by the soon to be Duke of Buckingham, departed incognito by ship for Spain in a desperate attempt to finalize the negotiations in Madrid. They returned empty-handed in October 1623.

The first copies of the First Folio were completed in November 1623 and sales began in December.

Success and Failure

As the project was being completed, the King seemed to acknowledge that a favorable milestone had been reached. In early November a public reconciliation between Southampton and Buckingham was organized, and at the end of December the Earl of Oxford was finally released from the Tower.

After the launching of the Folio the Herbert brothers maintained their high status in the government and at Court. Pembroke continued as Lord Chamberlain until 1626, when he passed his position to Montgomery; after the death of King James in March 1625 he continued at Court as a powerful advisor to King Charles, with a promotion to Lord Steward in 1626. He died in 1630 at the age of fifty, passing his Earldom to Philip (Montgomery), who became the 4th Earl of Pembroke.

The fortunes of Montgomery (Philip Herbert) also stayed on a smooth track. He continued as a close advisor to James and hosted the King at annual hunting excursions at the Herbert ancestral estate. King James is said to have recommended Montgomery to Charles, who appointed him Lord Chamberlain in 1626.

The Countess of Montgomery (Susan Herbert) continued as the other half of the Montgomery power couple, maintaining a house in London with eighty servants and a country home with more than 100. She died of smallpox in 1629.

After the release of the 18th Earl of Oxford from the Tower and the smoothing over of troubles between Southampton and Buckingham, the two Henrys (Southampton and Oxford) apparently felt the best course of action was to get out of town. They gained appointment as officers in a volunteer English force fighting the Spanish in the Netherlands making the trip across the channel in July 1624. Within months both died from fever or infection. The First Folio organizers' objective of getting back into the good graces of the King had been achieved. But in other ways the project was a failure. Despite the growing popularity of theater during the two decades after publication of the First Folio, Puritans continued to gain influence in and out of Parliament and persisted with their attacks on theater. Disputes between the King and the Puritan-led Parliament became increasingly intense, leading to the first English civil war in April 1642.

Warfare continued on and off until 1648, when King Charles's forces were defeated by the hymn-singing "New Model Army" under the command of Puritan warlord and Member of Parliament Oliver Cromwell. Charles was sentenced to death and executed in January 1649. Subsequently, Cromwell took control of the government, subjecting England to a dictatorship until he died in 1658. From 1642 to 1660 the London theaters were shuttered; Puritan preachers finally had the audience to themselves. When the monarchy was restored in 1660 the theaters were reopened, but by then no one was alive who knew about the authorship deception and there was no reason for anyone to dispute the version of authorship printed in the First Folio.

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Alec Guinness Speaks

From the third volume of actor Alec Guinness's autobiography, *A Positively Final Appearance* (1999): "It amazes me that there are people who think Marlowe wrote Shakespeare's plays, although there is every likelihood that Shakespeare either deliberately plagiarized an image now and then or that a line of Marlowe's, when first heard or seen, had struck so deeply into his soul that he imagined it his own. Marlowe's stagecraft is crude or non-existent when compared to Shakespeare's know-how. And is there a character in Marlowe which makes one smile, let alone laugh outright?"

[Submitted by Robert Fowler]

Report of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Annual General Meeting

by Bonner Miller Cutting, Secretary

The Annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship was held at the Hyatt Centric Hotel in New Orleans from 9:00 to 10:30 AM on Saturday, November 11, 2023. It was well attended by members, with forty-six signing in at the door. Several more people came in late but did not sign in. President Earl Showerman provided the attendees with an agenda and copies of the several Committee reports.

Finance Report:

Richard Foulke gave the Treasurer's report. Total revenue in 2022 was $109,000. Compared to 2021 revenues, this amount shows a decline of 6% with fees from the Ashland 2022 annual conference excluded. A major component of the decline was a drop of $8,247 in donations.

Overall, SOF finances are in good shape. Foulke reported $101,394 in expenses, resulting in an increase of $7,927 in net assets. He provided details of expenditures and the percentage of the budget allocated to publications, conferences, communications, outreach programs, and administrative costs.

SOF net assets lost some ground, with a decrease of $39,570 from 2021. However, the SOF has recovered some of this loss in 2023. The funds in the Reserves and Endowment are fully invested in two mutual funds, and the returns from these investments have been good. Foulke noted that only the interest from these funds can be used for SOF expenses.

Membership and Fundraising Committee:

Dorothea Dickerman, chair, gave the Annual Report of the Membership and Fundraising Committee. Membership to date is 479, with fifty-two lifetime members. The success of offering lifetime memberships was noted. Donations are increasing, though contributions are lower than in previous years. Search engine optimization (SEO) has been a major project since its implementation in 2021, and has increased the effectiveness of the organization's website and social media outreach. A measure of the success of the SEO initiative is that Google, the world's most powerful search engine, ranks the SOF website close to the top when the public searches for authorship information. This ranking puts the SOF in fifth place, behind Wikipedia, the Folger Library, the De Vere Society and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Dickerman also said that the SOF keyword ranking has excelled in two search categories, ranking second behind only Wikipedia. Although Wikipedia will always be number one, at times over the last ten months the SOF website has ranked second in searches for the words "Edward de Vere" and the "People also ask" question box. The SOF website ranks fifth for searches using "Shakespeare authorship," trailing Wikipedia, The Guardian, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and the Wire. She further pointed out that these are large Stratfordian websites run by major corporations. Ranking fifth among these giants is a signal achievement for a small organization.

The number of visitors to the SOF website has doubled in 2023 over the same time period in 2022. September saw a 25% increase in the number of new viewers over the same timeframe in the previous year. Alex McNeil's *Shakespeare Authorship 101* video (produced by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan), the Blue Boar Tavern conversations, the SOF interviews, and the recorded presentations posted on the SOF YouTube Channel are all garnering a growing number of views each month—about 20,000 on average.

Dickerman has also been working with SOF website wizard Jennifer Newton to make the membership renewal process more efficient. The website will soon feature a "members only" section to provide members a space for fellowship, crowdsourcing ideas, and discussion boards. Proposed is a bulletin board for announcements, opportunities to volunteer for the SOF projects, and a place for local groups to connect with speakers and each other. Discussion platforms will need a monitor, and Dickerman is soliciting "help to launch this project."

Another project is the revamping of the homepage to give the SOF website a fresh new look.

Tracking viewership of the innovative Blue Boar Tavern video series, Dorothea provided the totals beginning with "Cracking the First Folio," which aired on December 15, 2022. There was a huge increase in views in April 2023 with "Oxford's Birthday Party" celebrating his 473rd birthday. The uptick in viewership is largely due to opening up the show from "members only" to public view. Subsequent episodes opened to the general public are increasing the numbers of views, and thousands are watching the shows once they are posted on YouTube. The latest episode, with guest Robert Prechter, had 115 live views and 826 when it was released days later.

Dickerman reviewed the Fundraising Committee's ideas and approaches for increasing donations. Among the proposals are as follows:

(1) a questionnaire soliciting feedback;
(2) targeted donation request letters;
(3) a telephone campaign reaching out to major donors;
(4) sending thank-you letters to major donors;
(5) updating the website to make donations and renewals easier, including the ability to make monthly donations via credit card.

Finally, Dickerman reminded members that the SOF employs a few persons, and pays them to make these programs happen. It is crucial to have donations along with membership dues to fund the jobs of Webmaster, publications and video editing, and graphics.

Communications Committee:

Bob Meyers, chair, gave an overview of the communications activities during the past year. Along with Tom Woosnam and Jennifer Newton, Meyers is engaged in putting educational and informative Oxfordian materials on the SOF website. New items—usually one printed and one video—are uploaded to the site twice a week. Links to other materials are also added. In order for members to know about new books, articles and other activities in the world of authorship studies, there is a new "Behind the Scenes" series of interviews spotlighting what individual members are doing.

The committee has collected all of the reviews of Elizabeth Winkler's book, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies*, and made them available on the website.

Meyers said that a wide variety of materials can be found on the SOF YouTube Channel, noting that 172 videos have been posted in the past five years. As the average length is 51 minutes, this adds up to a total of 8,772 minutes, 146 hours, or 3.65 forty-hour weeks. Thus, Meyers suggested, if someone asks about authorship, we can say, "Give me the next three weeks and three days and you'll be up to speed."

Meyers reported much progress to report on the social media front. Alex McNeil's *Shakespeare Authorship 101* video, as noted above, is a hit. Phoebe Nir has completed six videos on YouTube and TikTok. In them, she incorporates a quick conversational style that resonates with a younger demographic. In his persona as the bartender at the Blue Boar Tavern, Jonathan Dixon has led several popular BBT episodes. Sam Meyers, Bob's son, produced a video with Phoebe Nir called "A Gen-X Approach to Authorship." As the title indicates, it is designed for outreach to the younger set.

Meyers gave an overview of two newly published books: Roger Stritmatter's *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma* (published by the SOF as part of its Brief Chronicles book series: see p. 9) and a recent issue of *The Journal of Scientific Exploration,* devoted specifically to the authorship question; this special issue of the quarterly journal was edited by Don Rubin. Earl Showerman noted the "Herculean labors" that went into writing and publishing both of these books.

Meyers announced that there are open slots for the editorship of the SOF *Newsletter*, editorship of the annual journal *The Oxfordian*, and a new position of social media editor. Alex McNeil is retiring after ten years as editor of the *Newsletter* at the end of 2023. (His wife, Jill McNeil, is also stepping down as the graphics and layout person.) The SOF is grateful to both of them for the fabulous volunteer work they have done over the years. Gary Goldstein's contract as editor of *The Oxfordian* actually ended last year, but he continued on through 2023. These openings have been posted on the SOF website and applications have been received. Meyers relayed the committee's appreciation to Bryan Wildenthal for developing new contracts for these three positions.

Conference Committee:

Chair Don Rubin set out an impressive list of the various tasks to be done in planning a conference, from "first you choose a city" all the way to "attend and monitor." In between are almost two dozen discrete tasks that must be done. Among the many things to stay on top of, it's essential to constantly monitor hotel bookings to make sure the reservation room blocks are adequate.

For the New Orleans conference, 105 persons registered for the full conference, with approximately fifty more signed up for livestream. Another sixteen persons paid to attend events on a daily basis. A special grant from a local foundation allowed for outreach activities – the buses to see the sights of New Orleans and the paddlewheeler ride with dinner on the Mississippi River. Past SOF conferences usually break even financially with a budget of about $30,000. The 2023 conference was a breakeven at $45,000.

Data Preservation Committee (DPC):

Board member Catherine Hatinguais gave the report. Nine projects were delineated. The committee continues to seek a home for hard copies of the ever-expanding collections of books, papers and Oxfordian materials. The Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources (SOAR) project continues to grow and now has over 8,600 records. A recent project is to revisit and update Barbara Burris's fine work on the Ashbourne portrait of Shakespeare/Oxford. The committee has had a groundbreaking paper about cataloguing, co-written by

Michael Dudley, Catherine Hatinguais and Bill Boyle, accepted in a mainstream journal (see the report in the Spring 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*, pp. 31-32 ["Cataloguing Shakespeare: Introducing the Authorship Question into the Library Science Literature"]).

The oral history project is going well, with five interviews completed. Three more interviews are planned for the near future. Hatinguais said that the DPC contacts people who directly knew the luminaries of the past and those who have done important research. James Warren has edited and published four more volumes of historical books that support the mission of the DPC.

Nominations Committee:

Tom Woosnam, chair, presented the slate of candidates to stand for election to the Board of Trustees: Bob Meyers and Bonner Miller Cutting are each nominated for another three-year term; Michael Dudley for a three-year term; and Earl Showerman for another one-year term as SOF President. Paul Arnold made the motion to accept all of the nominees and Lowell Widmer seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. (Catherine Hatinguais is leaving the Board after completing a three-year term.)

President's Remarks:

Earl Showerman praised Roger Stritmatter's book on the First Folio, saying that it was "the most important publication we've put out this year." He noted the outreach to two schools on Thursday morning and thanked Dr. Lyle Colombo of Tulane University for setting up the school visits and the panel discussion on the Tulane campus Wednesday evening (see page 14).

He announced the formation of a new committee that will combine the responsibilities of the Research and Education and Outreach Committees. He reminded members that they will have access to most the conference presentations via the livestream until mid-December 2023. He also announced that the SOF 2024 conference will be held at the Hyatt Centric Hotel in Denver, Colorado, from September 26 to 29, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30.

The Rosalind Effect

by Phoebe Nir

I've been haunted lately by a suspicion that the Oxfordian community is not just running laps around the Stratfordians, but is in fact producing superior research to virtually any Western university department in the humanities.

The indignities that Oxfordians are subjected to in the academy and in the press are nothing to sneeze at, especially for the many gifted researchers who dedicate decades of their lives towards uncovering great truths, only to be scoffed at or ignored by frauds masquerading as "experts." However, I wouldn't trade places. Not with the Stratfordians, nor with anyone else currently trapped inside the byzantine and corrupted ivory towers of our formerly elite research institutions. A plague is raging inside of the kingdom, and we who were banished have avoided the malady.

Oxfordians are producing daring, imaginative, groundbreaking research at an incredible rate. We follow hunches and dreams in the tradition of Mendeleev and Bohr, and are able to hold contradictory ideas together in tension without canceling each other. We employ modern technologies and stretch ourselves to master any discipline that might support our work. We love negative capability and we abhor flashy shortcuts. These are all characteristics of the greatest intellectual communities, and the health of the fruits testify the health of the tree.

Inside the Academy, it's a different story. Perverse incentives. Maddening bureaucracies. Intimidation from students and administrators to conform to woke ideology. These are just some of the forces that deter scholars from taking great leaps into the unknown, and as a result, their output is mediocre at best, and disingenuous at worst.

In *As You Like It*, a once great kingdom is overtaken by evil, and its most worthy subjects are cast into exile. However, in time, Rosalind and her friends begin to thrive in the Forest of Arden, nourished by good food, music, and attractive company. I believe that the Oxfordian community has of late been the beneficiary of what I will term "The Rosalind Effect," our salutary exile preferable to life at Court.

I'm raising this now because I regard the future of this movement with a cautious but unquenchable optimism, and I believe that the types of prestige and recognition that have been elusive for so long may be within reach sooner than anyone realizes. Nothing would bring me more joy than to see the Herculean labors of Oxfordians at long last receive their due. At the same time, I worry that shiny prizes, press coverage, or—dare I say—even money, might carry with them traces of the contagion which we have evaded so successfully until this point. This is not to say that these things should be rejected. It is high time for the world to learn the truth, and for Oxfordians to step into their rightful place as custodians of humanity's greatest literary treasures. But I hope that when we do finally achieve the paradigm shift, we will stay true to the practices and attitudes that have served us best as truth seekers. Rather than conforming to the dysfunction of mainstream academia, let us rebuild it in our own image.

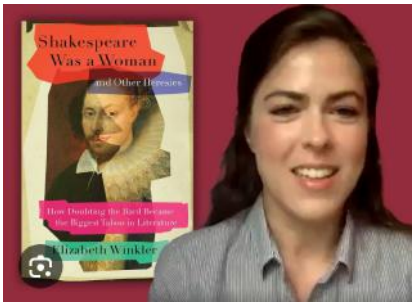
(NOLA Hoopla, continued from p. 1)

of acting. Sprung noted first that, at the beginning of the very last speech in the play, Fortinbras directs the captains to "bear Hamlet like a soldier to the *stage*" (emphasis added). Sprung related that many theater historians believe that the style of acting evolved rather quickly at this time, moving away from the bombastic, declamatory mode to a more subtle, intuitive approach, from "playing" (the older term) to "acting." The word "act" appears numerous times in the play, with different shades of meaning. In Hamlet's advice to the visiting players, and elsewhere in the play, Sprung sees a direct connection to the approach toward acting later developed by renowned theater practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938). Stanislavski's first principle—that the actor needs to understand "Who am I?"— is adumbrated in the very first line of Hamlet ("Who's there?").

Day 2: Friday, November 10

The morning session began with a presentation from Prof. **Lyle Jennings Colombo** of Tulane University. In "Two First Folio Poems and Three Other Texts Encrypted by John Dee," she argued that cryptograms embedded in five texts show that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is the author of the Shakespeare works: the dedication to *Shake-speares Sonnets*; the Shakspere gravestone in Stratford-on-Avon; the Stratford monument; Ben Jonson's "To the Reader" address in the First Folio; and Hugh Holland's dedicatory poem in the Folio. Building on Alexander Waugh's previous discoveries in this area, Colombo maintains that John Dee either directly encrypted the texts or, since he had died in 1609, "created the technique and his colleagues executed it." Edward de Vere and John Dee were acquainted. To find the encrypted messages, the solver must determine what size grid to use to lay out the letters in the text; once that task is completed, the solver should expect to find identifying clues such as the word "DEE" or groups of four "O's" or four "T's." Oxford's cryptographic "number" is 1740, with "17" representing the *seventeenth* Earl of Oxford, and "40" representing the triple *tau* symbol (also, 40 equals 2 times 20, and "V" is the twentieth letter in the Latin alphabet).

Gabriel Ready spoke next, investigating "Ben Jonson's Desk Fire in November 1623." In his "An Execration on Vulcan," Jonson wrote that seven works of his were destroyed in a fire in November 1623. Shortly afterward, dramatist and poet George Chapman, in "An Invective," accused Jonson of lying. Ready pointed out that a number of the works that Jonson claimed to have lost were subsequently published. Ready suggested that perhaps Jonson was offering a defense for not delivering on certain patronage commitments ("the dog ate my homework" excuse). Ready doesn't doubt that there was a fire, but it is hardly a coincidence that it occurred just as the printing of the First Folio was completed. Ready maintains that some two dozen manuscript copies of Shakespeare plays were in Jonson's possession, that they had been used as copy texts for the production of the 1623 Folio, and that they were intentionally destroyed by Jonson with the approval of the Herbert brothers and Susan Vere.



The keynote speaker was **Elizabeth Winkler**, author of *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies*, published earlier this year by Simon & Schuster. She offered a wryly amusing "autopsy" of some of the responses to her book, which she described as "authority gone archaic." Are journalists like Winkler supposed to meekly defer to "authority" whenever they investigate something? Does the traditional excuse of Shakespeare's innate "genius" cover all the gaps?

Reviewing the book on slate.com, Isaac Butler found it "dumb, antihistorical and pernicious," believing it preferable to leave the author offstage and in the shadows. Jonathan Bate launched the attack in England. Pooh-poohing the notion that Shakespeare had visited Italy, Bate seized on the fact that the Bard doesn't mention canals in the two plays set in Venice; therefore, he was ignorant of their existence and couldn't have been to Venice. However, as Winkler pointed out, Shakespeare does refer to gondolas in the two plays, something that Bate conveniently forgot to mention. Reviewer Emma Smith fell back on the "Who cares [who wrote the plays]?" argument. Winkler countered that, in 2012, Smith apparently did care, as she published an article about Shakespeare having a co-author on *All's Well That Ends Well*. (Note: a collection of positive reviews of Shakespeare Was a Woman may be found on the SOF website: https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/reviewing-shakespeare-was-a-woman-and-other-heresies-by-elizabeth-winkler/).

The keynote address was followed by a "Publication Panel" discussion, moderated by conference chair **Don**

Rubin, with authors **Margo Anderson**, **Ros Barber**, **James Warren** and **Elizabeth Winkler**. Anderson's biography of Edward de Vere, *"Shakespeare" by Another Name*, was published in 2005 by Gotham Books (an imprint of Penguin/Random House). She stated that her motivation in writing it was to produce the kind of book "that I'd like to read." She also said that a second edition of the book is in the works; it won't be published by Gotham Books, however, because that imprint is no longer active. Winkler related that she had not been planning a book. "I didn't want to write a book in favor of a particular candidate. I was more interested in the controversy itself. I did a proposal, and had an agent shop it around." It attracted attention because of the success of her earlier article in *The Atlantic* magazine. Barber's book, *Shakespeare: The Evidence*, is a 600-page online compendium of evidence, arguments and counterarguments contesting the orthodox case (available at https://leanpub.com/shakespeare). It is hyperlinked to numerous digitized primary sources.

Warren has so far published nineteen books via Amazon.com's self-publishing arm, KDP. He noted that he is able to receive some technical support from KDP staff, but observed that this method of self-publishing is no way to get rich. Amazon receives 40% of the book's sales price, but authors must pay the printing costs from their 60% share.

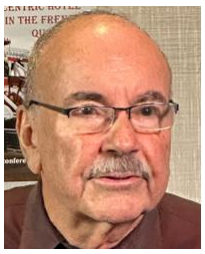
The afternoon session began with "A Secular Tour of *Venus and Adonis*," a presentation by **William Niederkorn**, It was based on his new book, *Shakespeare Discoveries I: A Secular Tour of Venus and Adonis*, the first in what he plans as a series of books on particular Shakespeare works. Niederkorn argues that, in the 1593 poem, Adonis is a portrait of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Venus represents the "passionate opposite personality" of Oxford (who also is the boar in the poem). Sidney and Oxford were often rivals, of course, dating back to the famous "tennis court quarrel," if not before. Niederkorn believes that, in *Venus and Adonis*, Sidney is portrayed as a non-virile boyish young man who is not particularly interested in the opposite sex.

In "Words, Words, Words: A More Accurate Understanding of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare," **James Warren** sought to clear up, or provide proper context for, some two dozen words or terms that he believes are misunderstood. Examples include "spendthrift"; though that adjective is often applied to Oxford today, in Tudor times members of the nobility were expected to spend extravagantly, especially on clothing when at court. Oxford is often said today as having "retired" from court by the early 1590s; Warren suggests that "withdrawal" from court is more accurate. Hamlet's line "I know a hawk from a handsaw" does not indicate that he's crazy; a "handsaw" is a corruption of the word "heronsaw" (pronounced almost identically), which is another name for a heron. When Ben Jonson writes that Shakespeare "lacked art," he doesn't mean that Shakespeare had no talent; instead, Jonson is complaining that the playwright did not follow the classical rules of drama, in that he mixed comedy and tragedy in the same work and ignored the "unities" of time and place.

Rima Greenhill spoke on "Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan: The Role of English-Russian Relations in *Love's Labours Lost*." Her talk was adapted from her book of the same title, published earlier this year by McFarland (reviewed in the Spring 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*). Although *LLL* is a comedy of manners on the surface, it's deeply concerned with international affairs and foreign trade. Ostensibly set in France, the play really depicts English-Russian relations. Russia began a ninety-year trade relationship with England in the 1550s. England established the Muscovy Company in 1555; several prominent Englishmen, including William Cecil, were investors. Tsar Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) wanted to marry Queen Elizabeth; she was able to put him off for about fifteen years, and later suggested to Ivan that Lady Mary

Hastings would be a suitable bride for him (that marriage never happened, either). Greenhill believes that a version of the play was presented at court as early as 1584, when it would have been topical satire.

The final presentation was by **John Hamill** (who was assisted by John Shahan in the preparation of the paper) on "Challenging the Prince Tudor Theory." It was a continuation of arguments they laid out in a letter to the editor recently published in Volume 25 of *The Oxfordian* (2023), which itself was a rebuttal to James Warren's article in Volume 24 of *The Oxfordian*, where Warren had outlined why he believes the theory is the only one "weighty enough" to explain why Oxford's identity as the author Shakespeare continued to be concealed after his death. Among the arguments they marshaled against the Prince Tudor theory (also known as the Dynastic Succession theory, that Oxford and Queen Elizabeth had a son who was raised as Henry Wriothesley, Third Earl of Southampton) are that in several letters, Mary Berowne, wife of the Second Earl of Southampton, refers to the Third Earl as her son; Elizabeth was in public view during the time of her supposed pregnancy; and that, even if she had borne a child, the queen, a staunch Protestant, would never have given it to a Catholic family to raise. Hamill and Shahan submit that other theories are equally "weighty" to explain the authorship mystery, such as theories that Oxford was homosexual, or was bisexual; or that Oxford was not the father of his son, who was raised as the 18th Earl. In a brief rebuttal, **James Warren** urged people to read the Hamill-Shahan and his reply to it in Volume 25 of *The Oxfordian*, and again asked why Oxford was effectively erased from history and how that could have been accomplished if not due to political considerations executed by persons in positions of power.

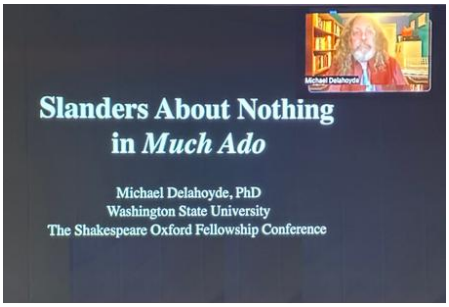


Day 3: Saturday, November 11

The Annual Membership Meeting took place from 9 to 10:30 AM (see Report, page 26). The conference resumed thereafter with a presentation by **Cheryl Eagan-Donovan** (who was assisted by Michael Delahoyde in preparing the talk, which included several pieces of music). In "Music and Lyrics by E.O." Eagan-Donovan began by observing that Oxford's lyric poetry "tends toward the musically dramatic," and reminded us that many mainstream scholars believe that at least some poems may have been written as song lyrics. Oxford was praised as a skilled musician by John Farmer (c. 1570-1601), himself a recognized composer. Eagan-Donovan observed that the familiar song "Greensleeves" was first registered in 1580, not long after Oxford returned from his trip to Italy; music scholars generally agree that the melody is based on an Italian compositional style. Eagan-Donovan cited Sally Mosher's belief that Oxford and composer William Byrd may have collaborated on "The Earl of Oxford's March." It is also known that Oxford supported musicians. Moreover, many of the Shakespeare plays contain songs, musical stage directions, and quibbles and puns on musical terms. Eagan-Donovan wondered if we should consider Oxford "the inventor of the modern musical."

Ros Barber gave a wide-ranging talk on "A Thousand Questions Reduced to One: How to Win the Authorship Argument." Barber conceded that it's useless to argue the issue with "any stripe of a 'true believer,'" but if one is engaging with someone who's rational and persuadable, she recommended several strategies. First, establish the authorship question as a valid one by "unseating the incumbent" (Stratford Shakspere), rather than advocating for a particular alternative candidate. Among the strongest points against Stratford Shakspere are Diana Price's chart (as appears in her book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, showing that, alone among two dozen contemporary writers, "Shakespeare" left no literary paper trail); the six shaky signatures as the only examples of his handwriting; the mismatch between Shakspere's known life and what we should expect of the true author (e.g., Shakspere's illiterate daughters vs. literate female characters in the plays); and that expressions of doubt about the true author's identity were voiced almost as soon as the name appeared in print (e.g., Marston and Hall's *Labeo* satires). She urged authorship doubters not to get into cryptograms, codes or ciphers, and not to argue that Oxford wrote works under other names besides "Shakespeare." Barber submits that most of the arguments asserted in favor of Stratford Shakspere are easily refutable: the Warwickshire dialect; Francis Meres's mentioning both Shakespeare and Oxford as skilled playwrights; Shakespeare's alleged ignorance of Italy; the publication dates of the plays; Greene's reference to an "upstart crow" and Chettle's "apology." Barber believes that the strongest evidence in favor of Stratford Shakspere are the two epistles from actors Heminge and Condell that appear in the First Folio; even if they were written by someone else, they nevertheless can be read as testimony that Stratford Shakspere, whom they knew personally, was the author.

The afternoon presentations began with **Michael Delahoyde**, on "Slanders About Nothing in *Much Ado*." Delahoyde explored the idea (put forth by Percy Allen, Margo Anderson and others) that *Much Ado About Nothing* is Oxford's response to the Arundel-Howard Libels, a series of allegations made by Lord Henry Howard, Charles Arundel and Francis Southwell accusing Oxford of a smorgasbord of immoral and illicit behavior. At the time, the three were in the Tower of London, fearing execution. Noting that the word "slander" appears sixteen times in the play, Delahoyde sees *Much Ado* as "Oxford's laugh, and invitation for all at court to laugh, at the accusations he renders ludicrous." In the play, Dogberry's speech in which he misnumbers the charges he's making is a lampoon of Arundel's "contorted numbering system in his desperate arrangement of the accusations."



Elisabeth Waugaman spoke on "Shakespeare's French Obsession: How New Historicism Can Help Advance the Authorship Debate." She began by recognizing that Shakespeare not only knew the French language, but was keenly interested in French culture and highly knowledgeable about French politics. This French connection is largely ignored by mainstream scholars because of the problems it creates for Stratford Shakspere as the author; mainstream academics are generally unfamiliar with the work of French Shakespeare scholars Abel Lefranc and Georges Lambin. Waugaman is hopeful that New Historicism (as per Wikipedia, "a form of literary theory which aims to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through its cultural context") can be employed here. She cited the writings of New Historicist Richard Hillman, who has examined Shakespeare's awareness of French politics.

To the question "Was the Earl of Oxford Bisexual?" **Robert Prechter** argued that the answer is "no." Prechter stated that the "odds are that Oxford was straight [i.e., heterosexual]' because most men (and women) are, and offered rebuttals to a number of specific points often cited as evidence of Oxford's bisexuality. His falling out with his wife in 1576 was motivated by his belief that the child she had given birth to was not his. The description of John Lyly as the "fiddlestick of Oxford" and a "very bauble of London" does not contain sexual innuendo. Oxford's poem "The Lovely Larke," with a description of men holding hands, merely reflects a common social custom of the time. The Howard-Arundel libels were made by people desperate to save their own lives, and Arundel was "a serious con artist." Oxford's bringing a sixteen-year-old boy back with him from Italy was no different from the common practice of keeping a page. True, Barnabe Rich did write of encountering a "verie womanly" soldier (whom some think was Oxford), but Rich later identified the person as an officer in the Army of Rome (see Prechter's article on Rich, page 18 of this issue).

Richard Waugaman discussed "The Origins of Modern Literary Theory in the Repudiation of Autobiographical Readings of Shakespeare's Sonnets." He made a case that a dominant form of modern literary theory—the insistence that one should study only the work itself, and not consider anything about the author—arose, at least in significant part, from a "homophobic reading of the Sonnets." Waugaman pointed out that noted Shakespeare scholar Sir Sidney Lee (1859-1926) wrote in 1898 that the Sonnets did contain autobiographical clues about the author. But only four months later Lee espoused the opposite conclusion, that there was no such connection. Waugaman characterized the view that there is no connection between authors and their works as "counterintuitive" and "anti-intellectual."

The day's final presentation was by **Earl Showerman**. "Hamlet's Book Revisited: The Identity of the 'Satiric Rogue' Revealed" was based on Showerman's letter to the editor published in Volume 25 of *The Oxfordian* (2023), in which he responded to an article by Sky Gilbert in the previous volume of *The Oxfordian* (2022). By way of background, many Oxfordians (and some mainstream scholars) have identified the book Hamlet is reading in act II of the play as *Cardanus Comfort* (a book that was dedicated to Oxford). In his 2022 article Gilbert proposed that Hamlet was reading *On Nature, Or the Non-Existent* by the Greek Sophist philosopher Gorgias. Showerman maintains that both suggestions are incorrect, that Hamlet is actually reading Roman satirist Juvenal's

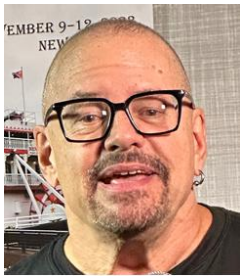
Tenth Satire. (This theory is not new; Showerman noted that it was proposed by Baconian William Theobold in 1909.) Showerman then offered several specific parallels between the Juvenal work and Hamlet's speeches.

Day 4: Sunday, November 12

The first presenter was **Michael Dudley**. His talk, "By the Rule of That Philosophy: Validating the Oxfordian Thesis Using Theories of Knowledge, Justification and Truth," was based on his newly published book, *Epistemology and the Shakespeare Authorship Question: Theoretical Perspectives and Approaches* (see page 8).

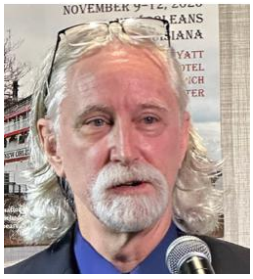
Dudley maintains that it is critical to understand the epistemological bases of the two leading authorship models (Shakspere as Shakespeare [SAS] vs. Oxford as Shakespeare {OAS]), i.e., what theories of knowledge underlie them. The SAS model, he finds, is based on "motivated reasoning"—that mainstream academics and organizations such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust have a vested interest in maintaining their model despite its shaky basis and obvious illogicalities; such "motivated reasoning" also explains their disbelief in the OAS model. Applying various theories of knowledge, the SAS model is revealed as "incoherent" and "incongruent." For example, under the "correspondence theory" of knowledge, we should have evidence that Shakespeare's writing was commented on at the time; in the OAS model we find that it was, in the form of circumspect or cryptic comments about the author's identity. Using the "pragmatism" theory of knowledge, Dudley submits that the OAS model possesses explanatory power, while the SAS model lacks it.

In "Ben Jonson's Hidden Agenda," **Sky Gilbert** argued that Ben Jonson found Shakespeare's works "abhorrent." Though he may have grudgingly allowed that Shakespeare was a good craftsman, Jonson felt that Shakespeare was crafting the wrong things. Jonson, who was steeped in the classics and especially loved Horace, firmly believed that comedy and tragedy should not mix, and that poetry should be "didactic," that it should instruct and teach the reader. In contrast, Ovid, who was Shakespeare's favorite classical writer, was not didactic. As Gilbert pointed out, it can sometimes be difficult to understand Jonson's motives. For example, he once wrote a "savagely critical satire" of Lady Cecilia Bulstrode, yet when she died a few months later, Jonson wrote a touching tribute to her. Gilbert maintains that Jonson must have deeply resented Oxford's bringing to England in the mid-1570s the "Italian moral sensibility," which was bawdier and gender-ambivalent.



Dorothea Dickerman presented "Shakespeare in Sicily: Part II of Traveling Together through Shakespeare's Italy." It highlighted the recent trip that she and her husband took to Italy, armed with a copy of Richard Roe's book, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*. In her 2022 presentation Dickerman had focused on northern Italy. In this sequel, she and her husband sought to determine Oxford's whereabouts during the summer of 1575. It is known that he left Venice to avoid the plague and returned there in September, but where was he in the meantime? She surmises that he first headed east, and probably avoided Messina. Dickerman and her husband visited Taormina, Siracusa, Agrigento, Palermo, and the island of Vulcano. Roe identified Vulcano as the inspiration for *The Tempest*. Vulcano was uninhabited in 1575, due to a recent volcanic eruption. Dickerman showed photos of the "Valle di Mostri" (Valley of the Monsters) on Vulcano, where unusually shaped volcanic rock formations may have inspired the playwright's conception of Caliban. Dickerman reminded us that Oxford's trip to the Continent was not just recreational, that it also had a diplomatic purpose.

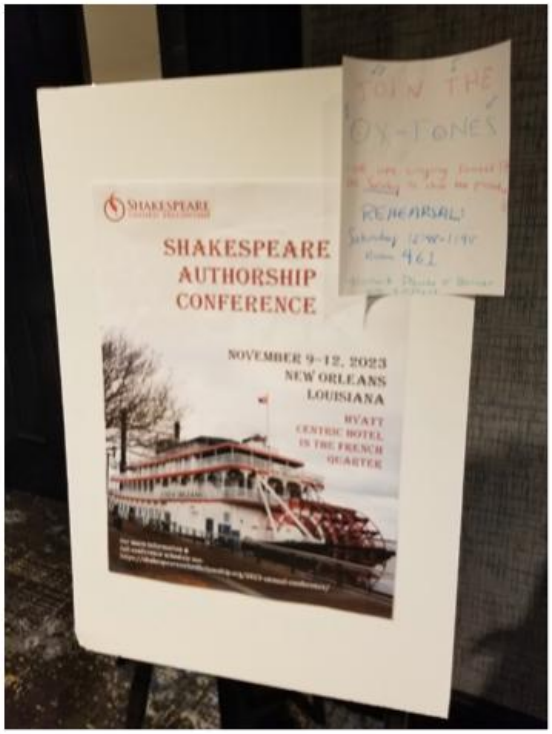
Roger Stritmatter was the final presenter. In "Work in Progress: From Literary Encryptions to Handwriting" he gave updates on two projects. First, his paper analyzing Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* (1598) was accepted for publication in a mainstream journal, *Critical Survey* (see page 10). In it he makes the case that Meres is unambiguously revealing that Oxford is the real Shakespeare. Second, Stritmatter is continuing his analysis of the handwritten annotations in three books of Roman history that are now housed in the great estate of Audley End near Saffron Walden in Essex (see "Breaking News: De Vere Annotated Books from Audley End," Spring 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*). The annotations appear to have been made by three persons. Stritmatter believes that one of them—the annotator who made more than 1,000 notes in the extra-wide margins of one of the books—was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, not Sir Henry Neville, as others have claimed. Stritmatter finds that many of these annotations (which are in Latin and Greek) have connections to characters, speeches and plot elements in Shakespeare's plays, especially *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The provenance of



the three books is not certain, although it is known that most of the 17th-century books that arrived at Audley End in the early 20th century came from the Neville estate in Berkshire.

After the final presentation, SOF President Earl Showerman announced that the Tom Regnier Veritas Award was being given to Alex McNeil (see page 5). Cheryl Eagan-Donovan announced that the 2023 Oxfordian of the Year is William "Bill" Boyle (see page 13). And finally, the audience was treated to a special appearance by "Phoebe Nir and the Ox-Tones," who, accompanied by Bonner Miller Cutting on keyboard, performed a musical version of Sonnet 17.

The SOF 2024 Conference will be held in Denver, Colorado, from September 26 to 29. Mark your calendars!



2023 Conference placard
with invitation to join the Ox-Tones

Extracurriculars!

The Ox-Tones in rehearsal

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