



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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Elizabeth Winkler's *Shakespeare Was a Woman* Published

by Alex McNeil

In May of this year, Simon & Schuster published *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature* by Elizabeth Winkler (it's reviewed on page 25 of this issue). Although the book is an examination of the Shakespeare Authorship Question, its focus is not on advocating for any particular candidate, but rather on why the Shakespeare establishment—including mainstream academia and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust—refuses to consider the existence of any doubt that Will Shaksper of Stratford-on-Avon wrote the works attributed to William Shakespeare.

The book grew out of a lengthy essay that Winkler wrote, "Was Shakespeare a Woman?" published by *The Atlantic* magazine in 2019. In it Winkler explored the case for Emilia Bassano as the Bard, as she puts it in her book, "in a spirit of inquiry and open-minded skepticism, questioning the perceived wisdom about Shakespeare but not making any definitive claims about [Bassano's] role" (15).

Winkler, a journalist by profession, admits that she was unprepared for the firestorm of criticism that ensued. "I was besieged by a (mostly male) army of Twitter trolls . . . Shakespeare's defenders had arrived, many of them tweeting under anonymous names—an irony to which they seemed oblivious" (id.). British journalist Oliver Kamm (more on him later) "associated me with Holocaust deniers . . . and called for the *Atlantic* to retract my essay. *Shakespeare Magazine* suggested I suffered from 'Shakespeare derangement syndrome'" (id.). "To speculate about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays is to pursue conspiracy theories," scolded Professor James Shapiro of Columbia University (16).

Undaunted (at least after "the initial shock had subsided" [17]), Winkler "realized that the responses had given me something extremely interesting. . . . Why were they so emotional? Why was a literary question being framed as a *moral* problem—on par with Holocaust denial and vaccine refusal?" (id.). Exploring these new questions led to this book, which contains interviews with orthodox notables such as Stanley Wells, Stephen Greenblatt and Marjorie Garber, and with



doubters such as Roger Stritmatter, Alexander Waugh, Ros Barber, Mark Rylance, and Richard and Elisabeth Waugaman.

This time Winkler was prepared for the brickbats from critics. Partisans of the traditional view reacted exactly as predicted, castigating Winkler for daring to question the traditional view that Shaksper wrote Shakespeare. Below is a sampling of some of the reviews published so far—some bad, some good. Links to a number of reviews may be found here: [Reviewing "Shakespeare Was A Woman And Other Heresies" by Elizabeth Winkler | Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship](#)

Jonathan Bate (*Daily Telegraph*, May 28) and responses

University of Oxford Professor Jonathan Bate conceded that the book is an "entertaining survey of the history of the authorship debate," but added, "Personally, I believe that allusions to the Cotswolds and detailed technical knowledge of glove-making, not to mention a scene in which a cheeky but clever schoolboy called Will is given a Latin lesson by a Welsh schoolmaster, suggest that the plays were written by a glover's son from middle England who went to the local grammar school where there was a master of Welsh descent." Bate took Winkler to task for being "cruel" toward Stanley Wells, "chid[ing] him for lapses of memory that would be

(continued on p. 18)

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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

The past three months have been frenetic, with Oxfordian and Shakespeare authorship discoursing over the internet and in print. Elizabeth Winkler’s new book, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature*, has generated a marvel of commentaries in the English-speaking press, both critical and, more often, commendatory (see article on page 1, and review on page 25). Winkler herself has engaged in a series of Zoom presentations and interviews, including our own Robert Meyers, the Shakespearean Authorship Trust, the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable, and SOF reading groups. Her most extensive recorded interview was with Sir Mark Rylance, sponsored by the How To Academy, and may be accessed here: [Sir Mark Rylance Meets Elizabeth Winkler - Who Wrote Shakespeare? - YouTube](#).

Winkler deftly explicates both the history of Shakespearean attribution and the current state of the debate with incisive, often ironic, journalistic brilliance. Her familiarity with the writings of the Shakespeare scholars she interviewed over the course of several years is impressive. She understands that the authorship question is a cultural and epistemological subject, that

English literature scholars’ training is myopically focused on literary analysis, and that they generally lack the methodological practices used by historians and other professionals.

Winkler embraces the metaphor of the pen as the weapon of choice in the brewing war over the identity of Shakespeare as poet and playwright. With this in mind, I eagerly accepted an invitation to teach the Oxfordian theory during a weeklong retreat in July on Star Island, New Hampshire, sponsored by a Unitarian Universalist non-profit entity. I approached it with a librarian’s abandon, donating multiple copies of *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies* and *Know-It-All Shakespeare*, edited by Ros Barber, as gifts for those attending my symposium. I also distributed recent titles by Diana Price, Hank Whittemore, and John Hamill, plus the Brief Chronicles book series edited by Roger Stritmatter, *The Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook*, *Shakespeare and the Law*, and both volumes of *The Poems of Edward de Vere*. The excitement these books brought to the recipients—priceless! There is a real hunger out there for our narratives; this is the year to take full advantage of the extraordinary opportunity for revelation through what we read and share with others.

I started by presenting evidence that Shakespeare's works were political, from legitimizing the Tudors by way of depicting the ravages of civil war and demonizing Richard III, to the 20th-century propagandist productions sponsored by Churchill and Mussolini. I gained their full attention describing how a modern-dress 2017 production of *Julius Caesar* in Central Park was disrupted when Marjorie Taylor Greene rushed the stage after the assassination of Caesar, videotaping herself accusing the company of killing the President, resulting in her forcible removal. The video went viral and two days later she was interviewed for the first time on national television by Sean Hannity of Fox News, launching her first congressional campaign. I concluded with the politics of the SAQ, demonstrating how otherwise thoughtful commentators have resorted to prejudicial and pejorative attacks on authorship doubters. The rest of our sessions focused on the literary sources and political allegory in *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a very well-received screening of Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's film, *Nothing Is Truer than Truth* (aka *Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Name*). Teaching the Oxfordian theory has never been easier or more rewarding.

Our educational project is once again gaining credence with the forthcoming release of Volume 25 of *The Oxfordian*. Editor Gary Goldstein reports that *TOX 25* is more than 300 pages, and includes ten new papers based mostly on archival research and source materials, seven book reviews, and an interview with novelist Jon Benson. Goldstein reports that a search of the World Catalog of Libraries indicates that *The Oxfordian* is now available in 670 libraries, a remarkable increase of 250 libraries over the past five years.

Alex McNeil, who has edited the *Newsletter* for the past decade (and who was named Oxfordian of the Year in 2014), has announced that he is retiring from that

position at the end of 2023. *Newsletter* readers should know that, beyond his outstanding editorial support, Alex has long helped to maintain our membership records and monitors our post office box. He was one of several persons who were instrumental the 2013 unification of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and Shakespeare Fellowship to form the SOF. Alex also has proofread many of the publications supported by the SOF, as well as quite a few by independent authors. His "Shakespeare 101" video is the #1 most visited feature of the SOF website. Fortunately, Alex has assured me that he intends to remain active in our organization.

Nonetheless, given that Alex is cutting back on his extensive responsibilities, we will need all hands on deck to fulfill the editorial challenges in the coming year. If you have skills and interest in assisting with editing, proofing, or designing our newsletter, journal, books, or social media postings, please see the notice on page 29, or send an email to:

apply@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

Finally, I want to thank our new Lifetime Members who have joined the ranks of our most committed supporters over the past six months: Margit and Reinhard Greiling, Charlotte Hughes and Lucy Ly, Stephen Larsen, Deborah Mahan, Alex and Jill McNeil, Robert Meyers, Mary Ross, Don Rubin and Patricia Keeney, and Nancy Stewart. The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is almost entirely supported by membership dues, generous donations by our patrons, and the volunteer services of a coterie of contributors.

I look forward to greeting as many of you who can attend our conference in New Orleans in November. *Laissez les bons temps roulee!*

Earl Showerman

Note to Readers:

The next issue of the *Newsletter* (Fall 2023) will be published a bit later than usual. Ordinarily, the Fall issue is available in mid-November. However, we want to include coverage of this year's Annual Conference in New Orleans, which takes place November 9-12. Thus, the Fall 2023 issue will probably appear in late November or early December.

Letters

We would be grateful if you would allow us to correct two minor misconceptions in Heidi Jansch's comprehensive review of the Moot Court Trial at Middle Temple Hall in the Spring 2023 issue of the *Newsletter*, and also to refer your members to The de Vere Society Newsletter report of the event.

First, the Moot Court was organised by Middle Temple, largely as an exercise for trainee lawyers, not by The de Vere Society (although Richard Clifford did facilitate "from our side, this event"). Second, although Richard is a trustee on the Events Team, it is now managed by Kerstin Delgado-Teglof (eventsteam@deveresociety.co.uk).

Second, we were disappointed that Heidi Jansch did not quote Alexander Waugh's explanation of the apparently disappointing result of the Trial: "The three judges were entirely sensible in my view to deliver the wrong verdict." This was supported by two legal referees for the DVS in the audience.

We were delighted that the Moot Court was able to coincide with the our Spring Meeting at the same prestigious venue; a brief report appears in the DVS Newsletter: Vol. 30, No.2, April 2023 (pp.15-16), which is available on the member-only section of the DVS website: <https://deveresociety.co.uk/the-moot-court-at-middle-temple-hall/>.

Amanda Hinds and Richard Clifford
Hon. Secretary and Vice Chairman of The de Vere Society

In the Summer 2019 issue of the *Newsletter* (p. 12) I offered a short piece titled "A Clear Declaration in 1606

That Prince Tudor Existed" It quoted the final couplet of Chapter 107 of *Albions England*, published in 1606 in the name of William Warner:

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

The words do not say that the queen *failed to name* an heir, but that she *concealed her heir*, implying that she had one and was hiding it. An obsolete meaning (Wiktionary) of *skill*, moreover, is *contrivance*, a word nicely fitting the implication of *conceal*, which means *hide, cover up or keep out of sight* (*Oxford Languages Dictionary*). Had Warner said, "I wot not by what skill," it would support my original inference.

The problem is that he does not say "by what skill," but "for what skill." Another obsolete meaning for *skill* is *reason*. Using that definition, Warner was concluding, "I know not for what reason." Had he been referring to a bastard son, the reason for concealment would be obvious.

The text can still mean, "I don't know why the queen concealed the heir we all secretly know about." But given the two options, it is prudent to default to the less spectacular reading.

I am led to conclude, then, that the author was reckless in his choice of three words. He probably meant that the queen concealed any *thoughts* she had about an heir and concluded, "I don't know why," in which case there is no implication of significance.

Bob Prechter
Gainseville, GA

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What's the News?

***The King of Nothing*: Sally Clark's Play about Edward de Vere Made into Audio Drama**

Sally Clark, a Canadian playwright (and SOF member), informs us that a play she wrote about the life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, has been turned into an audio drama. "My friend, Sky Gilbert, told me about Mark (now Margo) Anderson's book, "*Shakespeare*" by *Another Name*, in 2016," Clark writes. "I was so inspired by the story that I wrote a play trilogy about his life. A Vancouver director and actor, Adam Henderson, and I combined forces to turn it into an audio drama. We produced a pilot version of the series, which I've called *The King of Nothing*. It won a Silver Award in the National Audio Theatre Festival for 2023."

Here's the link to the NATF "Hear Now Palooza 2023": <https://www.natf.org/hear-now-palooza-2023/> From there, go to the Silver Nominees and click on "The King of Nothing."

Clark adds that, when she wrote the play, she was inspired by Charles Beauclerk's book, *Shakespeare's Lost Kingdom*, and by Hank Whittemore's books, including *The Monument*. "I think Whittemore's theory about the sonnets and the succession makes perfect sense. I'm aware that many members are opposed to the Prince Tudor or Dynastic Succession theories. But, as an author, these are exciting ideas to play around with."



The King of Nothing

A Tragical Comical Epic about the Life of Edward de Vere
By Sally Clark

Alan Green Launches New Video Series



In May 2023, Oxfordian Alan Green announced that his new video series, *Shakespeare Decoded*, had launched on Gaia TV. Green stated that the seven-part series is based on "nineteen years' research into the world's greatest literary mystery. . . . *Shakespeare Decoded* is going to blow the lid off the whole story to an enormous audience at last—all the hidden codes, secret treasures, scientific knowledge and royal scandals!"

Here is a link to the trailer: [Green's introductory trailer](#). Gaia TV (gaia.com) is an on-demand streaming service. Founded in 1988 as Gaiam, it offers more than 8,000 videos on a wide variety of topics, including meditation, spiritual growth, expanded consciousness, hidden history and the supernatural.

SOF Research Grant Program for 2023-2024

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship again plans to award research grants. The purpose of the Research Grant Program (RGP) is to support new research about Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, relating to his biography, his literary career, and the evidence that he was the true author of the Shakespeare canon.

The plan for 2023–24 is to award up to \$4,000 in grants, depending on funds available and the number, merits, and nature of the proposals submitted.

Proposals for grants must be submitted by November 30, 2023. The Selection Committee will announce the grants early in 2024. The Committee includes John Hamill (chair), Katherine Chiljan, Bonner Miller Cutting, Ramon Jiménez and Don Rubin.

Complete details on how to prepare and submit a grant proposal may be found on the SOF website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/shakespeare-oxford-fellowship-research-grant-program/>



Bob Pletcher, Phoebe Nir, and some young Oxfordians

The Young Oxfordians

by Bob Prechter

Phoebe Nir is an artistic force of nature. She has issued a dozen pop songs stuffed with clever lyrics and vibrant images. She wrote and directed an indie film that has recently found a distributor. The White House honored her as a Presidential Scholar of the Arts. Fulfilling an intellectual passion, she recently founded the Edward de Vere Truther Society (.org), dedicated to promoting the century-old and increasingly popular proposition that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, wrote under the pseudonym William Shakespeare.

On Friday evening, April 28, I had the pleasure of addressing an energetic, friendly gathering of about thirty members of the Society in New York City. In attendance were sharp, mostly thirty-something New Yorkers with origins as far away as California, Georgia and Texas and affiliations with Brown, Columbia and Yale.

The theme of the event was the infamous Pamphlet War of 1587-1597, in which writers using diverse names

argued with each other through the press. My online book, posted at OxfordsVoices.com, identifies the players as Edward de Vere, posing as half a dozen writers, on one side; and on the other side brothers Gabriel and Richard Harvey, with support from Barnabe Barnes, joined later by puritan Joseph Hall, posing as Cambridge barber Richard Lichfield.

Nir got the event going with a scripted skit describing the Pamphlet War and its participants, climaxing with the Archbishop of Canterbury's burning of the offending texts. Then came an interview in which I discussed de Vere's practice of writing under names other than Shakespeare, with special focus on his most prolific prose voice, Robert Greene. Finally, the floor was thrown open to some lively, intelligent questions from the audience.

Although the event was scheduled to last from 7 to 8:15, nearly everyone stayed late as spirited discussions took place among knowledgeable Oxfordians and newbies alike. The party finally ended around 10 PM, and off we went into a chilly, rainy night, warmed with the glow that like minds on a fresh topic can generate.

My New Shakespeare Course on Zoom

by Sky Gilbert

This summer I'm teaching the second iteration of my new online course: "Shakespeare: Pulling Back the Curtain." I'm excited to announce a third set of classes, which will run on Zoom from October 3 to December 12, 2023. Each weekly session is just under two hours long (we take a break halfway through), and starts at 7 PM Eastern Time. The price for the course is \$300 Canadian (about \$225 US). To register for the course, go to <https://skygilbert.com/>.

Who am I? I hold a PhD from the University of Toronto in Drama, and I'm kinda famous in Toronto (there is a street named after me!), with lots of novels, poetry books, plays, and even films, to my credit. This year I will reach my 71st birthday, but it is only my old body that is slowing down — somewhat. I recently retired from my professorship at the University of Guelph (I'm now an "emeritus" after a twenty-four-year teaching career), and I must admit I'm not able to stop teaching.

The students in my new course have been an eclectic bunch from places like San Diego, New York City, Chicago, and Toronto; a mixture of young and old, with Oxfordians along with those who just happen to love Shakespeare as much as I do.

My Oxfordian approach is a little different from others. I have written two books about Shakespeare (I'm now at work on a third). The first: *Shakespeare Beyond Science: When Poetry Was the World*, was published by Guernica in 2020. My second book, *Shakespeare Lied*, will be published by Guernica next year.

I am convinced, like so many of you, that Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford. But rather than taking an historical approach—that is, correlating the biographical details of Edward de Vere's life to the plays (something that Margo Anderson did so well, along with so much else, in her book, "*Shakespeare*" by *Another Name*) — I focus on the evidence offered by Shakespeare's learning as proof of de Vere's authorship. This evidence is, of course, to be found in the plays; in my course we specifically discuss *Richard II*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

If this sounds complicated, it's not. I certainly find Shakespeare's rhetoric—his style of writing—to be a fascinating subject. My job to make it fascinating for others. In my research, I have discovered two ancient writers who are keys to understanding Shakespeare's style: Hermogenes of Tarsus and Gorgias. Both were Greek rhetoricians whose work would not have been available to

ordinary schoolchildren during the reign of Elizabeth I. But for Edward de Vere, who had access to the library of his guardian (William Cecil, Lord Burghley) as a boy, and who would have been fluent in several languages as a child (as Elizabeth was), these works would have been easy reading. Also, de Vere would have learned much about Hermogenes from his visit to the famous and esteemed professor Johannes Sturm during his European trip in 1575-76 (Sturm was an expert on Hermogenes). Evidence that de Vere would have known of Gorgias is found in his association with his secretary, John Lyly, whose poetry is often linked with Gorgias's rhetoric.

The focus of the first six classes of "Shakespeare: Pulling Back the Curtain" is on understanding the early modern world that Shakespeare lived in. That world was very different from ours. People understood life through poetry, rather than by studying it through observation. The second part of the course is devoted to Gorgias's notion that all art is a "lie" (a notion shared by Oscar Wilde and Picasso) and to understanding the implications of this idea.

Class participation is welcome. At least half an hour of each class is reserved for discussion alone. Also, we are not afraid to let the discussions roam beyond Shakespeare into the engaging and sometimes controversial modern implications of Shakespeare's learning, touching on subjects like A.I., QAnon, feminism, sexuality and "identity politics."

I hope you will sign up for my course. I urge you to come and share my new discoveries with me.



Report of the Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee (chaired by Tom Woosnam, with members Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and John Hamill) is pleased to present the SOF membership with a slate of three candidates to stand for election to the Board of Trustees, and one candidate to stand for election as President, at the annual membership meeting. Nominations to the Board and to the office of President may also be initiated by written petition of at least ten members in good standing, so long as the petition is submitted to the Nominations Committee no later than sixty days before the annual meeting, i.e., on or before September 12, 2023. Petitions may be sent to jandbcutting@comcast.net or to P.O. Box 66083, Auburndale, MA 02466. The results of the Board election will be posted on the SOF website immediately after the annual meeting and reported in the *Newsletter*.

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



Bonner Miller Cutting is a frequent speaker at Shakespeare authorship conferences and gives introductory talks on the authorship question to community organizations, literary groups and book clubs. In her recently published book, *Necessary Mischief: Exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question*, she reveals

new information on ten authorship-related subjects, including the last will and testament of William Shaksper of Stratford-upon-Avon, the £1,000 annuity that Queen Elizabeth gave to Edward de Vere, and whether the young Princess Elizabeth had a child. Cutting earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Tulane University and a Master of Music from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana. She has been a soloist with the New Orleans Symphony, the Lake Charles Symphony and Shreveport Symphony orchestras, and played with chamber music groups in the Pacific Northwest. She lives in Lake Charles, Louisiana, with her husband Jack. A current member of the Board of Trustees, she is nominated for a second term.



Michael Dudley is a Canadian academic librarian. Having been an Oxfordian since the 1980s, he has written extensively on various interdisciplinary aspects of the authorship question in *The Oxfordian* and *Brief Chronicles*, as well in the fields of education and library science. His many YouTube

videos on the subject are quite popular, with one—"The Bard Identity: Becoming an Oxfordian"—having been viewed almost 20,000 times. In addition to serving on the SOF's Data Preservation Committee and on the Board of Directors of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, he has recently completed a book, *The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy: Knowledge, Rhetoric, Identity*, forthcoming from Cambridge Scholars Publishing in the UK.



Bob Meyers served for twenty-one years at the National Press Foundation, nineteen of them as president and chief operating officer. He retired in 2014 with the title of President Emeritus. The National Press Foundation provides free on-the-record educational programs for US and international journalists.

Thousands of print, broadcast, and online reporters and editors went through programs that Bob led or designed. He also worked as a reporter at the *Washington Post*, including on its Pulitzer Prize-winning Watergate investigation, and as an editor at the *San Diego Union*. Bob also served as director of the Harvard Journalism Fellowship for Advanced Studies in Public Health. He has been a freelance writer for *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Columbia Journalism Review*, among other publications. He is the author of two books, one of which won the American Medical Writers Association Award for Excellence in Biomedical Writing. Since 2015 Bob has edited the SOF's popular "How I Became an Oxfordian" essay series. On March 4, 2020, he moderated the SOF Centennial Symposium celebration at the National Press Club. Bob was appointed to fill a vacancy on the SOF Board of Trustees in July 2020 and was elected to a three-year term in September 2020. Bob is the News Editor of the website, chairs the Communications Committee, serves on the Conference Committee and served as President from 2021-2022.

Nomination for a one-year term as President:



Earl Showerman, MD, current SOF President, has been a patron of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for over forty years. He began his personal study of Shakespeare after retiring from medical practice and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles on Shakespeare's use of Greek drama sources and the playwright's remarkable medical

knowledge. He was the executive producer of the CD of Edward de Vere's music, *My Lord of Oxenford's Maske*, recorded by the Renaissance group Mignarda. Over the

past decade he has taught a series of Shakespeare authorship classes at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Southern Oregon University. He is a graduate of Harvard College and University of Michigan Medical School. In 2012, he presented the keynote address to the Shakespearean Authorship Trust (SAT) Conference in London. He is an associate of the SAT and a former president and trustee of the Shakespeare Fellowship.

In Memoriam: Roland George Caldwell (1933-2023)

by James A. Warren

Longtime Oxfordian (and SOF Lifetime Member) Roland Caldwell died April 24, 2023, at the age of eighty-nine. He was born in Chicago on November 10, 1933. When he was eleven, the family moved to a farm in Bainbridge, Ohio. In high school he excelled at sports, playing on the basketball, football and baseball teams and running track. After graduating in 1951, he served two years of activity duty in the Navy, followed by eight years in the Naval Reserves. The GI Bill made it possible for him to attend college at Ohio State University.

In 1955 Roland married his high school sweetheart, Annette, and soon after began his professional career in the trust business as an investment analyst, first for the Cleveland Trust Company, and then as a senior trust officer for the American National Bank. He then helped found and lead the Trust Company of the Bahamas. Moving back to the US, in Florida he operated his own investment advisory firm, Caldwell & Co. Always an independent thinker and entrepreneur, at age sixty he founded the Caldwell Trust Company, now run by his son, Kelly. He took great pride during his leadership in instilling a company culture devoted to fiduciary responsibility, personal client relationships and client goals.

In retirement, whether in Venice, Florida, or the family cabin in the Smoky Mountains, Roland embraced lifelong learning. He became a student of the great American philosopher Mortimer Adler, and was invited into Adler's elite inner circle of participants at the Aspen



Leaving the Board of Trustees after serving for three years is **Catherine Hatinguais**. The Board thanks Catherine for her service, especially for her excellent work on the Data Preservation Committee and on the SOAR (Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources) bibliographic database.

Institute's conferences and roundtable discussions on philosophical ideas. It was from Adler that Roland learned of the idea that Edward de Vere was the real author of the works known as "Shakespeare's." He then dove deeply into the authorship issue.

Roland provided funding for various Oxfordian initiatives. As Prof. Roger Stritmatter notes, in 2000, when the Shakespeare Fellowship was founded as an alternative organization to the Shakespeare Oxford Society, Caldwell backed the Fellowship with a donation, to be held in trust, which supplemented member dues and other income to keep the Fellowship functioning until the 2013 reunification of the two organizations as the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. At that time, in cooperation with the Caldwell Trust and at their request, Earl Showerman led a committee that disbursed grant monies to support specific Oxfordian initiatives by other groups.

Roland's passion for writing (and sharing his thoughts) flourished as he began publishing a newsletter, later named "Musings," through which he shared his thoughts on an extensive and diverse list of topics, ranging from politics, economics, monetary policy, American history, religion and ethics—and in the last few years, on blockchain technology, bitcoin and Artificial Intelligence. Roland maintained his sharp mind through his final illness earlier this year. In his final days, he asked that his family send out a last "Musings" to say goodbye. It read, "Farewell: It's been nice knowing you all. It's been quite a ride – I've enjoyed the journey. I will see you upstairs sometime soon." Roland is survived by his three children, and was the proud grandfather of seven grandchildren.

Although I never met Roland Caldwell, a piece he wrote about the second Authorship Conference organized by Professor Dan Wright at Concordia University in 2002, which he had attended, played a key role in transforming my life by drawing me into the Oxfordian cause. It was published by Max Weissmann, co-founder with Mortimer Adler, of the Center for the Study of the Great Ideas. In it Caldwell summarized five of the presentations that "made the strongest impact on me personally." One of them was Roger Stritmatter's presentation on the annotations in Edward de Vere's copy of the Geneva Bible. 📖

In Memoriam: Helen Heightsman Gordon (1932-1922)

by William Boyle

We recently learned of the death of Helen Heightsman Gordon, an Oxfordian colleague who had been involved with the authorship issue and various Oxfordian organizations and gatherings for decades. Helen passed away in California on May 8, 2022, at the age of 89.



An obituary in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* on May 28, 2022, covered some of the highlights of her life:

Helen, a beloved mother, grand and great-grandmother passed on Mother's Day evening. She was born in Salt Lake City on September 7, 1932, to Fred C. and Florence Hale Heightsman. She is survived by her son, Brent T. Winn, her daughter, Holly Winn Willner, and 10 grandchildren and extended family. Helen studied as an honor student at University of Utah, earned her BA and Masters at CSU, Sacramento, and continued her career-defining education earning her Doctorate in Education from Nova University. In addition to her degrees, Helen earned numerous other certificates, citations, awards, and honors for her academic and humanitarian achievements. She taught English, Literature, ESL and Women's Studies at Porterville and Bakersfield Community Colleges, as well as wrapping up her CSU career at UCSB. She was a master researcher and became an expert on Shakespeare and authored theories, papers, books and articles on that subject.

Helen wrote and published poetry, humor, professional articles, opinion pieces, five textbooks, and memoirs of her uncle's POW experiences in Guam and Japan. Her historical novel *Voice of the Vanquished: The Story of the Slave Marina and Hernando Cortez* placed first in the historical fiction category of the Hollywood Book Fest in 2007; in 2011 her historical novel *Malinalli of the Fifth Sun: The Slave Girl Who Changed the Fate of Mexico and Spain* earned an Editor's Choice Award and a Rising Star Award from iUniverse. In 2012 she was honored by the Bakersfield College Colloquium for her distinguished scholarship on the Shakespeare authorship question: "Sleuthing the Shakespeare Mysteries."

Helen was first introduced to the Oxfordian thesis by the writings of the Ogburns, first Dorothy and Charlton Sr., and later by Charlton Ogburn, Jr., with his 1984 book *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. In the 1990s and the 2000s Helen was a regular at Shakespeare Oxford Society conferences, and at the Shakespeare Authorship

Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. She wrote articles and letters to the editor during these years, and in 2005 published her book, *The Secret Love Story in Shakespeare's Sonnets*. In it she argued that a close relationship between Edward de Vere and Queen Elizabeth was the key to understanding the sonnets, and in turn to understanding the authorship problem. Gordon believed (as do a number of other Oxfordians) that their relationship had produced a secret love child who was raised as the 3rd Earl of Southampton, dedicatee of the long narrative poems, and fair youth of the sonnets. This is the Prince Tudor or Dynastic Succession theory.

She also believed that de Vere was involved in the Rosicrucian and Freemason movements of the time, and that he wrote in a format (using ciphers) that would be understood by future generations of Rosicrucians. The appendices to her book provide detailed information on these ciphers and their related coded language.

While preparing this notice I looked again at her book. It came out the same year as Hank Whittemore's *The Monument*, both of which present detailed glosses of sonnets from the Prince Tudor angle. There are some interesting instances of agreement—and disagreement—with Whittemore about what was being said by a poet addressing both the Queen and the Fair Youth over various rights and promises having to do with the succession. What caught my eye this time was her final chapter on Sonnet 87, a sonnet about a "gift of love" and a king, which I had addressed in detail in a conference presentation four years ago. I wished I had read it then, because I would have included some of her observations. She concludes with a heartfelt statement that reminds us why our mutual Oxfordian journey is always so rewarding:

It is an impressive tribute that we still care, 400 years after his death, about the playwright-poet who dramatically changed the world of English literature and contributed thousands of words to the English language From that body of work, with its intensely personal universality, we derive meaning in our own lives, insight into the complexities of human behavior, and wisdom for our own times, which are amazingly parallel to yours And we continue to be inspired by that overriding truth that your own life story so well exemplifies—the healing and ennobling power of love. (157-158)

Services for Helen Heightsman Gordon were held at the Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Church in Goleta, Calif., on June 18, 2022. Donations to Live Oak U.U. were suggested in lieu of flowers. ☹

Join Us in New Orleans!

Space is still available for anyone wishing to come to November's SOF annual conference, which will be in New Orleans from the 9th through the 12th.

The conference will feature a panel on publishing, with four well-known authorship authors who have reached a wide public with their works. They include Margo (formerly Mark) Anderson, author of the de Vere biography "*Shakespeare*" *By Another Name*; Elizabeth Winkler, author of Simon and Schuster's *Shakespeare Was A Woman and Other Heresies* who will also give the keynote address on reactions to her recent volume; Prof. Ros Barber, creator of the online *Shakespeare: The Evidence*; and the SOF's de facto historian James A. Warren, creator of Veritas Press, which has now published a wide range of new and reprint volumes on the authorship and on the Oxfordian case.

Following the panel discussion will be an open book signing—an opportunity to have not just these four, but *all* authors present at the event, to personally sign their respective books. A book table will be available; registrants are also welcome to bring their own volumes from home and get them autographed as well.

The publishing panel and book signing are just two of some twenty events planned for this year's Conference, which includes a jazz dinner cruise on the Mississippi as the opening reception on Thursday, November 9. The cruise—along with lunches Friday, Saturday and Sunday and refreshment breaks throughout—are all included in the discounted Conference registration fee.

"It's going to be a tremendous four days," said SOF President Earl Showerman. "We'll be able to hear papers from some of our most popular and important speakers: Bonner Cutting on the First Folio, Roger Stritmatter reporting on his recent research in England, Robert Prechter on the question of authorship and bisexuality, and even one from me on 'Hamlet's Book.'"

"Other speakers will include Michael Delahoyde and Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, who are planning a talk about Oxford's music and lyrics, a scholarly complement to the jazz cruise. Michael will also be giving a separate paper on 'slander' in *Much Ado About Nothing*. There really will be something for everyone and a whole lot of camaraderie for all."

Conference Chair Don Rubin added that an "Authorship 101" talk is scheduled for the opening Thursday for anyone wishing to learn more about authorship basics. "Given that 2023 is the 400th anniversary of publication of the First Folio, there will be several papers on the Folio, including one by Gabriel Ready from Ottawa, another by Lyle Columbo, an assistant professor at Tulane, and a third by Ralph McDonald. All in addition to Bonner Cutting's major paper on the subject."

Among other papers, Professor Rima Greenhill of Stanford will be speaking about her new book, *Shakespeare, Elizabeth and Ivan: The Role of English-Russian Relations in Love's Labours Lost*, and French scholar Elisabeth Waugaman will be speaking about Shakespeare's "French Obsession." Talks are also scheduled on the related subjects of philosophy and epistemology by Librarian Michel Dudley of the University of Winnipeg and Sky Gilbert from the University of Guelph.

Among the new presenters is noted Canadian director Guy Sprung, on Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of theater and performance. Sprung has directed numerous productions of Shakespeare plays for major companies, including one production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* that ran in repertory for a dozen years in Moscow.

Other presenters will include Dr. Richard Waugaman, on issues connected to autobiographical readings of the sonnets; John Hamill and James Warren debating the Prince Tudor Theory; Ros Barber on how to win the authorship argument; and Board member Dorothy Dickerman on her own recent experiences seeking out Shakespeare in Sicily.

Registration details may be found on the SOF website (there is also a flyer in this issue of the *Newsletter*). The conference venue is the Hyatt Centric Hotel in the French Quarter. Rooms are still available at a reduced rate. Additional rooms are being held at the Homewood Suites by Hilton New Orleans French Quarter, about five streets away from the Hyatt, but also in the French Quarter.

To book your room at the Hyatt, please use the following dedicated website link:

<https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/MSYRF/G-SHAK>.

(If the link doesn't work for you, call 504-586-0800 and provide our group discount code: G-SHAK.)

To book at Homewood Suites, try the special link that is on the SOF website:

<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2023-annual-conference/>

If that doesn't work, call Homewood Suites at 504-930-4494.

A discounted registration rate for the Conference is available until October 1. Discounted rates for the hotels will be available as long as we as a group can book them. If there are any problems with booking, please let Don Rubin know (drubin@yorku.ca).

A livestream of all conference papers will be available to those unable to attend in person. Registration for the livestream (\$99 for the four days) must be booked in advance. Booking for the livestream will open in September.

Did Jonson and Shakespeare Really Admire One Another?

by Peter W. Dickson © 2023

Scholars have long hoped to find a Shakespearean work not known to have existed (or which existed but was lost, even if once published). Claims have been made for dramas but especially for poems, some of which have been previously attributed to others.

Similarly, some poems attributed to Shakespeare were actually composed by others. This situation ensures controversy, sometimes bitter exchanges as to the truth. The stakes are high precisely because the professional rewards are huge for any scholar who becomes the discoverer of a “lost” Shakespearean work.

British Professor Chris Laoutaris (University of Birmingham) is the latest to enter the fray. His new book concerning the creation of the First Folio is entitled *Shakespeare’s Book*, but he unexpectedly devotes an entire chapter to a poem addressed to Ben Jonson (a rival of Shakespeare) composed by someone who used “Cygnus” as a pen name.¹

The name Cygnus alludes to a story (there are a few variations) about a Greek king or citizen named Phaeton who was transformed by the gods into a swan after he had retrieved the remains of a loved one lost in a river. Laoutaris proposes that this poem, printed above the name “Cygnus” to honor and praise Jonson, is a “lost” Shakespeare sonnet and that the presumed Bard from Stratford-upon-Avon chose to hide behind “Cygnus” as a pseudonym. The poem is addressed “To the Deserving Author”:

When I respect thy argument, I see
An image of those times: but when I view
The wit, the workmanship, so rich, so true,
The times themselves do seem retrieved to me.

And as Sejanus, in thy tragedy,
Falleth from Caesar’s grace; even so the crew
Of common playwrights, whom opinion blew
Big with false greatness, are disgraced by thee.

Thus, in one Tragedy, thou makest twain:
And, since fair works of Justice fit the part
Of tragic writers, Muses do ordain
That all Tragedians, Masters of their Art,

Who shall hereafter follow on this tract,
In writing well, thy tragedy shall act.

A major clue in this mysterious poem is that it praises Jonson’s tragedy *Sejanus* as the standard for excellence that all “Tragedians, Masters of their arte” should “hereafter follow” and strive to emulate. The poem appears in the preliminaries for the version of *Sejanus* published in 1605, two years after it was first performed on the stage.

Despite the poem’s different rhyme scheme, Laoutaris argues that the Cygnus pseudonym reminds us of Jonson’s reference to the Bard as “Sweet Swan of Avon” in the First Folio.

Laoutaris maintains that the poem’s reflection on “time” and certain phraseology and word usage such as “twaine” are similar to that found in Shakespeare’s Sonnets 39, 42 and 105. He also notes that Martin Wiggins, the Renaissance scholar who published the multi-volume *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, had previously suggested that the Cygnus poem was a lost Shakespeare sonnet.

But there is a basic problem for which Laoutaris or Wiggins never provide a credible explanation. It seems counterintuitive and illogical, if not ludicrous, that in praising Jonson as the one dramatist for others to emulate, Shakespeare would elevate Jonson above himself and do so while hiding behind a pen name that would leave Jonson in the dark about who holds him in such high regard.

Moreover, the notion that the Bard used a pen name conflicts with the orthodox view that, beginning in 1594, Shakespeare openly enjoyed the exalted literary perch at the royal court as the premier dramatist for the actors known as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, renamed the King’s Men in 1603. When *Sejanus* was published in 1605, Shakespeare already had numerous dramas performed and/or in print, including seven tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

In comparison, Jonson was primarily known for comedies and satires and was regarded as a master of the genre known as the “masque,” which typically centered on figures and tales from classical mythology with an emphasis on dance and music. As for tragedies, those that survive from Jonson’s pen are limited to the two he included in his own literary folio of 1616: *Sejanus*, first performed in 1603, and *Catiline*, much later in 1611.

Given that Shakespeare’s stature as a literary titan was secure with the number of his dramas, especially famous tragedies, it is illogical that he would have praised Jonson’s *Sejanus* as the new gold standard. Could Shakespeare have been that modest or uncertain about his own literary achievements since 1594 as the monarch’s uniquely favored literary pen at the royal court well into the early 1600s?

It’s surprising that Laoutaris even suggests that the Bard needed, or was willing to use, a pseudonym because orthodox scholars roundly condemn that idea in their dispute with those who question the notion that William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon really was the true Bard.

The lingering question is why Laoutaris is so desperate to find any evidence to prove that the presumed Bard from the Midlands admired Jonson, whose dedication to Shakespeare in the First Folio is so famous.

Laoutaris's fundamental problem (and Wiggins's) is that everyone knows that the Bard never revealed his feelings or thoughts about any other living person in any published work after dedicating the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to an aristocrat (the Earl of Southampton) in the early 1590s.

Unlike so many of his literary rivals, Shakespeare never dedicated a work to his patron, Queen Elizabeth, not even at the time of her death in 1603, or to his subsequent patron King James, or to honor Prince Henry, the King's wildly popular heir who died prematurely in 1612.

There are other deep flaws in Laoutaris's insistence that Jonson and Shakespeare were a two-man mutual admiration society, which Laoutaris feels he has to defend to protect the Stratfordian orthodoxy concerning the First Folio, the primary focus of his book.

Jonson's Conspicuous Refusal to Honor the Bard in 1616

Laoutaris conceals from less-informed buyers of his book an accurate understanding of Jonson's mind regarding Shakespeare in both in own folio, published in 1616, and in the Shakespeare First Folio seven years later. A consummate self-promoter, Jonson's desire to underscore his own achievements resulted in an unprecedented literary folio of more than 800 pages.² Early in 1616, Jonson learned of the untimely death of his literary protégé Francis Beaumont, who had died on March 6. Beaumont was accorded a high-profile burial in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey, which at the time included only Chaucer and Spenser.

Not surprisingly, Jonson's folio includes a poem in praise of Beaumont, which begins, "How I do love thee Beaumont":

How I do love thee Beaumont, and thy muse
That unto me dost such religion use!

How I do fear myself, that am not worth
The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth!

At once thou maked me happie, and unmaked;
And giving largely to me, more than thou tak'it.

What fate is mine, that so it self bereaves?
When ever there, where most thou prayed me,
For writing better, I must envy thee.

Jonson's folio also includes three poems from Beaumont that praise Jonson, one of which extols him as



Francis Beaumont



Ben Jonson

a greater composer of comedies "than any English stage has known." Jonson conspicuously placed Beaumont's poems at the beginning of his massive folio, which confirms the deep personal bond in which the latter was a protégé of the former.

But, at the time of his death, Beaumont had only one work that bears his name on a title page: a masque performed before the royal family at the Inner Court in 1612.³ This is in glaring contrast to the name "William Shakespeare" associated with plays and poems as far back as *Venus and Adonis*, which made the Bard a national sensation in 1593, when Beaumont was only nine years old.

Despite this enormous disparity in fame, Jonson's folio does not contain any praise for the much greater literary genius. In fact, toward the end of Jonson's folio are more than 100 pages of epigrams (poems) honoring various persons and topics. Yet he was content to list "William Shakespeare" only as an actor in two of his own plays, one being *Sejanus*, with the last name as "Shake-speare."

Jonson's reference in 1616 to this person as nothing more than an actor in some of his dramas is astonishing because if that person really was the senior dramatist at the royal court from 1594 to perhaps 1613, then Jonson is showing utter contempt for the premier literary figure of the era.

What we know for certain is that Jonson had ample time to ponder what, if anything, more to say about Shakespeare as a major literary figure because Jonson's folio was still in the works when the presumed Bard from Stratford-upon-Avon died in late April 1616. Jonson's folio was published no earlier than November 1616, as proven by Kevin Donovan's research, "The Final Quires of Jonson's Works: Headline Evidence," in *Studies in Bibliography*, Volume 40 (1987), 106-119.⁴

Jonson's deliberate refusal in 1616 to honor the Bard exposes his reference to Shakespeare as "My Beloved" in the First Folio of 1623 as patently false, keeping also in mind that, in the same dedication, Jonson was not

exactly kind when he said of Shakespeare: “thou hadst small Latine, and lesse Greeke.”

The Long Shadow of Tombgate

The second reason to reject Laoutaris’s idea of a deep bond of affection or mutual respect between Jonson and the William Shakespeare who died in April 1616 can also be seen a little further down in Jonson’s dedication in the First Folio of 1623.

Jonson expressed utter disrespect for the Bard when he declared: “Thou art a Monument, without a tombe.” This declaration cannot have been more outrageous; it would have jumped right off the page to any reader.

The only persons not accorded a proper burial with an identifiable grave or tomb were those who had committed suicide. That was an action which Christian doctrine for both Catholics and Protestants condemned as unforgivable and deserving the ultimate sanction, which meant being consigned to oblivion via burial beneath the intersections of roads.⁵ The Tudor regime also often severely punished families of those who had committed suicide.

The only charitable interpretation one can give to Jonson’s shocking assertion would be to note that the word “moniment” (unlike *monument*) in earlier centuries could mean “a body of work” or a record of achievement, not a physical memorial.⁶ Indeed, Jonson clearly suggests that readers should not bother to look for a William Shakespeare tomb because it does not exist and informs them that the Bard will only be found, and will forever live, in his literary works—his book, i.e., a body of work or “moniment.” Six crucial lines from Jonson’s dedication in the First Folio provide the full context of his remarks:

My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
A little further, to make thee a roome:
Thou art a Monument without a tombe,
And art alive still, while thy Book doth live,
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

Jonson is explicitly referring to Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey, where in March of 1616 Beaumont’s high-profile interment occurred in the presence of a crowd of admirers, surely including Jonson. In glaring contrast, that honor was not accorded or arranged for the presumed Bard from Stratford-upon-Avon, who died less than seven weeks later.

Why, when Jonson refers to Shakespeare as “my beloved” in his First Folio dedication, did he not urge amends and call for the great literary genius to be reburied in Poets’ Corner? In the passage above, Jonson does the opposite; he does *not* want the tomb of his protégé (Beaumont) to be moved “a little further” to

make room for Shakespeare, despite the fact that the latter’s works were far more celebrated.

In asserting that Shakespeare was “without a tombe” in the First Folio (which did not go on sale until December 1623), Jonson is either suggesting that he thought that the Bard was still alive or he was in the dark that there was a tomb for the literary genius in Holy Trinity Church in his hometown, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Orthodox scholars still insist that the expensive wall memorial with a bust was already in place, perhaps as early as 1616, which Laoutaris finds credible, citing Lena Orlin’s *The Private Life of William Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 2021). But if the memorial was erected in 1616 or so, how could Jonson still be in the dark in 1623?

Unless Jonson was convinced that the author had committed suicide and therefore was buried underneath an intersection, his claim in the First Folio that the Bard was “without a tombe” only makes sense if he knew that the deceased author had chosen to hide behind a pseudonym and actually had a tomb, but one bearing a different name, his true name. But this scenario is heresy for orthodox Shakespeare scholars.

Shakespeare: Two Tombs or None?

The threat to orthodoxy posed by Jonson’s allegation that the Bard was “without a tombe” does not end there. For four centuries we have been led to believe that, unlike Beaumont’s glorious interment in Westminster Abbey in March 1616, the presumed Bard’s remains were placed only a few weeks later in an anonymous tomb in a church floor in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Yet the inscription beneath the Shakespeare bust in the memorial mounted on the north wall of the church explicitly asserts: “Shakespeare whom envious death has placed within this monument” and “whose name doth deck this tomb.”

Astonishingly, we have in the same church two tombs for the same man—one with no name in the church floor, and the other explicitly for a William Shakespeare whose remains presumably were interred within the church wall. Or perhaps neither is the true tomb, if we are to believe Jonson when he declared “Thou art a Monument, without a tombe.”

Interments within church walls were extremely rare, one example being for a member of the Medici family in Italy. As for the anonymous floor tomb next to the altar of Holy Trinity Church, it was not large enough to contain the remains of an adult.

Furthermore, no sign of a coffin or human remains were seen when an adjacent excavation in 1796 provided a side view of the area below the anonymous gravestone, as the sexton told Washington Irving when he visited Holy Trinity Church in 1815.⁷ This revelation is all the most significant because Irving mentioned it in his

Sketch Book, a celebrated literary work with many editions that ensured his fame and popularity in England and America.

The premier Shakespeare scholar James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (1820-1889) independently confirmed the 1796 excavation.⁸ He added that the anonymous tomb's badly damaged gravestone was lifted and replaced with a newly engraved but still anonymous inscription in the 1830s. He stated that when the grave was fully exposed at that time "nothing more" than dust or dirt could be seen.

Last but not least, a non-intrusive scan of the anonymous tomb took place in 2016, in time for the 400th anniversary of the presumed Bard's death and burial. It too detected no signs of human remains or a coffin below the gravestone.⁹ Thus, there is no reason to conclude that this anonymous gravestone had anything to do with a famous literary figure named "William Shakespeare."

With Holy Trinity Church seeming to have two "tombs" for the same man, we are presented with a contradictory and incoherent situation that suggests that a sloppy attempt was made to simulate a fake final resting place sometime after the First Folio was published (more likely in conjunction with the publication in 1632 of the Second Folio, in which the word "moniment" in the 1623 First Folio was altered to "monument"¹⁰).

The only reasonable conclusion is that the true final resting place of the William Shakspeare who died in April 1616 remains a genuine mystery. But there is no mystery when it comes to Jonson's manifestly indifferent attitude toward the presumed Bard, about whom—alive or dead—he chose in his own folio of 1616 to express undying love only for Beaumont.

Likewise, there is no mystery why seven years later, Jonson's double message to those who purchase the First Folio was that they would find the Bard and his final resting place only in the dramas as a "Moniment" or body of work preserved in that folio, and that they

should not spend time searching for the true tomb of the person or persons who were the concealed creators of these literary works.

Endnotes:

1. Laoutaris, Chris, *Shakespeare's Book*, Pegasus Publishers, ch. 19, "Big with False Greatness," 317-328.
2. The author consulted and closely studied an original copy of Jonson's Folio of 1616 in the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress.
3. Dickson, Peter, *Shake-speare and the Royalists Who Stole the Bard*, 2011, 2016, p. 97.
4. Ian Donaldson, who published the first Jonson biography in more than twenty years, places the publication of Jonson's folio between November 6 and 27, 1616. See p. 324 and endnote 36 on p. 495 of *Ben Jonson – A Life*, Oxford University Press (2011), where Donaldson lists all prior scholarship concerning the printing and proofreading of the folio of 1616.
5. MacDonald, Richard and Terrence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England*, Clarendon Press, 1990.
6. The word "Moniment," which appears in Jonson's dedication and in Leonard Digges's dedication to Shakespeare in the First Folio, was altered to "monument" in the Second Folio, published in 1632. This is a strong hint that something took place in conjunction with this Second Folio to have what we know as the wall memorial and a Shakespeare bust in place on the north wall of Holy Trinity Church. There is no evidence of anyone mentioning that they had seen this wall memorial prior to the 1630s. See Dickson, op cit., 24, 96-97.
7. Washington Irving mentions his conversation with the sexton at this church in 1815 in his *Sketch Book*, published by Van Winkle in New York in 1819.
8. Halliwell-Phillipps, James Orchard, *Outlines of a Life of William Shakespeare*, Second Edition (1882), 172-174. See Peter Dickson, "Flawed British Documentary Film," *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Spring 2016, 19-22.
9. There was extensive media coverage of the scan of the anonymous tomb, which was the focus of a documentary film, "Secret History: Shakespeare's Tomb," broadcast on BBC's Channel 4 on March 26, 2016, and on PBS in the US on April 19. See Peter Dickson, "Flawed British Documentary Film," *supra*.
10. Id. at n.3.

Understanding Ben Jonson's "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author"

by Margaret Becker

The laudatory poem by Ben Jonson in the front of the First Folio is surely about Edward de Vere and no one else. Jonson begins by asking whether, without being envious of Shakespeare or his name, he is equal to the book and fame because Shakespeare's writings "cannot be praised too much," but all men's rights he had not meant to praise, for "silliest ignorance" might settle on what sounds and echoes right, or on "blind affection," which never advances the truth. Or there might also be "crafty malice" pretending to praise, but the Author is proof against them.

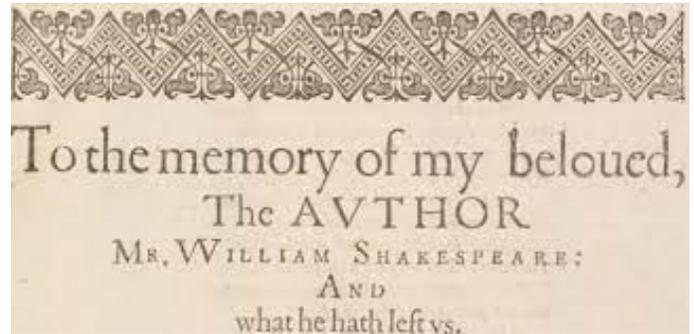
Therefore, Jonson begins: "Soul of the Age! . . . wonder of the stage," He says "rise! I will not lodge thee by Chaucer or Spenser or bid Beaumont lie a little further to make thee room." Why does he say that? He is talking about Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, where the remains of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, had been moved from the Hackney Church. (Not William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, who is buried in the Stratford Church.) Jonson does not say de Vere is not buried there, but says "rise!" it is his way of saying that he should be living and receiving praise.

“Thou art a monument without a tomb” because the Earl of Oxford does not have an individual tomb; his writings will be the monument of English literature. And he will live while his book is alive and people can give it praise.

Jonson thinks if his judgment is mature enough, he will include him with his peers to outshine them, who were Lyly, Kid and Marlowe. They were truly his contemporaries, Lyly even having been deVere’s secretary. And “though thou hast small Latin and less Greek” he is saying: even though he had smaller Latin and less Greek than those ancient poets, he would call them forth to honor him. Jonson was not suggesting an inadequate education, but was making a dramatic contrast between the ancient Greek and Latin poets and contemporary dramatists themselves. Jonson commands the ancient poets to hear Shakespeare’s “buskin tread.” A buskin was a boot worn by ancient Greek Tragedians. Likewise, socks (which Jonson also mentions) were to represent comic drama. After laudatory praise from Greek poets, he even says “Triumph, my Britain! Thou has one to show,” and that Europe owes him homage.

Jonson continues: “He was not for an age but for all time!” He then reviews the Muses and says: “Upon the Muse’s anvil strike the second heat for a good poet is made as well as born.” “Shakespeare’s mind and manners brightly shines,” at which he seems “to shake a lance brandish’d at the eyes of ignorance.” When he was young, the Earl of Oxford won several jousting tournaments where they shout “Spear Shaker!” (Good place to get a pen name!)

Then we come to “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.” Alexander Waugh has found a number of sources showing that the royal Hampton Court on the banks of the Thames was originally known as Avondunum or Avondun, and was still known as “Avon” during Elizabethan times.

Jonson concludes: “But stay. I see thee in the Hemisphere Advanc’d. and made a constellation there! Shine forth, thou star of poets. . . .”

Edward de Vere died in June 1604; in September of that year astronomer Johannes Kepler identified a new star in the sky in the constellation of Ophiuchus, now known as Kepler’s Supernova. Is this reference not an unimpeachable identifier of the Earl of Oxford? And there it is in the First Folio. When read correctly, this information could hardly be more straightforward. You could say the same for any of the subjects Jonson presents in the poem. It is more than a thesis; is it not proof that de Vere was the author of the Works of Shakespeare?

Tales from the Archives: Mad north-northwest

by Bill Boyle

Over the past few years we’ve been developing an archives policy for the entire Oxfordian community, working with the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library and its SOAR catalog, and through the SOF’s Digital Preservation Committee. “Archives” involves more than just identifying material and making it accessible. It also means first locating material, then storing it (i.e., books, periodical, personal papers, etc.) somewhere, with a policy to maintain everything.

There is another important aspect to archiving: making known to the world what you have, why it’s important, and what is the full history.

All these elements have come into play recently as one of our projects suddenly grew into these larger questions about what is the history, and whether that

history is still important. Last year, as the DPC contacted older Oxfordians about their plans to archive their personal papers and book collections, we contacted Barbara Burris, who wrote an important series of articles on the infamous Ashbourne portrait, documenting its history and the state of the debate over its provenance at the turn of the 21st century (her four-part series appeared in *Shakespeare Matters* in 2002). Recently there have been discussions about Shakespeare portraits, including the Ashbourne, on the ShakesVere Facebook group, and a book on Shakespeare portraits came out this spring (Lee Durkee’s *Stalking Shakespeare*), which featured the Ashbourne in its closing section as illustrative of the whole problem with Shakespeare portraits.

Background

We then realized that many newer Oxfordians may not be aware of the Ashbourne story. It first blew up in 1940, when Charles Wisner Barrell published his breakthrough study of the painting in *Scientific American*, with his x-rays, his revelation that the Ashbourne was really an overpainting of another portrait, and his claim that the original was most likely a lost portrait of the Earl of Oxford. It was a major story for several years, until World War II intervened.

The key evidence that Barrell discovered were the initials “CK” hidden under the paint. This was most likely the monogram of artist Cornelis Ketel, known to have painted a lost Oxford portrait sometime in the late 1570s or early 1580s. In 1948, eight years after Barrell’s *Scientific American* article, the Folger Shakespeare Library, which owns the portrait, took its own x-rays, and somehow the “CK” monogram had disappeared. Barrell was accused of fraud, and he in turn sued the Folger (the case was withdrawn in 1950).

The matter resurfaced in 1976, when the Shakespeare Oxford Society proposed that the painting be examined again by independent experts. Two years later the Folger did hire an expert. Peter Michaels’s examination uncovered a hidden coat of arms on the painting, and it was quickly concluded that the sitter was not Oxford, but rather Sir Hugh Hamersley, a former mayor of London. No “CK” was visible on the painting, but no search for it was conducted, nor x-rays taken.

Peter Michaels was murdered in 1982; work on the Ashbourne ceased for several years. More work began in 1988, with a new restorer (William Pressly, working with Arthur Page). In 1993 the Folger made things official with an article by Pressly in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, proclaiming that the sitter was indeed Sir Hugh Hamersley. No painter was identified.

Eight years later Barbara Burris, dissatisfied with Pressly’s account, reexamined things. In a four-part series of articles, she made a convincing case that the Folger had engaged in less than scholarly behavior, and that the case for Oxford as the sitter was back. Her work resulted in a major article on the authorship debate and the Ashbourne in the *New York Times* in February 2002.

In fact, the “missing” “CK” monogram was still visible on the Folger’s 1948-49 x-rays; Pressly himself had acknowledged as much in 1993, in a memo to the Folger director and in his book, *A Catalog of Paintings at the Folger Shakespeare Library*. The Folger provided those x-rays to us in 2002-03, and we saw for ourselves that the “CK” was indeed faintly visible. How could Hamersley be declared the sitter? The case seemed to have been made by Burris and the Oxfordians. Yet twenty years later the Folger website tells us that the portrait is “now known to depict the slightly altered visage of Sir Hugh Hamersley.” So do other prominent Stratfordian websites, and, of course, Wikipedia.

All this led us to revisit the whole issue, at first with an eye toward rounding up all the papers and research, cataloging it, and storing it. But what of the story itself? Is the “CK” there or not? Is the portrait one of Oxford or not? All that somehow got dropped down the memory hole, and is no longer even fought over.

Additionally, some new research has come to light, and a few overlooked pieces of the puzzle have resurfaced. In a footnote in his 1993 *Shakespeare Quarterly* article, William Pressly had cast doubt on the accuracy of a sketch of part of the painting made by Peter Michaels’s assistant, Lisa Oehrl. Pressly wrote that she had erred in drawing the tips of the cross in the coat of arms as rounded (if the tips were rounded, the coat of arms could not be Hamersley’s). Oehrl, who did not learn until 2014 that she had been cited, insisted that she had drawn what she saw—rounded tips—and asked *Shakespeare Quarterly* to print a correction. However (perhaps because more than twenty years had passed), *Shakespeare Quarterly* took no action. Oehrl then sent a letter to the SOF, which was published in the Summer 2014 issue of the *Newsletter*.

We contacted Lisa Oehrl, and she has agreed to be interviewed on the record about her experiences from 1979 to 1981 assisting Peter Michaels as he worked (under the Folger’s direction) on the Ashbourne.

The CK-Cathay Company Context

Finally, recent research has revealed that Cornelis Ketel was deeply involved with the Frobisher expedition as the company’s “contracted” artist, creating paintings documenting the investors, the ship, and the Inuit natives brought back to London (Nicole Blackwood, “Meta Incognita: Some Hypotheses on Cornelis Ketel’s Lost English and Inuit Portraits,” *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art*, 2016). As Oxfordians know, Oxford lost a fortune on this expedition, which sought to find the fabled north-west passage to China; only the Queen lost more. Records show that it was Frobisher who persuaded Oxford to invest and keep investing.

Of all the work Ketel did for Frobisher’s Cathay Company—it is documented that he made nineteen paintings—the only known surviving portrait is one of Martin Frobisher. Interestingly, it bears a “CK” monogram. This information strengthens the case for the Ashbourne being Oxford, and for its date being around 1580, as Burris had theorized. Perhaps it was painted for a reason; when placed next to Ketel’s portrait of Frobisher, it looks like a twin brother (see figures 1 and 2). Two men who were “mad north by north-west,” and devastated by it.

Based on this new information and on long-held doubts, we have decided not just to archive the Ashbourne story, but to resurrect it. In that regard Lee Durkee’s book, *Stalking Shakespeare* (to be reviewed in the Fall issue of the *Newsletter*), should be part of the mix. One of Durkee’s theses is that many of the putative



“Shakespeare” portraits may turn out to be overpainted Oxford portraits. Maybe somebody knew something. This is what Barrell also thought; in at least one public appearance he said as much (in Philadelphia in March 1947, reported in the old US *Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, Spring 1947). Those old newsletters, and Barbara Burris’s series of articles, are available on the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship site.

We hope to have a much fuller story in the Fall issue, and more stories after that.

←
Figure 1. Martin Frobisher is said to have been the key person who persuaded the Earl of Oxford to invest in his expeditions. (Cornelis Ketel, 1578, with a CK monogram signature)

→
Figure 2. The Ashbourne portrait. The Earl of Oxford lost more than anyone (except Elizabeth) on the failed northwest expedition. (c. 1580, Cornelis Ketel, with a CK monogram signature)



(Winkler, continued from p. 1)

excusable in someone half his age.” Bate then offers his own solution to the authorship question: “The ultimate explanation for the authorship controversy is that everyone—schoolboy, lover, soldier, justice, lean and slippered pantaloone, tyrant, aristocrat, woman, outsider—can find themselves in Shakespeare, and that this phenomenon leads those with an obsessive turn of mind to pin his identity to some particular aristocrat, woman, outsider or whoever. . . . because Shakespeare was . . . the ‘Soul of the Age.’”

A few days later the *Telegraph* published Winkler’s response. It read in part:

[Prof. Bate] dutifully affirms his belief that the son of a glove-maker must have written the plays because they exhibit “detailed technical knowledge of glove-making.” He doesn’t elaborate on this exceptional knowledge, as it amounts to only two references: “a glover’s paring knife” in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and “cheveril” (a type of leather) in *Romeo and Juliet*. Meanwhile, he ignores the

vast scholarship detailing, for instance, the author’s familiarity with Italy and knowledge of the law. Both are too awkward, since there’s no evidence that the glover’s son visited Italy or studied law.

Prof. Bate says I was “cruel” when I interviewed his friend, the scholar Sir Stanley Wells. However, he finds me “incisive” when such criticisms are applied to anti-Stratfordians. It isn’t a journalist’s business to be kind and pampering, but he would like me to be more pampering to those who agree with him.

Prof. Bate might consider the view of Carol Symes, a historian I interviewed in the book: “I think it’s unethical for a group of scholars to be confronted with perfectly plausible questions and some plausible evidence and to refuse to consider it.”

The *Telegraph* also published a letter from Sir Derek Jacobi and Sir Mark Rylance in response to Bate’s review. “We applaud *The Telegraph* for reviewing a contentious book,” they begin. “However, we have less

praise for the reviewer, Professor Jonathan Bate, who takes so little of it seriously. . . . Ms. Winkler charts the history of the authorship question over 400 years, both through her own research and interviews with various scholars. She explores the development of the Startford myth and how it came about, initially through David Garrick in 1769. Professor Bate fails to acknowledge that her chapter on the glorification of Shakespeare reveals that it was created in response to the French Revolution. She shows very clearly how the development of Bardolatry was attached to the preservation of Church and state: 'A new religion was needed; a discourse that could provide the unifying, pacifying function formerly provided by Christianity.' These are serious points that Professor Bate ignores." Jacobi and Rylance also criticized Bate for "fail[ing] to address the extraordinary scholarship found in the plays, the detailed understanding of untranslated manuscripts in Old French and Old Italian, Ovid, the law, botany and the inner workings of the Tudor court, among other things."

Emma Smith (*The Spectator*, June 3) and response

Emma Smith, also a Shakespeare professor at the University of Oxford, wasted no time in lambasting Winkler. "Let's start with the basics," Smith begins. "Despite widespread disinformation, including in *Shakespeare was a Woman and Other Heresies*, there is in fact ample historical evidence from the period that a) attributes the plays and poems to William Shakespeare, b) registers the same William Shakespeare as an actor and shareholder in Lord Chamberlain's, later King's Men, and c) connects this William Shakespeare with the William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. Only if you believe that all this evidence is fabricated does the authorship question become a question. And once the question is admissible, all that mass of documentation is no longer sufficient to answer it. Faced with this unwinnable argument, Shakespearean scholars ('Stratfordians', as the doubters dub them) overwhelmingly prefer not to engage."

"Reviewing this engaging and wrong-headed book is thus a challenge," Smith continues. "Too contemptuous, and I am simply one of the 'Shakespearean priesthood,' that purblind queue of 'orthodox believers in the one true church' who do not 'take kindly to the denial of [their] god.' Too engaged by the argument, and it has already won by establishing itself as worthy of academic debate."

On June 15 the *Spectator* printed Winkler's letter in response:

Emma Smith chastises me for questioning the authorship, while also criticising me for not identifying an alternative candidate (Books, 3 June).

Professor Smith seems to have misunderstood the book. It's a portrait of a fractious, muddled controversy by

a journalist surveying the history of the debate. My aim was to report on it, not to solve it. I let the reader grapple with the many gaps, inconsistencies and problems without being told what to think.

Historians recognise that debates about the past are a fundamental feature of historical inquiry. Shakespeare scholars, by contrast, resort to accusations that those with different views are spreading disinformation. The authorship question is a compelling subject that has engaged diverse writers and thinkers. Yet in her defence of orthodoxy, Professor Smith deploys breezy misrepresentations and belittling smears. She concludes by wondering 'Who cares?' about the author anyway. This show of indifference has long been the last line of defence for scholars who otherwise seem to care quite a lot. No one has to care, of course, but a scholar who doesn't has abandoned all pretence to scholarship.

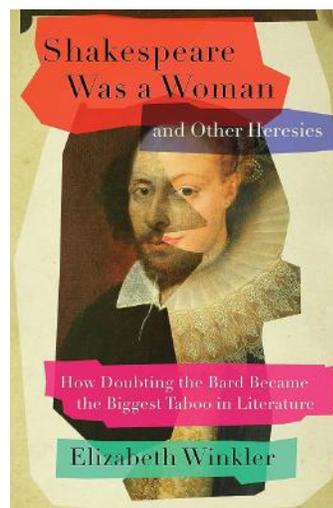
Other negative reviews

Writing in the [London] *Times* on 3 July, Oliver Kamm thundered, "We must denounce insidious theories about Shakespeare," finding Winkler's book "a farrago of wounded pride, sly insinuation of mystery where there is none, and a feeble grasp of sources, dates and facts." He also managed to insert another Holocaust-denier comparison: "If you reject Shakespeare's authorship, you dispense with the methods of historical inquiry altogether. Not coincidentally, the prominent Oxfordian author Joseph Sobran was a Holocaust denier."

Perhaps the lengthiest review—some 3,100 words—was by Isaac Butler in the online magazine *Slate*. Authorship doubters need not read past the headline and subhead: "Shakespeare Was Shakespeare: It is long past time to retire the pernicious, anti-historical, dumb search for who 'really' wrote Shakespeare's plays." In the very first paragraph, Butler conflates Shakespeare of Stratford with Shakespeare the author, calling both "Shakespeare." To his credit, Butler does acknowledge gaps in the historical record, which, in his view, "have caused the birth of two different cottage industries, both of which

seek to explain the remarkable achievements of the mysterious William Shakespeare. The first is the Shakespeare Biographical Complex, which churns out biographies of Shakespeare for the general reader that are filled with wild imaginative leaps.

The most prominent of these is Stephen Greenblatt's openly speculative *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, which is as delightful to read as it is



conjectural in its scholarship. . . . [I]n terms of the Bard himself, the book is a house of cards in which every leaning laminated rectangle is printed with the word ‘maybe.’

“The second is the Shakespeare Truther community. To these ‘anti-Stratfordians,’ the various gaps in Shakespeare’s biography have an obvious explanation: William Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him. Someone else must have. None of their evidence is very persuasive; much of it does not rise to the standard of evidence at all. This has led the broader Shakespeare scholarship community to treat the field of Shakespeare Trutherism with hostility and contempt.” Butler goes on to dismiss the case for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, in five words with a tired reason: he “died before Shakespeare’s career ended.” After a few hundred more words—reminding us that “trutherism is so pernicious,” etc.—Butler falls back on the old canard that it’s the works themselves that are important: “They are a great gift to the world, waiting for each generation to receive it. Their author has, whether by design or by accident, been reduced to a shadow lurking behind the work. Unless some new evidence arises, let us leave him there, offstage in the dark, and focus on what really matters.”

Felicia Londré (*The Village Voice*, June 13)

To be sure, not all of the published reviews were negative. Felicia Londré, Professor of Theatre at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, wrote a lengthy review. With the witty and percipient title, “The Lady Doth Protest Too Much for Traditionalists,” Londré accurately summarizes the book’s contents and the author’s aims. “Although deflating the authorities who champion the Stratford man was never her goal, Winkler bull-doggedly charms her way into the lairs of some of the biggest names inside the Stratfordian bastion, as well as various stripes of doubters in Shakespeare authorship studies. She probes their entrenched views with her persistent questions, backed by her own thorough grounding in the issues and wearing her badge of skepticism. She is an Alice in Wonderland pursuing a Cheshire Cat who maddeningly disappears and leaves her without answers. Winkler’s personal encounters give the book its most engaging passages.”

Londré continues: “Stratfordians cling to the myth of natural-born genius from humble origins because the mystery itself is a source of power, as if to fill a vacancy left by the decline of religion in modern life. Inconveniently, anti-Stratfordian truth-seekers, not confined to digging in the same already-emptied holes, are uncovering new clues. Edward de Vere, for example, left a substantial paper trail with his letters, business contracts, early poetry, and relationships with other writers, all of which allow us to see that he was all too humanly flawed—not what Britain has needed as a

‘national hero.’” [Full disclosure: Felicia Londré is a member of the SOF.]

The *Guardian* (June 18 and June 27)

The *Guardian* ran two features on Winkler’s book. First was a review by Stephanie Merritt, who found it “a fascinating detective story that combines diligent scholarship with a lively journalistic approach in an attempt to examine the schism from all sides. . . . Winkler is not flying the flag for any particular figure here; rather, she is attempting to hold up to the light of historical inquiry the absences and unanswered questions that dog any serious student of Shakespeare’s life and work.” Merritt accurately summarizes some the gaps in the traditional case for the Stratford man, and recognizes that “many Renaissance texts, produced for an age that delighted in puns, anagrams and allusion, can be read to support whatever meaning you wish to project on them.” Merritt sums up: “[Winkler’s] conclusion may seem a cop-out to anyone looking for a definitive answer: she leans on Keats’s definition of ‘negative capability’—the possibility of living with uncertainty. She speculates on what could be discovered if ‘scholars were no longer constrained by the Stratfordian paradigm’ The one certainty is that there are a great many influential people and institutions whose livelihoods and reputations depend on not questioning the solitary genius of the glover’s son from Stratford. In tackling the subject head-on, with an open mind, Winkler has produced a thoughtful and persuasive contribution to the debate, whose irreverence is part of its appeal. Let’s see whether her opponents choose to attack the arguments or the writer.”

Nine days later the *Guardian* featured a lengthy interview with Winkler, conducted by David Smith in Washington, DC. “Why is a question about the authorship of 400-year-old plays getting people so riled up?” Winkler mused. “I dug into the history and you start to see how it’s connected to British identity and imperialism and religious and social changes over the centuries.

“I wrote the book just because I thought it was interesting. Some people maybe have the impression I’m out to convince everyone, that I’m on some sort of crusade. . . . I don’t care what people believe about Shakespeare. That’s not the point. The psychology of belief is a big part of the book, but what interested me was that it is about these bigger issues of authority and belief and certainty and the problem of history, how we interpret and construct the past. That’s what excites me about it. The authorship question actually stands for something much larger.”

Winkler took issue with the claims by some critics that she is “anti-expert,” noting that experts from several disparate fields (i.e., law, history, foreign languages, and actors and directors) have examined that authorship

issue: “It’s the expertise of all these different people from different disciplines who’ve looked at the plays. Actually, Shakespeare scholars are not experts on Italy and they’re not experts on French history and 16th-century French court politics or on the psychology of genius.

“In some ways, the authorship question is an interdisciplinary subject. It’s not actually a subject just for English literature scholars whose training is in literary analysis. They’re literary critics. They don’t have

the same methodological training often as historians, although they would probably get mad at me for saying that.

“They certainly don’t have training in all these other fields that the author seems to be knowledgeable about. There’s a sense in which the authorship question should be attacked in an interdisciplinary space, and instead because it’s seen as just the purview of Shakespeare scholars and only they are the authorities – that’s the problem.”

The How and Why of the Coverup: My Two Cents

by Ron Roffel

I have been reading James Warren’s masterful book *Shakespeare Revolutionized* on the history of the Oxfordian movement, witnessing how our forebears had often changed their minds about aspects of the authorship question as new information became available. The greatest “sea change” he documents is perhaps that of Charlton Ogburn, Jr., who did a complete 180-degree turn with respect to the “Tudor Rose” or “Prince Tudor (PT)” theory that Southampton was the illegitimate son of de Vere and the queen; Ogburn was initially unpersuaded by the theory, but came to believe that it was the only conceivable reason why all evidence of de Vere’s authorship could have been eradicated from the history books.

The Tudor Rose/Prince Tudor theories propose that the sonnets are about Southampton being the illegitimate son of de Vere and the Queen (sometimes known as PT1) or that de Vere was himself the illegitimate son of Seymour and Elizabeth while she was still a princess (sometimes dubbed PT2). Another theory posits that Southampton was the surrogate biological father of Henry de Vere by Penelope Rich at the behest of de Vere who may or may not have taken a vow of chastity for some secret reason.

The PT theories revolve around the idea that Southampton and the queen are portrayed in the sonnets as the “fair youth” and the “dark lady.” According to these theories, de Vere’s authorship had to be concealed; otherwise the secret of Queen Elizabeth’s alleged child (or grandchild) would have destroyed the monarchy. The concealment continued under King James’s reign because the legitimacy of his claim to the throne would have been put into doubt if it were known that a Tudor heir was alive.

I believe that these theories ignore the fact that many other people had equally compelling reasons for erasing Edward de Vere not just from the authorship of the plays and poems issued under his pen name “Shakespeare,” but practically from history. This group included many of his surviving relatives and in-laws. All had good

reasons to want to distance themselves from the “black sheep” of the family.

One reason was that de Vere had associated himself with lowly actors and playwrights, whose status in the social ladder was such that it precluded aristocrats from being in their presence unless it was during a performance, and even then, it was usually at a distance. He also stooped to writing plays for public performance the public playhouses. Granted, many of those plays were watered-down versions of what had been originally written for the Court, but it was not until the Restoration of the monarchy that players and playwrights rose in status. (Witness King Charles II and his mistress Nell Gwynn as an example of how things had changed by the last decades of the 17th century.) It was therefore deeply embarrassing to his family to admit de Vere spent a lot of time among “those people.”

Another reason was de Vere’s supposedly spendthrift nature. By the time he died (in 1604, but perhaps later), most of his inheritance was gone. His wife had to petition William Cecil to revert the title of the family seat, Castle Hedingham, back to the family so that when de Vere passed, his daughters at least would have something of the original family legacy. To lose some properties was bad enough, but to lose the ancient family seat was unthinkable.

It should be noted, of course, that de Vere’s reputation as a spendthrift was not fully deserved. Recent research by Bonner Cutting and Nina Green has made it fairly clear that William Cecil, Robert Dudley, and Queen Elizabeth herself took advantage of the wardship system and the peculiar status of de Vere and his father as co-purchasers of his estates to mismanage de Vere’s lands and income while he was under Cecil’s guardianship starting in 1562 (Cutting, “Edward de Vere and Wardship in Early Modern England,” *The Oxfordian* Vol 18, p. 65ff (2016); Green, “The Fall of the House of Oxford,” *Brief Chronicles* Vol. 1, p. 41ff (2009); Green, “An Earl in Bondage,” *Newsletter*, Summer 2004, pp. 1, 13-17). This meant that once he attained his

majority and purchased his livery, he was stuck with huge debts and an income barely sufficient to pay any estate costs, let alone the lifestyle required of a courtier.

These were the principal reasons why his family would have wanted to erase him from the record and from history.

Robert Cecil would have wanted revenge for de Vere's treatment of his sister Anne, de Vere's first wife. She was wrongfully accused of infidelity and was thus slandered and libeled by de Vere for a period of several years before the Queen probably intervened to force de Vere to reconcile with Anne and help restore her reputation. (Robert Cecil might also have wanted revenge for the vicious characterization of him as the hunchback Richard II in Shakespeare's play and for the lampooning of his father as Polonius in *Hamlet*.)

I submit that all it would have taken for de Vere to be virtually erased from history was for Robert Cecil to approach de Vere's surviving family (immediate and extended) and "suggest" that they destroy any correspondence or other documents they had linking him to the writing of "Shakespeare." Cecil himself would take care of letters and documents in his own family's possession, the records from the Master of the Revels, and the Stationers Register. He would also destroy the records from the Stratford Grammar School from the period when the Stratford man would have attended. This

would ensure that there would be little possibility that the Stratford man *could not have had* the works attributed to him (i.e., if the records existed and showed that Will Shakspeare did *not* attend the school, it would be a major impediment in the case for Shakspeare as the true author).

Court circles were intimate and that would enable Cecil to see to it that his "suggestion" was complied with. He, like his father, had spies in all corners of England and abroad, which meant that even people as powerful as de Vere's family would carry out his wishes. Nobody wanted to suffer the wrath of one of the most powerful men in King James's Privy Council. Like his father, he had only to pull a few strings and someone's life would be ruined as easily as his father had ruined so many before.

This scenario sidesteps all of the paternity issues brought up by the PT/Tudor Rose theories and simplifies interpreting the sonnets. To me, they are addressed primarily to himself and others in his immediate circle of friends and family and, in at least two sonnets, an enemy of his. This fits the idea that sonnets are personal poems which *sometimes* were circulated among nobles at Court or inserted into letters. It also avoids the complexities of any royal conspiracies and maternity/paternity ideas, for which there is scant evidence.

“Back, friends” or “backe friends”?

by Richard M. Waugaman, M.D.

Most editions of *As You Like It* have Celia say to Touchstone and Corin, “How now back, friends” (3.2.167). But the First Folio has no comma between “backe” and “friends.” Thus, Celia’s line should be, “How now backe friends: Shepheard, go off a little: go with him sirrah.” Earlier in the scene, Corin had referred contrastingly to “good frends.” Editors should respect the First Folio wording here, since Celia is indeed, teasingly, referring to Rosalind and Touchstone as “backfriends,” or false friends. Further, *Comedy of Errors* has “a back friend, a shoulder-clapper” (4.2.37). Dromio of Syracuse is speaking of his master, and leaves little doubt from the context that a “back friend” may be “a fiend, a fury . . . a wolf” (4.2.35-36).¹

EEBO lists the first use of “backfriend” in 1575. The OED, however, gives a first usage of “backfriend,” meaning a false friend, in 1472, and a second example in 1574. However, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, used the word in a surviving letter to Lord Burghley, two years earlier, on October 31, 1572. The letter alludes to

“sinister reports.” Oxford prefaced the word in question with the explanation “(I can not tell how to terme them but as bakfriendes unto me)”² as though he realized he was reintroducing a now antiquated word. He used the word in an effort to discredit as false friends those who had made unfavorable reports about him to Lord Burghley, his former guardian, and, since a year earlier, his father-in-law.

This is yet another among the hundreds of connections between Oxford and the works of “Shakespeare.”

Endnotes:

1. The First Folio has “back friend” here; the Fourth Folio inserted a hyphen between the two words.
2. Quoted in Alan Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*. Liverpool University Press (2003).

How Shakespeare Made the Classics into His Own

by Patrick Sullivan

I've always found the Stratfordian notion that Shakespeare's works show little or no evidence of erudition to be a most curious delusion. Even, perhaps, a defense mechanism. I first encountered it in high school when I read Louis B. Wright's essay in the Folger Library paperback edition of *Hamlet*: "[Shakespeare's] learning in books was anything but profound," Wright assures us. Even as a teenager I found that to be a bizarre conclusion to draw from the evidence before my own eyes. The idea perhaps reached its pinnacle of silliness in Jonathan Bate's 2019 book, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*. In it the very erudite, PhD-credentialed *litterateur* (Provost of Worcester College, professor of English Literature at Oxford and Gresham Professor of Rhetoric at Gresham College) provides 300 pages of evidence that Shakespeare was "steeped in the classics." This, Bate says, was a result of him being "[s]haped by his grammar school education..." For which claim Bate must know that there is not a shred of evidence.

Bate did not seem to be self-aware enough to have asked himself how, in the 16th century, Shakespeare managed to acquire—in a few years at grammar school—all the knowledge it took Bate stints at Cambridge and Harvard Universities to acquire.

Similarly, along comes another highly educated expert, Daniel Blank (Assistant Professor at Durham University, with degrees from Columbia, Oxford and Princeton) with a new book, *Shakespeare and University Drama in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, June 2023), to provide more evidence of the incongruity of the belief in Shakespeare's lack of formal education.

Since I'm not eager to fork out \$85 to read another Stratfordian fantasy, I am going to "review" a paper that Professor Blank wrote, "'Our Fellow Shakespeare': A Contemporary Classic in the Early Modern University," *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, Vol. 71:301 (January 2020), 652-669. In it there is also plenty of evidence that Shakespeare's scholarly contemporaries recognized his erudition.

As background, Blank shows the hostility displayed toward commercial vernacular literature by the authorities at Oxford and Cambridge: "[T]hey uniformly viewed professional plays as antithetical to the labour of scholarship." He quotes the Oxford don William Gager (1555-1622) lamenting "the great corruption of manners" from the students' exposure to commercial drama. In 1584 the University of Oxford passed a statute banning professional acting companies ("no common stage players [shall] be permitted to vse or do anye such thinge with in the precincte of vniuersitye"). Earlier, the

University of Cambridge had passed a similar law. Even the libraries were included in the prohibitions. In 1598, when Thomas Bodley established his Oxford library after retiring as a diplomat, he explicitly barred "such books as almanacs, plays, and an infinite number, that are daily printed, of very unworthy matters." Such things were "riffe raffe" and "baggage books" not suitable for a place of learned study.

However, the universities had no direct authority over what went on in the towns themselves, where acting companies did perform. To counter that, university administrators prohibited their students from attending those performances "under paine of imprisonment." Further, those same authorities often paid off the professionals to leave town without performing, to avoid possible corruption of the students.

Yet, despite these actions, scholars at both universities managed not only to encounter the works of Shakespeare, but to praise them as well. Blank cites John Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1688), in which Dryden notes that the highly esteemed scholar John Hales (1584-1656) had written, "there was no subject of which any Poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treated of in Shakespeare." Dryden was attempting to refute the belief that Shakespeare "wanted learning," using Hales's opinion, given how highly respected his scholarship was, as evidence.

According to Blank's article, Hales entered Corpus Christi College, Oxford, at the age of thirteen in 1597. He quickly gained the attention of prominent scholars such as Thomas Bodley and the polymath Henry Savile. He inherited Bodley's chair in Greek at Merton College upon his death, and was offered a position at Eton by Savile, where he remained for the rest of his life. He was said to have had one of the best libraries in England (reputedly used by Milton). An inventory of Hales's books in 1624 shows it to be comprised almost entirely of classical texts, with almost nothing vernacular. Similar documentary evidence from scholars' book lists of the age show only the works of classical poets and dramatists, such as Virgil, Homer, Ovid, Seneca, Terence and Plautus.

Yet, Professor Blank, Stratfordian though he be, writes: "I argue in this essay that academics within Oxford and Cambridge began to figure Shakespeare as a 'classical author' around the close of the sixteenth century: they read him, referenced him, and imitated him in a manner that was theoretically reserved for ancient writers like Homer, Virgil, and Ovid." This is consistent with Francis Meres (1598) writing in *Palladis Tamia* that, "As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for

Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage.”

Blank adds: “Among the most famous examples of Shakespeare’s early readership, the Cambridge scholar Gabriel Harvey noted . . . [c. 1598] that the ‘the younger sort takes much delight’ in *Venus and Adonis*, while *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Hamlet* ‘please the wiser sort.’ These comments suggest not only Harvey’s own knowledge of Shakespeare’s works, but also his knowledge of their reception among those in his intellectual orbit.”

Blank is just warming up. In his analysis of the three *Parnassus* plays (performed by students at Cambridge between 1598 and 1601), he argues that while the usual fare for student plays were comedies written in Latin by university scholars, these were in vernacular, and were unlike anything produced there before. Undoubtedly satirical, nevertheless they are evidence that this audience of scholars understood the “in jokes” in Shakespeare’s plays, and even knew of the actors Will Kempe and Richard Burbage (who had been legally barred from performing at their own school, and the students likewise barred from attending performances by them in town).

There are direct quotes from *Richard III* and close paraphrases of lines from *Venus and Adonis* in the *Parnassus* plays. Moreover, in the second play the character Gullio compares Shakespeare’s work to that of Homer by alluding to the story of Alexander the Great placing his copy of *The Iliad* under his pillow at night. Gullio states he intends to do the same with his copy of *Venus and Adonis*. Blank takes this as evidence that, *pace* Gabriel Harvey, the younger scholars were turning to Shakespeare as once some did to Homer for both entertainment and instruction, i.e., Shakespeare’s prominence in the universities is growing.

Then there was the play *Narcissus*, put on during Twelfth Night celebrations in 1602 at St. John’s College, Oxford. Also written in English, its dependence on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is explicit. But Blank writes that the lines in the play’s prologue recited by the actors seem to mirror those of Shakespeare’s “rude mechanicals” who put on a play within *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: “Wee are noe vagabones, wee ar no arrant, /Rogues that doe runne with plaies about the country,” and “We are no saucye common playenge skipjacks, /But towne borne lads, the King’s owne lovely subiects.”

Narcissus owes a substantial debt to Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 1* and an even bigger one to the Pyramus and Thisbe episode in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Shakespeare asked his audience to imagine “Wall” and “Moonshine,” represented by a person and a lantern, respectively. The *Narcissus* playwright has a character named “The Well” place a bucket filled with water for

Narcissus to view his image in. The Well then speaks lines comically, overexplaining what is going on in case some may have “mistooke” the action, just as in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where Snug lets the audience in on the joke that he is only pretending to be a lion, and “Wall” explains that he’s there to separate the two lovers. Blank calls the Oxford scholar’s *Narcissus* “less an adaptation of Ovid than it is an adaptation of Shakespeare’s parody of Ovid.”

Even more interesting is that St. John’s College was the site of a performance of that college’s Fellow Matthew Gwynne’s short play *Tres Syballae* in 1605, in honor of a visit by King James. Stratfordians have suggested that it was a source for the witches in *Macbeth*. But Blank points out the obvious: “In *Narcissus*, however, we see that influence moving even more concretely in the opposite direction: the St John’s playwright draws inspiration from Shakespeare to produce a collegiate entertainment.”

Professor Blank’s concludes his article with this statement: “[T]he idea that Shakespeare rivalled the classics [was not] the invention of the academics of later centuries. It was the invention of academics living in Shakespeare’s own time.” There must have been some lively conversations in the English Faculty Lounge when that was published.

A Poem by Sally Ellis (supplied by Ren Draya)

There's a theory that a monkey,
although disinclined to rhyme,
would produce a work of Shakespeare,
given vast amounts of time.

The possibility of this is slight,
but lest there be some doubt,
by Laws of Probability,
each outcome will come out.

So when we see this monkey's work,
we'll see the truth appear
if, instead of Willy Shakespeare,
it's signed by Ed de Vere.

Reviews

Elizabeth Winkler, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2023)

Reviewed by Michael Dudley

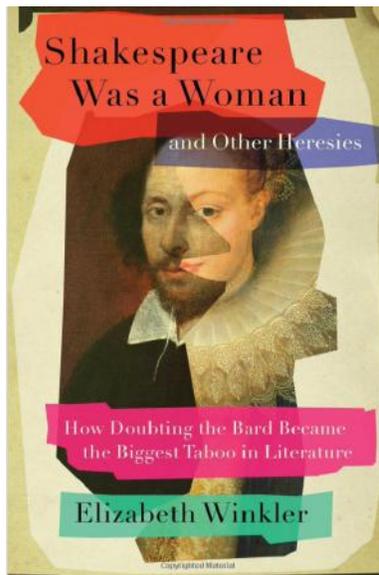
In June of 2019, the *Atlantic* magazine featured an essay, “Was Shakespeare a Woman?” by American journalist Elizabeth Winkler. Summarizing the long history of doubt regarding the attribution of the plays and poems to the apparently unqualified grain merchant of Stratford-upon-Avon, she then made the case—given the many rich female characters in the Shakespeare canon—that the poet Emilia Bassano might be a potential alternative candidate for their authorship.

The reactions from many major media outlets and over social media were swift and often hostile, with some condemning Winkler for peddling a “conspiracy theory.” Winkler was totally taken aback by the response, as was an editor at the *Atlantic*, who indicated to her that they never wanted to touch the subject again.

Winkler, however, was not deterred — and not only because her article would go on to be selected for inclusion in the book *The Best American Essays of 2020*. As a journalist, she realized there must be something larger at work fueling the firestorm she’d experienced. Her resulting book-length investigation, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies*, brilliantly combines literary criticism and journalism to expose the social, cultural and institutional dimensions of the taboo against questioning Shakespeare’s identity.

A prolific and respected journalist and critic whose work has appeared in such major outlets as the *Economist*, the *New Yorker*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, Winkler deftly combines her professional experience with a graduate education in English literature, revealing herself to be as comfortable analyzing Elizabethan-era allusions as she is in conducting probing interviews with sometimes reluctant subjects.

Winkler’s book is an engrossing and highly accessible introduction to a debate that most Shakespearean institutions—and surely English departments more generally—wish would just go away. She provides considerable and compelling detail regarding the case against the traditional biography of Shakespeare, and the search for authors who could have



more plausibly written the most sophisticated and beautiful literature in the English canon, including Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, Mary Sidney and Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Yet this is no dry academic text: Winkler ably brings the reader along on her intriguing quest for answers, which includes interviews with some of the field’s leading experts on all sides of the debate, including Sir Stanley Wells, eminent scholar and honorary president of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; Mark Rylance, the first artistic director of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London; and Alexander Waugh, noted British literary critic and outspoken advocate for the Earl of Oxford.

As a journalist, Winkler’s object is not to advocate for any one authorial candidate, but rather to investigate a particular phenomenon, that being the suppression of dissent against the traditional view that is so pervasive in the academy and in the media, and which she had experienced personally. As such, the book’s title may strike some readers as a tad misleading: she isn’t at all arguing that Shakespeare was actually a woman, but is instead focusing on why it should be that any suggestion of such a possibility should be considered—of all things—a *heresy*.

The quasi-religious dimension of the authorship debate has a long history, one tied up not only in British nationalism, but in the roots of higher education in English literature during the Victorian era being itself a deliberate attempt to replace religious faith in an increasingly secular age. She argues that, coming at the height of “Bardolatry,” this movement was perfectly situated to, as she puts it, find in Shakespeare and his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon, England’s own “Jesus, Bethlehem and manger” (111).

In the course of her investigation, Winkler uncovers a host of unanswered questions: Why does Shakespeare tell readers in the sonnets that he knows he himself will be forgotten, but that his works will live forever? Why have no biographers been able to credibly explain how Shakespeare was able to write so expertly about so many fields while having had very little education? Why are the references to Shakespeare from the time so cryptic, as if their authors were sharing some kind of secret?

The authorship skeptics she interviews all have thought-provoking responses to these and many other questions, making for fascinating and often delightful reading, particular in her conversation with Alexander Waugh. However, things turn decidedly uncomfortable—

and frankly embarrassing—when these same questions are put to orthodox Shakespeare scholars, who can only insist they’ve never given such matters any thought. Stephen Greenblatt, for example, concedes to Winkler that the authorship question is “an epistemological question,” but asserts that “[t]hese epistemological questions are above my pay grade” and so he can’t be bothered to pursue them (321). However, it is in her interview with Sir Stanley Wells—in which the esteemed Shakespearean stonewalls Winkler over numerous cryptic and suggestive contemporary quotations, insisting he’s not familiar with them—where the reader can’t help but come to the rather disturbing realization that it’s not really the case that the leading Stratfordians

don’t *believe* there is an authorship question, but rather that they just can’t admit it to themselves, or the world.

This stark contrast between the open, informed inquiry of doubters and the closed-minded, resolute obstruction of credentialed experts is quite troubling, and impossible to dismiss or ignore. *Shakespeare Was a Woman* may represent something of an “emperor-has-no-clothes” moment for academia, for it reveals a startling absence at the center of western literary culture which few of its professed leaders seem willing to confront.

[Note: This review was originally published, in shorter form, in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on May 19, 2023.]

Thomas Nashe: A Person or a Persona?

Reviewed by Bill Boyle

On May 6, 2023, Robert Prechter addressed the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable’s online symposium. His topic was “Was Thomas Nashe a person or a persona?” The talk was based on Prechter’s research over the past twenty-four years on the writings of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. In Prechter’s view, Oxford’s corpus of work is much larger than many suspect. Prechter published his research online in the multi-volume work, *Oxford’s Voices* (<https://oxfordvoices.com>). He concluded that Oxford spent his life writing under the guise of many names and personas. Oxfordians are familiar with some of these names, such as Arthur Brooke, Arthur Golding, John Lyly, Robert Greene, and of course William Shakespeare. But Prechter believes there are many more, some of them quite familiar to us, but whom we assume were actual persons who existed and wrote their own material.

In singling out Thomas Nashe as one of these “fictive” characters, Prechter wades into controversy, as some Oxfordians believe that we can’t allege that Oxford wrote everything, that such theories only damage our credibility with the public. Nonetheless such theories are part of the landscape; a number of prominent Oxfordians, including Nina Green and Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, share Prechter’s central thesis.

In Part One of his talk, Prechter made a thorough survey of the London literary scene in the 1580s and ‘90s, and found that Nashe is the most elusive of all the “University Wits.” When one takes a closer look at Nashe’s work, Prechter noted, ones repeatedly finds either close connections to Shakespeare (such that scholars wonder who borrowed from whom), or close connections to Oxford, with many overlapping interests. Isn’t it interesting, Prechter asked, that Nashe often attacks Oxford’s enemies (e.g., Gabriel Harvey),

supports his friends (e.g., the Earl of Southampton), or satirizes his family connections (e.g., the Cecils)?

Prechter cited connections such as when Nashe says in a dedication to Southampton (in *The Unfortunate Traveler*, 1594), “A new brain, a new wit, a new soul will I get mee, to canonize your name to posteritie.”

Why, Prechter wondered, in *Pierce Penniless* (published in 1592), does Nashe go out of his way to deal with events of 1572 and the Earl of Norfolk, when Nashe was only four years old?

In *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* (1592, published 1600) why does Nashe write an allegory of the Cecil family, why is “Ver” (Spring) so prominent, why does “Ver” sing a song close to Oxford (lifted from *Love’s Labor’s Lost*), and how in the world can he get away with it?

Prechter concluded Part One with a list of biographical contradictions, such as Nashe’s knowledge of sailing lingo, graduation ceremonies at Cambridge and Oxford, knowledge of the finest homes in England, knowledge of Italian, French, Greek, and Latin, and knowledge of the law. Nothing in Nashe’s known biography would seem to qualify him for any of this knowledge, but everything in Oxford’s would.

In Part Two Prechter took a close look at all the facts offered to support the idea that Thomas Nashe was indeed a real person in London who said and did all the things he is credited with. Prechter found that, in almost every instance, documents are missing, stories are hearsay, and in one instance a “known fact” (entries in Henslowe’s diary) is based on a forgery made by John Payne Collier. There is, for example, no evidence that Nashe was ever at St. John’s or Cambridge, nor is there evidence that he ever appeared in a show during the time he was supposedly at university.

In the famous *Isle of Dogs* incident (1597) a search for Nashe’s “papers and lodging” was started, but then stopped. In the Privy Council records of the incident his name does not appear, even though Ben Jonson, Gabriel Spencer and Robert Shaw do.

Parish records in his supposed hometown of Lowestoft list a family named “Nayshe,” not Nashe (another instance of close, but not identical, names).

Prechter marshaled an impressive list of facts that turn out to be not quite factual or nonexistent. He then turned to the subject of handwritten letters.

In a letter to his wife dated November 13, 1593, George Carey talks of Nashe as someone he knows, and who has been imprisoned in the Fleet for having written *Christes Teares*. Prechter noted first that Nashe had not yet even been summoned by the authorities on the 13th, and that there is no record he was ever imprisoned in the Fleet. Further, Prechter observed, Carey seems to write like Nashe, which raises suspicions about what is really going on. Prechter believes that the letter was written as an excuse for Carey to tell his wife why he wasn't coming home, and that it reads like something dictated, by perhaps Carey's friend the Earl of Oxford.

Another letter is one to William Cotton in 1596, supposedly written by Nashe himself, even though it was unsigned. Here Prechter notes several anomalies, such as the lack of any personal remarks, an extensive pattern of using text from Nashe's published writings, and an

abundance of legalisms in what is a one-page letter. He believes that Oxford's voice can be detected in it.

In both cases, Prechter speculated that Oxford may have been directly involved, and that with the Cotton letter he was creating evidence for the existence of Nashe. If one assumes that Thomas Nashe existed, the letters offer some support for the idea that he may have been a flesh-and-blood “front man,” not just a persona.

In sum, it struck me that the short time frame of the Nashe years (1589-1600) is a perfect match for Oxford's “Shakespeare” years. Moreover, Nashe's complete disappearance from the scene in 1601, shortly after the Essex Rebellion, lends support to the idea that he seemed to exist only to support Oxford, and that when Oxford crashed in 1601, he disappeared. There is no record of how and when he died, no discussion about his death by anyone, and no known burial site.

Powerful and thought-provoking, Robert Prechter's presentation is well worth watching. Both parts are available on the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable channel on YouTube.

Leigh Light, *The Which of Shakespeare's Why* (City Point Press, distributed by Simon & Schuster, 2023; list price \$30, 304 pp.)

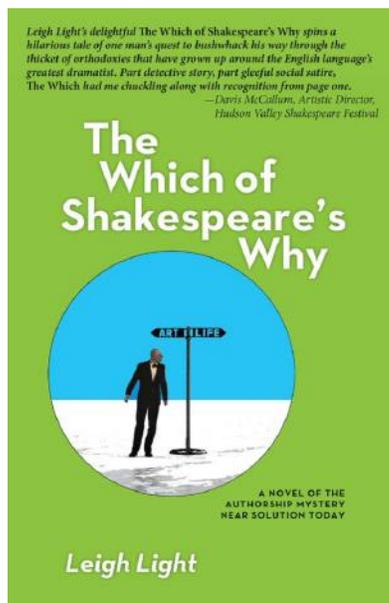
Reviewed by Tom Harrigan

“That's a good emblem for our project, Harry. We will wrap the facts of Oxford's life around the facts of his Shakespeare characters in continuous lines that are recognizably linked.” So says the director to his playwright early on, concerning the play in preparation within Leigh Light's novel, *The Which of Shakespeare's Why*.

That approach—wrapping the facts of Edward de Vere's life around the facts attributed to various Shakespeare characters—is used to excellent effect in several contexts in this most interesting novel.

The setting is the present. It involves preparations for an Oxfordian-oriented play, designed with hopes of making a significant splash for the cause.

Light sketches the concordances between the above two sets of facts multiple times, in different layers, while buttressing the case for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the true author of the Shakespeare works. In an introduction entitled “A Threshold Note to the Reader,” Light sets out in brief the case for Oxford as



author, as well as the negative case against William of Stratford.

When the play-in-production encounters a serious curveball, the two chief protagonists, in gameplanning how to deal with this new turn, decide on an approach heavily reliant on relevant facts from the lives of Queen Elizabeth and de Vere, facts which parallel situations from the Shakespeare plays. In the course of the playwright's researching and writing, Light presents more parallels between the Oxford story and the plays, as well as spotlighting some present-day Stratfordian tactics.

The effect is further strengthened by giving roles in the play to the ghosts of Oxford

and Elizabeth, having them recount and hash out takes on some of what the story between them may have been.

Pointing out parallels between the Shakespeare plays and the Oxford story is not groundbreaking. But the way that approach is employed here, repetitively, in multiple facets, makes for strong presentation.

The author hits the mark in other regards as well.

Oxfordians are understandably reluctant to provide fodder for the other side's predictable jabs, denigrating our arguments as fringe, conspiratorial, and so forth. Light does commendable work in pointing out that

matters of secrecy, hidden truths, ruthless tactics, and conspiracies did not enter the scenery of that time by way of Oxford. Those threads were inextricably woven into high Tudor and Elizabethan circles in ways that both predated, and had nothing to do with, Oxford.

Light does a good job illuminating the wardship system, the conveniently early deaths of certain nobles, and the effects of creating wealthy young wards and seizing their wealth. De Vere—the first royal ward—is shown to have had ample reason for being disaffected, without need to seek the roots of that outlook in his character.

The Oxfordian case might benefit going from further efforts along these lines, unapologetically contextualizing Shakespeare with reference to Oxford and the powerful figures most influential in his life.

Persuading folks to accept Oxfordian arguments would, of course, advance the cause directly. But generating more widespread awareness of the many and pointed concordances between Oxford's life and the incidents and characters of the Shakespeare plays might just gradually accomplish the same result.

.....

The author of this novel writes here as “Leigh Light,” referencing the powerful World War II bombing illumination device, and says concerning the authorship issue: “This argument involves some fiercely ideological bombing from above, you could say. Thus the pen name. I have a dog to walk along university streets.”

Previously Unnoticed Biblical Echoes in *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*

by Richard M. Waugaman, MD

Looking at Oxford's works for biblical echoes continues to be rewarding. In the third act of *The Tempest*, Miranda asks Ferdinand, “Do you love me?” (III.i.68). In the next act, Ariel asks Prospero the same question (IV.i.48). These are the only two times this question appears with these exact words in all of Shakespeare.

It is noteworthy that in the New Testament of the Geneva Bible—the translation most echoed in Shakespeare's works—the equivalent question, “Lovest thou me?” occurs only three times, all in the final (21st) chapter of the Gospel of John.¹ Jesus asks Simon Peter, son of John, the question (in Greek, ἀγαπᾷς με). Simon Peter replies, “Yea Lord, thou knowest I love thee (φιλοσῶ).” But Jesus repeats his question two more times.

The noun form of the first Greek word for *love* is often translated as “loving kindness,” or “brotherly love.” One speculation is that Jesus asks three times to allude to Peter denying Jesus three times. Each of the three times Peter confirms that he loves Jesus, Jesus tells him to “Feed my sheep [or lambs],” i.e., continue the ministry of Jesus as the leader of his disciples.

The Tempest is regarded as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.² These allusions to the end of one of the Gospel narratives of the life of Jesus support such a reading, with Prospero in a Jesus-like role.³ In his speech echoing the Golding translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Prospero claims to have brought people back from the dead, as did Jesus. The biblical echoes of “love” from the New Testament remind us that, in Shakespeare's day, love was believed to be central to Christianity, distinguishing it from other religions (McEachern, 2019).

Turning from revenge to forgiveness is another important way that Prospero follows the teachings of Jesus. He relinquishes his magical powers before the play ends; he says his “every third thought shall be my grave” (V.i.312) once he returns to Milan. One early Christian belief about the death of Jesus on the cross was that, even if he was divine, he had to become human before he could die. This too may be another parallel between Prospero and Jesus.

There is another possible echo of “Lovest thou me?” from the Gospel of John in *Hamlet*, when Hamlet instructs Horatio, near the end of the play as in the final chapter of John, “*If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart [i.e., love me],/Absent thee from felicity awhile,/And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,/To tell my story*” (V.ii.346-349; emphasis added). Horatio is implicitly compared with John, telling the story of Hamlet, as John tells the story of Jesus through the Gospel he wrote.⁴

Endnotes:

¹ Naseeb Shaheen, in his *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark, NJ, 1999) overlooked this biblical allusion. Nor is it mentioned in Claire McEachern's chapter on “Love” in Hannibal Hamlin (ed.), *Shakespeare and Religion* (Cambridge, 2019).

² Or as his last single-authored play.

³ Steven Marx compares Prospero to the portrayal of God in Genesis, in his *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford, 2000).

⁴ Hannibal Hamlin, one of the few contemporary experts on Shakespeare's biblical echoes, writes that “Shakespeare's biblical allusions are almost always contrastive or ironic.” *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2013), 85.

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- **The Oxfordian Editor.** *The Oxfordian* is the fellowship's peer-reviewed annual academic publication, now in development of its 25th edition in 2023.
 - The content of *The Oxfordian* is intended to advance or clarify the Shakespeare attribution pertaining to Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford; William Shakespeare, traditionally identified as the author; or other historical or literary issues involving authorship in 16th and 17th-century England.
 - Oxfordian editions typically include 10-15 articles of original research related to the Shakespeare Authorship Question, plus book reviews, letters to the editor, and other items. The 24th edition had more than 300 pages.
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The Holy Hyphen

by Richard Kennedy

[Author’s note: *I see that the hyphen in “Shakes-peare” is still getting kicked around by the Strats, Shapiro, etc. I wrote this small notice in a group many years ago, still a nice collection of the wee figure, easily understood for what it is for those of an easy understanding.*]

It would have been obvious to the Elizabethans that the hyphen in “Shake-speare” indicated that the writer was using a pseudonym, and was unknown. This would hardly have needed comment. But the Stratfordians need some comment, and the best comment is by way of example.

In 1886 Emil Weller published his *LEXICON PSEUDONYMORUM*. It’s a standard work in which Weller searched out thousands of pseudonyms and gives the true authors. It’s an international exploration, as you will see by the examples in German, French, etc. You will see thereby that the use of a hyphen in this regard was of worldwide use and in ages past. There can be no mistaking the reason for that hyphen in “Shakes-speare” except as the Stratfordians wish to mistake it.

Naturally, hyphenated family names are not of this pseudonymous nature, Fitz-Geffrey, Smyth-Jones, and so forth. Here’s what Weller found; the list could be brought to date with many score more of the same not noticed here:

Anglo-Saxon, Anti-Caesar, Anti-Climacus, Anti-Draco (and many other Anti- constructions), Archi-zero, Au-Lir, Bel-Mor,

Blunt-spurs, Boa-Morte, Croix-Rouge, El-y, Every-one, Fleur-des-Pres, Franc-Macon, Franco-Gallus, Frange-pan, Free-lance, Frou-Frou, Geo-Cosmophilus, Gil-Blas, Gobe-Mouche, Good-Fellow, Gott-Hold, Gros-Guillaume, Gros-Jean, Gross-Kipper, H-asper, Hawks-Eye, Hyper-Boreus, Mar-Preist, Mar-Prelate, Mar-Sixtus, Max-Ax-Knorifax, Meister-Singer, Mere-Sotte, Merrie-brain, Mer-Snits, Misch-Masch, Miso-Dolos, Mont-bieu, Neither-nor, Nick-All, Ni-Tag, Noisy-le-sec, On-the-go, Owls-glass, Pel-Nick, Pen-drag-on, Peu-de-Soucy, Philo-Anglicus, Philo- Anglicus, Philo-Biblion, Philo-juvenis (and many more of the same for Philo-), Plain-Facts, Plain-Sense, Puss-in-the-Corner, Quid-pro-quo, Radda-manthus, Red-Hot, Romano-Catholicus, Ruy-Blas, Sans-Chagrin, Sans-Nom, Sans-Travail (and more of the Sans- construction), Scoto-Britannus, Scribero-Scriblerus, Sen-Mare, Sixty-One, Smell-Knave, Talis-Qualis, Tar-philus, Tell-Truth, Touche-a-tout, Tra-Fal-Gar, Tyro-Theologus, U-go, Va-de-bon-coeur, Verte-Allure, Vert-Vert, Vice-Comes, Welt-Feind, Wom-Bat.

Notice “Mar-Prelate,” which is still a mystery second only to “Shakes-speare.” And we must like the “Sans-Nom,” a kiss to the practice of hiding out in a hyphen.

It’s a feast of pseudonyms, such a strange and tasty menu, all originally without the name of the chef, but all used the same spice to give savor to their dish—the hyphen. Everyone knew the recipe back then, and they should know it today. Except for the Stratfordians. They think that the hyphen means nothing and wish it had never been dropped into the pot, just a cockroach that fell from the rafters, and most annoying for them to find on the plate.



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By registering I acknowledge that I will receive a full refund if I cancel on or before 1 October (the date we are committed to paying for the Conference). If I want a refund between 2 October and 2 November, all but \$99 will be refunded to me with the remainder of the fee turned into a livestream registration.

Mail this form with your check or credit card information to:

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For hotel reservations, contact the hotels directly:

Hyatt Centric French Quarter New Orleans (504-586-0800; group discount code G-SHAK)

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SHAKESPEARE OXFORD FELLOWSHIP

*There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

What was true in Shakespeare's day (and in Brutus') is still true today. The Oxfordian movement now finds itself afloat on a full sea. Thanks to the wave of publicity generated by the publication of Elizabeth Winkler's *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature* by Simon and Schuster, the Shakespeare Authorship Question is now being mentioned politely in journalistic society. *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *The Washington Post* have all reviewed it. The Kirkus Review says it is a "witty, irreverent inquiry into a fraught question: Who wrote Shakespeare's plays?"

This is an opportunity for Oxfordianism to seize the day, not equaled since John Thomas Looney's publication of *Shakespeare Identified* in 1920. Unfortunately, that earlier campaign was derailed by the onset of World War II, from which the Oxfordian theory took decades to recover. Today, with resources from the generosity of our members who have provided the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (SOF) with the ability to promote scholarship, publications, media productions, and conferences, we can avoid that fate this time. We need to build on your past support, and expand our outreach to new audiences.

Contrary to some received wisdom, the world does not beat a path to the door of the better mousetrap. It requires that we make our knowledge easily accessible to the world. That means expanding our social media outreach, producing videos, and developing other 21st century communication tools, all of which take funding. The SOF Board has recently approved the creation of a Social Media Editor position and is succeeding in its Search Engine Optimization program, with over 50,000 views of our YouTube videos in the past three months. If you are able to help the SOF expand its capabilities, we urge you to participate with a financial contribution.

Please, make your gift online today through this link [Donate to the SOF | Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship](#) or use the mail-in form on the next page to help keep the momentum going. As a thank you, the SOF will send a copy of the forthcoming Brief Chronicles edition, *The First Folio: A Shakespearean Enigma*, edited by Professor Roger Stritmatter, for your gift in the amount of \$150 or more, if received by December 1, 2023. Thank you on behalf of the SOF and the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Sincerely,

Earl Showerman, President

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Dorothea Dickerman, Chair/

Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship

P.O. Box 66083, Auburndale, MA 02466

Donation Form

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