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Oxford's Birthday: Special "Blue Boar Tavern" Session Draws More than 100

by Alex McNeil

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, was born on April 12, 1550. To celebrate his 473rd birthday, a crowd of more than 100 well-wishers signed on to a special Zoom session at the SOF's "Blue Boar Tavern" on April 12, 2023.

Ordinarily, Blue Boar Tavern sessions are for SOF members only, but for this birthday celebration everyone on the SOF's mailing list was invited. Some persons encountered difficulty logging in, but eventually the glitches were solved.

As the Blue Boar Tavern bartender, Jonathan Dixon hosted the event. He was joined by SOF President Earl Showerman and SOF Trustees Bonner Miller Cutting, Dorothea Dickerman and Tom Woosnam. The focus was on a large London house known as Fisher's Folly; Oxford bought it in 1580 and enlarged the estate in 1584. Oxfordians believe that the house was a hotbed of activity by Oxford and many of his literary cohorts, including John Lyly, Anthony Munday, George Peele and Thomas Nashe, among others.

Using a period map, Dorothea Dickerman showed that Fisher's Folly (which was demolished in the eighteenth century) was located in Bishopsgate and was close to the major London theaters. Using slides from the de Vere Trail Tour in 2013, Earl Showerman retraced the efforts to find the site now; some of the foundation was still visible more than 400 years later.

There was a discussion of euphuism, the elegant and elaborate way of speaking and writing that became fashionable in the upper echelons of Elizabethan society in the 1580s. John Lyly's novels *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and His England* (1580) are considered prime examples of this style, as are several of Shakespeare's plays. Yet, according to the conventional dating scheme of Shakespeare's works, these plays were written in the mid- to late 1590s, ten to twelve years after euphuism had reached its peak popularity. Is it not more likely that these plays were composed contemporaneously with the popularity of euphuism?

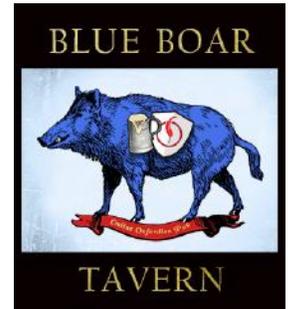
Oxford sold Fisher's Folly to William Cornwallis in 1588. This William Cornwallis [c. 1549-1611] is

sometimes known as William Cornwallis of Brome Hall or William Cornwallis the elder, to differentiate him from his nephew, the essayist William Cornwallis. Bonner Miller Cutting then discussed a commonplace-book known bearing the signature of one "Anne Cornwaleys." It is generally believed that this "Anne Cornwaleys" was the daughter of William Cornwallis the elder, though there were other persons by that name.

The book contains transcriptions (in at least two hands) of some thirty-three poems by Elizabethan poets, including poems by Edward de Vere and Anne Vavasour. It also contains an anonymous poem that was later published in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), where it is attributed to "W. Shakespeare." "Anne Cornwaleys Book" was purchased in 1844 by Shakespeare biographer J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps. Cutting noted that Halliwell-Phillipps had originally conjectured that the book could have been assembled as early as 1585, but later revised his estimate to 1590-95 to fit more comfortably with the standard Shakespeare literary chronology.

There are many intriguing questions about this book, now owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library. Charles Wisner Barrell discussed it extensively in a 1945 article, arguing that it was likely put together no later than 1586 ("Earliest Authenticated 'Shakespeare' Transcript Found with Oxford's Personal Poems," *Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, April 1945; <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/Vol.-VI-No.-2-1945-April.pdf>). One of the most intriguing questions, of course, is why the "Shakespeare" poem in it is anonymous.

Earl Showerman concluded the presentation urging the attendees to join the SOF and to attend this year's annual conference in New Orleans in November.



The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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

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

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

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From the President

In a recent issue of *The Atlantic*, journalist Megan Garber warned that non-fiction writing has become more about entertainment than the conveyance of truth. “We will become so distracted and dazed by our fictions that we will lose our sense of what is real,” she writes. “We will make our escapes so comprehensive that we cannot free ourselves from them.” Garber concludes that the result of this development is that we will collectively forget how to think and how to empathize.

“Dwell in this environment long enough,” Garber warns, “and it becomes difficult to process the facts of the world through anything except entertainment.” If this sounds like a critique of Shakespearean fictional biographies akin to Professor Stephen Greenblatt’s imaginative recounting in *Will in the World*, then Oxfordians have a new context in which we can understand how we have been gaslit by traditional Shakespeare scholars for over a century. It’s simply more entertaining to imagine an untutored upstart crow genius from a backwater hamlet arriving in London and suddenly becoming both acclaimed and criticized for his dramatic and poetic production than to consider the more plausible, if less appealing, narrative of a privileged but marginalized nobleman writing under a pseudonym.

The reiteration of the Horatio Alger myth—the assertion that anyone can achieve success through hard work and virtue that the traditional Shakespeare narrative indulges—represents an addiction to our cultural preference for entertainment. The success of derivative fictions based on Shakespeare’s life in dramatic works, including Tom Stoppard’s *Shakespeare in Love* and Lauren Gunderson’s *The Book of Will*, attests to the power of such fictions to determine our take on the origins, production, and publication of Shakespeare’s works. These entertainments are attempts to fill the actual lacunae of biography, establish authorial motive; they reflect a public desire for sentimental satisfaction.

There are more on the way. In late April, it was announced that two Shakespeare-related TV series are in production. One appears to be a traditional biography of the humbly born Stratford man as the literary genius, while the other promises to explore the authorship question (see page 7).

Not to be outdone, the Royal Shakespeare Company has produced a dramatic adaptation of Maggie O’Farrell’s award-winning imaginative book, *Hamnet: A Novel of the Plague*, which fictionalizes Shakespeare’s family life around the time of his son Hamnet’s death in

1596 and the writing of the play *Hamlet*. The *New York Times* book review indulges the fantasy of redemption, “As the book unfolds, it brings its story to a tender and ultimately hopeful conclusion: that even the greatest grief, the most damaged marriage, and most shattered heart might find some solace, some healing.”

The more recent *Times* review of the RSC’s adaptation described the production as elegant, but also formulaic and sentimental. “Writers of historical fiction are allowed to take liberties—they are in the business of filling in blanks, after all. But how much is too much? At what point does something become so speculative, its connection to the factual record so tenuous, that it ceases to be historically credible? The production is essentially a high-end, 16th-century soap opera, a delicately wrought portrait of a couple—their coming together, their travails and their sorrow — that carries an uplifting message about the generative power of grief. It could be completely inaccurate, but no one can disprove it.”

Meanwhile, there are more serious endeavors to convey factual matters without the entertainment lens. Chris Laoutaris’s *Shakespeare’s Book: The Story Behind the First Folio and the Making of Shakespeare* was released last month. Promotional postings claim that it tells “the never-before-told story” of how the makers of the First Folio created Shakespeare as we know him today, and how the First Folio was produced against “a turbulent backdrop of seismic political events and international tensions which intersected with the lives of its creators and which left their indelible marks on this ambitious publication-project.”

Oxfordians Peter Dickson and Gabriel Ready have both previously written on this subject in *Bardgate: Shakespeare, Catholicism and the Politics of the First Folio* (2016) and “The Production of the First Folio Reconsidered” in *The Oxfordian* (2021), available here: [TOX23_Ready_Mercies_First_Folio.pdf](https://www.oxfordian.org.uk/TOX23_Ready_Mercies_First_Folio.pdf) (shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org).

Public interest is clearly focused on the 400th anniversary of the publication of the First Folio, and SOF members should be happy to learn that the SOF’s Brief Chronicles edition of *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma*, will be published very soon and will be available for purchase through Amazon. The volume will include over 300 pages with contributions from editor Roger Stritmatter and ten other noteworthy Oxfordian scholars.

In April McFarland & Co. published Rima Greenhill’s highly original study, *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan: The Role of English-Russian Relations in Love’s Labours Lost*. For the past decade Greenhill has investigated a narrative that challenges the traditional interpretation that this early comedy was based on events and characters from the French Wars of Religion; she maintains that the play’s French veneer conceals a

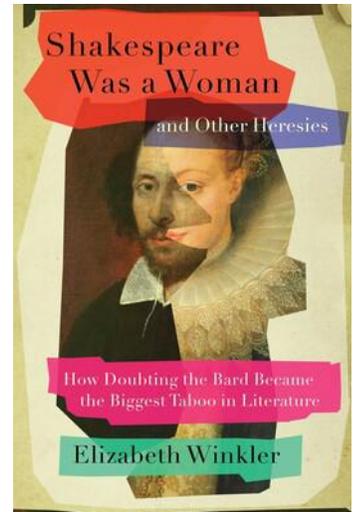
Russian core of diplomatic relations during the decades following England’s establishing a northern trade route to Muscovy in 1553. (Her book is reviewed in this issue; see page 25.)

Elizabeth Winkler’s brilliant critique, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature*, was released this month. Her recent Zoom presentations at the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable and Shakespearean Authorship Trust were outstanding. Winkler’s reports of interviews of scholars and skeptics, including Michael Witmore, Stanley Wells, Stephen Greenblatt and Marjorie Garber, are revealing of the larger problem of historical truth, “how human imperfections (bias, blindness, subjectivity) shape our construction of the past. History is a story, and the story we find may depend on the story we’re looking for.” A full review of Winkler’s book will appear in the summer SOF *Newsletter*. My advice to all SOF members is to buy this book and make it a bestseller, and to come to New Orleans in November for our conference and personally thank Elizabeth Winkler, who is scheduled to speak there.

Finally, I was recently interviewed by Alexander Waugh and Maudie Lowe for a new podcast series, 147T, on the De Vere Society website: [The De Vere Society Podcasts | De Vere Society](https://www.deveresociety.org/podcasts). I encourage SOF members who have not visited the DVS website to access the series of videos and scholarly articles on Shakespeare authorship topics, to search their website (and consider joining), and to examine their forthcoming three-part *Great Oxford* book series.

The way of the truth is not through an ahistorical, imaginary, sentimental miniseries on the miraculous origins of Shakespeare and his entourage, but through close reading, and perseverance, and the enthusiasm that arises from the knowledge that we are not alone.

Earl Showerman



Letters

I enjoyed the article “Does the 17th Earl of Oxford ‘lieth buried in Westminster’?” by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Bonner Miller Cutting (*Newsletter*, Summer 2022). The authors generally did a commendable job transcribing Percival Golding’s dedication to Sir Horatio Vere in *The Armes, Honours, Matches, and Issues of the auncient and illustrious family of Veer, etc.*, in addition to some other excerpts from the 72-page manuscript (BL MS. Harleian 4189). There are, however, a few needed corrections. Checking the authors’ transcription against my own, I find a few minor errors beginning about midway through Golding’s dedication. The authors transcribe:

...as our Saviour Christ who though he vouchsafed to be borne of meanest parentes, yet came of the Royall trybe of Judah, and from the noblest persons of the house of Jacob; showing that nobility is not to be Rejected [rejected]; but virtue preferred. In this study having sometymes bene Conversant according to my slender skill ... not I alone, but many of my auncestors, as humble wellwishers have longe borne, to the honourable house of Oxenford; whereof yours being a most eminent branch I presume but rather my present would not prove ungratefull. (p. 18)

“Rejected [rejected]” should be “Neglected.” A parenthetical “(Sir)” should be inserted thus: “In this study (Sir) having sometymes bene Conversant according to my slender skill” In the final phrase after my ellipsis, “yours” should be “your self,” and “I presume but rather” should be “I presumed the rather”—so as to read: “... not I alone, but many of my auncestors, as humble wellwishers have longe borne, to the honorable house of Oxenford; whereof your self being a most eminent branch I presumed the rather my present would not prove ungratefull.”

Finally (and ever so slightly), near the end of the dedication, a reiteration of the word “of” was omitted from “...as also my scarcity of books, & want accesse to Recordes...” —which should read: “...as also my scarcity of bookes, & want of accesse to Recordes...” (p. 19).

Elsewhere, the authors transcribe (and write in a footnote):

Dorothy Daughter of Rafe Nevill Earle of Westmorland, first wife of John Earle of Oxenford the sixt. [sixteenth]. Margaret Daughter of John Golding Esquire, second wife of John Earle of Oxenford. She was afterward married to Charles Tyrell Esquire. Issue by the first match Katherine sole Daughter of John Earle of Oxenford and Dorothy his first wife, married to Edward Lord Windsore, and was mother of Frederick Lord Windsore which dyed without issue, and Henry Lord Windsore his brother, who by Anne his wife Daughter of Sir Thomas Kivet knight, was father of Thomas Lord

Windsore now living, which married Katherine Daughter of the Earl of Morceston and hath issue.³ (p. 19)

³ She was the daughter of the Earl of Somerset. This comment contains a peculiar mistake, as there is no Earl of Morceston. (p. 21)

First, a small technicality appears as a misinterpretation, viz. “John Earle of Oxenford the sixt. [sixteenth].” While this John de Vere was indeed the sixteenth Earl of Oxford, he was also the sixth one named John, and here Golding is referring to him in that way, similarly to how he elsewhere refers to “John de Veer the fyfte of that name earle of Oxenford” (as Eagan-Donovan and Cutting transcribe on p. 19). It so happened that John de Vere the fifth of his name was also the 15th Earl of Oxford, John the fourth of his name was the 14th Earl of Oxford, *et al*, which lends itself to confusion. At the time of Golding’s writing, there had been three Aubreys (or Albericks), four Roberts, and six Johns who had held the earldom; as he frequently mentioned them in assorted places throughout the manuscript, Golding usually took pains to clarify which one he was referring to by ordering their Christian names. Golding also referred to their earldoms ordinally in many, but not all, instances, e.g., “John de Vere the sixt of his name and sixteenth of his surname Earle of Oxenford, took possession of his estate in the yeere 1540.” (23v)

Additionally, “Margaret Daughter of John Golding Esquire,” should read “Margery” rather than “Margaret,” and “Sir Thomas Kivet knight” should read “Sir Thomas Rivet knight” (Thomas, Lord Windsor’s maternal grandfather).

While it’s true that there was no Earl of *Morceston*, Golding actually wrote “the Earl of *Worcester*.” The authors also state that the “Katherine” referred to (who married “Thomas Lord Windsore now living”) was the daughter of the “Earl of Somerset.” However, she was the daughter of Edward Somerset, 4th Earl of Worcester. (This Edward Somerset, who married Lady Elizabeth Hastings, was the same bridegroom who shared nuptials with Edward de Vere and Anne Cecil on 16 December 1571.) At the time Percival Golding was penning this genealogy, the Earl of Somerset was Robert Carr, who was advanced to that title by King James on 3 November 1613, and held it until his death in 1645.

I appreciate the thorough research that went into the article, and the foregoing nitpicking by no means diminishes its value.

Christopher Paul
San Antonio, TX

The authors respond:

We are very pleased to have Christopher Paul's corrections to our transcription of Percival Golding's manuscript. If we had known that Chris had transcribed it, we would have run our article by him before submitting it to the *Newsletter*. We hope to republish the transcript with these corrections at some point in the future.

Both of us are still in the process of learning to transcribe the early English secretary hand. Three of our errors concerned capital letters, which can be highly idiosyncratic. B.M. Ward made many transcription errors in Oxford's letters in his 1928 biography, and Oxford wrote in the "Italian hand" that is much easier to discern than the secretary hand. According to Bill Bryson in his clever book *Shakespeare: The World as Stage*, handbooks of writing in this era "suggested up to twenty different ways of shaping particular letters." He adds that "nearly every letter could look like nearly every other letter" (11).

We're glad that our research further supports Chris's 2006 article ("R.I.P.: Bulbeck Bites the Dust," *Newsletter*, Fall 2006) with the information about members of the Vere family, and we agree that the most likely date of the composition of Percival Golding's manuscript is 1619.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Bonner Miller Cutting

In Earl Showerman's review of John Hamill's book, *The Secret Shakespeare Sex Scandals* (reviewed in the Winter 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*), I came across this sentence: "Elizabeth Trentham was fifteen years younger than the Earl of Oxford . . ." (p. 18). I'm not sure whether that statement was actually made by Hamill in the book or is Showerman's own, but in either case it suggests that she was born in 1565. This is the only reference I have ever seen that makes her that young; most commentators assign her birth to between 1559 and 1563.

Later in the review, after noting that Hamill assigns the *Diella* sonnets (published in 1596 as by "R.L., Gentleman") to Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, Showerman notes, "Unfortunately, Hamill does not mention that many scholars have attributed *Diella* to the poet Richard Lynche (1540-1610)" (p. 18).

That many Oxfordian authors disagree on various critical components of the case for Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, of course, leaves us open to deserved criticism. Most of our respected scholars have taken their respective published positions after years of serious research. They have become emotionally and professionally attached to their creations and often are

not willing to see other positions. It's akin to raising and loving your children and not wanting to see their faults.

As a relatively new Oxfordian, but having read a substantial number of books and articles and watched many YouTube videos, I find that, once you get past the brief introduction refuting the case for the Stratford businessman—which is actually easy to accept if you have an open mind—you find yourself in this garden of earthly delights where you're free to go picking from the vast array of choices to create your personal bouquet. Rarely are any two the same, though many are gathered from only a small part of the garden. As *Newsletter* editor Alex McNeil put it to me in an email, the Authorship Question is like a jigsaw puzzle with the most important pieces missing.

If you compare John Hamill's reasons for hiding Oxford's authorship (as detailed in *The Secret Shakespeare Sex Scandals*) with, say, Bruce Johnston's (from "What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?" *The Oxfordian* 21 [2019]), you'll find two totally different perspectives, both plausibly defended. That said, we need to get our house in order at the same time as we deal with Stratfordian intransigence.

Speaking of Stratfordian intransigence, I jokingly mentioned to Roger Stritmatter the following quote from Max Planck:

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it ... [*Scientific Autobiography*, 1950, p. 33]

Stritmatter replied that "It [is] a relay race." I am hoping that the baton is being passed to people much younger than me.

However, there is one final fear: What will we all do if we actually succeed?

Ken Anstruther, MBA
Brampton, Ontario

Please consider adding a bequest to the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship in your will or trust. Your legal counsel or financial advisor can assist you in making a difference in our common goal of recognition of "William Shakespeare" as the pen name of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford!

What's the News?

2023 SOF Conference Update: Hotels Are Booking Fast

The SOF's 2023 Conference will be held in New Orleans from Thursday, November 9, through Sunday, November 12, at the Hyatt Centric Hotel in the historic French Quarter. If hotel bookings are a reliable guide, it looks to be well attended.

Hotels:

"We've had to increase the numbers of rooms being held three times already," said Conference Chair Don Rubin. "We hit our first booking maximum at the Hyatt Centric in February. We then reserved additional rooms, and they were gone in another three weeks. So we increased our numbers again.

"As of late April, we have five or six rooms available for each night at the Hyatt, so I urge people who want to stay there to make their bookings as soon as possible. We can keep adding rooms so long as the hotel has them available, but I think waiting until a month or two before the conference is not going to work this year. New Orleans is a popular venue and our Conference program is especially attractive this year, including a steamboat ride on the Mississippi.

"We are holding rooms at a second hotel—Homewood Suites by Hilton New Orleans French Quarter—about five streets from the Hyatt. Their rates are cheaper than Hyatt's, but those rooms are starting to fill. So please book early."

Complete information about hotel accommodations, and links to the hotels themselves, may be found on the SOF website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2023-annual-conference/>. Special room rates for November 9, 10 and 11 are \$220-\$240 per night at the Hyatt, and \$149 per night at the Homewood Suites; rates do not include a tax of about 16%. These rates may also extend for one or two nights before and after those dates if rooms are available. If you are unable to get the additional nights, try booking the three core nights at the special rates and let Conference Chair Don Rubin know (drubin@yorku.ca) what additional nights you'd like to add. He is in touch with the hotels and will try to assist you.

Conference Registration:

For persons who plan to attend the full conference, the early registration discount fee is \$250 for SOF members (\$275 for non-members). That fee includes attendance at all presentations, three lunches (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) and a special guided city tour of

New Orleans on Thursday evening, followed by a two-hour jazz dinner cruise on the Mississippi River. Special daily in-person registration rates are also available.

For those who do not plan to attend the conference in person, all presentation sessions will be livestreamed and will be available (via the SOF website) for a single fee of \$99. To register for the Conference, or for more information (including refund policies), please go to the SOF website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2023-annual-conference/>.

Second Call for 2023 Conference Presentations

The SOF Conference Committee reminds all members that the deadline for submitting proposals for papers to be delivered at this November's New Orleans Conference is June 15, 2023.

Proposals should include the title of the proposed paper; an abstract (200-500 words) describing the paper to be presented (including how it relates to the authorship question generally and/or to Edward de Vere as Shakespeare specifically); a biography of up to 300 words if you are a new presenter (less if you're a regular presenter); the requested length for your talk (15, 25 or 40 minutes, with five minutes added to those times for questions and discussion); and whether you want to give your presentation live in New Orleans or whether you will record it in advance and have it shown on screen only.

Also being accepted by June 15 are proposals for panel discussions on a particular topic or for a special event that could take place during the conference. Do give such a proposal a title and be sure to include some suggestions on who could be involved and who might chair such a session.

Proposals should be sent by email to Conference Chair Don Rubin (drubin@yorku.ca). The Conference Committee also serves as the Selection Committee for papers and presentations. Its recommendations are forwarded to the SOF Board of Trustees for final approval. In addition to Rubin, the members of the Conference Committee are: Bonner Miller Cutting, Richard Foulke, John Hamill, Richard Joyrich, Alex McNeil and Tom Woosnam. SOF President Earl Showerman serves on the committee ex-officio.

"We have some twenty spots available for presentations," said Rubin. "In fact, we have already received enough proposals to fill the conference, which

means that some difficult choices will have to be made. But I want to assure anyone interested in presenting that the Selection Committee has not yet looked at *any* of the proposals and will not do so until after the June 15 deadline. So if someone is interested in presenting, please send the proposal in by the deadline.”

Note: All presenters must register for the conference, either at the livestream rate or the in-person rate as appropriate.

Two New Shakespeare TV Series in the Works

According to the showbiz journal *Variety*, two new television series about “Shakespeare” are in development. One of them seems to be a hagiography of the Stratford man, while the other one promises to explore the authorship question.

On April 22 *Variety* reported that “a drama series based on the life of William Shakespeare” is being developed by Steven Knight (creator of the TV series *Peaky Blinders*) and is based on a concept by Sarah Lancashire (star of the series *Happy Valley*). As yet untitled, it promises to “tell the complete story of the glove-maker’s son who became the greatest storyteller in history and how his genius survived and thrived in an age of turmoil and terror, danger and disease. It aims to be the first full account of the passion, people and politics that made William Shakespeare the world’s most famous dramatist and the men and women around him who loved and labored, schemed and plotted, killed and connived in one of the most dangerous periods in history.” Lancashire said, “This is a thrilling project about a golden age beset by plague, Puritanism and deadly politics.” Knight, who plans to write the series, added: “I’m excited to be embarking on what will be a landmark TV production telling the dramatic story of the world’s most accomplished writer.”

Three days later, on April 25, *Variety* reported that a second Shakespeare-related television series is underway,

and has been cast. This one purports to tackle the authorship question directly. Described by *Variety* as a “[c]onspiracy drama series,” *The Rosy Cross: The Rebels Who Wrote Shakespeare* was created by writer Tom Keenan and American actor-director Nick McDow Musleh, and is being guided by Lasse Halberg, executive producer of the *Lilyhammer* TV series. *Variety* noted that “Keenan says that the show seeks to present the alternative side to the Shakespeare authorship debate, where the facts outweigh the myths. ‘There is a huge audience and global interest in the idea that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare – there is room for all opinions, and once people see the facts, they will be very surprised.’” The cast includes Stephen Campbell Moore, Romario Simpson and Samuel Barnett.

As far as can be determined now, this project will explore the group authorship theory with Bacon at the center of it all. “The series is based on research claiming to identify the real and diverse underground writing group of men and women who secretly crafted the plays under the pseudonym of William Shakespeare, led by the great English philosopher Francis Bacon,” *Variety* noted. “The show follows a shadowy order of diverse freedom fighters from all walks of life who wage a covert war to protect freedom of speech and civil rights, by using plays to spread knowledge, bury secrets and empower the masses.” The article further stated that “The show is inspired by Jørgen Friberg’s documentary *The Seven Steps to Mercy: Cracking the Shakespeare Code*, which was released in 2016 and followed a Norwegian man who deciphered a secret code hidden in Shakespeare’s first folio, revealing a treasure map where ancient religious artifacts are hidden.” The series title, *The Rosy Cross*, is an allusion to Rosicrucianism, the esoteric movement that arose in the Middle Ages.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether Edward de Vere’s candidacy as the true Shakespeare will be dealt with, or whether *The Rosy Cross* will prove to be yet another manifestation of the “Anybody but Oxford” mindset.



Steven Knight



Sarah Lancashire



Tom Keenan



Nick McDow Musleh

Moot Court Trial of William of Stratford Held in London

by Heidi J. Jansch

“Were the plays of the First Folio really written by William Shakespeare of Stratford on Avon? Or is the claim that he was their author a fraud?”



On March 18, 2023, these questions were the subject of a Moot Court Trial of William of Stratford that took place at Middle Temple Hall in London. Benefiting the Middle Temple Sir Paul Jenkins Fund, the event was organized by the de Vere Society and attended by an audience of 250, with an additional sixty students viewing remotely.

Actor and producer Richard Clifford, who served as head of the de Vere Society Events Team, began the evening by introducing the participants. The judges were Sir Christopher Floyd PC (a retired appellate judge), Dame Joanna Smith DBE (a High Court judge), and Dame Maura McGowan DBE (also a High Court judge). Benet Brandreth KC (a noted barrister with special interest in Shakespeare and his works) provided a defense for the man from Stratford while Bernard Richmond KC (an experienced trial attorney and Director of Studies for Middle Temple’s Advocacy School) served as prosecutor. The witnesses included Dr. Ros Barber, a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Director of Research at the Shakespearean Authorship Trust; Kelley Costigan, an actress and director with a background in English Renaissance Drama; and Alexander Waugh, a Senior Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester, editor, author and current Chairman of the de Vere Society.

During the proceedings, prosecutor Richmond sought to establish that Will Shakspeare, the man from Stratford, was not the author of the Shakespeare canon by noting that the skill, expertise, and education exhibited in the plays stand in stark contrast to what is known about the actual life of William Shakspeare. Brandreth defended the traditional attribution of authorship to the man from Stratford, accusing doubters of being snobs and conspiracy theorists. Brandreth argued that the man from Stratford had theatre connections, and that his contemporaries recognized him as the author Shakespeare.

Richmond reviewed the many areas of expertise that are apparent in the plays including linguistics, rhetoric, medicine, science, politics, history, and languages. He noted that the author must have had an understanding of French, Italian and English law. After

asking Kelley Costigan to read the “Quality of Mercy” speech from *The Merchant of Venice*, Richmond provided examples of the author’s expansive knowledge of law apparent in *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Julius Caesar*; he noted there was no evidence that the man from Stratford had any legal training that would have enabled him to write these scenes. Richmond inferred that since there is no evidence the man from Stratford attended school or owned

any books, his educational background does not support his candidacy for the authorship of the Shakespeare works.

Throughout the trial, Brandreth attempted to establish a personal connection between the man from Stratford and contemporary writers, citing the cast list from *Every Man in His Humour* in Ben Jonson’s 1616 folio which includes the name “Will Shakespeare,” Jonson’s comments in “De Shakespeare Nostrat” in *Timber: Or, Discoveries*, the introductory poem by Jonson and letters signed by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio, the inclusion of Burbage, Heminge and Condell’s names in Shakspeare’s will, and the mention of “Shakespeare” in *The Return from Parnassus* and in John Webster’s introductory letter in *The White Devil*.

Ros Barber discounted these claims of personal connections, explaining that the comments in *Timber* were not a personal anecdote, but almost a word-for-word translation from Seneca that Jonson had included in his commonplace book. Alexander Waugh was permitted to expand on the topic, and agreed with Barber that it could not be considered a personal reference since over half of the section of “De Shakespeare Nostrat” was a near-translation of Seneca’s description of Haterius. Waugh explained that Seneca was commenting on Haterius being a puppet; someone who had words put in his mouth by another person, a description that would reinforce a doubter’s view of the authorship. (Waugh’s full explanation on this topic can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O60uYDKTqJ0&t=563s>)

When asked whether the phrase “Swan of Avon” in Jonson’s tribute to “my beloved, the Author” in the First Folio refers to Stratford-upon-Avon, Waugh responded that it referred to Hampton Court, which, according to several sources, was historically known as “Avon,” and where Queen Elizabeth and King James would have seen Shakespeare’s plays. Waugh quoted the lines that follow the famous phrase:

Sweet Swan of Avon! what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James!

An exasperated Brandreth then attempted to establish the man from Stratford as the author by showing a drawing of Shakspeare's coat of arms with the marginal handwritten notation "Shakespeare the Player," to which Waugh responded that it read "player," not "writer."

Richmond reviewed Diana Price's checklist of "literary paper trails" as compiled in her book, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*. Price made a list of ten criteria (besides having their name on a title page) that could provide corroborative evidence that someone was a professional writer: evidence of education; existence of letters on literary matters; evidence of being paid to write; contact with a patron; original manuscripts; receipts and handwritten letters; commendatory verses; acknowledgement as a writer during the author's lifetime; ownership of books; and notice at death of being a writer. While Ben Jonson had evidence in every one of Price's categories, Will Shakspeare had none. Barber stated that there are about seventy documents relating to the man from Stratford, but they are mainly involved with business matters.

Richmond concluded that the evidence for the man from Stratford shows that he had nothing to do with writing or learning, while the list of talent and knowledge shown in the works is astounding, particularly the knowledge of history and law.

In his closing argument, Brandreth insisted that contemporary evidence provided a definite identification of the man from Stratford as the writer by those who knew him, and reiterated his earlier comment that because there are alternate candidates for the authorship,

the position that anyone other than the man from Stratford as the writer is entirely without merit.

While the judges retired to discuss the case, Richard Clifford presented questions from the audience to the three experts. Upon the judges' return, Sir Christopher Floyd thanked Kelley Costigan for sharing her knowledge on the subject, acknowledged that Alexander Waugh was a most efficient advocate for the de Vere Society, and noted that Ros Barber showed great expertise in the subject of authorship. Floyd announced the panel's decision that the contemporary records establish that William Shakespeare was a player, had a share in the Globe, and was part of an acting troupe. He stated that they were persuaded that the man from Stratford wrote the plays. Dame Joanna Smith DBE and Dame Maura McGowan DBE concurred, after which the proceedings came to a close.

Though the outcome was disappointing for authorship doubters, the trial did provide a forum to share with those who attended the many reasons why there exists a Shakespeare Authorship Question. Additionally, the event raised over £4,000 for the Middle Temple Sir Paul Jenkins Fund, a charity which assists underprivileged law students pay their fees.

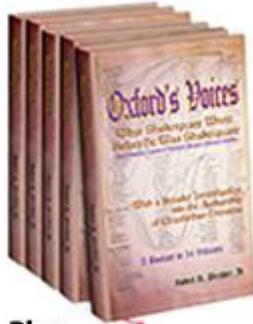
Following the event, Waugh commented that the verdict was an expected outcome, avidly noting, "It was a lively and stimulating evening in which all participants gave freely of their time and expertise to raise money for a worthy charity by debating SAQ fundamentals in a beautiful historic setting within the narrow boundaries of a mock-trial format."

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Who Translated “Shakespeare’s Favorite Novel”?

by Robert R. Prechter

Oxfordians have figured out that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, translated *Ovids Metamorphoses* from Latin under the name of his uncle¹, Arthur Golding. The book came out in two portions, the first part issued in 1565 and the second in 1567. It is likely that Oxford undertook a similar project in the ’tween year of 1566 and published it under the name William Adlington.

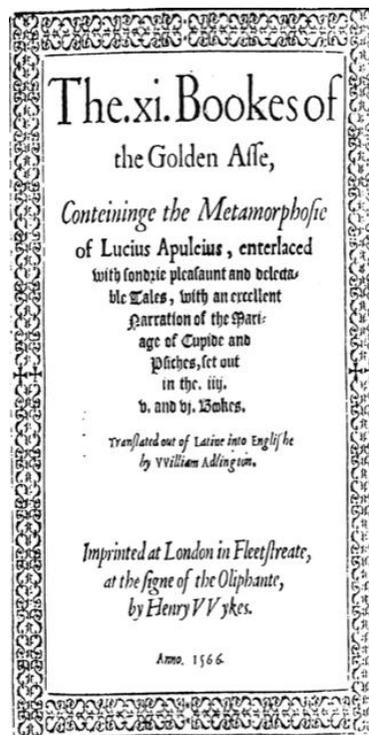
This translation from Latin is titled The. xi. Bookes of the Golden Asse, Conteinige the Metamorphosie of Lucius Apuleius, interlaced with sondrie pleasaunt and delectable Tales, with an excellent Narration of the Mariage of Cupid and Psiches, set out in the. iijj. v. and vj. Bookes. As you can see from the title, the book parallels Arthur Golding’s *Ovids Metamorphoses* in presenting a fantasy of physical transformation based on classical mythology. In the preface, the author even says of his book, “there be many whiche would rather Intitle it *Metamorphosis*.”

The standard story is that a student at the University of Oxford issued a strikingly ambitious translation of prose fiction and was never heard from again. What is the probability of such a thing happening? In two similar instances of the 1560s, Oxfordians have suspected that Oxford is the author: Arthur Brooke issued a narrative poem of fiction titled *Romeus and Juliet* (1562) and never repeated the genre, and Arthur Golding issued a poetic translation of fiction titled *Ovids Metamorphoses* and never repeated the genre. No other publication of any kind ever came out under the name William Adlington.

The Dedicatee’s Tight Link to Oxford

The book begins with a dedication “To the Right Honorable, and Mightie Lorde, Thomas, Earle of Sussex, Viscount Fitzwaltre, Lorde of Egremont and of Burnell, Knight of the most noble Order of the Garter, Justice of the Forestes and Chases, from Trente Sowthwarde, and Capitaine of the Gentlemen Pensioners, of the house of the Queene our Sovereigne Lady.” As chronicled by Nelson, Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex, was a lifelong ally of Oxford’s at court.

Sussex was the patron of a troupe of players known as the Earl of Sussex’s Men, the first records of whose performances date to 1569. In the spring of 1570, Oxford



served under Sussex’s command in Scotland. On April 2, 1571, as Parliament opened, Queen Elizabeth sat while attended by three lords: “the robe supported by the Earle of Oxenford, the Earle of Sussex kneelinge holdinge the sword on the left hand, and the Earle of Huntington standinge houldinge the hatt of estate....”² On August 12, 1572, Oxford and Sussex were two of the eight lords attending the Queen’s entertainment at Warwick Castle. Thomas is the “Sussex” whom Gilbert Talbot in a 1573 letter named as a supporter of Oxford’s. On January 30, 1574, Oxford named five people as trustees of his estate should he fail to survive his upcoming trip to the continent; the first named is “Thomas Earl of Sussex.” In the summer of 1577, Sussex promised to speak to the Queen on behalf of Oxford’s sister Mary Vere about her pending marriage to Peregrine Bertie.

In the summer of 1580, Sussex sent a personal letter to the Vice-chancellor of the

University of Cambridge urging him (unsuccessfully) to break the rules and allow Oxford’s players to perform plays previously acted before the Queen. A record from July 1581 indicates that Sussex had argued with the Earl of Leicester about Havering House and Park in the Forest of Waltham, the stewardship of which Oxford was pursuing as his ancestral right. Nelson concluded, “perhaps Sussex had taken his part in the argument.”³ The two men were distantly related, too. Thomas’s mother was Elizabeth Howard, a member of the Howard family of Oxford’s cousins and an aunt of Oxford’s uncle, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Thomas’s first wife, who died young in 1555, was Elizabeth Wriothesley, sister to Henry Wriothesley, 2nd Earl of Southampton, who was father to the 3rd Earl, Shakespeare’s only dedicatee. Sussex has no known link to William Adlington.

Links to Oxford, Golding and Shakespeare

Half a dozen writers of the era testified that Oxford delighted in learning.⁴ In his brief review of “The Life of L. Apuleius,” Adlington expresses appreciation for the original author’s “savery kinde of learninge, whiche delighteth, holdeth, and rejoyseth the Reader mervelously.” Oxford had been trained in oratory. Adlington especially praises “One excellent and copious oration conteinige all the grace and virtue of the art Oratorie.” Adlington credits Apuleius as being what “might woorthily be called [a] Polyhistor, that is to say, one that knoweth much or many things. [H]e learned Poetry, Geometry, Musike, Logicke, and the universall

To the right Honorable, and
 Mightie Lord, Thomas, Earle
 of Suffex, Viscont Fitz-
 walter, Lord of Cygremont
 and of Burrell, Knight of the
 most noble Order of
 the Garter,
 Justice of the Forestes and Chases,
 from Trente southward, and Capt-
 taine of the Gentlemen Pen-
 sioners, of the house of
 the Queene our So-
 veraigne Lady.



After that I had ta-
 ken upon me (right Hon-
 orable) in manner of that br-
 learned and foolish poet che-
 rillus, (who rashly, and br-
 audely, wrote a bigge vo-
 lume in verses of the gestes
 and valiant prowesse of A-
 lexander the great) to trans-
 late this present booke, con-
 sideringe the Metamorphose of Lucius Apuleius: beinge
 moved therunto by the right pleasant pastime, and de-
 lectable matter therein: I effones consulted with my
 selfe, to whome I might best offer so pleasant and sw-
 ete a worke, devised by the Autho, it beinge now bar-
 barously and simply framed in our Englishe tongue.

* And

knowledge of Philosophie, and studied not in vaine the nine Muses, that is to say, the nine noble & royall disciplines." Oxford had been tutored in just such a manner.

The subject of Adlington's book is right up the alley of a youngster reveling in spirited mythological tales. The dedication is full of references to classical figures, including the poet Cherillus, Alexander the Great, Actaeon, Diana, Tantalus, Atreus, Thiestes, Tereus, Progne, Icarus, Mydas, Bacchus and Phaeton. Adlington advertises "the jestinge and sportfull matter of the booke," which is in the manner of *Ovids Metamorphoses*.

Adlington offers a moral defense of his subject matter: "although the matter therein seeme very light, and mery, yet the effect thereof tendeth to a good and vertuous morall [whereby] the vertues of men are covertly thereby commended, and their vices discommended and abhored." Of such morals he provides ten examples. In discussing Adlington's "moralizing notes," Carver observed, "Arthur Golding had already addressed similar problems a year before Adlington in his introduction to *The Fyrst Fower Bookes of P. Ouidius Nasos worke, intituled Metamorphosis*."⁵ In our context, the two authors' parallel thematic treatments are perfectly natural. Carver then quoted several passages in which "Golding again anticipates Adlington."⁶ But Golding did not "anticipate" Adlington; in this instance, he *is* Adlington. We can explain the motivation for the moralistic

excuses, too: Oxford was a teenager, and both his uncle and his guardian were Puritans, so he excused his racy translations with claims of moral instruction.

The youth of the writer is reflected in his defense of the material: "the Poetes feigned not their fables in vaine, consideringe that children in time of their first studies, are muche allured thereby to proceede to more grave and deepe disciplines, whereas otherwise their mindes would quickly lothe the wise and prudent workes of learned men, wherein such unripe yeeres they take no sparke of delectation at all." In other words, "I may be reading comic books, but at least I'm reading." Oxford was sixteen years old at the time.

In "To the Reader," Adlington expresses the joy he had felt upon reading the original author's "pleasaunt and delectable jestes... written in suche a franke & flourishing stile, [producing] such exceedinge plentie of myrth, as never (in my judgement) the like hath bene showed by any other." Clearly, this author knows Latin as if it were his native language. He can even discern degrees of eloquence between texts in Latin and Greek. In "The Life of L. Apuleius," he calls Apuleius's "Dialogue of Trismegistus, translated by him out of Greeke into Latine, so fine, that it rather seemeth with more eloquence turned into Latine, then it was before written in Greke." Shakespeare likewise knew Latin and availed himself of books available only in Greek.⁷ There is documentary evidence that Oxford knew Latin well. Oxford visited German humanist scholar Johannes Sturm, known as Sturmius, in 1575, after which Sturmius wrote to Burghley, "As I write this I think of the Earl of Oxford, for I believe his lady speaks Latin also."⁸

Adlington casually remarks that he had reviewed versions of the book by "French and Spanish translators." The Earl of Oxford knew the former language; he wrote a letter in French to William Cecil in 1563 and received one from his nephew Robert Bertie in 1599. Shakespeare seems to have been familiar with the latter language: "it is well known that the main plot of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is based, directly or indirectly, on the episode of Felix and Felismena in the Spanish pastoral romance, *La Diana* (Valencia, 1559?) of Jorge de Montemayor."⁹

Arthur Golding (but only in *Ovids Metamorphoses*) and Shakespeare are renowned for coining new words, and Apuleius's capacity for doing so prompts shivers of delight from Adlington: "the Author had written his worke in so darke and highe a stile, in so strange and absurd words, and in such newe invented phrases, as... to show his magnificency of prose."

Many translators of the day wrote awkward prose, trying to maintain a literal rendering. Adlington is not among them. His prose is complex yet smooth. He describes his method of translation:

I have not so exactly passed thorough the Author, as to pointe every sentence accordinge as it is in Latine, or so absolutely translated every woorde, as it lieth in the prose.... considering the same in our vulgar tongue would have appeared very obscure and darke, & thereby consequently, lothsome to the Reader, but nothing erringe as I trust from the given and naturall meaning of the author....

This declaration is in keeping with the freewheeling, as opposed to literal, approach employed in Arthur Golding's *Ovids Metamorphoses*.

Adlington crafts an "as...so" comparison, thirteen years before John Lyly's *Euphues* made a habit of it:

But as Lucius Apuleius was chaunged into his humaine shape by a Rose, the compaignions of Ulisses by great intercession, and Nabuchodonoser by the continuall prayers of Daniell, whereby they knewe them selves, and lived after a good & vertuous life: So can we never be restored to the right figure of our selves, except we taste and eate the sweete Rose of reason and virtue, which the rather by mediation of prayer, we may assuredly attaine.

Observe the reference to a Bible story. Walls made a case that Adlington's craft is deeper than one might imagine: "Addington introduces a number of subtle modifications" to the original work that result in parallels to the Biblical ideas of "Heaven...the Song of Solomon...the body of...Christ [and] the resurrection of the redeemed in Revelation 19:7-9...."¹⁰ It seems that Oxford at this young age was already doing what scholars have recognized in Shakespeare: weaving together seminal influences, including biblical ones, to achieve a multilayered effect.

"Shakespeare's Favorite Novel"

The Bard used Adlington's book as source material. "*The Golden Ass* by Apuleius is often viewed as a leading candidate for Shakespeare's source [for the] *Metamorphosis of a man into an ass*"¹¹ in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Yet the influence extends far further:

As long ago as 1807, Francis Douce discerned a relationship between the witches in *Macbeth* ('grease that's sweaten / From the murderer's gibbet,' iv. i. 65–6) and Pamphile's tendency to cut 'the lumps of flesh from such as were hanged' (AA 3. 17). Douce noted that Adlington's translation was 'a book certainly used by Shakespeare on other occasions'; but it was not until the 1940s that interest was renewed. In a ground-breaking study, D.T. Starnes detected Apuleian influence in one of Shakespeare's poems (*Venus and Adonis*) and eight of his plays....¹²

In *Shakespeare's Favorite Novel: A Study of 'The Golden Ass' as Prime Source*, J. J. M. Tobin confirms and extends Starnes' discoveries, concluding that Shakespeare relied on Apuleius throughout his career, and made 'use of *The Golden Ass* in more than thirty of his works.' Indeed,

the importance to Shakespeare of Apuleius was 'scarcely surpassed by Holinshed, Ovid, and Plutarch.'¹³

In short, "Shakespeare's favorite novel" rivals Shakespeare's favorite poet, Ovid, for influence over the entire canon of Shakespeare.

Carver concluded, "the accumulated evidence of Apuleian presence in the Shakespearian corpus suggests that *The Golden Ass* exerted a profound influence, providing a rich resource of interactive elements which contributed to the proteanism of his own dramatic art."¹⁴ He tried to explain the influence: "It may be merely that Shakespeare's natural genius made him a particularly acute reader of *The Golden Ass*."¹⁵ That is one option. A better option is that Shakespeare wrote Adlington's book, in which case it is perfectly natural that he would have drawn time and again from another of the translations he did as a youngster.

Perfect Timing

Consider how well the timing of this translation fits the Earl of Oxford's activities. "Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex, is listed among the nobles who accompanied Elizabeth to Oxford in 1566...."¹⁶ "The queen had arrived at Oxford on August 31 for a six-day royal visit, culminating in the cap-and-gown ceremony on Friday, September 6 [when] de Vere, Cecil, and ten other courtiers and diplomats...receive[d] master's degrees."¹⁷ So, the Earl of Sussex was at the university with the Earl of Oxford from August 31 through September 6, 1566. Just twelve days later, Adlington signs his dedication to Sussex "From Universitie Colledge in Oxforde the. xviii. of September. 1566." That temporal juxtaposition put Anderson on the true author's trail. In an endnote, he wrote, "The coincidence between de Vere's trip to Oxford in early September 1566 and the appearance, in mid-September, of 'Adlington's translation of Apuleius certainly deserves more research."¹⁸ The discussion here fills in the case for Oxford's authorship of the book.

Based on the foregoing analysis, one might entertain something akin to the following scenario: Oxford had been translating *the Golden Ass* that summer. He brought his work with him to the university, where he lodged in the presence of his closest ally, Sussex. He stayed on for two weeks following the graduation ceremony to complete the project. He penned a dedication to Sussex, headed back home with the manuscript and conveyed it to the printer.

An Unqualified Mr. Adlington

There is no entry for the writer William Adlington in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and nothing of his life is on the record: "Adlington himself has proved to be an elusive figure. Although he signs his dedicatory epistle 'From University Colledge in Oxenford, the xviii. of September, 1566', he has left no trace in the university

or college archives.”¹⁹

Someone with his name did die, though. “The Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury contain the will of William Adlington or Adlyngton, Gentleman,”²⁰ which is presumably identical to the will “By me Willyam N Adlington” of London, dated April 14, 1571, and posted among the U.K.’s National Archives. The document contains nothing²¹ linking this person, even remotely, to the book. Carver noted, “The will makes no mention of books or literary activity, and there is nothing to tie the testator to the translator beyond the fact that the death date would explain our Adlington’s disappearance from the literary scene.”²² This Mr. Adlington indeed must have been quite young, because he leaves items to the care of his mother, uncle and aunt. There is, however, no indication that “our” Adlington graced the literary “scene” and no explanation for why someone on said scene would have published nothing else during the five years he lived following the publication of the book. All we have is a name on a one-off project and an uncorroborating document.

Based on Oxford’s usual method of using allonyms, it is likely he borrowed Adlington’s name from a real person. The dying Adlington’s young age accommodates the possibility that the man whose will is in the archives is the one who lent his name to Oxford’s project.

Assessment and Influence

Critics have strongly praised Adlington’s skills as a translator. One reviewer exclaimed, “I think the translation better than the original.”²³ Another remarked, “his translation is often better literature than the work of Apuleius, seeing that it is always fresh, direct, and simple.”²⁴ One scholar used words much like those commonly applied to Arthur Golding’s *Metamorphoses*: “His prose is bold and delightful. [He] was one among the host of translators that made the Elizabethan era the ‘golden age of translations.’”²⁵ The translation provided inspiration for the Elizabethan era’s second-best poet, Edmund Spenser, who built a portion of *The Faerie Queene* substantially from the translation issued in Adlington’s name.²⁶

I think we now know what Oxford was doing between 1565 and 1567, the years he issued the two parts of Arthur Golding’s *Ovids Metamorphoses*: He was translating another book about metamorphoses. Both efforts helped make him Shakespeare.

The article is excerpted from the “Early Voices” portion of Oxford’s Voices (oxfordvoices.com).

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- ¹⁴ Id. at 444.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ John Nichols’s *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. II (Oxford University Press, 2014), 573n.
- ¹⁷ Mark Anderson, “*Shakespeare*” by Another Name (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 32.
- ¹⁸ Id. at 440.
- ¹⁹ Carver, 298.
- ²⁰ Id. at 299.
- ²¹ Based on a rendition into type by researcher Geoff Williamson, sent to me by email, August 2 and September 11, 2022.
- ²² Carver, 299.
- ²³ Lathrop, *Translations*, 159-160, as quoted in Carver, 314.
- ²⁴ E.B. Osborn, Introduction, *The Golden Asse of Lucius Apuleius*, reprint of 1639 edition, London, p.xv, as quoted in Carver, 314.
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Breaking News: De Vere Annotated Books from Audley End

by Roger Stritmatter

[Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the *De Vere Society Newsletter* earlier this year, and is reprinted here with their kind permission.]

Thanks to research made possible by a recent grant from the De Vere Society, three newly discovered books containing annotations by Edward de Vere are now yielding fresh insights into the creative dynamics of Shakespeare's literary imagination for two of his Roman plays, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. They also contain names, plot elements, themes, and motifs prominent in other plays, especially *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale* and *Coriolanus*. The books are folio-sized first editions of Appian's *An Ancient History and Exquisite Chronicle* (1551, Paris) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities* (1546, Paris), and a 1587 French edition of François De La Noue's *Discourses Politique et Militaires*. Both folio editions were designed for annotation, with extra-wide margins for that purpose.

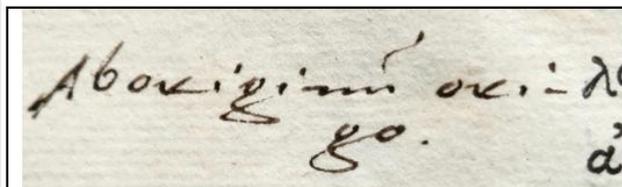
Now housed at the great estate of Audley End in Saffron Walden, Essex (managed by English Heritage), the three volumes were first discussed by John Casson and William Rubinstein in their 2016 book, *Sir Henry Neville Was Shakespeare*, and later, somewhat more systematically, by Ken Feinstein in his blog (<http://kenfeinstein.blogspot.com/>). In this article I will focus on the Dionysius and Appian volumes and the annotations in them.

Both the Dionysius and the Appian volumes were annotated by two persons (Figure 1).

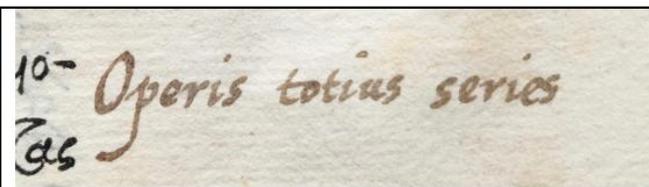
The first annotator has been identified as Sir Henry Savile (1549-1622), a scholar and translator who was briefly imprisoned in the wake of the 1601 Essex Rebellion. For the purposes of this article I do not question that attribution—it is the identity of the second annotator, and the connections of these annotations to Shakespeare, that are considered here.

Casson and Rubinstein, and Feinstein, identified him as Sir Henry Neville (1564-1615), under the dubious assumption that, since most of the 17th century books that arrived at Audley End in the early 20th century came from Neville's estate in Berkshire, Neville himself must have made the annotations. A historian, diplomat and Essex sympathizer, Neville (like Savile) was jailed in the Tower of London along with Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, following the abortive 1601 uprising. How the books came into Neville's possession in the first place remains an enigma, but the volumes do contain clues that can help provide a plausible answer.

The second annotator made about a thousand notes in the two volumes, some of them quite lengthy. Starting in the Dionysius volume, the annotations trace a long arc of Roman history, from Aeneas's founding of Lavinium and pact with the Latins (*Latinos*) to the abandonment of Romulus and Remus and their raising by shepherds (*pastoribus*), moving on (in Appian) to Caesar's conquest of Gaul and Brittany and his assassination, Cicero's prosecution of Cataline, the rise to power of Caesar's adopted heir Octavius, the rivalries within the power-sharing Second Triumvirate and its conflict with Pompey and Menas, Antony's relationship with Cleopatra, and the battles of Philippi and Actium. They conclude with annotations on the reigns of Claudius (51-54 CE), Nero (54-68), and



A: Sir Henry Savile: *Aboriginum origo.*



B: Second annotator: *Operis totius series.*

Figure 1. [A] Sir Henry Savile's note (left) in his spare, schematic, and somewhat obscure script (Latin above Greek) as contrasted to [B] the second annotator's precise calligraphic hand, including artful variations in the angle of nib to produce thicker or thinner elements in a line (right). Savile notes something about the aboriginal population of what became Rome and the Roman empire. The second note summarizes Dionysius's proposed design for

his narrative: "The sequence of the entire work (operis totius)" From Dionysius pp. 7-8. The differences between the two annotations, with one focused on content and the other on structure, are somewhat characteristic. Savile thinks like an ethnographer or historian; the second annotator, like a rhetorician and a dramatist. [All photos of Audley End annotations courtesy the Estate of Audley End, English Heritage, and Louise Newman.]

Vespasian (69-79). In many cases, and for many interconnected reasons, the annotations exhibit the mind of a dramatist preparing to write such masterworks as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, plays for which Appian is a well-acknowledged and influential source, second only to Plutarch's *Lives*.

The Casson-Rubinstein book was brought to my attention by Jan Scheffer at the 2019 SOA Conference in Hartford, Connecticut. Scheffer, an Oxfordian (and member of the SOF and DVS) suggested that the

annotations they attributed by to Neville might instead be in Oxford's hand. In a 2022 presentation for the Shakespeare Authorship Trust at the Globe Theatre, I established that the annotations in question are not in Neville's handwriting. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate systematic differences—those that denote the existence of more than one writer—between the questioned document sample and samples of Neville's known handwriting.

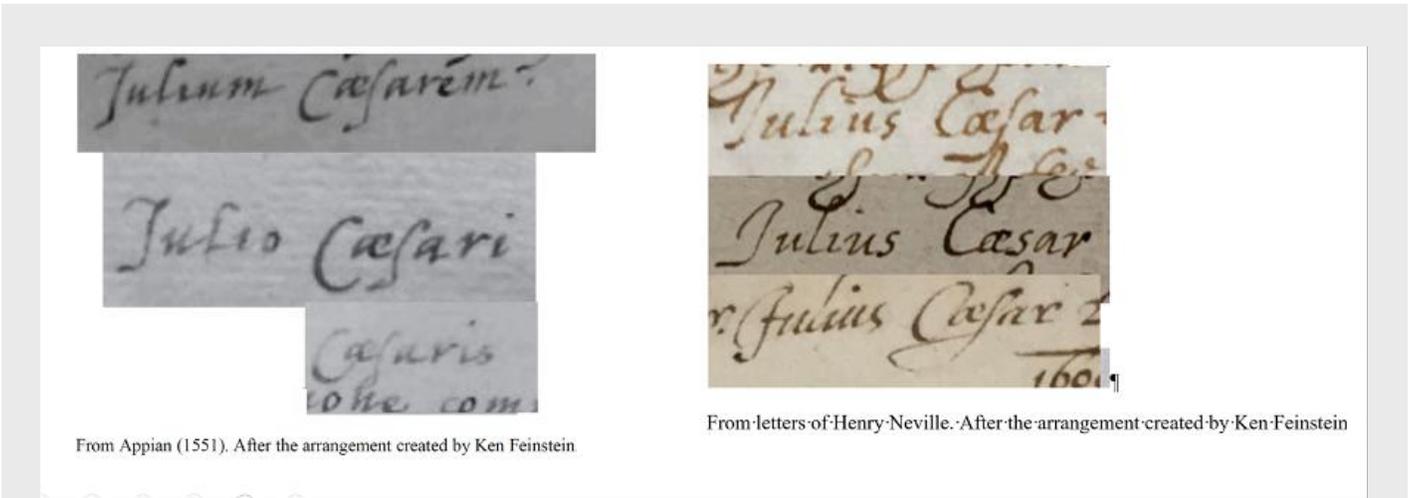
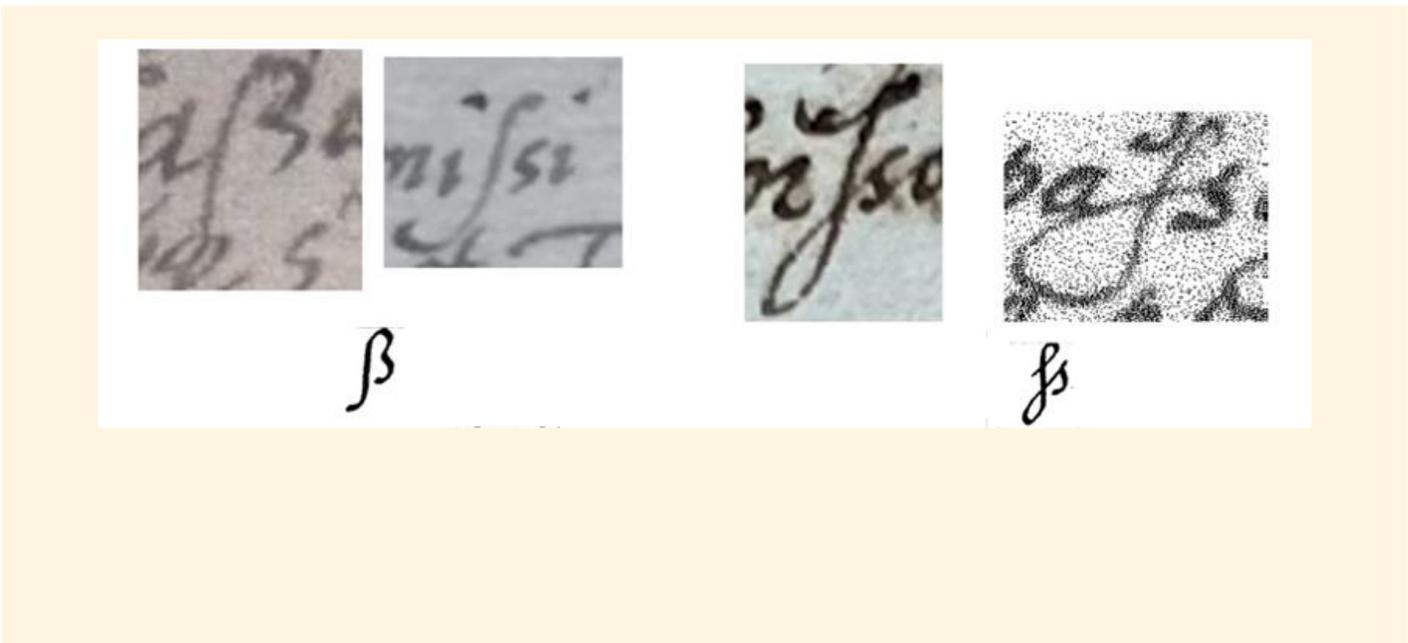


Figure 2. Systematic differences between the Audley End annotations (left) and Neville's hand (right) cast serious doubt on whether Neville wrote the annotations.



On October 21, 2022, with the assistance of Dorna Bewley and English Heritage curator Dr. Peter Moore, Shelly Maycock and I made more than a thousand new high-resolution photos of many hundreds of annotations, mainly from the Dionysius and Appian books. These are mostly in Latin, but also contain many words and phrases in Greek and, sometimes, mixed Latin-Greek constructions, which summarize the Greek original in a few words (see example below). This article is not intended to offer a systematic evaluation of all the annotations, still less a forensic demonstration proving that they are definitively in Oxford's hand. Readers even somewhat familiar with his handwriting will recognize many points of similarity in the samples which follow. In place of a forthcoming full forensic study of the handwriting, Figure 4 supplies an abbreviated demonstration that the annotator is Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

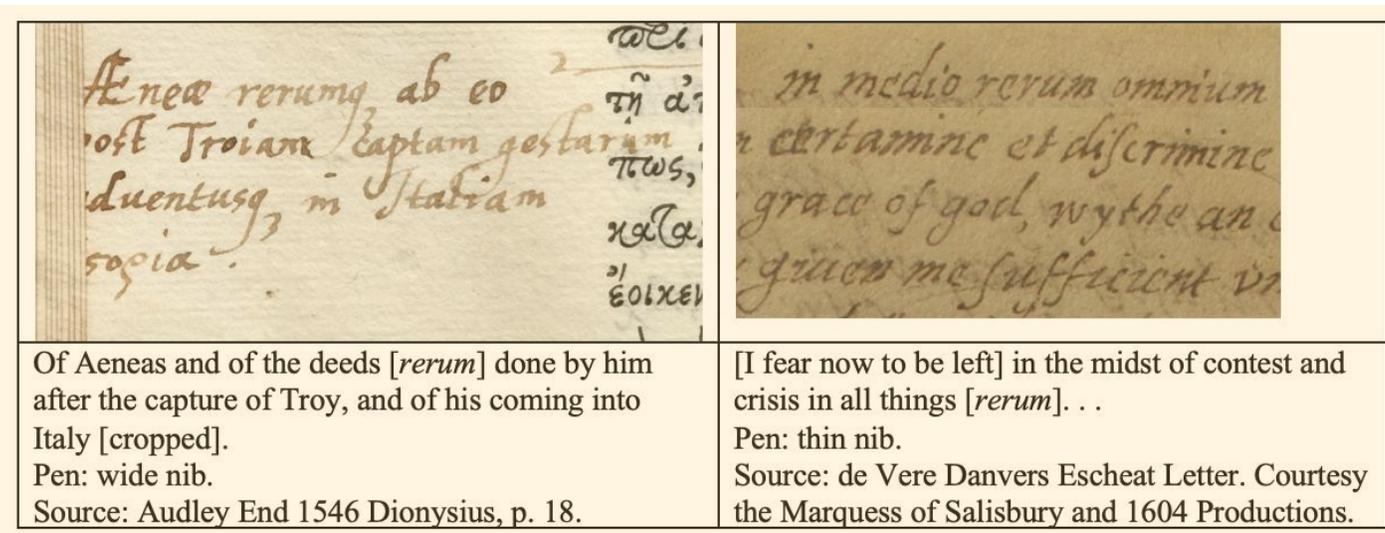


Figure 4. Audley End annotation (left) compared to a Latin phrase in Edward de Vere's 1602 Danvers Escheat Letter (right).

Unlike the annotations in de Vere's Geneva Bible, which preserve a record of private devotional readings, those found in the Dionysius and Appian volumes trace *dramatis personae*, speeches, motifs, and plot elements from historical sources known to have influenced the Shakespearean plays. The dramatist's pulse is palpable in these notes, which pay close attention to moments of crisis, conflict, psychology, and rhetoric, including many that are directly applicable to the design and emphases of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. For example, the annotator tracks Appian's account of speeches by several historical figures with the notation *oratio* (Figure 5).

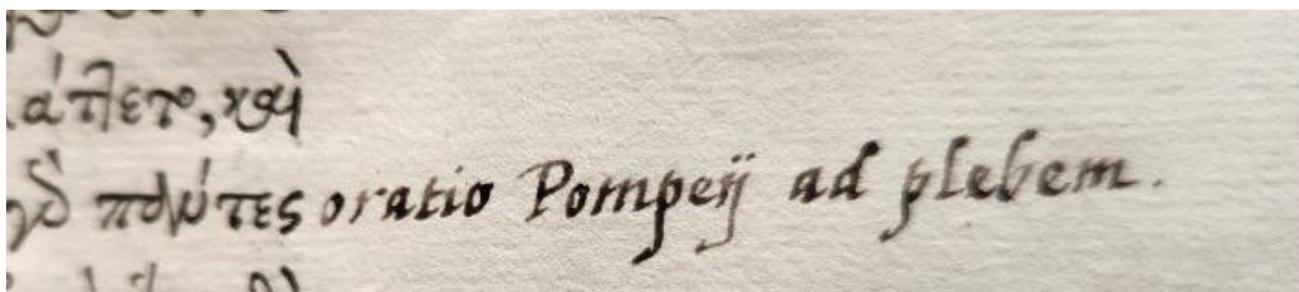


Figure 5. The Speech [oratio] of Pompey to the people. Appian, p. 3.

The annotator devoted his closest attention to the construction of Mark Antony's funeral oration, a speech long known to have been influenced by Appian's theatrical account. According to Stuart Gillespie in his *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources* (2001), "in both [plays] Appian supplements Plutarch with details not readily available elsewhere; *Julius Caesar* uses him especially for the portrayal of Antony, in particular for Antony's funeral oration on Caesar, which has similarly theatrical, almost operatic qualities in both writers" (18). The annotator

made two separate notes about the funeral oration, including one in which Antony's reading of Caesar's will has "again aroused" the anger of the people (Figure 6):

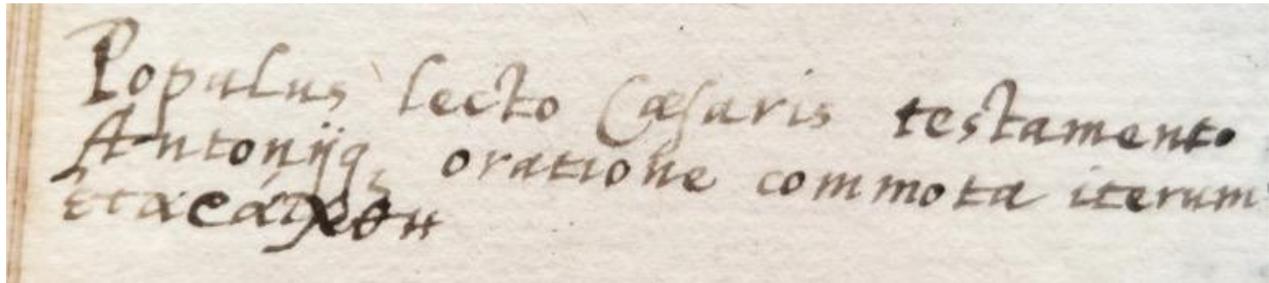


Figure 6. The will of Caesar having been read, and the power of Antony's eloquence having been stirred, the people were again agitated (ἐταράχθη). Appian, 170. Thanks to Charles Beauclerk for help with this translation.

The annotator has paid precise attention to narrative and rhetorical elements for which Gillespie says Shakespeare owes a special debt to Appian. Several annotations, for example, detail the two great battles—Philippi and Actium—that take place in the two plays. The entire fifth act of *Julius Caesar* concerns the Battle of Philippi (42 BCE) and the circumstances by which Brutus and Cassius were defeated. Figure 7 illustrates one of the relevant notes about this battle:

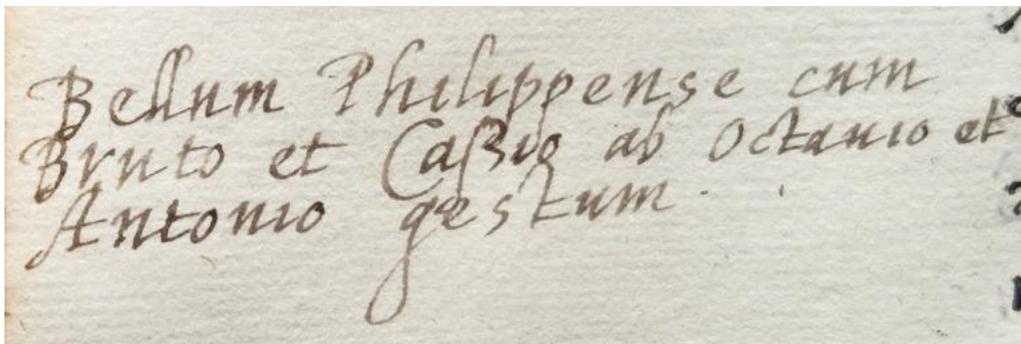


Figure 7. The battle at Philippi with Brutus and Cassius waged by Octavius and Antony. Appian 234.

Gillespie states that the influence of Appian on *Antony and Cleopatra* "is more minor" than that on *Julius Caesar*, but one wonders if this alleged difference may be the result of insufficient scholarly attention to Appian's original Greek text. After all, the mantra of orthodox Shakespeare studies is "small Latin and less Greek." For example, there is a note on the death of Mark Antony's Roman wife Fulvia (Figure 8):

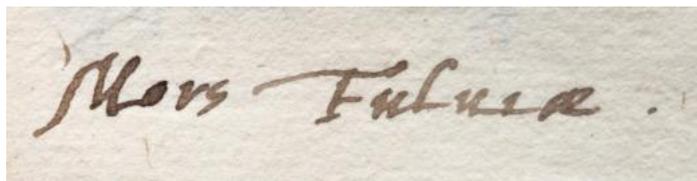


Figure 8. The death of Fulvia. Appian, 250.

In the third scene of the play, Cleopatra and Antony discuss this death: "Can Fulvia die?" asks Cleopatra. "She's dead, my queen . . . see when and where she died" (1.3.57-62). While Plutarch also depicts the news of Fulvia's death being delivered to Antony, the concentrated focus of this annotation demands that we read Appian more closely alongside Plutarch to discover if the influence of the former on this or other scenes has been underestimated.

There are many deaths in these two plays, but by far the most consequential is the suicide of Cleopatra herself. In both the play's sources and the play her motive for suicide is to avoid being paraded as a war captive in Rome. The annotator has once again anticipated Shakespeare's emphasis (Figure 9).

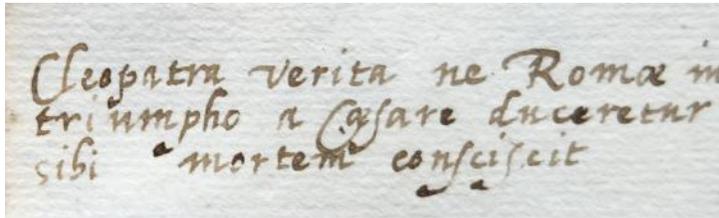


Figure 9. Fearing lest she be led in triumph by Caesar in Rome, Cleopatra kills herself. Appian 306.

Many more annotations of like significance can be cited. In my opinion, it is safe to say that they reveal aspects of the creative process by which Shakespeare transformed his sources into the fully assimilated designs of his plays. Both leading motifs and many highly particular names yield their significance from the larger context and the strength of their accumulation. In addition to the eponymous title characters, the following names from *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Julius Caesar*, and other plays, occur at least once in the Appian or Dionysius annotations: Ptolemy, Augustus, Pompey, Portia, Lepidus, Octavius Caesar, Octavia, Marcus Brutus, Decimus Junius Brutus, Cassius, Lucius, Trebonius, Dolabella, Menas, Marcus Crassus, Ventidius, Cato, Cicero, Herod, Comagene, Cimber, Nero, Maecenas, Messala, Bochus, Tauros, Caesarion, Proculeius, Scaurus, Mithridates, Pacorus, and Orodes. The following place names—all appearing in Shakespeare’s works—also appear in the annotations: Armenia, Alexandria, Syria, Cilicia, Actium, Philippi, Brundisium, Ionia, Cappadocia, Pannonia, Rhodes.

In addition to those already noted, the Appian book includes many annotations anticipating motifs and themes from the Roman plays, including the murderous confusion of the two Cinnae in *Julius Caesar*, Portia’s proving her fortitude by self-harm, torture and killing of messengers, corruption of imperial offices, triumphs, intercepted messages, positive attitudes towards exile, proscriptions, plots, secret pacts, dissimulation, the distribution of honors, the risks of writing poetry and history, Pompey’s command by sea, conflict between members of the Triumvirate, the suicides of Antony and Brutus at Philippi, Antony’s “delights” (*deliciae*) in Egypt, political desertion, Antony’s envy of Ventidius’s conquests in Parthia, the Battle of Actium, Antony’s burning of his ships, Antony and Cleopatra’s flight from the battle, and Cleopatra’s feigning suicide as the cause of Mark Antony’s suicide. Categories of annotation include law (*lex, leges*), prodigies and omens (*prodigia, portenta*), deaths, political intrigue, battles, suicide, and speeches (*orationes*). Indeed, throughout the annotator tracks “speeches,” just as Shakespeare did while composing his version of Mark Antony’s funeral oration with the help of Appian. Unfortunately, it’s in the handwriting of the wrong man! . . . a comedy of errors.

To conclude on a personal note, having taught these two Roman plays many times in my Shakespeare class

at Coppin State University—where the luminous films of Gregory Doran’s masterful 2012 RSC production of *Julius Caesar* and Barry Avrich’s 2015 Stratford (Ontario) production of *Antony and Cleopatra* are favorites—I’m struck by the intimate relevance these annotations hold for the study of these plays. They provide historical, dramaturgical, and thematic connections not only to *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, but also *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *Coriolanus*. They constitute a prolegomenon to *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* and reveal glistening sparks of the creative process by which these and many other plays were generated. Reading the annotations is like having a small glimpse into the workshop of Shakespeare’s mind.

Readers are encouraged to stay tuned for further exciting revelations of the annotated books of Audley End!

I extend my thanks to the Audley End Estate and English Heritage, Dr. Peter Moore, and the De Vere Society for supporting this ongoing research. I also thank Charles Beauclerk for his assistance with the Latin translations.

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Is Shakespeare Bigger Than a Breadbox?

by Patrick Sullivan

In the eighteenth century, the clergyman and amateur mathematician Thomas Bayes discovered a way to solve puzzles that survives in a popular party game known as Twenty Questions. (The title I have given to this essay is adapted from a common starter question in the game.) The Answerer thinks of something, and the Questioner tries to guess it by using a series of up to twenty yes-or-no questions. For example:

Answerer: I'm thinking of a city somewhere in the world, with a population of at least 100,000. Which city is it?

- Q1: Is it in Europe? A: No
 Q2: Is it in North America? A: Yes
 Q3: Is it in the United States? A: Yes
 Q4: Is it east of the Mississippi River? A: No
 Q5: Is it east of the Rocky Mountains? A: No
 Q6: Is it north of Las Vegas, Nevada? A: Yes
 Q7: Is it north of Salt Lake City? A: Yes
 Q8: Is it north of Spokane? A: No
 Q9: Is it Boise, Idaho? A: Yes.

The important thing to note about the game is that uses binary reasoning, which is the way computers “think.” The example Bayes used to illustrate his theorem was similar. He showed how a blindfolded person could determine the location of a cue ball on a billiards table by being given information about the comparative locations of other balls—north, south, east, or west of both the cue ball and each other. Today it's known as Bayesian Search Technique.

Bayes created an algebraic equation to solve the puzzle of the cue ball's location. It's a method of eliminating possibilities, until you reach an answer with a very high probability of being correct. It wasn't until the twentieth century that the computing power existed to make much practical use of his formula. These techniques were employed during World War II to help crack the “Enigma Code” used by the Germans to position their U-boats. Now, with our much superior computing capabilities, Bayesian statistical reasoning is in evidence almost everywhere—medical diagnoses, financial analysis, engineering, rocketry, prosecution of crimes, positioning of infielders in Major League Baseball games, even in computer matching of romantic couples.

It's the method that astrophysicist Peter Sturrock and engineer Paul Chambers have separately used to resolve some of the mysteries surrounding Shakespeare and his works. Sturrock entered the fray in 2013 with a

book, *AKA Shakespeare: A Scientific Approach to the Authorship Question*; Chambers wrote an article, “Employing Mathematics to Identify the Real Shakespeare,” which appeared in *The Oxfordian* 24 (2022), and is discussed below.

As I know from personally debating Stratfordians of the Oxfraud variety, statistical analysis is a method that they deeply fear. Such a fear sets them apart from educated people in other fields. Oxfordians can exploit this disjunction between literature experts and those in scientific and tech fields. Statistical analysis is now widely taught in colleges and even in many high schools, to students who are also likely to be reading Shakespeare. To reach this audience, we should be making a serious effort to present our research in forms that will be readily seen by them as valid. Bayesian techniques are not the only ways to calculate probabilities; several alternative statistical tests can be used, and hybrids of different statistical approaches are common.

Another example of using statistical analysis involved an authorship question, namely in connection with the Federalist Papers, the series of late eighteenth-century essays published pseudonymously in support of ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Historians had agreed on the authorship of most of the eighty-five papers, but as to twelve there was no agreement as to whether they were by Alexander Hamilton or James Madison (their writing styles were quite similar).

The mystery had captivated statistician Frederick Mosteller of Harvard for years. In 1955 he enlisted the help of a young University of Chicago statistics expert, David Wallace. They had a large set of data: 94,000 words used by Hamilton in his writings, and 114,000 by Madison. But they were looking for just a few that were separately characteristic of the two men. They also had much increased computer speeds available than what the Enigma codebreakers had had a decade and a half earlier. After several years of work Mosteller and Wallace learned of the existence of a 1916 paper that showed that Madison used “whilst” and Hamilton's “while.”

A hand count undertaken by 100 student volunteers showed that Hamilton used “upon” about twice per paper, and Madison almost never used the word. Further hunting found that Hamilton used “enough” and Madison never used it. They also found differences in the usage between the two authors of such common words as “there,” “on,” “may” and “his.” After ten years of work, Mosteller and Wallace concluded that Madison had written all twelve of the disputed articles.

The weakest result (for Federalist #55) still favored Madison by odds of 240 to 1.

In his 2022 paper in *The Oxfordian*, Paul Chambers cites a 2007 paper by three Dartmouth students (Seletsky, Huang and Henderson-Frost) that used language analytics to test for character usage, word lengths and unique words in the Shakespeare canon against those found in the writings of Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe and Edward de Vere. The young scholars found that there was little similarity for Bacon and Marlowe, but were surprised by the results for de Vere's known poetry (none of his plays survive under his own name).

In word-length analysis of poetry by de Vere and Shakespeare's poems, the Dartmouth students found such similarity that they could not reject the hypothesis that the same author wrote both (that's the way statisticians talk). In their metric of "proportion of unique words" (those used only once) they found clear differences for both Marlowe and Bacon against Shakespeare, and could reject both men as being the author we know as Shakespeare. For de Vere's poetry versus Shakespeare's it was virtually identical numbers; Shakespeare's unique word usage ratio to total words was .30, deVere's was .31.

Those results inspired Chambers to run some tests of his own. First, he did "text mining" analysis for nine poets contemporary with Shakespeare and threw in Ogden Nash and Walt Whitman for fun. The procedure is too complex for me to explain it here, but it produced some results that make sense. For instance, the works used for Ben Jonson and Francis Beaumont, who worked together, "cluster" mathematically. So do three broken-up groups of fifty sonnets each (it would be highly suspicious if they didn't). The works of Ogden Nash and Walt Whitman also cluster together, since both wrote much later and were Americans.

Chambers broke up *Lucrece* into three parts, and *Venus and Adonis* into two, since they are epic poems. Here there was a stunner; Oxford's 4,000 words of known poetry—all composed, it is believed, before 1593—cluster nearest one of the segments of *Lucrece*, as well as near both of the *Venus and Adonis* segments. I find this stunning, since Oxford stops writing (under his own name) just as Shakespeare makes his first appearance on the scene. That Oxford's early writing does not cluster near the Shakespeare sonnets is consistent with each of those bodies of work being written by persons of different ages. This statistical result fits the Oxfordian theory quite well.

Chambers begins his Bayesian summary conclusion with a starting probability of only 5% for Oxford's authorship, versus 95% for Shakspeare of Stratford-on-Avon. (This starting point, I might add, is an incredible act of bending over backwards to the Stratfordian establishment). However, the key to Bayesian analysis is to revise one's prior beliefs and estimates in light of

new evidence. When Chambers introduces such new evidence as the beginning date for publication of the Shakespeare name (*Venus and Adonis*, 1593; there are no known literary writings of Oxford after this date, even though he lived another eleven years out of the public eye), the probability for Oxford rises.

Using a Bayesian probability calculator, Chambers calculates the chance that Oxford merely "retired" from writing in 1593 at the age of 43 to be 6.9% (0.069). Incorporating this fact into the formula for Bayesian inference, to update our cumulative figure, raises Oxford's chance of being Shakespeare up to 43%. And, as he is comparing Oxford and Shakspeare to each other, that lowers the latter's odds to 57%, as the numbers must sum to 100%.

Plays now identified as Shakespeare's appeared at an average rate of about two per year during the 1590s until 1604. Then there was a hiatus until another was made public in 1608. If Oxford was not the author, then his death should have no effect on the publication schedule, but there is a statistical correlation with these two facts. This requires the Oxfordian probability to be updated. Chambers now finds the probability of de Vere's authorship to be 92%, dropping the Stratford man's to 8%.

At this point Chambers returns to the results of the 2007 Dartmouth students' study where, in a statistical comparison with Marlowe and Bacon, Oxford comes closest to Shakespeare in all three categories tested. The probability of that happening by chance is calculated by multiplying the odds (1 in 3) for each of three tests: one chance in 27, or 3.7%. Incorporating that figure into his cumulative Bayesian figure raises Oxford's score to 99.7%, and lowers Shakspeare's to .3%.

All this hasn't even considered things like Oxford and Hamlet both being captured by pirates, Oxford's father-in-law being lampooned as Polonius, his description as the Italianate Englishman and so on. Unless someone can come up with a lot of new evidence, or produce an alternate (and scientifically valid) statistical calculation, we are left with a mathematical near-proof that Oxford wrote the works of Shakespeare.

Although the math above (even highly oversimplified) may be off-putting to many, there will soon be clearer methods available to those of us who have forgotten high-school algebra. Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) look to be capable of turning all of us into computer programmers using only our native tongues. At least that is how I interpret recent statements by no less an authority than Bill Gates, who famously said in the early days of Microsoft's march to PC dominance that he wanted to make using a computer so easy his mother could do it.

With the advent of applications like ChatGPT, Google Bard and Bing Chat we're getting close to that Gatesian standard for programming. I recently (for the

first time, at age 75) engaged in conversations with AI bots, and am impressed with the potential I see. Clearly, this technology is just in its infancy, but looking back on tech developments of the last couple of decades, I foresee a brave new world ahead. Stratfordians will definitely not find this a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Consider: in my first interaction with ChatGPT—once I'd learned how to talk productively with it—I got its bot to actually perform Bayesian calculations of the probability of an unnamed 16th century English playwright sprinkling his work with highly detailed descriptions of Italian/Mediterranean geography, topography, locations and customs, both without and with having traveled to Italy.

The results of the bot's first pass at it were: For a playwright who had only a 1% likelihood of ever having left England, there was a 5% probability of having observed first-hand the fifteen details I'd supplied. If we increased the likelihood of this playwright having left England to 5%, that raised the probability of first-hand observation of those same Italianate details to 23%. Finally, for a writer with a 99% likelihood of having traveled beyond England, the probability for first-hand observation was calculated to be 99.8%. That figure is consistent with the probabilities that both Peter Sturrock and Paul Chambers independently calculated for the Oxfordian authorship theory. (I stress that I did not give ChatGPT any playwright's name.)

With the much less sophisticated Google Bard, I asked a different question: What was its Bayesian probability calculation for the 3rd Earl of Southampton being the fair young man of Shakespeare's Sonnets? This was premised on: Shakespeare's dedications of the epic poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* to him (at a "prior probability" of 10%, as Bayesian calculation cannot begin at zero), the several physical descriptions in the sonnets of the youth that match surviving portraits of Southampton, and "most tellingly" the allusions in Sonnet 107 to Southampton's release from the Tower of London where he'd been imprisoned for his role in the Essex Rebellion of 1601, along with mention in that same poem of the death of Elizabeth I and the peaceful succession to the throne of England by James Stuart.

Taking into consideration those facts, Google Bard replied: "Therefore, we can conclude there is a high probability that Southampton is the 'fair young man' of the sonnets." I pressed it to come up with a number, and it eventually admitted it found it to be "90%." Both bots were at almost human pains to stress that their calculations were hypothetical, and not certainties. What was very *unhuman* was the speed with which ChatGPT responded favorably to my pointing out an error of reasoning on its part (actually, a sloppiness of language), and even thanked me for doing so. Nothing like that has ever happened in my interactions with Stratfordians.

All these results will not change the minds of many, if any, Stratfordians. As Upton Sinclair famously put it, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it." Nor will people with strong emotional commitment to an idea. But that should not be our goal. Our goal should be to make our case known to a wider world—the world of sentient, intellectually honest and educated people, whose minds have not been numbed by too many years of fingering the Stratfordian rosary.

Oxfordian scholars who are now working in colleges and universities are in an excellent position to enlist the help of colleagues with the requisite math skills in fields like economics, chemistry, biology, engineering, and theoretical physics. We don't have anything to fear from a broader investigation of literary history. In stark contrast to those who do, we look like intellectually respectable people.

Oxfordians of the world, unite! We have nothing to lose but our reputations for being strange.

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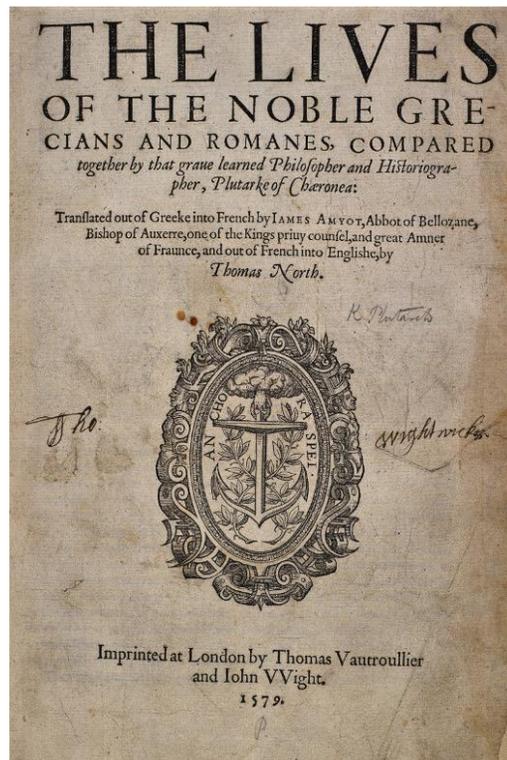


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Was Thomas North a Secretary to the Earl of Oxford?

by Matt Hutchinson

Sir Thomas North (1535-1603?) has become popular recently in authorship circles with the release of Dennis McCarthy and June Schlueter's academic publication *Thomas North's 1555 Travel Journal: From Italy to Shakespeare* (Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2022) and Michael Blanding's trade book documenting McCarthy's research, originally published in 2021 with the title *North by Shakespeare: A Rogue Scholar's Quest for the Truth behind the Bard's Work*, retitled in 2022 as *In Shakespeare's Shadow: A Rogue Scholar's Quest to Reveal the True Source behind Shakespeare's Plays* (Hachette Books; reviewed in the Spring 2021 issue of the *Newsletter*). It is worth looking at some of the connections between North and Oxford, as there is evidence suggesting North may have acted as a servant or secretary to the Earl:



- North is most famous for his English translation of *Plutarch's Lives* in 1579, a work that all scholars agree was used extensively by Shakespeare. Oxford bought a copy of Amyot's French translation of *Plutarch's Lives* in 1569, along with other books, including the Geneva Bible (Ward, 33). Roger Stritmatter's dissertation on the correlations between marked passages in Oxford's copy of the bible and the works of Shakespeare is well known. Oxford clearly had an interest in Plutarch as well.

Fig. 1. Thomas North's 1579 translation of *Plutarch's Lives*

- As noted by Jan Cole in the *De Vere Society Newsletter*, Sir Valentine Dale's correspondence with Lord Burleigh in 1575-76 mentions that Oxford and Thomas North were both staying at the French court. "From this it seems clear that Oxford and Roger and Thomas North are all in each other's company at this time" (Cole, 26).
- Oxford stayed with Thomas and the North family for four nights during Elizabeth's progress in 1579, the year North translated *Plutarch's Lives*. Oxford required eight carts to carry his belongings back to London (Dovey, 123). By this time Oxford had already gone a great way toward acquiring a "splendid reputation for nurture of the arts and sciences," as Professor Steven May put it, such as sponsoring the translation of *Cardanus Comfort* (May, 9).
- North appears to represent Oxford in 1591-92 in Oxford's lawsuit to be appointed gauger of vessels for beer and ale, suggesting North was acting as a servant or secretary to the Earl (Lockwood, 1). As Nina Green writes, a "document, in which North uses the phrases 'my Lord thinketh,' 'he thinketh,' 'differences betwixt the Earl & you for the proceeding in this suit,' '& yet he is afraid,' establish personal communication between Oxford and Sir Thomas North. . ." (Green, 1).
- In March 1591 North purchased a copy of his own 1582 book, *The Dial of Princes* (the third edition of his English translation of Antonio de Guevara's popular Spanish work), and made marginal notes in it that feature in several of Shakespeare's plays (McCarthy, 50). As noted by Quinn, at least two other hands contributed to the marginalia of that copy (Quinn, 284). North did not himself publish a subsequent edition, but a fourth edition of his *Dial of Princes* appeared in 1619 containing prefatory materials with the initials *A.M.*, believed to be Anthony Munday, a secretary

and servant of Oxford (Quinn, 285). From the early 1590s Munday was overseeing numerous translations and dramatic works, some of which, like *Primaleon of Greece*, were first published in 1619. The 1619 version of *Primaleon* also bore the initials *A.M.*, rather than Munday’s name. In the book’s dedication to Henry de Vere, Oxford’s son, *A.M.* praises Henry’s father and mentions “having sometime served that most noble Earl your father,” such that his identification as Anthony Munday is routinely accepted. *Primaleon* has been cited as a source for *The Tempest*, with Stratfordian scholar Gary Schmidgall noting no less than seventeen parallels between the two (Schmidgall, 1986). The play *Sir Thomas More*, the main body of which was written by Munday—and the handwritten additions to it by a fourth hand believed by numerous scholars to be by “Shakespeare”—is usually dated around this time also.

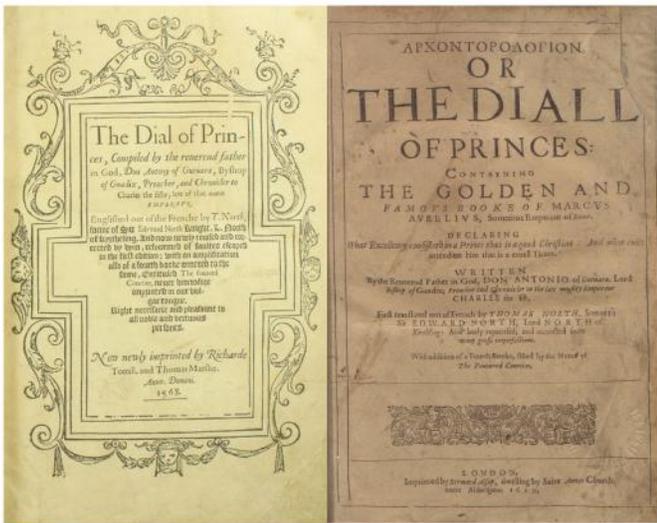


Fig. 2: Title pages of North’s second edition of *The Dial of Princes* (1568), and the fourth edition (1619).

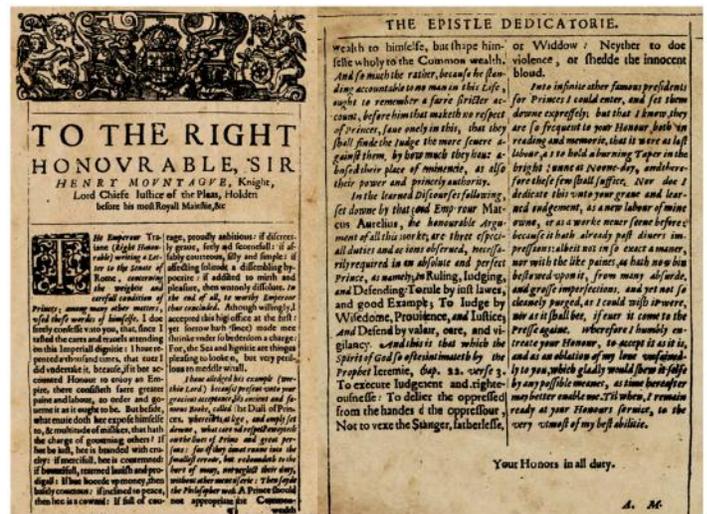


Fig. 3: “Epistle Dedicatorie” of the 1619 edition of *Dial of Princes*, signed *A.M.*

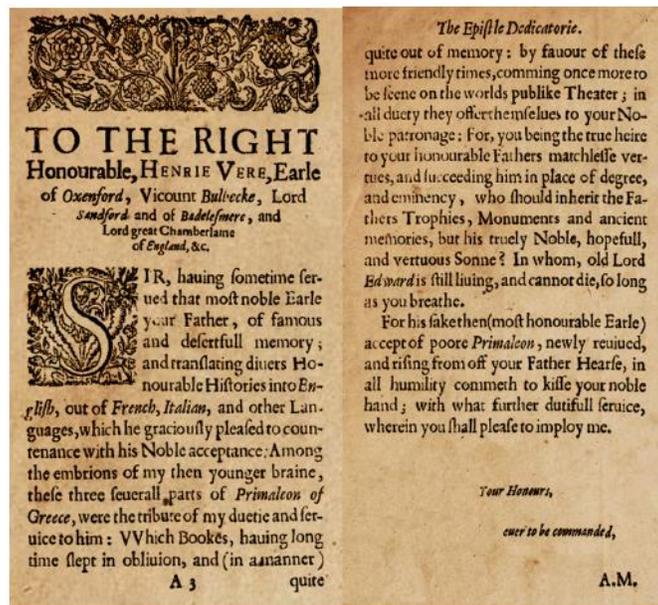


Fig. 4: “Epistle Dedicatorie” of the 1619 edition of *Primaleon* also signed by *A.M.*, who clearly states to the 18th Earl of Oxford that he had “sometime served that most noble Earl your father.”

While hardly conclusive, the evidence is suggestive that North moved in Oxford’s circle in the 1590s and may well have acted as a servant or secretary to the Earl in a similar capacity to that of Lyly and Munday. It will be interesting to see what else Blanding, McCarthy and Schlueter uncover.

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Play Review: *By My Will* by Douglas Post

Reviewed by Robert Prechter

By My Will, a comedy on the authorship question by award-winning playwright Douglas Post, debuted (after a couple of previews) at the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern on April 8. The Chicago-based playwright was on hand for a pre-show discussion. Post noted that he was personally involved in casting and rehearsals, which were handled primarily by the Tavern's President and Artistic Director, Jeffrey Watkins. (Their relationship goes back to their educations and early ventures.) Post is hopeful that the play will find other venues.

Though he is a Stratfordian, Watkins is content that the issue be aired, to which end he commissioned the play. He expressed a fear that Post might have slipped too close to the "dark side" of Oxfordianism, but Post publicly professes agnosticism on the subject.

The play opens with Anne Hathaway grousing at Will Shaksper over an inconveniently discovered copy of a will mentioning a certain "second-best bed." Shaksper, exhausted from the exchange, lies down and begins to dream. He finds himself in a room with John Lyly, Thomas Kyd and Kit Marlowe. Queen Elizabeth enters with Aemilia Bassano Lanier. To please the monarch, the playwrights try to act out Act III, Scene ii of *Hamlet*. Much grumbling and bumbling ensues. In the final moment of Act I, a new character enters and announces, "It is I, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford and the true author of the plays of William Shakespeare!"

Act II brings up the authorship question. De Vere, in a constant state of pique, makes his case for having written the Shakespeare plays. He is continually countered by Shaksper, but several exchanges throw the needle sharply in de Vere's direction. He rattles off a list of his direct connections to the plays: He studied law, he lived in Italy, he spent time at Court, he had access to exceptional

libraries as a youth, his life experiences show up in *Hamlet*, his brother-in-law went to Denmark and met Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius represents his father-in-law, he was acquainted with falconry, gardening, music and so on. In reply, Will can only say that he got his information from "books" and hanging out at the Mermaid Tavern. De Vere gets a robust laugh from the audience when he cries out in a haughty tone, "Oh, *the Mermaid Tavern!* Yes, of course! A veritable *fount of information*. A towering cathedral of higher counsel! If only I'd known, I could have saved myself all those tedious years at the two universities I attended!"

Yet Will has his moments. He is not as emotional as de Vere, and he expresses exasperation that this "Oxfraud" is trying to claim his honest, hard work. He declares that his father was an influential man who got him into Kings New School, providing him sufficient education. Oxfordians will recognize that Will's case is given too much credit on such points, yet Stratfordians will have a few reasons to grouse, too. Will neglects to mention, for example, that Ben Jonson listed "William Shakespeare" among the actors of *Sejanus*. One can only fit so much into a 100-minute play.

Along the way, de Vere professes that he contributed to the output of his "Wits," Lyly, Kyd and Marlowe, which I judge to be an enlightened view. Deep into Act II, Lanier steps forth and makes her own claims to having written Shakespeare's plays. The Queen utters the Stratfordian fallback, "Perhaps none of it really matters."

In an interesting twist, it is not Shaksper who wakes from the dream but de Vere, who explains to his wife Elizabeth that he had dreamt that Shaksper dreamt the bulk of the play. As de Vere sits in a melancholy mood, Will Shaksper enters and, after a pause, simply says, "I think it's time we had a chat." It's a poignant ending.

In sum, *By My Will* is a play for agnostics. Even so, I think it leaves Oxfordians more satisfied than their rivals, accurately reflecting the balance of evidence.

Book Reviews

Rima Greenhill, *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan: The Role of English-Russian Relations in Love's Labours Lost*;

McFarland (McFarlandBooks.com), 2023, 264pp.

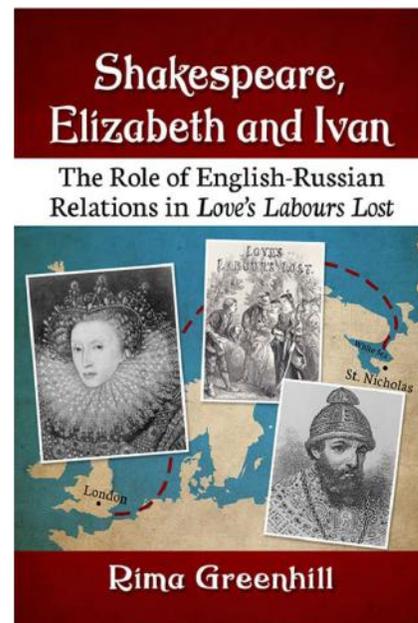
Reviewed by Michael Delahoyde

Love's Labours Lost may be Shakespeare's least playable play. As Rima Greenhill notes at the start of an introduction that displays her comprehensive knowledge of recent literature on *Love's Labours Lost* and indeed of the entire history of the scholarship, criticism, and theater history concerning the play, for centuries producers and directors have struggled—and failed—to salvage the bizarre work from its obscurity and inaccessibility. Some of the critical trashing is even amusing: it's got an "irritating preoccupation with language" (6); it's "an acquired taste at best" (5); it's "the darling of the Shakespearean lunatic fringe" (5). At first I thought that "the Shakespearean lunatic fringe" meant us, but then I remembered that very few Oxfordians adore the play, and recalled that Abel Lefranc did make much of *Love's Labours Lost* in his case for the Earl of Derby as Shakespeare. So Derbyites must be the representative "lunatics." But I digress.

Roger Ebert called Kenneth Branagh's 2000 film version (which included only about one-third of the actual play) "empty," and wrote, "It's no excuse that the starting point was probably the weakest of Shakespeare's plays. *Love's Labours Lost* is hardly ever performed on the stage and has never been previously filmed, and there is a reason for that: it's not about anything" (189). Not based on any source, the play seems an insignificant inclusion in the Shakespeare canon, except perhaps as a counterargument to assertions about Shakespeare's eternal relevance and universality. I tried to teach it to my undergraduates once in twenty-four years of Shakespeare classes, but the piece is too replete with puzzles, lost in-jokes, and sophisticated linguistic humor requiring a suffocating number of footnotes.

In *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan*, a breathtaking tour-de-force, Rima Greenhill rescues *Love's Labours Lost* and solves this 400-year-old enigma. She exhaustively demonstrates why it is a "problem play," why producers and directors have not known how to stage or film the thing. But she has discovered the key, the starting point being the "Masque of the Russians" (or the "Muscovites"), a portion of a scene frequently cut in productions, including Branagh's.

No prior scholarship on this play has come close to such a successful deciphering. Historians have not suspected that 16th-century Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations could be captured and given perspective in



dismissible theatrical comedy, and Shakespeare scholars have not suspected that the playwright could have had—and cared about—such insider Elizabethan court knowledge. *The Merchant of Venice* prompts scholars to investigate Judaism in the 16th century, while *Othello* raises questions of race; but when the courtiers disguise

themselves as Russians in the last scene of *Love's Labours Lost*, it all seems so goofy and arbitrary that no one before has suspected that it was revealing an important English cultural perspective of the time. Part of the reason for its escaping notice is because Shakespeare created a smokescreen, planting many false leads pointing toward the French court and Henri of Navarre, primarily in selecting names for those courtiers such as Berowne for the Duc de Biron.

In short, *Love's Labours Lost* is relentlessly topical, a cascade of subtle references to negotiations between England and Russia: diplomatic, political, mercantile, and even matrimonial. Ivan the Terrible sought much from the English, including the hand of their Queen, and her court established the Muscovy Company to benefit from trade with Russia. Greenhill provides us with a thorough and engaging history of Elizabethan-era Anglo-Russian relations, full of charming, horrific, and quirky matters of intrigue, including torture, filicide, secret messages in a vodka flask hidden under horses' manes, misdirection, shipwrecks, frozen sailors' corpses, herbology, Russian elk, the importance of certain exports, the spreading of false rumors of plague and of England losing to the Spanish Armada, and the nerve-wracking chess game of international nautical and mercantile negotiations. The tone of the book is just right: Greenhill unobtrusively lets the occasional amusing anecdotes or the horrific ironies speak for themselves. With a lucid style and effective pacing, she crafts a history with all the excitement of a historical novel and a literary analysis with all the exhilaration of a mystery novel.

With her knowledge of the Russian alphabet, etymologies, customs, and the personalities involved,

Greenhill seems able to explain every bizarre detail and phrase in *Love's Labours Lost*. I made pages of notes, but will supply here only a happy few of the revelations. Prospective readers will find themselves on a thrill-ride that newly dazzles them with Shakespeare's brilliance.

Perhaps the best-known bit of trivia concerning the play is that it contains one of the longest words in English: "honorificabilitudinitatibus," meaning, simply, "honorableness." Greenhill sees this as a swipe at Tsar Ivan's verbosity and the absurdly long and ostentatious string of titles he used for himself in correspondence. While Greenhill explains the absurd and self-important character Don Adriano de Armado as a depiction of Ivan the Terrible (with the name clue that St. Adrian was Ivan's patron saint), the character named Costard, a word that can signify the head, darkly alludes to Ivan's son Tsarevich Ivan, who at the age of twenty-seven was killed when his father gave him a blow to the head with his walking staff. References in the play to blinding and losing one's tongue allude obliquely to barbaric punishments in Russia reported to the English court. There is indeed a grim shadow behind this comedy.

The most notable triumph is that, for the first time in Shakespearean scholarship, the Pageant of the Nine Worthies (Act 5, scene 2) has been adequately explained. Traditionally, the Worthies were Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Joshua, King David, Judas Maccabeus, King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon, leader of the First Crusade. But Greenhill shows that in this "Pageant of the Nine Worthies, the courtiers are able to vent 'mean, childish, and vulgar' abuse at a group of characters" (184) that represent Ivan and his heirs—Ivan, Fyodor, and Dmitry—and successors, chiefly Boris Godunov. Greenhill identifies each character-actor and why he is representing his respective "Worthy." For example, the males in the audience, recently embarrassed by the savvy women, mercilessly heckle Nathaniel, who has been cast as Alexander. He represents Ivan's son Fyodor, who seems to have been a sort of "holy fool," "which makes him abandon the stage in fright and flee pursued by the mocking of the courtiers, much as Fyodor bolted for the door during his own coronation" (169).

A mystery to critics is why Holofernes, in crafting this dubious entertainment, has included and cast two non-canonical characters: Hercules and Pompey. The presentation of Moth as Hercules evokes the legend of Hercules having clubbed the three-headed dog of the Underworld, Cerberus, and, as a baby, strangled serpents in his hands. This, Greenhill shows, alludes to Ivan's son

Dmitry, who as a child pathologically killed animals (170).

Ultimately, the relentless heckling of the Worthies by the courtiers "is the playwright's revenge for all the injustices the English felt they had received at the hands of the Russians: wasted effort, lives and goods lost, privileges reneged, . . . envoys harassed, belittled, and rejected" (175), and Ivan's false promises. All the efforts of the English court, the ambassadors and envoys, the Muscovy Company—which lost power after Ivan's death—ended in vain (164).

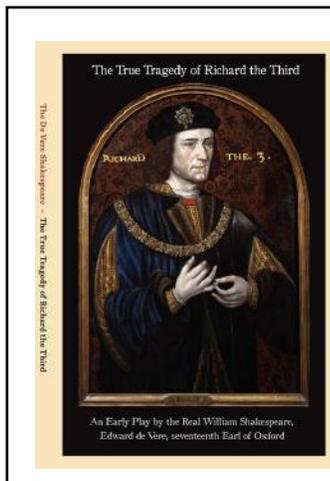
"Just when the Pageant is beginning to descend into a brawl between Armado and Costard, calling to mind the fatal final fight between Ivan the Terrible and his son Tsarevich Ivan," who also had previously shared women, the messenger brings the news of the death of the Princess's father (165), and the sober ending of the play captures the disillusionment of the English court when it was forced to realize that the *labors* in winning "the special favor of their Russian trading partners" (184) had come to naught and had indeed been *lost*. Thus another enigma is solved: an explanation for the dispiriting tone of the play's title, "one of the more enigmatic in Shakespeare's canon" (184), though Greenhill considers the play to have been, at least on this score, a catharsis for the court.

The point need hardly be made that only the royal court could have appreciated this Shakespeare play.

Regarding her own book, Greenhill says it best: it traces "the earliest links between England and Russia, an association which began with mutually advantageous commerce and endured through half a century of turmoil for both regimes. It is astounding that intimate details of this collaboration were meticulously, if by necessity opaquely, immortalized in *Love's Labours Lost* by England's greatest writer" (183). In Rima Greenhill's *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan*, you can enjoy for the first time Shakespeare's labors on *Love's Labours Lost* found.

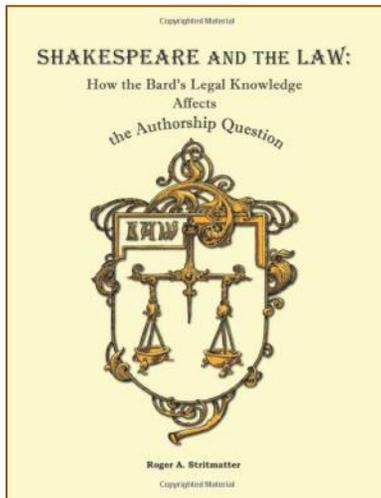
Correction:

The Winter 2023 issue of the *Newsletter* contained a review, by Michael Hyde, of Ramon Jiménez's new edition of *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*. Unfortunately, in most of the printed copies of the Winter issue the accompanying photo on page 21 was of a different edition of that play. We apologize for the goof. (We were able to correct the error for the online version and for later printings of the print version.) Ramon Jiménez's edition looks like this. It is available on amazon.com or directly from the author (ramjim99@gmail.com).



Roger Stritmatter, *Shakespeare and the Law: How the Bard's Legal Knowledge Affects the Authorship Question* (SOF, 2022)

Reviewed by Michael Hyde



It is fitting that Roger Stritmatter honors the late Tom Regnier (1950-2020) by dedicating this book to him and by including three of his essays in this compilation of articles on the vexed topic of Shakespeare's legal knowledge: "Could Shakespeare Think Like a Lawyer?" "The Law in *Hamlet*," and "Did Tudor Succession Law Permit Royal Bastards to Inherit the Crown?"

The answers in brief are: (1) Yes, Shakespeare did think like a lawyer, as Stritmatter strongly urges us to imbibe draft after draft of Shakespeare's legal expertise in these articles; (2) Shakespeare demonstrates familiarity with the fine points of homicide law, and it is virtually certain that Edward de Vere could read Law French in which the Plowden summary of the *Hales v. Pettit* case was written; (3) No! as illegitimate offspring were absolutely barred from the royal succession.

I should add that the final words I heard from Tom Regnier at the Hartford SOF conference in 2019 quoted and amusingly explicated the famous line from the Jack Cade scene in *Henry the Sixth, Part Two*: "First, let's kill all the lawyers."

Overall the essays (pro and con) in this volume about the depth of the Bard's legal knowledge amplify the observation made by riverboat captain Mark Twain (aka Samuel Clemens) that "the man who wrote the (Shakespeare) plays was limitlessly familiar with the law and law courts, and law-proceedings, lawyer talk, and lawyer ways" (p.11).

The all-star contributors to the book, in addition to Regnier, include Mark Alexander, Sir Arthur Underhill, Sir George Greenwood, the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, and, of course, Roger Stritmatter. Indeed, I urge browsers to read first Stritmatter's introductory essay, "Shakespeare's Law in Focus," and his "Afterword: Shakespeare's Law and the Earl of Oxford's Case." The latter relates to a legal matter that was ultimately decided in Oxford's favor in

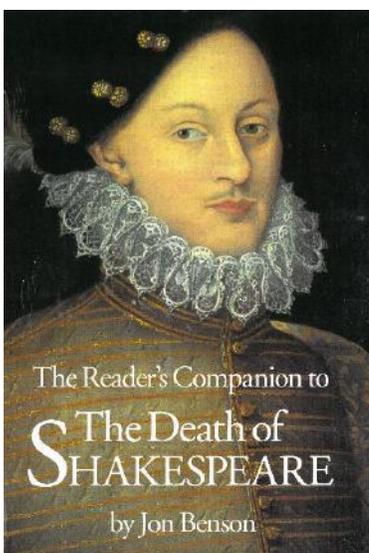
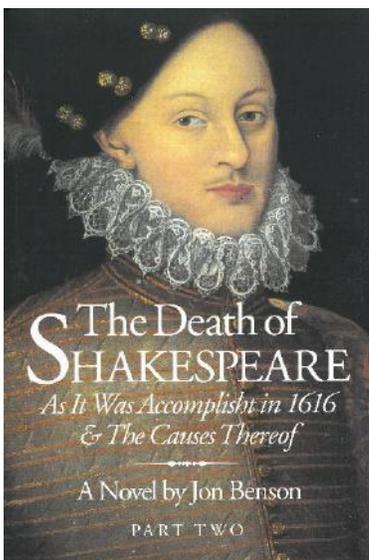
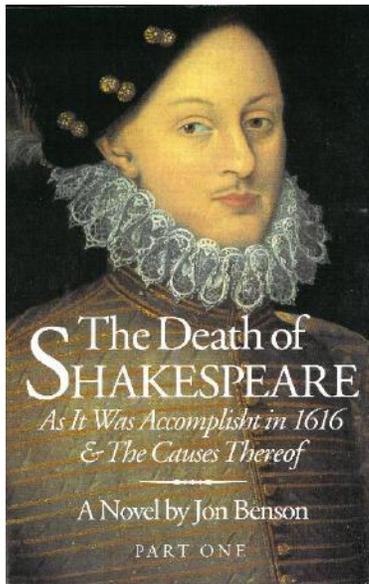
1615, as to whether the de Veres or the Corporation of Cambridge had full title to land owned by the Queen that had been sold in 1571. This case remains important today, as Regnier himself explains (p. 310). The legal principle involved is "quicquid plantatur solo, solo cedi," translated as "whatever is affixed to the soil, belongs to the soil." The matter involved the Great Garden property near Aldgate—directly across the street from the Boar's Head tavern!—that had been purchased by Edward de Vere in 1580. One court—a "law court" following principles of common law—ruled against Oxford, while a second court—the Court of Chancery, an "equity" court—ruled in Oxford's favor. Finally, more than a decade after de Vere's death, King James ruled that, when there is a conflict between a decision of a law court and one of an equity court, the equity court's decision is entitled to primacy. Four centuries later, *The Earl of Oxford's Case* is cited in *The New Oxford Companion to the Law* (2008), as the "foundation stone" of the Law of Equity in modern legal theory.

Thankfully, this volume has a helpful index allowing us to look up arcane terms such as *leet*, *pie-poudres*, and *Law French*. The A-Z list of legal terms (pp. 317-320) allows us to better understand seemingly obvious (not so!) terms such as *Livery*, as well as odd words such as Hamlet's "quiddities." When I read the plays, I recall stopping to look up "praemunire," which connotes an offense under papal jurisdiction and the actual writ for arresting a person.

Stritmatter's own "A Law Case in Verse" (2004) now makes more sense to me with its tripartite exegesis of *Venus and Adonis* (cultural, figurative, and parodic). Importantly, Stritmatter reminds us of Edward de Vere serving as one of the judges on the panel in Queen Mary's 1586 treason trial, and in 1601 as one of the twenty-five nobles who were the jury in the treason trial of the Earls of Essex and Southampton. In the House of Lords, de Vere was involved with the finicky legal business of entering and trying various petitions. If he is indeed the Shakespeare author, he was thus involved with the law in many ways: as a student at Gray's Inn, as a member of the House of Lords, as one who served on panels in two important treason cases, and of course as a litigant himself. In his letters, he speaks often of his legal troubles and of meetings in London with "mine attorney."

Finally, I think that this volume needs a well-read lawyer who can, or could, pluck items most relevant to the Shakespeare Authorship Question and to the life and letters of Edward de Vere, ranging from suing for his livery to reclaiming his ancestral properties of Havering and Waltham Forest. Tom Regnier would have been the perfect person for the task, but hopefully another legal eagle can step forth.

Advertisement



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

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

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

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

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

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

An Oxfordian Masterwork Revisited and Restored: Bernard M. Ward's *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604*, edited by James A. Warren (Veritas Publications, 2023; 449 pp.)

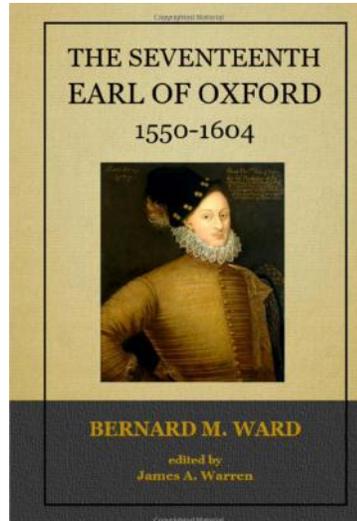
Reviewed by Tom Goff

For a decade and more, researcher James A. Warren has been a man on a daunting mission with two main aims: (1) to bring back into print long-forgotten or out-of-print books from the early and middle years of the Oxford Shakespeare theory (with updated information); and (2) to demonstrate that the Oxford cause is a genuine intellectual and scholarly movement that keeps revealing weaknesses in the mythic Stratfordian candidacy. When the Oxford theory succeeds in toppling the William Shakspeare legend with the truth that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, wrote all or most of the great plays, narrative poems, and sonnets ascribed to “William Shakespeare,” Warren will have contributed a mighty share of the persuasive push.

Warren's latest coup is bringing back a much-needed Oxfordian source book, Bernard M. Ward's *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford 1550-1604 from Contemporary Documents*, the first generally reliable, documentary biography of Edward de Vere. It was originally published in 1928, eight years after J. Thomas Looney's *“Shakespeare” Identified*. Ward continued Looney's efforts to quash the slanders and cut through the fog of silence surrounding de Vere, an important courtier who was—and continues to be—routinely ignored or vilified in accounts of Queen Elizabeth's reign (more about Ward and Looney in a moment).

Captain Bernard Mordaunt Ward would be important in the Oxfordian movement even if he'd never published the Oxford biography. Educated at Winchester and at Sandhurst, England's school for military officers, Ward made an early reputation as an Elizabethan scholar. He was also the son of Colonel Bernard Rowland Ward, the prime mover in building the Shakespeare Fellowship, the indispensable organization for developing and publicizing Looney's discovery (researchers into other possible Shakespeares were invited to contribute, but it was Looney who convinced both Wards).

The junior Ward would be remembered if he had only published articles proposing that the poetry and prose anthology *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573) was largely Edward de Vere's work as editor and part contributor; that Edward de Vere's cousin, Lord Lumley, wrote *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), which listed de



Vere among the principal contributors to the drama (“comedy and interlude”) and confirmed the taboo against noblemen publishing poetry or plays; that de Vere was paid a “mighty sum” yearly, for providing dramas and dramatists to further Queen Elizabeth's “policy of plays.” In the absence of anything like modern newspapers, or any mass information medium outside the pulpit, London's acting companies had to help sustain propaganda battles and encourage military recruitment efforts in the prolonged war against Spain.

Luckily for us, Ward did complete the Oxford biography. Like other Oxfordian books, it made a genuine stir—Warren credits it with reigniting discussion of Looney's thesis, given that “*Shakespeare*” *Identified*

had been vigorously defended by Looney but was gradually silenced and suppressed. Ward's book, published by the reputable firm of John Murray, drew new adherents to the Oxford cause, key to developments of the 1930s, but was in its turn attacked and allowed to fade from public consciousness.

For those of us who sought additional material on the Oxford case after reading Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984), Ward's book was a necessity, though it was long out of print. It was only available in a photocopy, in paper covers, ring-bound in plastic, supplied by the inspirational Oxfordian scholar-publisher Ruth Loyd Miller; my own copy quickly disintegrated, and I lacked the ingenuity to preserve it in some other way.

James Warren has not merely reprinted Ward's book; he has provided an incisive introduction, ably discussing its genuine merits and occasional demerits. More importantly, Warren has incorporated corrections and supplemental details that were unavailable to Captain Ward. Many of these were first noted by Oxfordian scholar Bronson Feldman in the mid-1980s, and have been added as footnotes in Warren's new edition.

Chief among Captain Ward's attributes is his resounding dismissal of the many slanders against the Earl of Oxford, many of them current in de Vere's lifetime, many more perpetrated by latter-day Shakespeare scholars once it was apparent that de Vere could indeed have written Shakespeare's works. Again and again Ward draws us to the documentary record, easily refuting (for instance) the notion that Oxford destroyed the outbuildings around his ancestral home, Hedingham Castle in Essex, to spite his father-in-law Lord Burghley. (The buildings probably fell into disrepair while under the Earl of Leicester's control of the de Vere properties.)

I wonder if some of Ward's modern readers will recoil at the prospect of reading many documents, largely

private letters and court memoranda writ in perfect Elizabethan. For Ward, however, and for the serious Oxfordian, these records are essential. They will not be an undue burden to anyone who's read, say, Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, valuable not only for the memorable conversations but also for the letters Boswell published, by Johnson and his contemporaries.

Ward excelled in scholarly perseverance, consulting "the Public Records Office, the British Museum, Hatfield House, and elsewhere," Warren informs us. In particular, access to the Public Records Office allowed Ward to transcribe complete texts of seminal Oxfordian letters and documents, whereas J.T. Looney, working in Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society collection, often had to rely on the Calendars of State Papers, which were usually abridgements or abstracts lacking in key details.

Now for a couple of the more signal demerits. Critics of Ward's biography, such as the Stratfordians Muriel St. Clare Byrne and G.C. Moore Smith, pounced on Ward's rather frequent mistranscriptions from his Tudor sources. Without doubt, these errors were a real drawback.

We in the twenty-first century need to address this issue with some perspective: in an era before photocopying (except perhaps with the rather lumbering cameras of the 1920s, assuming one even had permission to photograph), with the presumably limited time Ward may have had to locate, request, and access the right papers, surely we can understand how transcribing errors could creep in.

Also, how many papers were in Secretary hand, how many in Italic? What missing words, what accidental tears or stains in the papers, how much faded ink? Above all, as an amateur scholar, however able, could Ward have had the prolonged access to the documents needed to get everything right? What strain might we even expect on a scholar's eyesight while he's working in some haste? Meanwhile, the privileges of extended access would routinely have been granted to such accredited academics as Byrne and Moore Smith. As James Warren has said, these transcription errors by no means impair Ward's overall thesis; and the Stratfordians' corrections have been incorporated in this edition.

Another kind of correction or supplement calls for a bit more thought. Writing decades after *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* was published, Oxfordian researcher and psychoanalyst Bronson Feldman published ninety-six "amendments" to it, either correcting mistakes in documentation or reporting revelatory new finds; these notes, often valuable, have been added to Warren's edition and the corrections usually incorporated. But how else did these interventions serve the biography?

Occasionally, Feldman makes a point of adding support to Ward's thesis. Admittedly, his revised readings of documents or original interpretations are often

indispensable. But he can seem quite tetchy and superior, as if nailing Freudian slips issuing from a none-too-bright client; this tendency reminds me of the scholar (I've forgotten his name) whose chief glory was footnoting—and undermining—Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.

Feldman occasionally undercuts not just his own points, but key parts of the Oxfordian argument: footnote 82 proposes that some Elizabethan writers listed the Earl of Oxford first among the great but anonymous authors of the time only because of the precedence of rank, not because of intrinsic literary merit. Warren's brilliant four-word riposte: "Couldn't it be both?"

Be that as it may, Feldman's revisions are there, to our overall benefit. In one or two instances, Warren has done what must be the proper thing: he has kept Ward's original text, perhaps sensing that a misread word seems crucial to the local point Ward is making, and to the reader's sense of the argument's flow. Later, when referring again to the original document, Warren now accepts the new rendition, allowing the attentive reader to readjust. (See the wrathful letter-challenge from Thomas Vavasour, where his "Is not the revenge taken of thy victims sufficient," at 216, is later quoted with "thy vildness" substituted for "thy victims" at 229.)

Perhaps the besetting problem for Ward was deciding what to do about crediting J.T. Looney, the great pioneer without whom Oxford's accomplishment as "Shakespeare" might go unsuspected, even today. Warren notes his indebtedness to Oxfordian scholar Bonner Miller Cutting (Ruth Loyd Miller's daughter) for access to Looney's own annotated copy of Ward's book. As that copy shows, Looney's feelings were deeply hurt by Ward's scant acknowledgment of his great achievement.

Again, this is a matter calling for a century's worth of perspective. Ward expressed genuine gratitude for Looney's discovery of the true Shakespeare, in the inscription he penned in Looney's copy of *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. But here we should recognize Ward's dilemma. As an archival researcher with ambitions to publish in the best academic journals, and to have his book issue from a firm like John Murray's (rather than Cecil Palmer's, which had published Looney)—not just for himself but, presumably, for the Oxfordian cause—Ward aspired to rebuild Oxford's literary reputation so solidly that the perceptive reader must recognize: "This courtly poet sounds an awful lot like, hmm, you-know-who." That is, Ward would accomplish this feat in practical terms; he would *imply*, but not *divulge*, Oxford's double identity.

Looney's experience with the rough treatment that prejudiced academics could mete out must have confirmed Ward in his course. (Doesn't *Hamlet's* Polonius advocate "by indirections find[ing] directions out"?) Nevertheless, Looney felt sorely neglected.

Curiously, Warren writes as if Looney was mentioned only once, in Ward's Annotated Bibliography ("in the briefest of notes" is Warren's summation). By this reckoning, credit is meager: "*Shakespeare*" Identified, says Ward, is "A long and carefully worked out argument, in which the author claims most of the plays and poems for the Earl of Oxford." (In fairness to Warren, *Shakespeare Revolutionized*, his detailed Oxfordian history of 2021, gives the fuller picture.)

However, let's look just below that entry, where we find Looney's valuable edition of Edward de Vere's poems. Next listed is an important book by Ward's father, Colonel Bernard R. Ward, which is described as "Following up Mr. Looney's hypothesis." The next entry is Stratfordian E.K. Chambers's *The Elizabethan Stage*, notable here for the absurd idea that many of the Shakespeare plays were "written after" Oxford's death—and Chambers deems this "fact" as fatal to—yes!—Mr. Looney's book. (Does Chambers not see that we could as easily argue that multiple plays in the First Folio were "written after" Mr. Shakspeare's death?)

Lastly, Looney's authorship is alluded to, though not specified, when an article in *The Golden Hind* (edited by Clifford Bax and A.O. Spare) is credited for "connecting the episode of the rivalry of the Earl of Oxford and Sir Philip Sidney for the hand of Anne Cecil with certain scenes in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*." One wonders if Looney, though a scholar of genius and great detective skill, was inured enough to conventional modes of scholarly address to recognize Ward's rather broad hints about his great achievement, even though they were relegated to the Annotated Bibliography.

Despite all this, I think Ward should have given Looney full, overt acknowledgment. Perhaps what Looney would have liked was the same courage he himself showed in publishing his reassessment of Shakespeare's identity and outlook: his approach was, in Hotspur's words, "Tell truth and shame the devil," where Ward's was a more politic, though genuine, courage.

There is so much more to discuss about *The*

Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, its many virtues and occasional disappointments, that a reviewer cannot possibly mention everything. Warren notes (as Gilbert Slater mentioned in a similar context) how Ward's book situates Oxford not only as a poet-dramatist but also as the active courtier, soldier, and political striver he was, for all his personal flaws and frustrations. Ward often errs in supposing Oxford's relations with Lord Burghley to have been more consistently cordial than they were, but his documents don't lie—especially about Oxford's marital breach with Anne Cecil, Burghley's daughter; yet as "Shakespeare," in play after play Oxford the humane dramatist made (in Charlton Ogburn's words) "deathless atonement" for his jealous disparagements of poor Anne.

While giving us Elizabethan source material, Ward lets us in on the possible bases for scenes in Shakespeare's works—their objective correlatives, if you will. Thus we see Katherine, dowager Duchess of Suffolk, conspiring with Oxford's sister Mary to sneak Oxford's unacknowledged daughter Elizabeth Vere (then a two-year-old) into a quasi-play date with Oxford, hoping he will be inveigled into accepting the girl he's never seen as his own child. Clever Duchess! Though the details in *The Winter's Tale* will be quite different, are we seeing intimations of a Perdita to come?

Above all, could Looney have reflected that Ward, in providing such anecdotes, was delivering proof of one of Looney's chief contentions, that Oxford's entire milieu, his literary, political, and social—even conversational—contacts were integral to "Shakespeare's" unrivaled powers of observation and philosophical breadth? We do know (from a letter to Katharine Eggar by Looney) that the Great Discoverer, sore as he was at Ward's slight, exhibited great maturity and self-command in his assessment of the matter, as Warren has written elsewhere. We can be grateful to both Ward and Looney for their brave advancement of powerful truths that the larger world must eventually accept, and to James Warren for his handsome new edition of Captain Bernard M. Ward's book.

Tales from the Archives: Cataloguing Shakespeare: Introducing the Authorship Question into the Library Science Literature

by William Boyle

Cataloging and Classification Quarterly (CCQ), a leading library science journal, is the only one in the world dedicated exclusively to library cataloguing. In its final print issue of 2022, CCQ featured an article, "Tongue-Tied by Authorities: Library of Congress Vocabularies and the Shakespeare Authorship Question," written by Michael Dudley, Catherine Hatinguais and myself. In it, we argued that the current subject headings assigned to "Shakespeare" (i.e., Shakespeare the

individual) are misleading, as they obscure the question of authorship; i.e., they assume that Shakespeare the author lived from 1564 to 1616 and consistently spelled his name "Shakespeare," rather than "Shakspeare." We proposed new alternative headings and made two major proposals: to modify the current Library of Congress name authority record for "William Shakespeare" to more accurately reflect the difference between "Shakespeare" and "Shakspeare"; and to create a new top-level subject heading ("Shakespeare authorship question") so that matters related to authorship are not buried as subdivisions within other headings.

Given the "taboo" nature of the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ), we were surprised and delighted at the positive response we received from the

journal and its peer reviewers.

Our collaboration was the culmination of years of work by each of us in exploring the SAQ, while also pursuing our respective careers—Michael Dudley and myself as librarians, Catherine Hatinguais as a translator and terminologist at the United Nations. We had all been active Oxfordians for decades.

Over the last ten years I had been working on a project with James Warren to catalog all of the articles ever written on the Oxfordian theory. I was joined in 2016 by Catherine. We agreed that our growing database (SOAR, Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources) needed subject access. Since our database was already being built in a library-based system, we used the existing system of Library of Congress Subject Headings. We thought that the resulting “hits” for a search would be more predictable than any ad-hoc tags that we might devise. We also adopted its system of name headings, which was useful for the many Elizabethan era surnames and titles.

Meanwhile, Michael Dudley was working at the University of Winnipeg Library as the librarian for History and Theatre, a position which often involves teaching students how to think critically about controversial subjects, and to recognize the role that normative library subject headings can play in potentially limiting access to such topics. He has also been engaged in the authorship debate, writing and presenting on how the SAQ represents a form of “subjugated knowledge.”

About five years ago the three of us became members of the SOF’s Digital Preservation Committee, a working group dedicated to identifying and preserving all the digital archives of the SOF, and of the wider Oxfordian community. This relationship soon led to identifying the unique problems of information access for the SAQ.

The paramount issue is the name itself. Is “Shakespeare” the real name of a real person, or is it a pen name? The spellings of the name of the man from Stratford (“Shakspeare”) and the name on the title pages (“Shakespeare” or “Shake-speare”) are so close that it is easy to say that the names are interchangeable and refer to only one man.

But what if the names are different, and represent two different men? All subject access to the issue of questioning the authorship flows from that distinction. In our small stand-alone catalog/database we could, however, emphasize that distinction, just as Samuel Langhorne Clemens and Mark Twain are clearly documented as one man and his pen name.

We had digital access to archives of the vast majority of 19th century writing, and to a full set of copies of the Library of Congress Subject Headings indices in the 20th century. Google N-grams of word usage in the 19th

century archives revealed patterns that no other form of access could have. Our access to the Library of Congress indices enabled us to document how its indexing of all things Shakespeare had evolved.

Writing the article helped us clarify our arguments. The peer review process with CCQ led to more collaboration; one of the reviewers helped immensely.

But nothing in the SAQ is easy. Within weeks of publication we received a curious inquiry from a reader wondering why we had chosen to misspell Shakespeare’s name throughout the article? To which we first thought, “What??”

But, when we checked, the name was indeed misspelled throughout, the result of a simple request to fix one misspelling (the article is full of spelling variants, e.g., “Shakspere,” “Shakspeare” and “Shakespeare”), combined with (we think) the dangers of a universal find-and-replace word processing tool. The misspelling would have completely ruined the entire purpose of the article and rendered it meaningless! The editor of CCQ, Sandy Roe, and the production staff were very apologetic and worked with us over a number of weeks to fix the article just in time for the journal’s print edition. When combined with the original interest from editor Roe and the very helpful commentary from one of the peer reviewers, we felt that there appeared to be genuine interest and enthusiasm—and a commitment—in getting this article included in the journal.

The article is now up live on the CCQ site, and was published in print. An author’s draft copy is available through SOAR (search the article title and click on the link, or click here: <https://opac.libraryworld.com/opac/standard.php>). The published version is available at the CCQ page on the Taylor & Francis Online website, but for a fee (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2022.2124473>).

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