



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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SOF Spring Symposium Attracts Large Audience

by Earl Showerman

On April 10, 2021, some 360 Oxfordians participated in the online Spring Symposium sponsored by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship: “The Shakespeare Attribution: Information, Misinformation and Changing Opinions.” The four-hour Zoom Webinar program attracted registrants from sixteen countries, and a cadre of seasoned presenters from four countries. The event was cohosted by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and myself. The presentations are [now available here](#) on the SOF YouTube channel.

The theme of the Symposium was well defined by Michael Dudley, who wrote, “The Shakespeare authorship question—the proposition that these plays and poems have for centuries been attributed to the wrong person—is treated with unique disapprobation in the academy, and almost universally excluded from scholarly curricula and inquiry.”

During the Symposium SOF Vice President Julie Sandys Bianchi announced the first recipient of the Tom Regnier Veritas Award: SOF Website Design and Technology Editor Jennifer Newton (see page 3). The award was created in memory of our former president Tom Regnier, who died in April 2020.

Kevin Gilvary, PhD, Honorary President of the De Vere Society and Trustee of the Shakespearean

Authorship Trust, led off the proceedings with a critique of “21st Century Fictional Biographies of Shakespeare.” Gilvary is the editor of *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays* (2010), now freely available online and recently reissued by Portsea Press. His doctoral thesis was awarded by Brunel University London and has been published by Routledge as *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare: How modern biographers rely on context, conjecture and inference to construct a life of the Bard*. Gilvary reminded us of the paucity of records pertaining to Shakspeare (or “Shakespeare”) during the Stratford man’s lifetime: a few dozen handwritten records, very few witness accounts, etc. Gilvary also stated that Alexander Waugh has been informed that there exist unreleased documents relating to Edward de Vere at Hatfield House.

James A. Warren, editor of the Centenary edition of J. Thomas Looney’s “*Shakespeare*” *Identified* and “*Shakespeare*” *Revealed*, next spoke on the impact of Looney’s landmark books on Shakespeare studies with “The Oxfordian Movement and Academia.” Warren is also the editor of a newly annotated edition of Esther Singleton’s Oxfordian novel, *Shakespearean Fantasias*, and of four editions of *An Index to Oxfordian Publications*, which he created. Warren highlighted three distinct categories of resistance to the Oxfordian thesis:



Symposium co-hosts Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Earl Showerman

human resistance, cognitive resistance, and institutional resistance. All three, of course, flourish in academia.

Michael Dudley, Community Outreach Librarian at the University of Winnipeg, next spoke on “The Stratfordian Belief System, Epistemic Injustice, and Academic Freedom.” Dudley’s presentation was based on his chapter, “With Swinish Phrase Soiling Their Addition: Epistemic Injustice, Academic Freedom, and the Shakespeare Authorship Question,” published in *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (2020). Dudley pointed out that, within mainstream academia, Stratfordianism is a “belief system” within which the Stratford man’s authorship is accepted as an absolute certainty, a “reflexive belief” that cannot be questioned and an “ethical belief” such that it is immoral to question it.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, M.F.A., 2019 Oxfordian of the Year and the writer, director, and producer of the superb Oxfordian documentary film *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, next introduced the first of three winners from previous SOF Video Contests, “Question Everything.”

There followed a provocative presentation by Shakespearean Authorship Trust activist Julia Cleave, “Excellent. I smell a device.” She noted that Shakespeare, in three of his comedies, makes sport with a colorful cast of Queen Elizabeth’s actual suitors: English, French, Spanish, German and Swedish. That Shakespeare dared to present Queen Elizabeth on stage in the guise of Titania (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*), and Olivia (*Twelfth Night*) challenges traditional interpretations of these comedies.

Roger Stritmatter, Professor of Humanities at Coppin State University and 2013 Oxfordian of the Year, next gave a presentation on “Witty Numbers: Ben Jonson’s First Folio Jest in Context,” which focused on the hidden meaning of Jonson’s epigram “To the Reader” facing the Droeshout engraving in the First Folio. This hidden meaning is based on the numbers “2” and “9,” which are derived from Jonson’s initials: *B* as the second letter of the alphabet, and *I* as the ninth (there was no separate *J* character at the time).

Dorothea Dickerman, a recently retired attorney now engaged in research and writing about the life of the Earl of Oxford, delivered a colorful and convincing narrative, “The First Thing We Do, Let’s *Convince* All the Lawyers,” which described her carefully researched trip to Italy, on which she sought to convince her husband

(also an attorney) that Oxford was the real Bard. Her presentation included many photos of sites they visited.

The final segment of the Symposium began with showing the top two winners of the 2020 SOF Video Contest, “The Earl of Oxford’s March...Remixed” and “Interview with a Stratfordian: THE WORKS.”

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan led a panel discussion with Kevin Gilvary and Roger Stritmatter on “Manuscript Circulation & the Band of Brothers,” after which Gilvary, Stritmatter and James Warren all outlined their upcoming publication projects. Gilvary is working on a volume about Oxford’s life, as part of a revised edition of *Great Oxford*. Stritmatter is working on a multi-volume set of Oxford’s poems, after which he plans books on Shakespeare and the law, Shakespeare and cryptography, and Shakespeare and Jonson. Warren has “a dozen or so projects underway,” including a comprehensive account of the first 100 years of the Oxfordian movement, a modern edition of *Cardanus Comforte*, a new edition of his Index to Oxfordian Publications, and a previously unpublished work by Dorothy Ogburn.

Earl Showerman noted that the Oregon Shakespeare Festival does not plan to have any live-stage Shakespeare productions during 2021. Thus it is likely that the SOF will postpone its next in-person conference until 2022, now scheduled to take place September 22–25, 2022, at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel and requesting rooms secured by the SOF. The 2021 SOF Annual Meeting this fall will be held online, with a separate virtual educational event comparable to the October 2020 and April 2021 Symposia.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan concluded the proceedings by thanking the participants and AV Presentations, which produced the Webinar. She encouraged viewers to continue to engage with the SOF through memberships and donations, and through reading and continued participation in this unrivaled mystery. “Hopefully during our time together over the virtual platform you have received valuable ‘information,’ been disabused of academically sanctified ‘misinformation,’ and understood the value of changing opinions when considering the attribution of the literary masterpieces that comprise the works of Shakespeare.”



Jennifer Newton Is First Recipient of Tom Regnier Veritas Award

At the April Symposium the first recipient of the Tom Regnier Veritas Award was announced: SOF Website Design and Technology Editor Jennifer Newton.

Jennifer Newton performs a myriad of tasks for the SOF, almost all of them behind the scenes: maintaining and improving the SOF website, maintaining several email distribution lists; troubleshooting online payment problems; and serving as technical advisor to those of us who aren't computer-savvy. She also maintains her own podcast website, "Shakespeare Underground."

SOF Vice President Julie Sandys Bianchi, who designed the award, said this in making the presentation: "We are continually amazed and delighted by [your] brilliance, creativity, thoughtfulness, and dedication."

SOF President John Hamill offered these remarks: "You were the first and only choice for this award. The combination of your skills, patience, dedication and such a close association and collaboration working with Tom, made you the natural selection for the first Tom Regnier Veritas Award. And thanks to Julie Bianchi for the unique design of the award!"

Accepting the Veritas Award, Newton wrote, "I am moved and honored to be selected as the first recipient of the Tom Regnier Veritas Award (so beautifully designed by Julie Bianchi). It's been my great fortune to get to collaborate with Tom and with you all to share the discoveries of this community. I think of Tom every day and in some ways have only begun to appreciate the scale of his contributions. In addition to his tremendous scholarly accomplishments, he was a dream collaborator offstage. He could connect across all kinds of differences, delighted in novel ideas, was ever even-tempered, seasoned his excellent judgment with playful humor, and had boundless vision for where the Oxfordian movement could go. Here's to advancing Tom's vision and continuing this grand adventure of inquiry and discovery!"

The award was created by the Board of Trustees in memory of Tom Regnier, former SOF President, who died of COVID in April 2020. It is intended to recognize "authorship doubters who best demonstrate through their creative endeavors, dogged scholarship, and overall tenacity, the potential to make a lasting impact on this history of the SAQ by exemplifying 'the mark and glass, copy and book' (*2 Henry IV* 2.3) fashioned by Tom." The medallion was designed to evoke the Most Noble Order of the Garter, a symbol of dedicated engagement against one's adversaries.



From the President

Hello SOF Members!

2021 is starting off well for us. We are having some successes. Like the De Vere Society and the Shakespearean Authorship Trust in England, we are now having our meetings and conferences on Zoom, which makes these events available to a much larger audience than before. No one has to travel to attend a program and ask a question. The Shakespeare Authorship Question is now something we can all pursue from our home! The De Vere Society had its meeting online on April 17, and the SAT had their conference on April 24.

The SOF Spring Symposium took place on April 10 and was very well received (see the report on page 1). We reached an audience of over 350 people, and the presentations will all be available soon on the SOF YouTube channel. At this event we also had a donation drive, and it too was a success. The total amount of donations was \$11,880. We gifted one lifetime membership, two busts of Oxford, and two special wine sets. Last year's donation drive raised approximately \$7,000. I want to thank SOF Trustee Ben August for

donating so many beautiful gifts in connection with this effort.

At our "in-person" conferences we usually have about 100 people, so reaching an audience of 350 is a benefit to our members. We are still operating under COVID-19 restrictions, and we expect that our annual meeting and Conference in the fall will also be "virtual" events. Details will follow soon. In the post-pandemic future we will probably have a combination of in-person conferences and Zoom symposia, again helping to reach the largest audience.

We are still working on improving our website, but it will take a few more months. We need to improve our social media presence—Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. We are working to make our Podcast, "Don't Quill the Messenger," even better and more approachable.

Recently we were contacted by a fellow Oxfordian in Chile, who has proposed adding Spanish subtitles to our YouTube presentations. He is also working on translating J. Thomas Loney's groundbreaking book, "*Shakespeare Identified*," into Spanish. This will make our research available to the Spanish-speaking world; Spanish is one of the world's most widely spoken languages, and, next to English, has the broadest geographic spread. It is an

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

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

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

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

Alex McNeil, Newsletter editor: (newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org)
 Jill McNeil, Newsletter layout

exciting new development! More details will be forthcoming in the *Summer Newsletter*.

As I mentioned in my last column, we are also starting to plan events to commemorate the First Folio's 400th anniversary in 2023. This is another big moment for us to celebrate and promote Oxford as the real author of the works of Shakespeare. We cannot let the Stratfordians again twist the event to accommodate their version of reality, and ensnare more people into their fantasy of an illiterate merchant from Stratford-upon-Avon becoming the most brilliant writer in the English language.

Thank you, members, once again for your support of the SOF and all of its activities. We proudly promote with research and evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, was the true author and that he used the pseudonym of William Shakespeare to write the poems and plays. Please help us carry this message to the world by becoming a member, and please add your donations. Any amount is appreciated. We need funding to continue our many activities. If you have a question about any of our activities, please contact me at info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

John Hamill, President

From the Editor:

Anybody But Oxford!

I don't usually run a 5,000-word book review, but I made an exception in this issue. I hope you'll read Michael Hyde's review of Michael Blanding's new book, *North By Shakespeare: A Rogue Scholar's Quest for the Truth Behind the Bard's Work* (page 12). It's an important book; it's getting a lot of attention in the mainstream press and even in academia. So it merits an in-depth review, a task for which Mike Hyde is well suited; a former academic himself, one of his areas of focus was attribution of anonymously published articles in the nineteenth century.

Blanding isn't the main character in the book; the "Rogue Scholar" is Dennis McCarthy, an independent researcher who passionately believes that Shakespeare didn't actually write his plays, but rather adapted for the stage a cache of play manuscripts by Thomas North (sadly, these plays are "lost," and how Will Shakespeare acquired them is not known). Moreover, McCarthy maintains, many of North's plays were written in the 1560s and 1570s.

Thomas North was not known as a playwright, but did produce an English translation of Plutarch's *Parallel*

Lives in 1580; that work is universally cited as a source used by Shakespeare. North also wrote a report of a trip to Italy that he had taken in 1555. McCarthy buttresses his arguments based on many parallels he has found between the two North works and Shakespeare's work. McCarthy has collaborated with Professor June Schlueter of Lafayette College on two recent books.

I'm all for independent research, and I'm delighted that an independent researcher has found a mainstream academician to collaborate with, to give him a foot in the academic door.

But it strikes me that *North By Shakespeare* and the attendant hoopla is yet another instance of "Anybody But Oxford!" Ever since J. Thomas Looney made the case for Oxford's authorship of the Shakespeare canon in 1920, the response from academia has been to ignore him and to denigrate him: "We cannot consider that a nobleman who was hailed during his lifetime as a skilled poet and playwright, and whose life story is reflected in the Shakespeare works, could have been the true author."

Those academics who do look at Oxford dismiss him as a second-rate poet (based on the small number of existing verses that have been attributed to him, many of which were likely written when he was a teenager) and as an eccentric, arrogant hothead. Were Mozart's juvenile works as sophisticated as *Don Giovanni* or *The Magic Flute*? Were the Beatles as sophisticated in 1963 (*Please Please Me*) as they were in 1969, only six years later (*Abbey Road*)? Was Mozart a nice guy? Was Picasso a nice guy?

Denigrate and ignore—James Shapiro has used both strategies. In *Contested Will* (2010) he sought to explore what motivated people to believe in alternate Shakespeares and concluded that they're deranged conspiracy theorists. In his next book, *1606: The Year of Lear*, he tried to show that several Shakespeare plays had to have been written after Oxford's death in 1604; that way he could dismiss the Oxfordian case without even having to mention him.

In many recent books about the Elizabethan era Oxford is not mentioned, or is cited only in passing (e.g., merely as the husband of Lord Burghley's daughter).

In 2018 the editors of the new Oxford Shakespeare expanded the canon by attributing several more plays to the Bard, and proudly announced that, based on state-of-the-art computerized research techniques, Shakespeare had collaborators on some eleven plays. They identified several putative collaborators—but none of them was you-know-who. Anybody But Oxford!

Now comes Dennis McCarthy, pinning his case on the supposition that nobleman Thomas North (who was *not* mentioned as a playwright during his lifetime)

managed to write several dozen plays starting in 1555 (all of them lost) that somehow came into the possession of actor-manager Shakespeare, who adapted these works for the public stage. Anybody But Oxford!

As Mike Hyde notes in his review, in preparing his English translation of Plutarch, Thomas North used Amyot's French translation. Is it just coincidence that Oxford purchased a copy of Amyot in 1569-70? Anybody But Oxford!

Alex McNeil

Letter

Wow! Thank you for a superb webinar [see page 1] — varied, provocative, thoughtful, brimming over with knowledge. Kevin Gilvary continues to demonstrate how threadbare the shreds of evidence are that support WS of Stratford as the playwright, and how no convincing and accurate biography can be written. Meanwhile Julia Cleave continues to show how the playwright time and time again proves his close acquaintance with the Elizabethan court and events which markedly predate the

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suggested timeline for the composition of the plays. New ground—very exciting whatever one's beliefs on authorship. Roger Stritmatter's slide illustrating a code grid card from the 1570s was a highlight for me, and he offers a very pertinent reminder of how carefully we need to read Ben Jonson. The never-sleeping James Warren and the youthful Michael Dudley are so persuasive and right in identifying the need to engage academia in a rigorous approach to researching Shakespeare, using the tried and proven methods of research used in every discipline other than English Lit. I've absorbed Noemi Magri's and Richard Roe's books, but it is exciting to see Dorothea Dickerman's wide range of pictures illustrating the Italian Connection. The variety offered by the mini-videos, and their engagement with a wide age range, was excellent, and it was very moving to see how the great Tom Regnier's contributions to the cause being commemorated. Above all, it is impressive how many publications are emerging, which will help everyone new to the authorship question and the SOF/DVS "solution."

Eddi Jolly, PhD
Lymington, Hampshire, UK



SHAKESPEARE: Behind the Name

Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal The New SAQ Gateway Film

A Robin Phillips Film

Big Congratulations! Robin on a success that you richly deserve. I've been following your growing celebrity with interest since your first awards began to accumulate last fall. And I caught your appearance at the De Vere Society meeting last weekend. It must be very gratifying for you to experience these fruits of your work.

It was a great labor, obviously of love, and the result is truly a unique masterpiece. I still can't imagine the volume of work you put into it. It would seem that such an astounding array of graphics and explanatory text would need a legion of researchers behind you to accomplish it, with you only in the role of the 'star', delivering the lines.

But you did it all yourself and it's a truly amazing accomplishment. Probably, that's what makes your delivery so effective -- the fact that you yourself are the author as well as the 'actor'. Anyway, it's great and will continue for years and years to come to be a resource for anyone wanting to discover the true answer to the 'authorship question'.

-- Mark Aman, Verus Publishing, VerusBooks.com



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What's the News?

Shakespeare Effigy in Stratford Now Claimed to Be an Authentic Likeness

The *Guardian* ran a big feature on March 19, 2021, trumpeting recent research done by Lena Cowen Orlin, a professor of English at Georgetown University, who now asserts that the famous bust of Shakespeare in Trinity Church in Stratford-on-Avon shows what the Bard actually looked like. "It is highly likely that Shakespeare commissioned the monument," she said. "It was done by someone who knew him and had seen him in life. We can think of it as a kind of life portrait, a design for death that gives evidence of a life of learning and literature."

Paul Edmondson, the modestly titled Head of Research and Knowledge at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, was effusive. "This is truly significant. We can therefore say that is how Shakespeare wanted to be represented in our memories. This is massive. It is compelling new light on what he looked like and how he operated. . . . It's just amazing. I think that the monument will never be the same again after Lena's research. She's made us look at it with fresh eyes."

It was previously believed by most scholars that the bust was installed sometime after Shakespeare's death in 1616, that it was made by sculptor Gerard Johnson, and that the facial image was not a likeness. According to Professor Orlin, however, the bust was made not by Gerard Johnson, but by his brother, Nicholas Johnson, a tomb maker who often traveled "with the sculptures to see their installation." Nicholas Johnson, she said, had worked on another monument that was installed in Trinity Church in 1615. Thus, she argues, "he would have been in Stratford some time in the year before Shakespeare's death. Even if not, his [London] workshop was round the corner from the Globe. It's highly likely that he would then have seen Shakespeare's face."

Orlin also believes that, except for the funerary data, the inscription on the plaque ("Stay Passenger") was created before Shakespeare's death. "Whoever came in to fill in the date after Shakespeare died didn't understand that he was supposed to use a whole line to give that important information," she said. "The fact that it's squeezed in there so awkwardly [in the lower right corner] is another bit of evidence that the rest of it would have been done during Shakespeare's life."

Interestingly, Orlin states that the gown worn by the subject is that of an undergraduate at Oxford University,



and that a cushion is sometimes found in monuments of persons erected at some Oxford college chapels. To Orlin, the connection "now suggests some collegial association that we don't know about."

Orlin was scheduled to speak on the subject at the 2021 Shakespeare birthday lecture. One wonders whether she will address such questions as why the current version looks so different from the early sketches of it made by Dugdale and others in the 1600s; whether the figure was originally holding a woolsack, not a quill pen and a piece of paper; why the person who was hired to add the funerary data was so dense that he did not see that he could fill the entire line at the bottom; and how convenient it is to propose a "collegial association that we don't know about."

Orlin herself is a trustee of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. She has also written a book, *The Private Life of William Shakespeare*, to be published by Oxford University Press this summer.

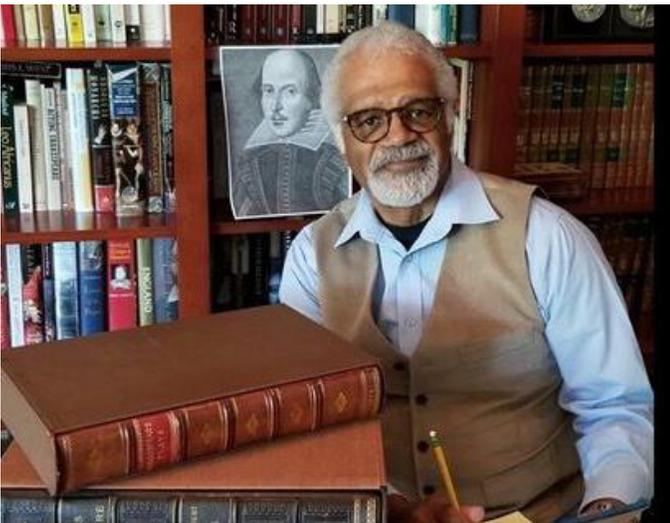
Oxfordian Alexander Waugh wasted little time in debunking Professor Orlin's claims in a recent YouTube video, "MORE Monkey Business at Stratford-upon-Avon." As to whether Shakespeare commissioned the bust himself, Waugh says "We can dismiss that fairly easily," noting that the Latin language at the top of the inscription alludes to the resting places of Francis Beaumont (as well as to Spenser and Chaucer), and that Beaumont died in March 1616, only a few weeks before Shakespeare (too late for all that carving work to be done). "Why," Waugh asks, "would Shakespeare commission a bust of himself with a beard and moustache, a fashion that didn't become

popular for another twenty or thirty years?" Moreover, the Oxford University robe worn by the figure is "a problem for Shakspeare," as there's no evidence that he had any connection with either Oxford or Cambridge University. The image shows Shakspeare, dressed in an Oxford gown, holding down a blank piece of paper with his left hand while holding a quill pen in the other that is not touching the paper. The message that it intends to convey to the perceptive viewer is that Shakspeare is clothed in *Oxford* garb, but wrote nothing.

Here is the link to Alexander Waugh's "MORE Monkey Business" video, which also addresses the fascinating topic of messages encrypted in the monument inscription.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI4RY9Xj7HU>

Ted Lange Launches New Authorship Play via YouTube



Actor and playwright Ted Lange has written an amusing and thought-provoking play about the Shakespeare Authorship Question. "Shakespeare Over My Shoulder" can be seen on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mlem9Oqwog>

The two-act, four-character play takes place at the Mermaid Tavern in London in 1593. Edward de Vere is already there as the play begins; he's soon joined by Will Shakspeare, an actor desperately seeking a part ("I'm really good at soliloquies!"). In due course they're joined by Christopher Marlowe ("I am a genius!") and, later, Francis Bacon, who informs Marlowe that his life may be in danger.

Without giving away the plot, it's enough to say that Ted Lange has done his homework on the Shakespeare Authorship Question, weaving in references to Will Shakspeare's two marriage records to Anne Whately and Anne Hathaway, Edward de Vere's uncertainty about his first daughter's parentage, and Marlowe's good fortune in escaping punishment for homicide.

Because London was facing an outbreak of the plague in 1593, Shakspeare, Marlowe and Bacon all wear scarves over their mouths and noses as they enter the Mermaid—a clever allusion to present-day conditions.

Featured are Gordon Goodman (de Vere), Daniel Barrett (Shakspeare), Steve Ducey (Marlowe), Stephan Spiegel (Bacon), and Mary Lange as the narrator.

Ted Lange is an actor, director, playwright and educator. He came to national prominence in the 1970s playing bartender Isaac Washington on the TV series *Love Boat*. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, he has received the NAACP's "Renaissance Man Theater Award" and the Paul Robeson Award. Lange was the first American Black actor to be featured in a film version of *Othello*. He was a presenter at the SOF's 2019 Annual Conference in Hartford, Connecticut, where he spoke about the creation of his award-winning play, *The Cause, My Soul, The Prequel to Othello*, which premiered in 2016 to rave reviews. Lange may have been introduced the authorship question in 2017 at a meeting of the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable in Beverly Hills (see Patricia Carrelli, "From The Love Boat to Lodz: My Chance Encounter with Ted Lange," in the Spring 2018 issue of the *Newsletter*).

Bob Meyers Gives Authorship Talk

SOF trustee Bob Meyers gave a remote Zoom talk on March 24 to approximately 122 members of the Rotary Club of Frederick, Maryland. The fifteen-minute talk was a slimmed down version of his forty-five-minute presentation at the SOF 2019 Conference in Hartford captured on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPxuCUXWKUM>) called "Was it Really William?" There was no time for questions, but Meyers provided his email and offered to talk to anyone interested. One Rotary Club member emailed afterwards, "Sir, Thank you again for this presentation! This has been one of my favorite ones of the year, and I've already shared your talk from YouTube to my Facebook page. EXCELLENT work!"

Entering the Mainstream: The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America

by Richard M. Waugaman, MD



In April 2020 I found myself coping with COVID-19 by retreating to the 14th century—for the first time I read Boccaccio's *Decameron*, set during the devastating pandemic of 1348, which killed as much as 75 percent of the population of Florence. What a wonderful book! No surprise it has remained a classic. After I finished it, I looked for its first English translation, published in 1620. Once I learned (1) that it was published as a folio by Isaac Jaggard; (2) that it was dedicated to the Earl of Montgomery; and (3) that its author was anonymous, I was hooked. I spent several months researching the matter, and concluded it was probably Oxford's work.

I submitted an abstract to the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) for its 2021 annual meeting, and was invited to present. On April 21 I presented (by Zoom) to a seminar that included seven other papers by scholars from the US, Canada, England, and Australia. Our moderator was Carla Zecher, PhD, Executive Director of the RSA. Her specialty is French literature.

Before I began, I warned that my paper would be not just controversial, but heretical. Carla Zecher smiled and replied, "The RSA loves heresy." That did much to set me at ease! My contrasting experiences with the Shakespeare Association of America is that they pride themselves, as an organization, on ridiculing authorship skeptics.

The presentation went well. The other participants responded positively to my paper, asking constructive questions. It helped that none of them was a Shakespeare specialist. Shakespeare scholars are unrepresentative of scholars in the humanities. They respond so viciously to our work because they realize how paltry the evidence

for the traditional author really is. Their enterprise is built on a faith-based foundation.

I hope many more of us will join the RSA. They have been open-minded in inviting me to review books for their journal, *Renaissance Quarterly*. The book review editor recently invited me to review my sixth book for them.

Here is a link to the video of my presentation on Oxford's authorship of the *Decameron* translation:

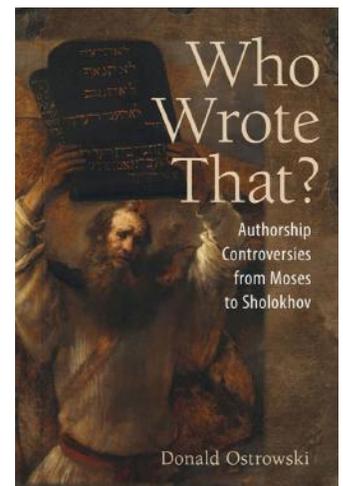
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNITA2Kzcbo&t=523s>

Ostrowski Book on Authorship Issues Now Available as Audio Book

Donald Ostrowski's book, *Who Wrote That? Authorship Controversies from Moses to Sholokhov*, will soon be an audio book in addition to its availability in hardcover, paperback and Kindle. Ostrowski informed Gary Goldstein, editor of *The Oxfordian*, that "Redwood Audiobooks has picked up the licensing rights to produce an audiobook of *Who Wrote That?*"

Ostrowski is a research advisor in the social sciences and lecturer at the Harvard Extension School, where he teaches world history. He also chairs the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies' Early Slavists Seminars at Harvard University. His book, published by Cornell University Press in 2020, discusses nine prominent authorship controversies, and lays a foundation for a field of authorship studies. One of the nine controversies is, of course, the Shakespeare Authorship issue.

Who Wrote That? was reviewed in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Newsletter* and in Volume 20 of *The Oxfordian* (2020). The book is now in 222 libraries worldwide, according to the World Catalog of Libraries (worldcat.org).





Remembering Prince Philip (1921-2021)

The death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, at the age of ninety-nine on April 9 was widely reported. He and Queen Elizabeth II had been married for more than seventy-three years. It was the longest royal marriage in British history.

After Princess Elizabeth became queen in 1953, Prince Philip knew that his role was to support her, and to walk a pace or two behind her at public functions. He once referred to himself as “the world’s most experienced plaque unveiler,” while the Queen lauded him as her “constant strength and guide.” He was known to speak his mind on occasion.

Perhaps less well known was that he was an authorship doubter. In 2014 Philip discussed the issue with his eldest son, Prince Charles, who was also president of the Royal Shakespeare Company (and apparently not an authorship doubter), thoughtfully arranged to put his father in touch with Stanley Wells, who was then honorary president of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-on-Avon. Wells gave Prince

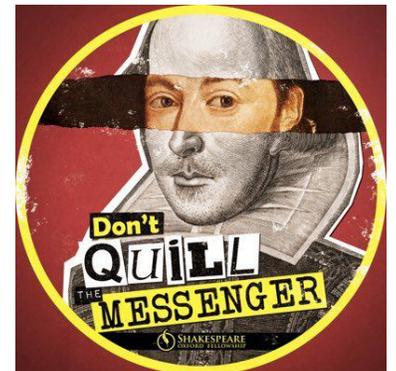
Philip a copy of *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, a recent book he had co-edited with Paul Edmondson of the SBT, a work which, they hoped, would drive a stake through the authorship controversy. A while later Wells asked Prince Philip if he was still a “heretic,” to which Philip replied, “All the more so after reading your book!”

“Don’t Quill the Messenger” Podcast Wins Award

As this issue goes to press we’ve learned that the SOF’s “Don’t Quill the Messenger” podcast series has won an award. Season Two of the series was honored by the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts as one of the recipients of its Communicator Awards. It was one of only three series in the documentary category to receive honors for excellence this year.

“Don’t Quill the Messenger” is produced by Dragon Wagon Radio and is hosted by Steven Sabel, the SOF Director of Podcasts and Community Outreach. Launched in 2019, it produces new episodes every two weeks; between 800 and 1,000 listeners, from dozens of countries, stream each episode.

Sabel noted that the Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts is an invitation-only group that includes professionals from fields including the media, communications, advertising and marketing. Other award winners include PepsiCo, Forbes, WWE, Microsoft and Disney Creative Studios.



Applications For 2022 Research Grants Welcomed

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is pleased to announce it is again welcoming applications for its Research Grant Program (RGP) for grants that will be disbursed in 2022. The deadline to apply is November 30, 2021.

The purpose of the RGP is to promote new research about Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, relating to his biography, his literary career, and the evidence that he was the true author behind the pen name “William Shakespeare.” The plan for 2021–22 is to award up to \$20,000 in grants, depending on the number, merits, and nature of the proposals submitted.

SOF President John Hamill, chair of the RGP Committee, states: “The Research Grant Program fulfills a very important part of the SOF mission to support research and discussion of the Shakespeare Authorship Question. It is truly an extraordinary endeavor. No other organization in the world is fostering Oxfordian research at this level.”

The SOF announced its most recent research grant recipients on January 21, 2021 (see *Newsletter*, Winter 2021 issue). For complete information: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/shakespeare-oxford-fellowship-research-grant-program>.

Nominations Committee Report

The Nominations Committee (chaired by Bonner Miller Cutting, with members Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Joan Leon) is pleased to present the SOF membership with a slate of three candidates to stand for election to the Board of Trustees, and one candidate to stand for election as President, at the annual membership meeting.

Nominations to the Board and to the office of President may also be initiated by written petition of at least ten members in good standing, so long as the petition is submitted to the Nominations Committee no later than sixty days before the annual meeting. Petitions may be sent to jandbcutting@comcast.net or to P.O. Box 66083, Auburndale, MA 02466. The results of the Board election will be posted on the SOF website immediately after the annual meeting and reported in the *Newsletter*.

Nominee for a one-year term as President:

Bob Meyers served for twenty-one years at the National Press Foundation, nineteen of them as president and chief operating officer. He retired in 2014 with the title of President Emeritus. The National Press Foundation provides free on-the-record educational programs for US and international journalists. Thousands of print, broadcast, and online reporters and editors went through programs that Bob led or designed. He also worked as a reporter at the *Washington Post*, including on its Pulitzer Prize-winning Watergate investigation, and as an editor at the *San Diego Union*. Bob also served as director of the Harvard Journalism Fellowship for Advanced Studies in Public Health. He has been a freelance writer for *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Columbia Journalism Review*, among other publications. He is the author of two books, one of which won the American Medical Writers Association Award for Excellence in Biomedical Writing. Since 2015 Bob has edited the popular “[How I Became an Oxfordian](#)” essay series. On March 4, 2020, he moderated the SOF Centennial Symposium celebration at the National Press Club. Bob was appointed to fill a vacancy on the SOF Board of Trustees in July 2020 and was elected to a three-year term in September 2020. Bob currently chairs the Communications Committee and also serves on the Conference Committee and the Public Relations and Podcast Committee.

Nominees for three-year terms to the SOF Board of Trustees:

Theresa Lauricella is Professor of Theatre and Program Coordinator for Theatre and Music at Clark State

College where she directs and produces shows for the Theatre Program. Recent and cherished directing credits include *The Clean House*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms*, and *The Foreigner*, which earned her a DayTony Award in Direction. She holds an MA in Theatre History and Criticism and a BA in Theatre from Ohio University and is currently attending Northcentral University, studying for a PhD in Leadership in Higher Education. You can [read here how Theresa became an Oxfordian](#). Theresa has served on the Board of Trustees since October 2018, when she was appointed to fill a vacancy; she was elected in 2019 to complete the remaining two years of that term. She is eligible for reelection to a three-year term on the Board in 2021. She also chairs the Education Outreach Committee.

Don Rubin is a Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Department of Theatre at Toronto’s York University, where he taught for more than forty years. During this period, he taught senior level courses on the authorship question four different times. Series Editor of Routledge’s six-volume *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, he currently serves as President of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, organizers of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt ([DoubtAboutWill.org](#)).

A longtime member of the SOF, he has been involved in the organization of three annual conferences—in Toronto (2013), Chicago (2017) and Hartford (2019)—and has served as member or chair of SOF’s committees on public relations, grants and conference planning. He is currently Managing Editor of the International Association of Theatre Critics’ webjournal *Critical Stages* ([criticalstages.org](#)) and has edited a special section for that journal on the authorship issue. He was a member of the SOF Board of Trustees from 2014 to 2020.

Tom Woosnam graduated from Imperial College, London, with a BSc in physics and from Stanford University with an MA in science and math education. His forty-five-year math and teaching career was spent in Santiago, Chile, and the San Francisco Bay Area. His hobby is theater. He has performed in more than fifty productions, including seven Shakespeare plays. He became interested in the Shakespeare Authorship Question after reading Charlton Ogburn’s *The*

Mysterious William Shakespeare in 1987. He gave a lecture on it as part of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Summer Series program in 1988. He debated the topic in 2002 with the OSF dramaturg. He has given many lectures and talks, including a three-hour OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) presentation focusing on "Reasonable Doubt." Here is a link to his "How I Became an Oxfordian" article:

<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/woosnam-how-i-became-oxfordian/>

Leaving the Board of Trustees are John Hamill, who served as President in 2014 and for the past three years, and Earl Showerman, who has completed a three-year term on the Board. The SOF thanks them both for their many contributions to the organization!



Reviews

Michael Blanding: *North by Shakespeare: A Rogue Scholar's Quest for the Truth Behind the Bard's Work* (Hachette Books, 2021)

Reviewed by Michael Hyde

Every researcher dreams of discovering old lost unpublished manuscripts about William Shakespeare, of whom we have precisely zero literary evidence in his own hand—only six scrawled signatures on legal documents.

Michael Blanding and Dennis McCarthy have the admirable fortune of one such find apiece—papers not lost, but hidden in the British Library. Blanding located the original manuscript of Sir Thomas North's 1555 travel journal in the summer of 2019, where he found a loose page at the end, with the title written in North's hand (350; unless otherwise noted, all cites to page numbers are to Blanding's book). McCarthy rocked the Shakespeare establishment in 2018 when he located the manuscript of George North's *Discourse on Rebellion and Rebels* in the Duke of Portland's collection, also housed (but oddly catalogued) in the British Library.

Blanding is a veteran journalist; McCarthy is a college dropout and self-educated researcher. Both have written books on other subjects: McCarthy explored the field of biogeography in *Here Be Dragons: How the Study of Animal and Plant Distributions Revolutionized Our Views of Life on Earth* (2009), while Blanding's *The Map Thief* (2014) explored the nefarious practice of stealing old maps from libraries. Blanding first wrote about McCarthy's discovery of the George North manuscript in *The New York Times* in February 2018.

In 2011 McCarthy published his own book on Thomas North, *North of Shakespeare: The True Story of*

the Secret Genius Who Wrote the World's Greatest Body of Literature. That book is no longer available. In 2018 McCarthy teamed up with June Schlueter, a professor of English at Lafayette College, to produce a contemporary edition of George North's *A Brief Discourse of Rebellion and Rebels*. Earlier this year McCarthy and Schlueter collaborated on a second book, *Thomas North's 1555 Travel Journal: From Italy to Shakespeare*.

As a recovering academic, I'm thrilled that Blanding and McCarthy, two non-academic investigators, are rocking the Academic Establishment with independent scholarship; kudos to both for their discoveries. I especially admire McCarthy's astonishing persistence and sacrifices in his single-minded pursuit of answers to questions about Shakespeare sources and authors that have bewitched and bedeviled countless investigators.

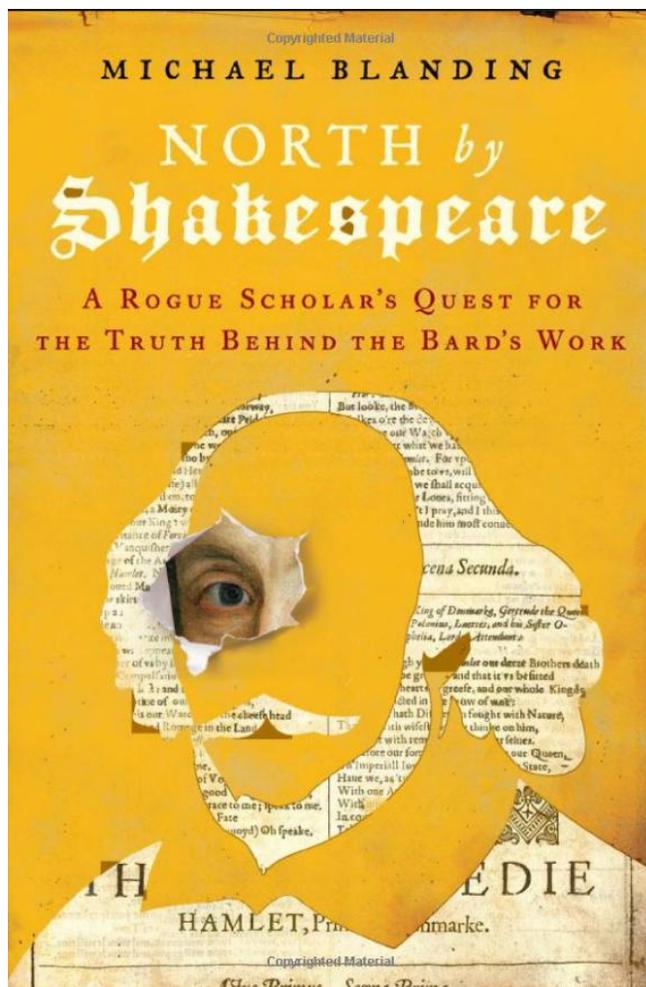
A Google Search led McCarthy to a 1927 auction catalogue that listed the George North manuscript. His skillful use of WCopyfind, a plagiarism detection program, and other tools facilitated examining images of the actual documents. This resulted in McCarthy's discovering numerous verbal parallels between the George North manuscript and the works of Shakespeare, and between Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (1580) and the Shakespeare canon. Thomas North (born 1535) and George North (fl 1561-1581) are assumed to be kinsmen, though the exact relationship between the two men has not been established.

In Sarah Smith's witty novel *Chasing Shakespeares* (2003) two grad students accidentally discover a letter by the Stratford man admitting that he was not the author of the canonical Shakespeare plays. Truth has now risen up—we really do have new manuscripts to evaluate. But alas for the Stratfordian view of William as the “monoauthor” of the plays, he has been tilted off his horse—even if unintentionally—by the combined efforts of Blanding and McCarthy.

The book's main title, *North by Shakespeare*, should perhaps be reversed, as its argument is that the works of Shakespeare were written by North, the lost author. McCarthy has long maintained that William of Stratford did not truly write the canon, rather he purchased and adapted for the stage a cache of manuscripts of plays by Thomas North. McCarthy believes that North wrote these original versions in the 1560s and 1570s. Ten years ago, in his earlier book, *North of Shakespeare*, McCarthy stated flatly: “Shakespeare was not the original author of the masterpieces. He merely adapted them for the stage.” The echoes ring as I read aloud the full titles of the two books—*North, Shakespeare, True/Truth, Secret Genius* and *Rogue Scholar*. North is the unsuspected secret genius, Shakespeare the playbroker and adapter, and McCarthy the rogue scholar who finally uncovers the Truth.

McCarthy began his quest with the aim of identifying “Ur-Hamlet,” the pre-Shakespeare version of *Hamlet* that scholars assume must have existed, based on the “Seneca by candlelight” allusion in Thomas Nashe's 1589 preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (107). McCarthy finds an early English translator of Seneca, Jasper Heywood. Using Heywood's preface to *Thyestes* (1560) as his crux, in which Heywood urges more Seneca translating from the young scholars at the Inns of Court, McCarthy selects Thomas North as the best candidate because North's name is at the top of Heywood's list: “There you shall find that self same North whose works his wit displays and Dial of Princes paint” (109). Following this slender thread, we learn that North was by 1562 “singled out by Heywood as the writer most likely to pen a Senecan tragedy.”

This is the heady brew of internal and external evidence that McCarthy and Blanding have fermented into a theory proposing that Thomas North, the famous prose translator of Plutarch, was the true author of the lost *Hamlet* and the works of Shakespeare. Nashe mentions Hamlet and Seneca in 1589; translator Heywood mentions Thomas North at the Inns of Court in 1560; North therefore composed the earliest versions of the Shakespeare masterpieces while cranking out his prose translations in the 1560s and 1570s. McCarthy



says of Thomas North, “He is Hamlet as much as J. D. Salinger is Holden Caulfield” (287).

All this threading of the needle ignores the basic procedures outlined in Samuel Schoenbaum's *Internal Evidence and Elizabethan Dramatic Authorship* (1966). Nevertheless, the result is that parallel passages from George North's *Discourse on Rebels* are being hailed, if not closely examined, as the earliest vestiges of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry.

Returning to the search for “Ur-Hamlet,” it should be noted that translating Seneca was a literary hobby between 1560 and 1589. The Stationers' Register for 1581 lists “Seneca's ninth tragedy, the Octavia . . . translated by Thomas Nuce, whose name appears in the 1581 collection titled ‘Seneca His Ten Tragedies’” (154). Note the initials—TN. It is possible that no “Ur-Hamlet,” no “Ur-Shakespeare,” and no “Ur-Seneca” ever existed unless we are willing to treat the conjecture of lost plays by North as fact. Thomas North's name is not in the table of contents of the 1581 collection of Seneca's ten tragedies. We can only solve the puzzle by theorizing that his other lost poetic works (not prose translations) account for Shakespearean parallel passages in the

manuscript of George North's *Discourse on Rebels and Rebellion* written in 1576, but undiscovered until 2018, though "hidden" in the British Library.

All this is necessary to understand what was really happening in 2018 when McCarthy and Professor Schlueter made their find. But why in 1576 did George North write the *Discourse*? Yes, he was seeking patronage and later obtained the ambassadorship to Sweden and had a diplomatic career. But his actual sentences sound like this, "Rebels therefore the worst of all subjects are most ready to rebellion." The *Discourse* is addressed to his patron, Second Baron Roger North, whose father had been imprisoned in 1524 for plotting rebellion against Henry VIII (51-53). Edward North was in the Tower a full year, and luckily released without further punishment. The anonymous tract *Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion* (1571) provides further context. Mark Anderson, in "*Shakespeare*" *By Another Name* (2005), describes its "state sanctioned propaganda" (Anderson 43), with English vicars being required to read every Sunday from the Anglican book of twelve homilies. The "Willful Rebellion" homily was also a direct response to the Northern uprising of 1570-1571, and, as Anderson says, "its influence on Shakespeare has been widely chronicled."

The very next year (1572) the Duke of Norfolk was executed for conspiring in the Catholic plot to bring Mary Queen of Scots to England. George North was reminding his patron that their family's safety and prosperity depended on constantly affirming loyalty to the Crown. The Second Baron Roger North (a new creation by Mary in 1555, the last Catholic Queen of England) must have been keenly aware of his family's suspect Catholic history. Cousin George wrote his manifesto in Kirtling Hall to finally absolve the North family of any stain lingering from the memory of Edward's youthful rebellion against Henry VIII. Thenceforth the Norths were never rebels, and remained the "best of all subjects," ever loyal and obedient. Blanding's find of Thomas North's original 1555 journal further reminds us that the family was regarded by Mary as devout Catholics. Thomas was part of the group of English ambassadors sent to Rome to effect the return of England to the true Church.

Interestingly, there is an Oxfordian provenance to the discovery of the Thomas North manuscript. It is now the earliest known manuscript of the journal, donated as part of the Harleian Collection in 1759. Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford (second creation), purchased it in 1704 as one of 600 manuscripts from the D'Ewes estate. It

passed to the 2d Earl, his son Edward, and was sold to the Library by his widow, hence its listing in the Collection. In 1759 it was attributed as "written by one of the Bishop of Ely's servants" i.e., Thomas North. There are further confirmatory attributions to North in 1872 and 1937.

Blanding's strongest (and most Oxfordian) section is his chapter, "Wonders of the World Abroad," on Italian travels. Yet it is also the most internally conflicted. First, he admits that "one of the reasons scholarly opinion has turned against the idea of an Italian jaunt for the Bard is that it has become a favorite argument of anti-Stratfordians, who use it to prove that the Earl of Oxford was the true author of the plays." Next, he notes the "geographical howlers" in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, where "the biggest gaffe is the fact that Valentine and Proteus travel from Verona to Milan by boat, despite both cities being landlocked." He adds that "critics have thrown cold water on the idea that there was network of canals connecting the major cities of Northern Italy." But then he backflips, citing that Richard Paul Roe, "lawyer and Oxfordian, set out to prove critics wrong by travelling to Italy in search of the locations in the plays in his *Shakespeare Guide to Italy*," and found "old maps showing a canal connecting the Adige River in Verona and the Po River near Milan, making such a trip by boat possible in the time of Shakespeare. Roe even found vestiges of the old waterways."

Happily for Blanding and McCarthy, Roe "was careful throughout his book never to speculate on the identity of the author—referring to him simply as 'the playwright.'" This justifies attesting their Stratfordian bona fides for the umpteenth time: "Of course, that playwright, McCarthy thinks, wasn't Oxford or Shakespeare, but North" (161). Of course, Roe is heavily relied on by Blanding and McCarthy for the rest of their Italian trip. "We take Roe's book with us now as we head across the hilly country of Northeastern Italy to one of the most popular destinations for English travelers in the sixteenth century, Padua."

The issue of Thomas North's trip (or trips) to Italy is ambiguous in Blanding's telling. Yes, North was in the English entourage to Rome in 1555 as part of the Marian embassy. However, McCarthy speculates without evidence that North made a second trip around 1570 that may have been a catalyst for his playwriting. Oxfordians will compare Edward de Vere's thoroughly documented lengthy stay in Italy in 1575-1576.

Let us unpack the paragraphs above: Roe is right about Shakespeare's Italy, the critics are wrong, the

waterways near Verona are still visible, and “scholarly opinion” be damned, Blanding and McCarthy use Roe as their guide since it contains no overtly stated anti-Stratfordian heresies! McCarthy and Blanding are nevertheless often dismissive of other studies of Shakespeare that fail to endorse McCarthy’s all-encompassing thesis that the Shakespeare canon is a 1590s revision of the lost plays of Thomas North. Discussing *Julius Caesar*, McCarthy gets testy: “passage after passage and image after image is taken for the play [from North]. . . . [P]eople don’t realize how many quotes are taken directly from [North’s *Plutarch*]” (196).

This is wrong. I still possess the paperback edition of North’s *Plutarch* from my Humanities 6 course at Harvard. We were shown the passages in *Antony and Cleopatra* that were sourced and lifted verbatim by Shakespeare (whoever he was) from North. We compared, line by line, what was authorial invention with what was pure North. An Oxfordian example is an extract from North’s *Coriolanus* translation that is lifted entirely (J. Thomas Looney, “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*, Centenary Edition [2018], 350). Coriolanus’s address to Aufidius in Act IV, Scene V, is word for word from North, but then varies. It seems that the traditional classroom teaching of the Roman plays having their origins in North’s *Plutarch* was on the mark, even at Harvard.

It remains for McCarthy to prove as clearly with his lengthy lists of parallel passages gleaned from software that the rest of the canon is pure North and that North was indeed the “Ur-Shakespeare” of the 1560s and 1570s. In the Folger Shakespeare Library’s podcast interview with McCarthy, “Shakespeare Unlimited Episode 93,” Barbara Bogaev tries to pin him down on the “one- in-a-billion” “word collocations” gleaned from his accumulation of parallel passages in George North and Shakespeare—all derived from running his plagiarism software: “But is there any danger in analyzing literature this way that you might fall into confirmation bias?” McCarthy offers an ambiguous defense: “Well, yes and no. In terms of source study, rather than authorship study, you have to cherry-pick in terms of resemblances between two passages.” So this means “Yes” on source study and “No” on authorship?

Stating that one must cherry-pick reveals a classic problem in attribution studies. I will gladly defend McCarthy, as I find that his long lists of parallel passages from North and Shakespeare (see Blanding’s Appendix B) do contain some close hits on target. Nevertheless, I urge McCarthy and all readers to examine Schoenbaum’s warning of the perils of parallel passages in authorship,

if not in source studies (*Internal Evidence and Elizabethan Dramatic Authorship* [1966], esp. pp. 189-193). In Section III, “Avoiding Disaster,” he quotes E. K. Chambers: “There is nothing more dangerous than the attempt to determine authorship by the citation of parallels” (Schoenbaum 189). The five-page section cited above is especially cautionary and conservative on using internal evidence and counting up verbal parallels for attribution. The sad outcome was for Schoenbaum’s contemporaries, at their worst, to passionately “claim every play in sight for an author on whom they have obsessively fixed” (Schoenbaum 192). He lists M. St. Clare Byne’s five “Golden Rules” on using verbal parallels: 1) there are always multiple explanations; 2) insist on quality in parallels; 3) avoid “mere accumulation”; 4) logically proceed from known works to anonymous ones; 5) apply “negative checks” to ensure that the same parallels are not found in other authors. Schoenbaum adds another: “To these rules I would venture to add a sixth, parallels from plays of uncertain or contested authorship prove nothing” (ibid.). His suggestion that many Elizabethan plays, including those attributed to Shakespeare, remain of “uncertain” or “contested” authorship should make each of us more humble as we pursue elusive rabbits and identifications into their rabbit holes.

I wonder if Schoenbaum would have accepted McCarthy’s ideas, buttressed as they are by many supporting parallel passages. A follow-up question is whether verbal parallels are subjective or objective in the minds of readers, like notes in music. Are they valid for source study, as McCarthy insists, but not for authorship, as Schoenbaum warns? Many fellow Oxfordians are devoted to the practice of attribution via such parallels. I have my doubts. Hence my reaction to the cornucopia of parallels in Blanding’s Appendix B is mixed, at best 50-50. The renowned *Cleopatra* passage (373) from North’s *Plutarch* is as vivid today as it was when I first read it in my Humanities class. But I believe that Hamlet’s “to be or not to be” speech, its existential questions, are from multiple sources, the chief being Thomas Bedingfield’s 1573 translation of *Cardanus Comfort*. As Oxfordians know, Edward de Vere patronized and welcomed this translation in a beautifully written prefatory letter. The Cade passages from George North (374) I find generally convincing in their verbal suggestiveness for the Cade scene in *2 Henry VI*.

My strongest negative reaction is to the imputed verbal collocations or echoes in the paired passages on Richard Crouchback’s deformities (375). Nothing in the George North passage suggests to me that Shakespeare’s

Richard III learned here to “descant on mine own deformity” as he chooses to “prove a villain.” Other readers may see more parallels here, and elsewhere, than I do.

The questions of attributing either sources or authorship on the basis of verbal parallels are inescapable. Discussing Dennis McCarthy and June Schlueter’s 2018 edition of George North’s *A Brief Discourse of Rebellion & Rebels*, Oxfordian Bill Boyle bows to the issue with a telltale “perhaps”: “This deeper layer of matches makes this discovery different, and perhaps as compelling as the headlines have said” (“New Source for Shakespeare Leads to the Same Old Problems,” *Newsletter*, Spring 2018, p. 18). Everyone needs to search Early English Books Online (EEBO) as they accumulate parallels, to avoid the blunder of claiming uniqueness or rarity for any particular passage.

A second review of the McCarthy-Schlueter book in the Spring 2019 *Newsletter* by the late Ron Hess was not so charitable. Hess saw the entire enterprise of stylometrics, computer-assisted techniques, and plagiarism software as a kind of moat now protecting the besieged Castle of Stratfordianism. He snarled, “Put these . . . movements together and you have a perfect marriage of ignorance meeting bliss” (Hess 21). He trenchantly observed that no computer search could locate the “common source” that tied together George North and Shakespeare because it was very likely private—at Court or in personal intercourse between families. Finally, he dourly wondered if the British Library might have financed the McCarthy/Schlueter project because it protects and defends the Stratfordian case (Hess 23).

Blanding’s Appendix A presents McCarthy’s revision of the timeline of composition for the plays, with Thomas North on the left margin pitted against orthodox chronology on the right. This is probably his most devastating, if unintentional, takedown of both Stratfordianism and Will Shakspeare as the “monoauthor” of the canonical plays. McCarthy’s timeline begins with *Henry VIII* or *All is True* in 1555, nine years before the birth of Will in Stratford-upon-Avon, and ends with *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Tempest* in 1602-03.

I have doubts about assigning *Henry VIII* to Thomas North at all, and especially in 1555. North spent much of that year traveling to and from Rome on the Marian embassy to return England to Catholicism. One would expect that anything written by a devout Catholic on a diplomatic mission at that time to have a pro-Catholic, anti-Henry slant. Blanding dismisses *Henry VIII* (“simply put, a terrible play,” 94-95) and suggests that its

first known performance in 1613 was a “later adaptation.”

Let us also recall the strident anti-Catholicism of Shakespeare’s canonical *King John* (“No Italian priest/ Shall ever tithe or toil in these dominions!”).

Blanding acknowledges in his first chapter that Stratfordian chronology shoehorns composition and performance dates for the plays into Will’s years as an actor from 1589-90 to 1604. Shoehorning is as popular as ever in Appendix A. McCarthy fits the dates of composition of Thomas North’s lost plays to his lifespan and career—his first produced at age twenty (1555), and his last at age sixty-eight (1603). Coincidentally, both Thomas North and Edward de Vere died in 1604. Does this leave an opening for Stratfordians to slam the door closed on McCarthy’s claim for plays that they think postdate 1604?

Arden of Faversham is included in the timeline, dated to 1557. Although it was not published until 1592, it is assumed to be identical to *A Cruel Murder Done in Kent* (1577). Oxfordians have their own case for *Arden* as presumably written by Edward de Vere and performed at Whitehall in March 1579 as *The History of Murderous Michael*. I found the McCarthy case for *Arden* to be convincing and persuasive for Thomas North as the author because of the play’s connections to the North family. Coincidentally, the substitution of a “fictional Lord Clifford” in the play (23) in place of 1st Baron Sir Edward North reminds me of the omission of the 9th Earl of Oxford, the alleged homosexual favorite of the monarch, from Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. Noble families have their secrets and their cover-ups.

The latest Oxford edition of *Arden* (2017) rejects Kyd and Marlowe as authors, and attributes it to Shakespeare. This helps McCarthy’s case if he is proven right about Thomas North. But again there is no contemporary evidence that Thomas North was a playwright. Nor is there evidence that he had any connection with the new playhouses built in the 1570s. Edward de Vere, who lived nearby at Fisher’s Folly in the 1580s, had such connections (Anderson 156-157). The best Blanding can do is to suppose that a poverty-stricken Thomas North, after his patron Leicester’s death in 1588, “drifted down to London, where he might have met Shakespeare” (299). Happily again for McCarthy, we have to suppose an additional lost North play or two being written and sold to Will Shakspeare, thus avoiding invidious comparisons and possible contradictions of his theories. Blanding later quotes Gary Taylor, who

pinpoints the difficulty: “The danger is that the invisibility of the lost texts means that it is very easy to speculate about them” (355).

Blanding writes that Taylor had earlier rejected McCarthy’s original *Arden* paper (348). He lets slip that McCarthy in a “wild moment” had wanted to purchase the original of Thomas North’s 1555 travel journal from the Lambeth Palace Library (which had obtained it for the prohibitive sum of \$43,750). He imagines owning what he believes will become one of the most valuable documents in the world—an original North/Shakespeare in North’s own hand! Though he later confesses that “I made ridiculous and wild claims” (353), it is impossible not to see monomania in these overexcited moments. McCarthy also worries that he’ll be accused of “conspiracy theory” by Stratfordian scholars for his far-fetched belief in North’s lost plays. He unloads to Blanding more of his untamed theories: *Merry Wives* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* “have little or no North at all”; the more literary plays are North’s original plays; Heminges and Condell “may have thought they were truly publishing Shakespeare” in 1623. Suddenly he panics at the thought: “that speculation, however, comes dangerously close to the anti-Stratfordian claim that ‘Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare’.” A fate worse than death: being labeled as an anti-Stratfordian by the Establishment!

Blanding’s sixteen-page bibliography is largely a compendium of Stratfordian or orthodox Shakespeare biographies, historical backgrounders, Italian travels, standard reference works, Elizabethan contemporary authors, and theater studies. Only four Oxfordian heretics make the cut—Looney, Roe, Charlton Ogburn and Joseph Sobran. Diana Price is included as an independent researcher, though the very title of her book, *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography*, might arouse suspicion in stout Stratfordian minds. To show fairness, Blanding does allow Mark Twain’s doubts about authorship (135-136) from *Is Shakespeare Dead?* and summarizes de Vere’s candidacy credentials (136-138).

His one-page summary of Delia Bacon’s espousal of Francis Bacon as the true author (134) ends with her dying before she could reveal her cipher for Bacon, “who was known to write in code.” Cryptography was launched in Shakespeare studies in 1888 via “Minnesota lawyer Ignatius Donnelly” (139) and so the bibliography dutifully includes William F. and Elizebeth S. Friedman’s 1957 work, *The Shakespeare Cipher Examined*. That book’s subtitle betrays its intention:

Analysis of Cryptographic Systems Used as Evidence that Some Author Other Than William Shakespeare Wrote the Plays Commonly Attributed to Him.

The case for Thomas North sometimes overlaps with Oxfordian arguments for Edward de Vere, with the signal difference that de Vere was involved in theater all his life and North was never mentioned in his time as a playwright. Blanding displays considerable animus at times toward authorship doubters. He labels all of them, especially Oxfordians, as conspiracy theorists (what conspiracy is not explained), while proclaiming his belief that William of Stratford “wrote every word attributed to him during his lifetime” (4). This ignores, among other issues, the strong evidence of both collaboration and later revisions in the Shakespeare texts, a topic that is mostly pursued by Stratfordians themselves.

Who is the best Oxfordian writer and researcher to compare? There are several excellent candidates, but I vote for Ramon Jiménez as the best rival researcher to McCarthy. Jiménez’s book, *Shakespeare’s Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright’s Earliest Works* (McFarland & Co., 2018) also explores the same field—identifying true “Ur-Shakespeare” texts. Both are independent investigators, self-motivated researchers with no whiff of odors from the classroom and no dissertation to defend. Both present cases for Elizabethan courtiers. Both recount how nonchalantly Elizabethan writers echoed each other as they flagrantly heisted their sources. As Jiménez observes, “moreover, all the Tudor chroniclers copied extensively from previous writers; Holinshed himself cited more than 190 sources” (Jiménez 113).

Jiménez methodically develops his case for de Vere as the teenage author in 1562 who wrote his first versions of dramas such as *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, later acquired and performed by the Queen’s Men as an anonymous work in the late 1580s. Jiménez offers three possible theories about the relationship between *True Tragedy* and the canonical *Richard III*: 1) both are by Edward de Vere; 2) the 1562 play is by de Vere and the canonical version is a masterly revision by a new author; 3) as Dover Wilson proposed, both plays stem from a lost play by an unknown author. Jiménez chooses the first theory, as there is strong evidence to support it, and it is much more straightforward. Theory two leads us into a dark forest of many possible authors. Theory three is similar to McCarthy’s claim for Thomas North as the “lost” author of the canon.

As I read Blanding's book I kept wondering why there is no evidence presented for McCarthy's Holy Grail. McCarthy is unflinching, repeating three times "I have all the goods" (348)—but they're never displayed. This occurs shortly before their meeting with Gary Taylor and Terri Bourus in March 2018 at Florida State University (351). The two academics are polite, attentive, but vague and noncommittal. Taylor concludes the meeting, "clearly the journal [of Thomas North] is important and clearly Shakespeare is interested in North" (352). I was even more bewildered by McCarthy defending himself to Blanding afterward as "being disingenuous by hiding [from Taylor and Bourus] the full extent of [my] theories about Thomas North and the source plays." McCarthy is adamant: "I have to downplay it. . . . [I]f I say exactly what I think, I can't get in the door" (353).

Blanding eventually acknowledges that, after five years of traveling with McCarthy to Kirtling, Faversham, Mantua, and Rome, he has reached a difficult conclusion: "Not once, in all that time, have I found anything to disprove the notion that Thomas North wrote source plays for all of the plays in the Shakespeare canon. Nor, however, have I found anything that definitively proves it. Despite the First Folio, there are no surviving plays with Thomas North's name on them, or even hard evidence that North was a playwright. There are no references to his dramatic works in letters, theater registers, or revels records. There are no surviving documents that place him in Italy in 1570 or Kenilworth in 1576. In short, it's entirely possible McCarthy has devoted a decade and a half of his life to a fantasy—an imaginative and plausible one, to be sure, but a pipe dream, which may prove no less true than the notion that the Earl of Oxford or Sir Francis Bacon secretly penned all of the Shakespeare plays" (355).

I presume that Blanding and McCarthy are still speaking, but this is a crushing confession. The internet is not all-seeing, all-powerful; the need for hard evidence is undeniable. It appears the "lost play" game is over, unless a new document emerges—not just "coincidence," as Blanding tries to argue. It is "no less true" that Thomas North or Edward de Vere, or Francis Bacon, or Mary Sidney could have "secretly penned" the Shakespeare masterpieces, lost or found, in the 1623 First Folio.

Blanding relates a happy ending at the British Library. He and McCarthy ask to view the George North manuscript, but are told it is on loan. Deflated, they "spy a doorway" and notice a sign for a side exhibition: Treasures of the British Library (359-360). "On a hunch" they sneak in. There on display is a First Folio, proudly

accompanied by the original manuscript of George North's *Brief Discourse*. McCarthy reads the accompanying placard and is elated: "They are literally quoting me." But, we notice, without attribution! McCarthy is forgivably ecstatic as they depart: "That is friggin' amazing. . . . It's right there when you walk in—one and two. The First Folio and the manuscript."

Just like Holden Caulfield, who imagines meeting via time travel his favorite authors! Are these deservedly happy treasure hunters contented, or still searching the Internet and visiting libraries for treasures new?

Postscript: Could Oxford have seen the George North manuscript? I believe it is highly likely. First, we know that noble families shared private manuscripts—that was the culture. With few books available, literate people were eager to read anything they could get their hands on. Second, North wrote his *Discourse* at Kirtling Hall, probably in 1576. In August 1578, Oxford joined the Queen's party at Audley End. Early in September the assemblage next went to Kirtling Hall, about five miles from Audley End (and about twenty miles from Oxford's residence at Hedingham Castle). See Alan Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary* (2003) at 180-182.

As for connections between Oxford and Thomas North, we know that in 1569-70 Oxford purchased a copy of Amyot's French translation of Plutarch, the same work that North used for his English translation of Plutarch a decade later.

[*Michael Hyde* is a registered financial advisor, and has worked in financial markets for forty years. Before that he taught in the English departments at several Boston area colleges and universities. He has a BA from Harvard (*magna cum laude*), and an MA and PhD from Tufts University. His doctoral thesis, "The Poet's Creative Word," was a full-length study of the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Under the tutelage of Walter Houghton he worked on the five-volume bibliographical project that became known as the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*; his work was principally focused on attribution of authorship in Victorian literary magazines, and involved identifying anonymous or pseudonymous authors using both external evidence and internal evidence based on known writings of each author. Mike became interested in the Shakespeare authorship question after reading Mark Anderson's book, "*Shakespeare*" by *Another Name*.]

North By Shakespeare Makes Big Splash

by Alex McNeil

Michael Blanding's book about Dennis McCarthy and his quest, published by the Hachette Book Group, has gotten lots of publicity in the mainstream media.

Blanding's article about the book was the cover story of the Boston *Globe Magazine* on March 21. It generated quite a few responses, eight of which were published a few weeks later, including one from me:

The article on McCarthy's discovery of Shakespeare's debt to Thomas North and George North offers new insight on playwriting during the Elizabethan era. And, it suggests that most — if not all — of the plays we know as “Shakespeare's,” which began to appear in print in 1594, were



originally written far earlier. Perhaps, as McCarthy believes, they were written by Thomas North. Perhaps they were written by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who was hailed as a skilled playwright during his lifetime and who would likely have known both Norths. Blanding shows that important contributions to scholarship can be made by “outsiders” such as McCarthy.

Interestingly, none of the other published responses were from mainstream academics; two specifically mentioned Edward de Vere, while a third noted that “Shakespeare’s identity remains a central question; to ignore it reduces the extraordinary meaning of the corpus.” This indicates to me that the public is far ahead of academia on taking the authorship question seriously.

There was also a lengthy article by David Kindy in the online edition of *Smithsonian Magazine* on April 6. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/did-shakespeare-base-his-literary-masterpieces-works-obscure-elizabethan-playwright-180977424/>. Kindy interviewed June Schlueter, the Lafayette College academic who collaborated with Dennis McCarthy on two works. “‘What if Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, but someone else wrote him first?’ she muses. ‘That’s exactly what we are arguing. The evidence is quite strong. Very strong, I think.’”

“Schlueter is quick to defend the Bard as a genius and incredibly intuitive playwright, deserving of the acclaim he rightly receives. But she thinks McCarthy has unlocked a passageway into a new understanding of Shakespeare’s inspiration:

‘We are not anti-[Shakespeare]. We don’t believe that the Earl of Oxford, Francis Bacon or even Queen Elizabeth wrote Shakespeare’s plays. We believe he wrote them but ... based them on preexisting plays by Thomas North.’

How Shakespeare got his hands on North’s plays is still unknown. The men most likely knew each other, though, and several documents reference a possible meeting between the two.”

Kindy also talked to Emma Smith of Oxford University, who called McCarthy’s theory “interesting,” but was quick to point out that “the kinds of borrowing of words and phrases we see as parallels in this book have not until now been seen as hints at a more thorough rewriting of a lost text. If all these plays of North’s are lost, it’s impossible to prove. . . . Shakespeare studies are full of people who are very, very clear about the shape of the things that we have lost. The point is, we really don’t know.”

Kindy noted Dennis McCarthy’s reaction to criticism leveled at him by some mainstream academics: “‘A lot of the time their reactions are comically hostile.’ McCarthy says with a laugh. ‘That’s fine, but I think if they just take a breath and actually look at my arguments, they might get what I’m saying. They don’t even have a candidate for some of these early plays that influenced Shakespeare. Why would you be out-of-your-mind enraged at this idea that this person had a name and his name was Thomas North?’”

Blanding and McCarthy were interviewed on WBUR, the Boston National Public Radio station, on April 19. As this issue of the *Newsletter* goes to press, they were scheduled to speak at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable in Los Angeles on May 8, and

were to be featured on the SOF-related “Don’t Quill the Messenger” podcast in mid-May.

Reviews of *North By Shakespeare* have generally been enthusiastic:

- “Bardolators will want to read this book” (*Library Journal*).
- “Virtuoso job... the most elegant proposed solution to the authorship question to appear in many decades... scholars who simply ignore it do so at the peril of their reputations” (*Christian Science Monitor*).
- “This fascinating book adds to the narrative behind Shakespeare and presents evidence that may change the way readers see the works forever” (*San Francisco Book Review*).
- “Whether or not readers are fully swayed by McCarthy’s arguments about the extent of North’s literary endeavors or his role in shaping Shakespeare’s work, Blanding’s presentation of his quest to build these arguments is both entertaining and provocative” (Laurie Johnson, University of Southern Queensland and President, Australian and New Zealand Shakespeare Association).

Not all reviewers were swayed:

- “I found some comparisons of text from North’s writing with Shakespeare’s plays striking. Other comparisons felt like a stretch. The same was true of the links between North’s life and the autobiographical elements McCarthy claims North included in the plays. The inclusion of the weaker evidence made it harder for me to take McCarthy seriously. He seemed obsessed and I didn’t trust him to objectively evaluate the evidence.
I also had a hard time getting past the fact that no plays attributed to North survive. This contributed to the biggest problem I had with this theory—it relies entirely on coincidence, with no definitive evidence” (doingdeweydecimal.com).
- “It’s unclear if Blanding’s highly enjoyable foray into the field will have an impact on Shakespearean scholars, but at the very least, *North by Shakespeare* will provide readers with the tools to enter the fray themselves. . . . It’s almost as much fun as sitting in a theater” (Deborah Hopkinson, bookpage.com).

From the Archives: A Few Words from the DNB (1910 edition)

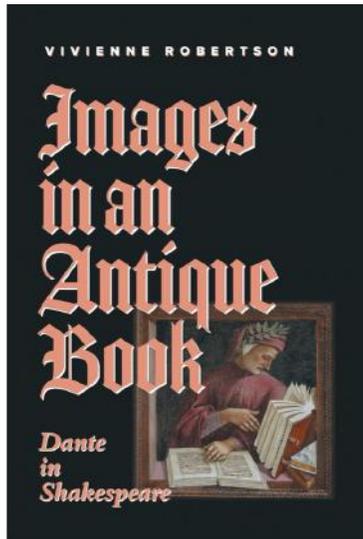
James Warren has sent along the following item, which he judiciously excerpted from the fifty-page entry for “William Shakespeare,” prepared by Sir Sidney Lee for the Eleventh Edition of the Dictionary of National Biography, published in 1910. This edition would likely have been the one consulted by J. Thomas Looney as he began work on his groundbreaking book, “*Shakespeare*” Identified.

“Shakespeare, William (1564-1616), dramatist and poet. . . undoubtedly . . . no doubt . . . may be assumed to have . . . he may have been . . . doubtless . . . suggested that he was . . . seems to have been . . . doubtless . . . is generally accepted as . . . probably . . . perhaps . . . cannot be reasonably contested . . . doubtless caused . . . It is possible that . . . may have been . . . there is little doubt . . . undoubtedly . . . probably . . . doubtless . . . might have . . . assumption . . . cannot reasonably be identified . . . may well have been . . . the theory that . . . is quite untenable . . . it is unsafe to assume . . . it is unlikely . . . implies . . . doubtless . . . according to a credible tradition . . . probably . . . doubtless . . . seems pure invention . . . reported to have . . . beyond doubt . . . seems possible that . . . suggestion . . . doubtless . . . tradition points to . . . we may suppose . . . likely to have been known . . . the theory . . . tradition and common-sense . . . according to the compiler . . . no inherent improbability . . . every indication . . . doubtless . . . probably . . . there seems no doubt . . . it is fair to infer that . . . seem to have been . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . . it is not certain . . . may be credited . . . were doubtless . . . there is nothing to indicate . . . doubtless . . . is not known to have been . . . appears . . . probably . . . perhaps . . . must be credited . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . . possibly . . . suggests that . . . every likelihood . . . doubtless . . . may have been . . . in all probability . . . probably . . . it is possible that . . . can only owe to . . . were doubtless . . . perhaps . . . the theory that . . . much can be said . . . was clearly suggested . . . suggests . . . doubtless . . . was probably . . . no doubt . . . was doubtless . . . may be . . . there is little doubt . . . little doubt . . . seems to allude . . . doubtless . . . there is no ground for assuming . . . possibly due . . . doubtful . . . may be reasonably included . . . was probably . . . would well apply . . . allusions have been detected . . . no direct proof that he didn’t . . . no improbability . . . there is no ground for supposing . . . wholly erroneous premises . . . practically confers . . . have assumed . . . therefore probable . . . doubtless . . . suggests that . . . there is no evidence . . . seems . . . unlikely that . . . seems . . . doubtless . . . there seems ground for the assumption that . . . it may well have been . . . may be tentatively assigned . . . doubtless . . . probably . . . probably . . . beyond doubt . . . credible tradition . . . thenceforth . . . probably . . . no doubt . . . does not seem to . . . does not appear . . . doubtless . . . puzzling problem . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . . a likelihood that . . . wholly in harmony with . . . perhaps . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . . perhaps . . . there seems some ground for the belief . . . may safely be credited . . . been suspected . . . probably . . . probably . . . possibly . . . probably . . . probably . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . . doubtless . . .”

***Images in an Antique Book: Dante in Shakespeare* by Vivienne Robertson
(Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2019; 276 pp.)**

Reviewed by Patrick Sullivan

Show me your image in some antique book (Sonnet 59)



Dante Alighieri's *La Divina Commedia* in three parts, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, was almost 300 years old when Shakespeare's plays began to be published in the last decade of the 16th century. Not written in Latin, but in vernacular Tuscan, from which modern Italian was derived, it was first translated into English in 1802.

In the early 1990s

Vivienne Robertson was a teacher at a small Catholic school near Sydney, Australia, of senior English literature, and basic Italian to younger girls; she had lived and worked in Italy in the 1960s. Needing a "tertiary certification" to become also an Italian instructor at a senior level, she enrolled in online classes, one of which was on Dante.

As she read *Inferno* she became aware of similarities in parts of it to *Macbeth*. That insight started her on a journey that eventually led her to write *Images in an Antique Book: Dante in Shakespeare*. Along the way she earned a PhD in 2002, but not before enduring some unpleasant Stratfordian arithmetic and logic, which story will not surprise Oxfordians.

One of the three examiners of her dissertation refused to accept it, giving her a failing grade. The examiner's reasoning was that her work was "of an acceptable level, in everything but its central argument." That argument was not only unacceptable, but there was no way to rescue Robertson's hard work unless she would "abandon her claim to have proved her case," because, "In spite of her diligent research, the evidence was simply not there." What was her "central argument"? That Shakespeare had read Dante in Italian.

Fortunately for Robertson, a committee at the University of New South Wales agreed that the examiner's grade was extreme and out of line with the

high marks from the other two, and called in a fourth examiner. When that one gave her dissertation the highest mark possible, she was awarded her doctorate. Of the incident, Robertson writes: "This was my first experience of the unshakeable conviction of stalwart 'Stratfordians' . . . in the angry world of the Authorship Question. Their vision of Shakespeare is set in stone. Shakespeare did not know Dante's work—and woe betide anyone who might claim differently."

To which most readers of this *Newsletter* would say "Amen." These preliminaries aside, let us look at the nuts and bolts of Robertson's thesis.

To me, the most startling things in this book are the correspondences between *Measure For Measure* and the tale of Piccarda Donati in *Paradiso III*. Piccarda, a young noblewoman, had been a nun in the Order of Saint Clare of Assisi, but was forced by her brother Corso (for political advantage to him and the family) to renounce her vows, return to the world outside the convent and marry a man of his choosing. Dante encounters Piccarda in "the first sphere of the moon," where, for breaking holy vows, the "inconstant" reside.

The two generally acknowledged sources for Shakespeare's *Measure* have the heroine as merely an unmarried, chaste young woman. But Shakespeare changes his, named Isabella, into a novitiate in the Order of Saint Clare. Her brother Claudio is under sentence of death for adultery. To free him and save his life, Isabella must go to the acting ruler, Angelo (the Duke being absent from the city temporarily), to plead for mercy. But once there, she excites his lust and he will only agree to her entreaties if she will sleep with him. She will not be able to take her final vow of chastity, and will be forced to leave her chosen vocation.

As Robertson points out, there is an even more specific correspondence between the two works. Dante coins an Italian word, *inciela*, to describe his Piccarda's heavenly state. (In both Italian and Spanish, 'cielo' means 'sky' and 'heaven'). Shakespeare also coins a word, *enskied*, for Isabella ("I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted"). Later in *Measure* Shakespeare actually uses a form of Dante's Italian adjective when he has Angelo tell Isabella: "these black masks [her nun's veil]/Proclaim an enciel'd beauty. . . ." Robertson

concludes, “To claim this parallel as coincidence is not possible.” It is hard to disagree.

In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth speaks the line, “Hell is murky.” According to Robertson, so are the depths of the circles of *Inferno* where traitors lie. She writes that Dante has ordered these circles thusly: the first is the least despicable and is for those who betrayed family. It is named *Caina* (for reasons obvious). The second is *Antenova*, for a Trojan who betrayed Troy to the Greeks. Third is *Tolomea*, for one who murdered his father-in-law at a banquet. This circle includes those who had betrayed guests or hosts. The fourth and most awful is *Giudecca* (Judas Iscariot), where are found Caesar’s betrayers, Brutus and Cassius.

So, Robertson has Dante’s ethic of treachery begin with familial traitors, worsen with those who are false to country, guests or hosts, and worst, those who killed their benefactors. The last category had reminded her that Macbeth had debated with himself about his plan to kill Duncan, the King (in which he’d been encouraged by his ambitious wife). Left alone, Macbeth wavers. His resolve weakens: “First, as I am his kinsman and his subject/Strong both against the deed; then as his host....” When Lady Macbeth returns, he tells her: “We will proceed no further in this business: He hath honored me of late....” Thus we see that Shakespeare has used all four of Dante’s categories of treachery—against kinsman, subject/countryman, host and benefactor—and he has put them in the exact same order!

Not only is Macbeth a murdering traitor, once he takes the crown he becomes a tyrant. Macduff calls him “untitled tyrant bloody-sceptered.” He kills Duncan, Banquo, Macduff’s wife and family, and several others. At one point Macbeth says: “It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood” (3.4.121). A few lines later (135): “I am in blood/ Stepped in so far, that should I wade no more./ Returning were as tedious as go o’er. . . .” Robertson informs us that in Canto XII of *Inferno*, Dante’s tyrants have been “immersed in a river of boiling blood, the Phlegeton. . . . Because they have wallowed in the blood of others....”

Where do Macbeth and wife end up? In Hell. But in a peculiar kind of Hell, as described by the Porter (2.3): “but this place is too cold for Hell. I’ll devil porter it no further.” This peculiarity is consistent with Dante’s punishment for his traitors—being buried in ice for eternity, because their hearts were cold to other people (an example of Dantean justice known as *Contrapasso*, from the biblical injunction: “Wherewith a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished”).

But enough of the Scottish Play. I’ll give Robertson the last word on it: “Shakespeare has exploited the intensely dramatic possibilities of Dante’s invention, and with spine-chilling effect on the stage.”

Let’s briefly look in on her analysis of another of the four greatest of Shakespeare’s dramas, *King Lear*. Immediately, she offers that the storm scenes recall the “chaos and gloom” of both *Macbeth* and *Inferno*. *Lear* suffers thunder, lightening, wind and rain, representing his inner rage. She points out that his anger causes him to become unreasonable and leads to errors in judgment. In Dante, that would send him to Purgatory (*Lear* does repent).

Robertson points out that there is much in *Lear* concerned with the reasons for the existence of evil. Shakespeare, through many characters, offers theories as to why and who is to blame. Also, “many characters are blind literally or metaphorically.” Dante’s wrathful characters in *Purgatorio* wander about in clouds of smoke, similarly blinded as they give vent to rage.

Robertson says that Dante is very concerned with “free will,” and man’s capacity to choose right from wrong. He rejects explanations of men’s choices by fate, or stars or gods. This is also true of some characters in *Lear*. Kent, for instance, says: “It is the stars./The stars above us, govern our conditions.” But the villain Edmund contradicts him with:

we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if *we were villains on necessity*, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence. (emphasis mine)

Of the above, Robertson comments that this is a very close paraphrase of Dante’s character Marco Lombardo’s theory of why there is so much evil in the world: “You who are living refer every cause upwards to the heavens alone, as if they *of necessity moved all things with them*” (emphasis mine). Note the similarity of language in the two italicized passages. (The original Italian reads, *movesse seco di necessitate*.)

I pass over much more of Robertson’s writing about *Lear* and come to the most autobiographical of Shakespeare’s plays, *Hamlet*. I’ll start with Hamlet’s most famous speech, the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy. In *Inferno*, Dante (the Pilgrim) asked Virgil to conduct him to the underworld. But afterwards the Pilgrim gets cold feet (again, translated from Italian): “And like one

who unwill's what he has willed and with new thoughts changes his resolve, so that he quite gives up the thing he had begun....”

But Virgil is having none of that: “Your spirit is beset by cowardice, Which oftentimes encumbers a man, Turning him from honourable endeavour. . . .”

This is obviously similar to Hamlet’s words:

Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,
And the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought...

Both men, says Robertson, are on the precipice of the afterlife, Dante (the Pilgrim) on a guided tour, and Hamlet via suicide to “the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.” Hamlet rejects the course “gainst self-slaughter,” but Dante proceeds after Virgil convinces him that he will be traveling with “Divine Love” (Beatrice).

Robertson points to another similarity in the two works. When Dante’s Pilgrim is in the ante-Purgatory, the circle of the “unshriven” who died violently without opportunity to make their peace with God. When Hamlet encounters his uncle Claudius at prayer, he knows he has a chance to kill him, but passes because the king would be in a state of grace (unlike Hamlet’s father, who was killed in his sleep and wanders as a ghost at night). Claudius is unshriven; “sent to my account/With all my imperfections on my head,” just like the spirits Dante encounters in ante-Purgatory. Those spirits swarm Dante, asking him for prayers that will shorten their time and speed them to Paradise.

After noting that the Church of England had outlawed the concept of Purgatory, Robertson asks a perceptive question: “[H]ow did Shakespeare manage to insert such a crucial reference into his play and escape the attentions of the authorities?” Oxfordians might have a ready answer for that.

There is more in Robertson’s *Images*, as those who purchase and read it will discover. She notes parallels to Dante in *Troilus and Cressida*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, *Richard II*, and *Richard III*.

It is unfortunate that the author didn’t have a better editor, who could have removed much redundancy from its second half, and perhaps disabused her of her belief in the authorship qualifications of Henry Neville, for whom the case is nowhere as strong as that for the “Italianate Englishman,” Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Born in 1562 (to Stratford man’s 1564), Neville suffers almost the same too-late-to-be-Shakespeare problem: Queen Elizabeth is recorded as having attended plays in

the late 1570s that appear to be Shakespeare’s. Even stronger is the case Ramon Jiménez makes in support of Oxford that, based on the evidence of his *Defense of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney had seen several of Shakespeare’s plays long before his death in 1586. Robertson seems to be unaware of these latter facts, which demolish her reliance on Stratfordian dating schemes for the dramas.

Those caveats aside, this is an excellent addition to Shakespearean scholarship, and ought to be persuasive to anyone conversant with the rules of evidence and logic. *Images in an Antique Book* should have an honored spot in libraries of anyone who believes the truth will out.

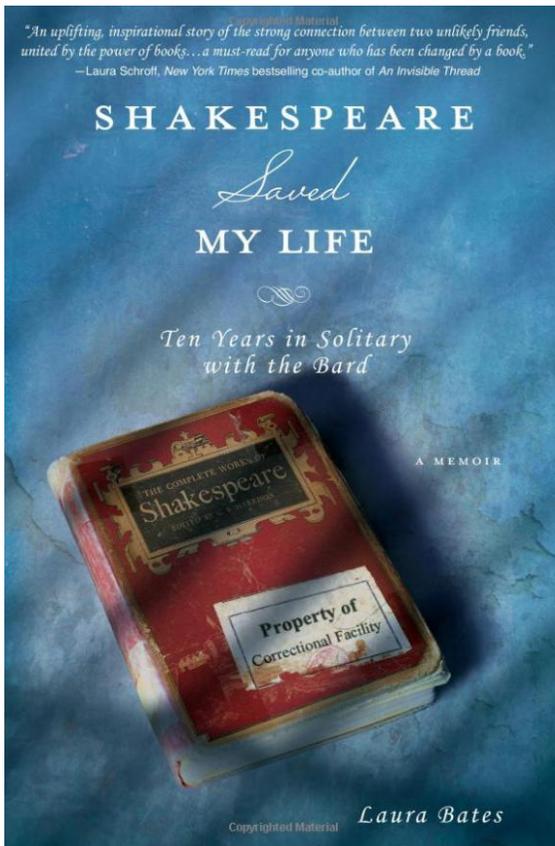
[Patrick Sullivan is a semi-retired small business owner who lives in Seattle, and is actively involved with managing the SOF membership database. This is his first contribution to the *Newsletter*.]

Finding Shakespeare in Supermax: Unexpected Biographical Evidence of Authorship

by Harry Campbell

In her 2013 book, *Shakespeare Saved My Life—Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*, Laura Bates relates her story of teaching Shakespeare in Indiana prisons. Her approach differed from many similar “Shakespeare in prison” programs: the focus was not about bringing literature and theatre to inmates in the medium security common areas, i.e., general population convicts who could willingly and safely participate in supervised group activities designed to help rehabilitate them and return them to normal life on the outside. Instead, Dr. Bates, a professor of English at Indiana State University, headed for “a place the bard had never been before:” supermax solitary confinement. Her intention was to probe the text of Shakespeare’s darkest tragedies for the motivations behind the characters involved in murder and mayhem. Her students would be the most hardened inmates in the system—violent and dangerous murderers sentenced to life in prison.

Among these students was Larry Newton, a thirty-year-old convicted murderer with several escape attempts on his record—a record that spanned most of his lifetime. The book is about his transformative journey through Shakespeare’s works, and his and other prisoners’ remarkable insights into Shakespeare’s most



troubled characters. Those insights stemmed from their ability to recognize, relate to, and frankly discuss such deviant acts and motives as murder, jealousy, ambition and revenge which propelled characters like Macbeth, Othello, Richard III and Hamlet, and the subsequent remorse and consequences that tormented so many characters in Shakespeare's tragedies and history plays.

In a characteristically short chapter titled "The First Lesson I Learn," the author recalls one particularly revealing early conversation with Newton about King Richard's soliloquy while imprisoned in solitary confinement (Act 5, scene 5). Newton described *in detail* how Richard's behavior, physically and mentally, was common among the incarcerated: the pacing and fantasizing were behaviors that were very familiar to him, and as Dr. Bates no doubt realized, was probably not something that could be described or appreciated by anyone who had not been locked in a cell for any length of time. Later, Bates summed up Newton's analysis in a question to him: "So Shakespeare not only had the insight to know that's what you do in isolation, but also maybe even to know that it's the key to surviving?" Newton concurred. She goes on: "The parallels were striking. For years, I'd studied these plays with some of the best scholars in the world—analyzed speeches, lines,

words, and even points of punctuation, from every angle of literary criticism—but I had never looked at Shakespeare through such a perspective before. I found myself wondering if anybody had." Larry Newton had: "Pacing. We all do it. *Man!* Where does Shakespeare get this insight?"

Ay, there's the rub. Where *does* Shakespeare get this insight?

That question stopped me in my tracks. I had not read this book as part of my usual reading related to the authorship question. But here was this challenge. How could the author of the works of Shakespeare have gained this insight? As far as we know, the man William Shaksperre from Stratford-upon-Avon, purported author of the works of Shakespeare, had never been in serious trouble with the law. Tax delinquency, a restraining order and various lawsuits are the most we know for sure. Had the author experienced treacherous motives and perilous emotions? Had he spent time behind bars? Had he faced physically violent situations, such as those portrayed in Shakespeare's plays? Regarding the Stratford man, not that we know of.

When Dr. Bates began working with this particular group of students her primary objective was to test the verisimilitude of Shakespeare's characters and their motives, emotions and actions. She had heard in a scholarly lecture the notion that the play *Macbeth* represented the "ipso facto valorization of transgression." Based on her earlier work with general population prisoners in other correctional facilities, she suspected that "real-life transgressors" would probably disagree. Later, in a written assignment Larry Newton wrote this about the scene where Macbeth kills King Duncan:

"The authenticity of a murderer: WOW! That is insight! Even if the author has not killed, he must have been exposed to that possibility. Like attempted [murder] or was at the point of trying but could not overcome those fears and great anxiety! As Mac killed Duncan, he was just in la la land! Even forgetting to leave the weapon! Man, that is just so authentic! The detail in fears, confusion, and gut-wrenching anxiety is uncanny! I regret to say that I have experience."

Laura Bates realized she had found what she'd been looking for: authentication. At this point, she considered ending the program and moving on to write what she needed to get tenure. However, she felt loyalty to these prisoners who had become something more to her than dangerous convicts. They seemed to need her and

seemed to need Shakespeare. With their unique insights, *she* had been educated by *them*, especially by Larry Newton. She knew her efforts were benefiting these men. Bates says this about Newton: “A record ten and a half consecutive years in solitary confinement, and he’s not crazy, he’s not dangerous—he’s reading Shakespeare. . . . And maybe, just maybe, it is *because* he’s reading Shakespeare that he is not crazy, or dangerous.”

When she started out, one inmate told her that she would never get this group of prisoners to read Shakespeare. After her first visit to the super-secure solitary confinement block—sitting on a chair in the open central hallway, surrounded by solitary cells from which the prisoners communicated through the cuffs in their otherwise solid doors—she herself thought that this would not be an environment conducive to the study of Shakespeare. But the prisoners engaged deeply with the works, much to her delight and surprise. They had minimal troubles with the language, willingly participated in spirited discussion, and looked forward to these weekly sessions; soon there was a waiting list of inmates hoping to join the class! Later she had to admit: “This challenging environment offered prisoners the opportunity to closely read Shakespeare’s plays and, in those extended periods of contemplative isolation, they were able to connect with the text more deeply than the average reader.” Plus, they were also reading what could have been their own stories.

Here is a small selection of other observations made by the prisoners:

- *Romeo and Juliet*: A reading of the rumble scene led to a discussion of the ethics of gang warfare; to what extent peer pressure led to Romeo’s decision to fight and kill Tybalt; a discussion of gang rivalries and machismo.
- *Richard II*: The prison soliloquy: Newton ends his analysis with “It seems to me he has gone from king to prisoner, and in his thoughts goes back and forth, but seems to conclude with saying that until you have been at peace, or content, with nothing . . . you cannot be pleased with anything. Or that you cannot be truly happy until you have come to terms with being nothing.” Newton could relate to that.
- *Macbeth*: Why would Macbeth leave the scene of his crime with the bloody daggers still in hand, and essentially force his coconspirator, Lady Macbeth, to return them and cover up the crime? When one prisoner observed, “He needs for her to get her hands dirty, too,” all agreed. They said it is easier

to bear the burden of guilt of such a heavy crime with an accomplice. From Newton’s earliest criminal acts, to his eventual act of murder, he never acted alone. Bates tells us, “Like many do, Newton got involved in criminal activity at the urging of his buddies.” And we know who was urging Macbeth.

- *Macbeth*: Newton says “I could relate to Macbeth . . . and I never exonerated him because of the influences of the witches. I mean, we all have influences.” (So much for “ipso facto” valorization!)
- *Hamlet*: In a discussion of Hamlet’s sanity, Bates asked Newton if he “ever had difficulty getting out of a fantasy [while pacing in his cell]?” His response: “How would I know? There were times that I worried about where my sanity was and how far I had gone. You don’t know where the line is, so how do you know if you crossed it?”
- *Hamlet*: In dialogue with Guildenstern and Rosencrantz Hamlet describes Denmark as a prison. When they disagree he says, “Why then, ‘tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.” Newton observes: “This prison don’t matter, it’s not that you’re in prison. I’m sure it doesn’t help matters, but a lot of the guys here were in prison before they came here and they’ll still be in prison when they leave here. . . . Prison is being entrapped by these self-destructive ways of thinking.”
- One of Newton’s “favorite freakin’ quotes” is from *Julius Caesar*, which he cites from memory: “So every bondman in his own hand bears the power to cancel his captivity.” Newton adds: “To me, that’s empowering, that we can free ourselves at any time — psychologically, I mean.”
- And finally, Newton talks about the “bottom line with bad deeds: it always takes more bad deeds to protect the first. And I’ve noticed that’s a theme in a number of plays. . . . I don’t think that’s a common insight. I think it’s awesome that Shakespeare had that insight.”

Although Dr. Bates never acknowledges it in the book (at least not in so many words), she and her prison students found something else, something they had not been looking for: *biographical evidence of authorship*. Although Larry Newton several times marveled about

how the author of the plays could have had the requisite insight to create these true-to-life characters and situations, unfortunately neither he nor Dr. Bates ever asked the logical next question: Who was Shakespeare?

Most SOF members believe that Edward de Vere wrote the works. I lean that way myself, but I strongly suspect that several (maybe many) others, Oxford's close associates and "servants," some of whom were writers, contributed substantially to the corpus of Shakespeare work, which I believe he probably supervised. His associates, I believe, contributed characters, scenes, language and possibly even whole plays. A number of these associates—shall we say "collaborators"?—were also known to have been involved in unruly, if not downright criminal, behavior (including murder), which led to arrests, prosecution, incarceration, and, for some, torture or death. Even Oxford himself was considered a scoundrel by many of his contemporaries and later historians and biographers. We all know the story as told

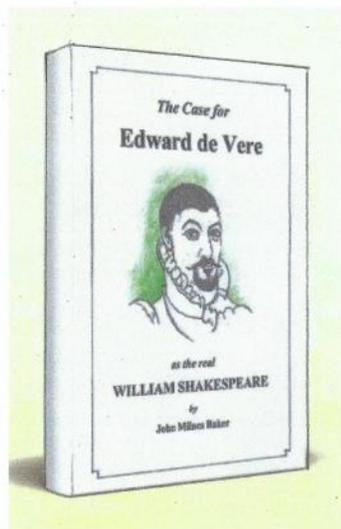
sympathetically by Mark Anderson and monstrously by Alan Nelson.

While I do suspect that de Vere was solely responsible for the poems, including the sonnets, my hunch is that it's the existence of this Shakespeare "syndicate" that provides the rationale for the great variety of voices we hear in the plays, the range of genres represented, and the diversity and variability of scenes and language juxtaposed within most of the plays. As well as the disturbing insights recognized by the student prisoners in *Shakespeare Saved My Life*.

[Harry Campbell, now retired, was a Book and Paper Conservator at Ohio State University.]



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The Case for Edward de Vere as the real William Shakespeare

by longtime Oxfordian **John Milnes Baker**

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Baker has done a great service to Shakespeare authorship enthusiasts by concisely summarizing the key facts in the life of Edward de Vere and why he is likely the true author behind the "Shakespeare" pseudonym. - **Bryan H. Wildenthal**

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- **Bonner Miller Cutting**

The De Vere Society (UK)

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The Clarion Review stated:

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SHAKESPEARE: Behind the Name

Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal The New SAQ Gateway Film

A Robin Phillips Film



Review of "SHAKESPEARE Behind The Name: Power, Lust, Scorn & Scandal" by the MACOProject Film Festival April, 2021

Shakespeare may seem like a dry topic – after all, haven't there been a million documentaries and adaptations of his work already? – but Phillips' film is anything but boring. She brings an exciting theatricality to the documentary, charmingly delivering various facts about both the alleged tradesman-turned-poet William Shaksper and the more probable poet Edward de Vere.

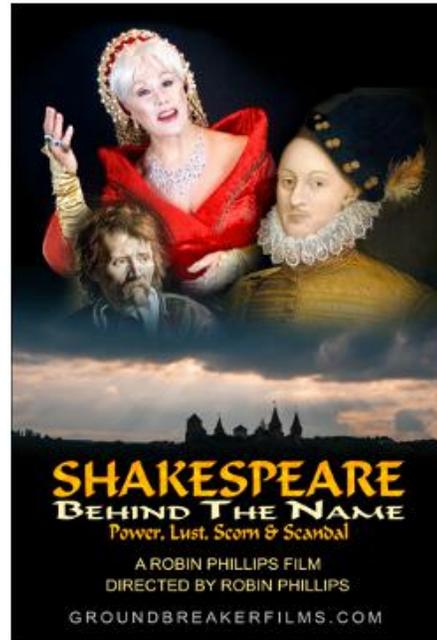
Throughout the piece, she chimes a bell or a gong whenever a contradiction is uncovered, and it's a wonderfully sassy way to present these academic misconceptions. Truly, Phillips' performance is the linchpin of the documentary, maybe even more so than the subject matter itself.

...Of course, it's not all about the wonders of the performance. The actual facts presented are genuinely interesting and well-researched. By the end, the idea that Edward de Vere was the real Shakespeare seems air-tight...Not only are the individuals who were asserted to be Shakespeare at some point explored, but the actual reasons why the wrong person would be pinned with these works in the first place.

Beyond that, the piece explores English history as a whole altogether. It dives into what nobles were and were not allowed to partake in, the education levels of peasants, symbols of British royalty, and more.

It is clear that Phillips put a lot of work into this topic. The documentary is extremely thorough. Her expertise in her field and her dedication to theater is very clear...

While it's a bit of a niche topic, the presentation here is charming enough that anyone can come into it and take something away from it. It's surprisingly accessible, and someone who has never even READ a Shakespeare play could enter this and still follow along easily. Oftentimes, academic research like this is dense and exhausting, but Robin Phillips has made this journey into literary history thoroughly entertaining and approachable.



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Will Shakspeare as a Successful Psychopath

by Andrew Crider

The term *psychopathy* is neither a psychiatric diagnosis, nor a form of criminality, nor a journalistic synonym for a deranged killer. Rather, it refers to a personality disposition characterized by a deficient moral compass and a manipulative, devious approach to others. Our current understanding of psychopathy is based primarily on studies of incarcerated psychopaths, who represent approximately twenty percent of prison inmates. However, not all psychopathic individuals are incarcerated. So-called *successful psychopaths* are typically gainfully employed; they may even have been found guilty of unlawful activity but have nevertheless avoided a prison sentence. Indeed, many psychopaths have ascended to prominent positions in business, government, and the major professions. Successful psychopaths are particularly problematic in the corporate world because they tend to engender consternation and confusion among coworkers, thereby disrupting the company's ability to attain its institutional and financial goals (Babiak & Hare).

Although incarcerated psychopaths are readily identified and studied, the same cannot be said for successful psychopaths, who are relatively uncommon in the general population and whose malfeasance often goes unrecognized. One solution to this problem employs informants with expert knowledge of psychopathy to identify successful psychopaths of their acquaintance. In one instructive study a large sample of psychologists and attorneys were separately asked to identify a successful psychopath they had known in their professional life. The informants were then asked to describe the identified individuals in terms of the five-factor model, a taxonomy of major personality traits (Widiger & Costa). The results indicated that psychopaths in these professions could be characterized as both *antagonistic* and *conscientious* (Mullins-Sweatt et al, 255-256). "Antagonism" includes such component subtraits as "manipulative," "arrogant" and "callous," whereas conscientious individuals are described as "competent," "achievement oriented" and "self-disciplined." In brief, both successful and incarcerated psychopaths share an antagonistic disposition, but only successful psychopaths can be said to be concurrently conscientious. Conscientiousness among successful psychopaths points to a psychological investment in occupational achievement, while antagonism speaks to the often nefarious means employed to achieve successful outcomes.

The following exposition applies our current understanding of successful psychopathy to the case of Will Shakspeare of Stratford. I argue that the modest biographical evidence we possess of Shakspeare's life is consistent with the personality traits of antagonism and conscientiousness, both of which are concomitantly associated with successful psychopathy.

Antagonism

Shakspeare's biography is anchored in a relatively small number of public records generated by various contacts with legal and civil authorities. The majority of them concern property transactions, business investments, and minor litigation with no obvious bearing on the question of Shakspeare's personality. However, four civil actions brought against him—a restraining order to insure the peace, two citations for tax evasion, and an instance of commodity speculation—do lend themselves to interpretation in terms of five-factor antagonism. In addition Shakspeare's last will and testament is an important personal statement that reveals less than generous intentions toward members of his immediate family.

Restraining Order. In November 1596 William Wayte of London, affirming under oath to be in fear of his life, sought court protection against William Shakspeare, Francis Langley, Dorothy Soer, and Anne Lee. The court in turn issued a writ of attachment to the sheriff of Surrey, whose jurisdiction included the south bank environs of the Thames where the incident occurred. There is no record of follow-up, but in the normal course of events the four named individuals would have been arrested and required to post bond to insure against further breeches of the peace (Hotson).

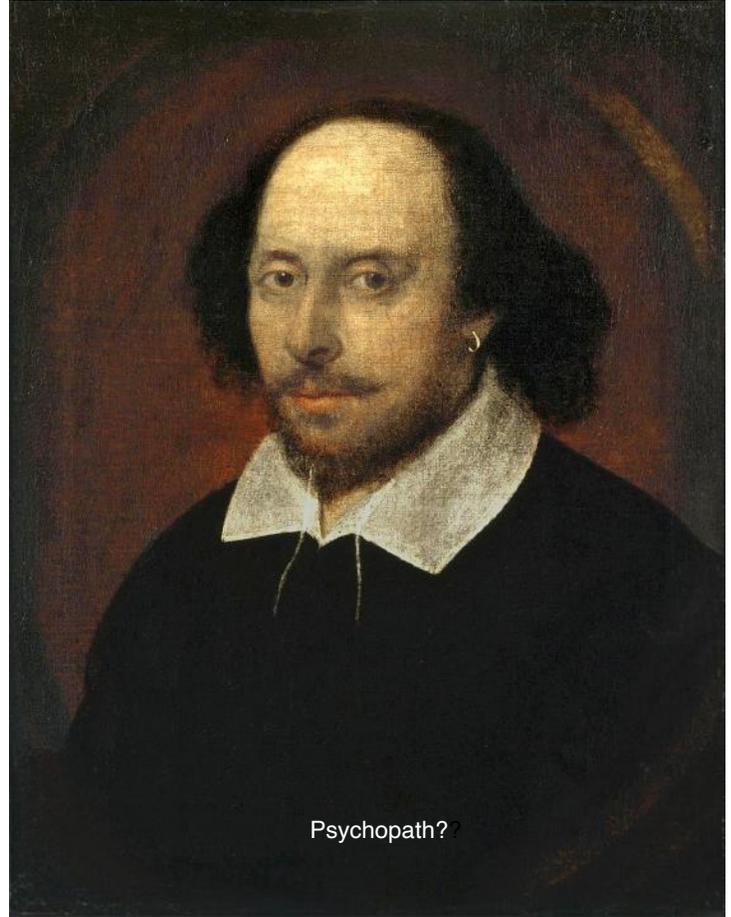
Because Wayte did not allege battery, the offense was most likely an admonition to take or desist from some action, coupled with the intimidating threat recognized in the writ. Shakspeare's primacy of place in the complaint suggests that he was no innocent bystander. The two named women have never been identified, but Langley was well known as an unscrupulous entrepreneur and loan broker with a propensity toward violent behavior (Hotson). Shakspeare evidently befriended Langley to the extent of joining him in an oppositional and aggressive confrontation with Wayte serious enough to prompt judicial intervention.

Tax Evasion. In 1597 the London tax commissioners certified that William Shakspeare, a resident of Bishopsgate ward, had defaulted on an occasional personal property tax levied by Parliament in 1593. A similar certification a year later found that Shakspeare had again defaulted on a second personal property tax levied in 1597. Both defaults were reported to the royal exchequer, which in turn instructed the local sheriff to take remedial action. At some point during this period Shakspeare moved to a different jurisdiction south of the Thames. There is no record that the taxes were ever paid (Chambers 87-90).

It is implausible that the two defaults were due either to ignorance or inadvertence on Shakspeare's part. All evidence suggests that he was a successful businessman and investor sensitive to financial issues. Nor were the defaults motivated by economic hardship: the sums involved were small, and at the time of the second levy Shakspeare was wealthy enough to purchase an imposing residence in Stratford. The infractions appear to have been motivated by greed and a callous indifference to civic obligation.

Commodity Speculation. Shakspeare was cited by Stratford authorities in 1598 for holding a quantity of grain, presumably malted barley, that greatly exceeded household requirements (Chambers 99-101). The citation was a result of successive failures of the grain crop between 1594 and 1596 in Warwickshire. The dearth of wheat and barley led to widespread famine and civil unrest, as well as to speculative withholding of grain from the market in anticipation of selling at higher prices. In an attempt to alleviate the suffering by forcing withheld supplies to market, the Queen's Council directed local authorities to conduct a census of private grain holdings, castigating hoarders as "wycked people in condicions more lyke to wolves or cormerants than to naturall men" (Chambers 100). Shakspeare was cited for holding eighty bushels of grain on his premises, which violated a government prohibition of several years standing. Shakespeare's apparent absence of fellow-feeling in this instance has been aptly described as "ugly evidence of man's callous, cold social indifference in modern times" (Honan 244).

Last Will and Testament. Shakespeare died in Stratford in late April 1616. An initial version of his will was amended and executed in March (Chambers 169-174). The will addresses the three members of his immediate family—his wife and two married daughters—with markedly different degrees of favor. Elder daughter Susanna Hall inherited the bulk of the estate, including



Psychopath?

substantial holdings in buildings, lands, and personal property. In contrast, younger daughter Judith Quiney received a much smaller and more restrictive legacy, an apparent consequence of Shakspeare's dissatisfaction with her marriage in February 1616 to the somewhat disreputable Thomas Quiney (Honigman 223-224). Judith received the modest sum of £100, and was in addition given the interest, but not the principal, on a second sum of £150. Although Judith's legacy was protected from a presumably unreliable husband, the amount was insufficient to guarantee financial security. As it happened, Judith remained married to Quiney, and the couple indeed went on to lead "a fairly penurious existence" (Honan 400).

If Shakspeare was manipulative and stingy toward Judith, he was unreservedly callous toward his wife Anne. The initial draft of the will conspicuously failed to acknowledge his marriage to her in any manner. Orthodox biographers often adopt Chambers's conjecture that Anne would have been a beneficiary of the common-law practice of assigning one-third of an estate to the widow (176-177). But there is no evidence that this practice was observed in Warwickshire at the time, nor would such assignment be compatible with Shakspeare's

explicit conveyance of the great majority of his estate to Susanna. As if to cement his intention, Shakespeare added to the March revision the infamous interlineation: "Item: I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furnishings." This dismissive but specific amendment had the effect of reducing the likelihood of any future claim by Anne for a more reasonable portion of the estate (Honan 396-397). The humiliation of Anne betrays a marked antipathy and lack of obligation toward the mother of his children and overseer of his domestic life in Stratford for more than three decades.

Conscientiousness

William Shakspeare's father, John, was an ambitious man. He married well, became a member of the Stratford governing elite, and petitioned for (but was denied) a gentleman's coat of arms. But his fortunes began to decline when William was a boy. He defaulted on debts, was cited for illegal trading in wool, and avoided public places for fear of being summoned to court (Feldman 2-3). Son William was likewise ambitious. He pursued a business career to become a wealthy member of the Stratford gentry through judicious investments in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the Globe theater, real estate in Stratford and London, and income-producing land in the environs of Stratford. In addition he was most likely a moneylender. He was known as such by Stratford acquaintances, and is known to have sued for at least two unpaid loans. Dismissed by some as a social climber, he achieved the title of gentleman after paying for and being granted the coat of arms denied his father (Price 14-19).

Will Shakspeare's business career can be read as a highly successful endeavor to reverse his father's disgrace and, at an early age, settle into a comfortable bourgeois existence in Stratford. This life trajectory suggests considerable self-discipline marked by goal setting, deliberate planning, and long-term persistence.

Summary

The concept of successful psychopathy refers to individuals, predominantly males, who have psychopathic traits and may even have been found guilty of criminal activity, but who have never been incarcerated. Many psychopaths have achieved occupational success in business, government, and the major professions. This is not to say that psychopathic manipulation and deviousness are not a potential source of conflict in the workplace in terms of disrupting organizational goals and taxing fellow employees.

From a five-factor model perspective we know that both successful and incarcerated psychopaths are highly antagonistic, described by such terms as "manipulative," "arrogant" and "callous." In contrast, a low degree of antagonism is marked by such terms as "agreeable," "cooperative" and "empathic."

Recent evidence suggests that occupationally successful psychopaths are also conscientious. The juxtaposition of antagonism and conscientiousness in the same individual may appear to be self-contradictory. However, the five-factor model definition of conscientiousness goes beyond the colloquial connotation of "dutiful" to encompass broader factors such as "competent," "achievement striving" and "self-disciplined." Low degrees of conscientiousness are associated with such markers as "disorganized," "aimless" and "negligent."

There is little reason to believe that Will Shakspeare had an agreeable personality, but good evidence that he was instead highly antagonistic. He hoarded grain during a famine, avoided paying taxes when possible, and was issued a court order to desist from threatening harm to another. Careful scrutiny of his last will shows him withholding a meaningful inheritance from his second daughter. In addition he was unreservedly callous toward his wife, to whom he left nothing aside from the infamous second best bed, and this as a device to block a future claim for a more reasonable portion of the estate.

Shakspeare became wealthy through moneylending, judicious investments in an acting company and the Globe theater, real estate, and income-producing land in the Stratford area. He retired in comfort at a relatively early age. This successful business career is consistent with the achievement striving and self-discipline of high conscientiousness rather than the disorganization and aimlessness characteristic of low conscientious individuals.

In sum, Shakspeare's biography as seen through the lens of the five-factor model tells us that he was simultaneously antagonistic and conscientious, the two major personality traits associated with successful psychopathy. He skirted the law and was obnoxious, even cruel, to others, yet he was concurrently ambitious and goal directed in his business career. Although it is possible that antagonism and conscientiousness might co-occur in the absence of psychopathic features, we have no evidence for this conjecture. On the contrary, we have every reason to conclude that Will Shakspeare's life trajectory was that of a successful psychopath.

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[Andrew Crider is a licensed psychologist and professor emeritus of psychology at Williams College. He has contributed several articles on psychological aspects of the Shakespeare authorship question to *Brief Chronicles*, *The Oxfordian*, and the *Newsletter*.]

Shakspeare's Monument

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forebears
To digg the dust enclosed here;
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones

If you some dust did move away
To find these extra things I say,
Then praye proceede to readeth more,
Just leave my bones beneath the floor

For you in time who visit here
This warning I pronounceth cleare;
In this faire Stratford still I dwell,
So mind your deer herds verie well

The ink and quill doth give distress,
My signature's a wicked mess;
It matters not what you have heard,
I never did compose a word.

[For Mr. H. W.
Unearthed by David Neuffer]

Shakspeare's Sonnet

Shall I compare thee to a sack of grain?
Or many sacks in granaries to hold,
From summer fields blest with abundant rain,
To winter's famine yielding sacks of gold.
When need is high, the price need also rise,
A merchant must be firm to stay ahead;
Thy family's life is what thy money buys,
This letteth me to purchase mine best bed.
Hast thou not funds? Not everything is dark!
Manna you may taketh as from Heaven,
Upon this document affix thy mark,
In time, return the cost to me times seven.
To you that owe for grain I stored away,
I'll sue your arse anon if you don't pay!

[David Neuffer]

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by Kathryn Sharpe, Chair, SOF Data Preservation Committee

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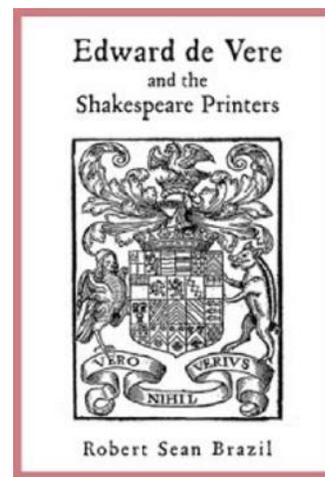
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Robert Brazil's book *Edward de Vere and the Shakespeare Printers* (below) was published posthumously by a friend who tracked down Brazil's heirs to get permission.



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