



# THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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## New SOF Video Series Promises to Illuminate Shakespeare

by Heidi Jannsch

Earlier this year, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship began sponsoring *Shakespeare Illuminated*, a new video series presenting Oxfordian interpretations of Shakespeare's plays. The series promises to provide Oxfordian insights that will help viewers further appreciate the author's motivations and references within the plays' plots and characters.

The long-term goal of the series is to include the thirty-eight canonical Shakespeare dramas and several of the apocryphal plays. The project is being coordinated by Michael Delahoyde, Professor of English at Washington State University and Jennifer Newton, SOF Website Design and Technology Editor. Each session will focus on one play and will be hosted by Delahoyde, who will occasionally welcome guest scholars with expertise and published commentaries on the play being discussed and guest actors who will bring the scenes being examined to life.

The initial funding for the project was provided by a \$1000 donation, and the entire series will require a three- to four-year commitment from the SOF. Viewers are invited to tune in each month as Delahoyde and guests "explore the historical and cultural environments that shaped Shakespeare's dramas and reflect the political intrigues, social norms, and philosophical debates of the time."

Outgoing SOF President Earl Showerman inspired Delahoyde to coordinate and present the series and Delahoyde notes that he "accepted joyously" because he has always focused his work on the plays: through teaching, conference projects, and now, publishing Oxfordian editions.

The series kicked off with *Much Ado About Nothing* in February 2024, followed by *Julius Caesar* in April, *Romeo and Juliet* in May, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in June, two sessions on *Hamlet* in July and *King John* in August. All sessions have been held on selected Sunday afternoons at 4:00pm Eastern/1:00pm Pacific and are being recorded as real-time Zoom



presentations, allowing for a viewer Q&A in a format similar to the Blue Boar Tavern sessions.

Recordings of each session will be posted on the SOF YouTube channel and made universally available. The *Much Ado About Nothing* session has already been posted and has its own page on the SOF website which includes:

- a link to the recording of the *Shakespeare Illuminated* episode
- *Themes* of the play
- a *Plot Summary* of the play
- the known *Sources* for the play
- a section focusing on an *Act by Act Analysis and More Evidence for Oxford's Authorship* with a link to more information about the play at Professor Delahoyde's website
- a *Learn More!* section providing links to additional resources
- a *Thank You* to sponsors and a link to the [info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org](mailto:info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org) email where potential sponsors can support the program.

Be sure to visit <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/the-plays/> to learn more about future episodes of *Shakespeare Illuminated*.

## The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to investigating the Shakespeare Authorship Question and disseminating the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17<sup>th</sup> 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

My final newsletter column as president of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is tinged by the sadness of learning of the recent passing of De Vere Society Chairman, Alexander Waugh. As Cheryl Eagan-Donovan put it, “He was brilliant. A light has gone out in our world, but his star will ascend to take its place with de Vere’s. ‘Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince: And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!’” The greatest honor I experienced as SOF president was the privilege of conferring the Tom Regnier Veritas Award on Alexander last October at the fall conference of the DVS and Shakespearean Authorship Trust. I can personally attest to Alexander’s great surprise and immense gratitude for this recognition. We are family and have lost a most extraordinary friend and avatar.

Alexander represents an exemplar of Oxfordian scholarship. Many of us have either known personally, or through their publications and presentations, the most radically driven and successful personalities in a century-long literary and historical revolution.

Alexander’s videos on the DVS website have garnered well over a million views. Every month, thousands of curious seekers of the Oxfordian narrative visit the SOF website and YouTube channel, so our best presenters and writers have a far wider audience than we have ever imagined in the past.

My tenure as an officer in service to the SOF has been extraordinarily satisfying for many reasons, including the astounding growth in Lifetime Memberships, which now represents a deep, enduring, and remarkable commitment of nearly a quarter of SOF members. While our total membership rolls have remained relatively static in the post-COVID era, the generosity of donors and Lifetime members has allowed us to expand our publication and online output, including a whole series of *Brief Chronicles* publications, the launch of the *Shakespeare Illuminated* Oxfordian play series featuring Michael Delahoyde, and the initiation of an annual conference livestream option.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to those who have done so much to promote our mission, including *The Oxfordian* editor Gary Goldstein, and

recently recruited *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* general editor, Heidi Jannsch, as well as Lucinda Foulke, who helps design all SOF publications and manages our Kindle Direct Publishing enterprise. During my tenure, *Brief Chronicles* editor Roger Stritmatter has produced Oxfordian editions on the poems of Edward de Vere, *Shakespeare and the Law*, the *First Folio* and Ben Jonson, and revised the immensely important *Shakespeare Authorship Sourcebook*, all while continuing his teaching obligations at Coppin State University, and producing more radical mainstream publications on topics as diverse as Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* and the annotations of selected 16<sup>th</sup>-century editions in the library at Audley End.

Our digital presence continues to expand, thanks primarily to the behind-the-scenes work of our Veritas Award winning webmaster, Jennifer Newton. Jennifer coordinates, records, curates and posts virtually all of our online video content, including conference presentations, Blue Boar Tavern gatherings, and the monthly *Shakespeare Illuminated* series. SOF Vice President, Tom Woosnam, has masterfully taken up the task of SOF website news postings as well as the reins of Conference Committee Chair from Don Rubin, who this past year edited an outstanding collection of Oxfordian essays for the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. Dorothea Dickerman has driven our search engine optimization campaign, launched her own Oxfordian website [www.dorotheadickerman.com](http://www.dorotheadickerman.com) dedicated to uncovering Elizabethan secrets and coordinated the Blue Boar Tavern team of scholars. Bob Meyers has continued his own behind-the-scenes series of interviews, serves as a producer of the *Shakespeare Illuminated* series, and will be taking on the responsibility of SOF president in the coming year. Michael Dudley presented a series of YouTube podcast programs based on his book, *The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy*, recently released in paperback edition. Clearly, the SOF has been blessed by a board of highly motivated and talented content creators.

It was my great good fortune to be president the year Elizabeth Winkler's outstanding book, *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies: How Doubting the Bard Became the Biggest Taboo in Literature*, was published. Elizabeth's presence and presentations during our conference in New Orleans were inspiring, and since then she has continued to write subversive

Shakespeare reports in mainstream publications, including *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, and *Financial Times*. Elizabeth has proven to be an outstanding, courageous champion for our cause, and her recent London and New York Library appearances with Derek Jacobi and Mark Rylance are proof of her enduring integrity and influence.

What inspires me most these days is the potential for confirmation of the most radical departure from a century of scholarly neglect, that is, the evidence of Shakespeare's knowledge of untranslated Greek literature. This recognition, combined with new evidence that Edward de Vere annotated (in both Latin and Greek) 16<sup>th</sup> century Greek editions at Audley End, could be the definitive philological proof of the Oxfordian claim to the plays inspired by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado*, *Winter's Tale*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.

In the last plenary session of the SOF New Orleans Conference, Roger Stritmatter presented his astonishing findings by providing visual evidence of Oxford's recognizable handwriting in several of the 1,000 marginal notes in the Greek edition of Roman history by Appian and Cassius Dio. If the forensic handwriting analysis holds up and confirms Roger's argument that these annotations, which parallel passages of the Shakespeare tragedies *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, were written by Oxford, then my decades-long personal obsession with "Shakespeare's greater Greek" is validated and demands further investigation.

My several years as SOF President have confirmed my faith in the verity of our mission, in the brilliance and integrity of our coterie of teachers, writers, editors, and video producers, and in the serious, enduring commitment of our membership in pursuing the most animating literary mystery of the past millennium. Please consider making a generous donation to the SOF so that programs like *Shakespeare Illuminated* may continue to be developed and help spread the wonderful notion that Edward de Vere was the inspired genius behind the dramas and poems attributed to Shakespeare. What could be more satisfying than possessing and promoting nothing truer than truth? Be reassured, you are exploring a sacred narrative, but always aspire to do what my other favorite author, Nikos Kazantzakis, implored, "Reach what you cannot!"

— Earl Showerman



## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The dive into the archives is such a wonderful idea. Over the years when I have been curious about something in particular, I have found myself looking at the older newsletters and been steered towards them by more informed members. My “in particular” often is woven into the warp and weave of the Ashbourne portrait debate, and so I really enjoyed the latest article, “Tales from the Archives: Look Not on the Painting, but the Sketch,” by William Boyle in the Spring 2024 *Newsletter*.

I can’t help feeling for Gordon and Helen Cyr when they came to their conclusion that the coat of arms did not belong to Oxford but to Sir Hugh Hamersley, the one-time Lord Mayor of London. As a notable figure for the Oxford debate, Gordon Cyr carried the hopes of the Society. It was a foregone conclusion that identifying the coat of arms with someone other than Oxford would founder the belief that he was the sitter. It was not an observation lightly or happily passed on. If Cyr did not have consummate belief in the conclusion, I don’t think he would have called it.

I have to ask; does the presence of a coat of arms conclusively identify a sitter? What if it was painted on later? What if it was wrong?

I think the biggest problem in tying Sir Hugh Hamersley to the sitter is not the coat of arms but what he is wearing. He is not dressed as a Lord Mayor—the scarlet robe is missing and more importantly so is his chain of office. There were sumptuary laws in place dictating what the different stakeholders in society could wear and these laws stipulated that they were to be enforced by the mayor. I can’t imagine a Lord Mayor blatantly breaking the rules and leaving the proof of it in a painting.

I believe that the coat of arms was of the Hamersley family, but they are not how Sir Hugh Hamersley’s funerary monument in St. Andrew Undershaft church in London displays them. On the monument they are impaled with his wife’s. The lack of impalement on those displayed on the Ashbourne Portrait is a bigger error than the ends of the cross.

If the coat of arms is meant to be Hamersley’s then it’s wrong. Could another subterfuge have been in the mix, prior to the Shakespeare identification? Could the

Reverend Clement Kingston—CK—have been up to no good as the Folger curator William Pressly thought?

How Barrell came to the conclusion that the initials on the x-ray are Ketel’s also raises questions. He wanted the sitter to be Oxford (don’t we all?) and grabbed onto the anecdote that Ketel had painted Oxford and so he saw in the monogram, CK. He does not appear to have done any checking as to what the practiced signature of Ketel’s hand looked like and whether the monogram is consistent with it. Does Ketel have to be the artist for the sitter to be Oxford?

Stella Samaras  
Sydney, Australia



## From the Editor

Being part of an organization like the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship provides us with the opportunity to collaborate with and befriend amazing people we might never know otherwise. Sadly, this also means that we experience a great sense of loss when those amazing people pass on from this life.

Although this issue was not the first one I prepared to include *In Memoriam* pieces, it was the first that included tributes to two Oxfordians that I knew personally: Ted Story and Alexander Waugh. I have fond memories of Ted from the SOF Conference in Boston a few years ago and was in regular contact with Alexander for about a decade. His final email to me included his congratulations and enthusiasm that I had taken on the *Newsletter* editor position.

I am thankful that we have this space, allowing us to share SOF news and research and also commemorate and reflect upon the contributions of our fellow doubters when they are gone, preserving our memories and their stories.

I am looking forward to hearing more of your stories while creating new memories at the upcoming gathering in Denver.

I can be reached by email at [newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org](mailto:newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org).

— Heidi Jannsch

## Denver Conference Schedule Announced

The preliminary schedule for this year's annual SOF Conference in Denver has now been announced. Full details of the four-day event—scheduled for September 26–29 at Denver's Hyatt Centric Hotel—can be found in the [2024 SOF Annual Conference](#) section of the SOF website. In-person attendance has been sold out, but livestream registration remains open on the same site.

Some two dozen papers will be presented during the conference by leading scholars from across the US and Canada. Among them will be major papers by Bonner Miller Cutting on Ben Jonson and the First Folio, Roger Stritmatter introducing a new SOF volume on Jonson as well as a separate paper about his work on de Vere annotations that he has found at Audley End, and Robert Prechter speaking about possible Oxford connections to the Marlowe canon.

Other papers will be given by Michael Dudley on a meta-understanding of the authorship debate, by Katherine Chiljan on Oxford's religious portraits, by former *New York Times* writer William Niederkorn on *The Tempest*, by Earl Showerman on *Hamlet*, and by Dorothea Dickerman on Oxford's wife, Elizabeth Trentham.

Australian researcher Matt Hutchinson will be presenting a video paper on Penelope Rich as Elizabethan Muse in the Sonnets with scholar Lisa Quattrochi Knight proposing a "Theory of Mind" approach to understanding the Sonnets.

Other speakers include *Shakespeare Illuminated* host Michael Delahoyde, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, Rima Greenhill, Sky Gilbert, Jonathan S. Jackson, Ralph McDonald, Daniel Cowan, Christopher Carolan, David W. Richardson, Ron Roffel and Shelly Maycock. Tom Townsend will be presenting this year's Authorship 101 paper as the conference's opening talk.

One of the many highlights of the conference will be a panel discussion with Chris Coleman, artistic director of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, about directing *Hamlet*, a production which will be on during the conference. Coleman is a signatory to the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's *Declaration of Reasonable Doubt* ([doubtaboutwill.org](http://doubtaboutwill.org)) and the SOF has reserved a block of tickets for the Friday

night performance of the show which are available for purchase through August 28 (while supplies last). The discussion is part of a panel on the production chaired by theatre scholar Don Rubin and will also feature dramaturg Leann Torske and one of the actors (tba).

And just in case all this seems a bit too intellectually heavy, SOF's long-time *Newsletter* editor Alex McNeil is hosting an "Oxfordian Jeopardy!" session on Friday, open to everyone in attendance.

As usual, Oxfordian authors are encouraged to have books available in Denver for sale.

***The full preliminary schedule with livestream registration and ticket purchase links are on the SOF website at <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/2024-annual-conference/>***

### REPORTERS NEEDED

Are you attending or livestreaming the SOF Conference and have always dreamed of seeing your name in a byline in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*?

Volunteer to report on a session of this year's SOF Conference and make your dream a reality!



Contact the SON Editor at: [newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org](mailto:newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org)

## What's the News?

### The Folger Shakespeare Library's Grand Reopening

by Dorothea Dickerman

These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve.

*The Tempest*, IV, i

After four years of construction and \$80.5 million, there is much to celebrate about the newly renovated Folger Shakespeare Library on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., adjacent to the Library of Congress and the US Supreme Court. The building, including its intimate Elizabethan-inspired theater and noncirculating library which houses an extraordinary collection of 15<sup>th</sup>-century to modern works and artifacts focused on early modern Britain and Europe and the writer known as William Shakespeare, have been closed during the renovation. I attended the Folger's Grand Opening on June 21, 2024.

The Folger's committed library staff used the interval to substantially upgrade and expand the digitalization of the collection. In addition to ever-ready online support during the four years the library was closed, the staff had reached out previously to existing readers to walk us through the new online research platform, OpenAthens, which will soon have all the Folger's digitalized resources available under one account and one login. They also updated us on what changes to expect during in-person visits when the library reopens in the coming days.

The exterior of the 1932 building gleams alabaster white. The outside staircases ascending to its theater and library wings from street level remain intact. Bees buzz contentedly in the manicured garden under the Puck statue's watchful eye. What is new architecturally is that the area formerly occupied by subterranean stacks in a labyrinthine, frigid rabbit warren of passages and shelves has been transformed into a new



Folger Facade — Dorothea Dickerman

below-grade museum, accessible through additional side entrances. More on the museum in a moment. Let's explore the interior physical environment first.

The first-floor spine of the building, the Great Hall, which connects the theater and the library wings, was previously the Folger's primary exhibit space. It has become an enlightened community living room, with a café, comfy social seating under the daylight now permitted to cascade from the Hall's tall windows since precious exhibition items have moved below ground. The jewel-box theater has been renovated slightly but the awkward side facing-seats along the walls remain. While still the neck-craning "cheap seats" for modern groundlings, they are an improvement for anyone recalling that the Folger's theater seats were once as hard as church pews.

The original paneled half of the double reading room, open for visitors strolling during the Grand Reopening, but not yet for researchers, looks much the same. Readers will be able to return to their favorite haunts shortly. Previously, a formal application, accompanied by two academic recommendations and a personal statement specifying the applicant's field of interest, was necessary to obtain in-person access to the Folger's collection. That restriction has now been lifted and access to the reading room and the open stacks will be available to anyone who registers. As always, restricted materials require either circulation desk request or pre-ordering online. The librarians assure me that you no longer need a down jacket, mittens and possibly a scarf in the Folger's reading rooms, but a sweater or a jacket is advisable. Happily, the locker room now has new lockers that work, a sink and



refrigerator. Traditional restrictions on what may and may not enter the reading rooms remain.

All of this is good news.

But turn from the reading room down the now-unadorned hallway towards the Founders' Room, which for years contained a 16<sup>th</sup>-century table across which two famous faces on canvas stared eye-to-eye, and you will find they are no longer there. Instead, impersonal modern Danish tables and chairs populate the bare-walled space, part of the newly designated conference rooms.

One of those missing paintings, a copy of the Queen Elizabeth "Sieve" Painting, has been retired. The excellent news is that, due to the climate controls installed during the renovation, the glorious and gorgeous original of the Sieve Painting, unseen for years, now hangs somewhat obscurely located in the new Shakespeare Exhibition Hall on the lower level.

The other painting missing from the Founders' Room is, of course, the "Ashbourne Portrait." There is evidence that this three-quarter-length portrait of a man in costly black 1590s garb, with obvious thick layers of overpainting that slapped a large frontal bald spot over his full head of curly hair (which shows through the paint), his signet ring and crest, and the painting's date, is of Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. Having previously identified the sitter as "William Shakespeare," and then later, tentatively as a mayor of London, the Folger has never formally identified the sitter as Oxford. However, its former position as the only other painting in the Founders' Room, directly opposite the Queen's portrait, always led me to believe that the Folger knows it is Oxford, and by some desire to hedge bets, in the event incontrovertible evidence surfaces, gave it a position of honor because someone at the Folger knows that Oxford is William Shakespeare.

I asked several members of the hospitable and friendly Folger staff, as they mingled with the day's ebullient guests, for the location of the Ashbourne and other paintings that formerly lined the hallway and reading room walls. No one had any idea. The consistent answer I received was that the paintings had been stored during the renovation for safety and that no plan has been announced about which paintings will be rehung or where or when. Some paintings might be loaned to other collections.

The face that the Folger now turns to the world is exhibited in its new below-grade museum, a destination in this city of destination museums. Symbolized by the rainbow-colored "F" of the Folger's Instagram logo, the Folger is now the democratization of the brand of Shakespeare. According to the Folger, Shakespeare belongs to each of us in our individual ways, as we want to imagine him, relative to ourselves.

The Shakespeare Exhibition Hall opens with a large wall plaque: "Shakespeare? He was then and there and he is here and now. Discoveries Await!" But of the man himself, where he lived, the course of his development as a writer, the means by which he garnered the wisdom of his age and the prior two millennia, or the story of his connection to the impressive wall of eighty-two First Folios, lying obediently on their sides in their transparent vault, like so many bricks in a fortress, or perhaps the American Cliffs of Dover, there is almost nothing.



Fortress of Folios — Dorothea Dickerman

A series of plaques bearing short explanatory texts in large font hang at intervals along walls papered in patchwork copies of works in the Folger's collection, reminiscent of once-popular bathroom walls papered with covers of *The New Yorker*. Unfortunately, more than one plaque contains factual errors. For example, one overlooks that Ben Jonson's First Folio, titled *The Workes of Beniamin Ionson*, containing nine of his plays, was published in 1616, seven years before Shakespeare's First Folio of 1623. Jonson's First Folio resides in the Folger's vault.

Additionally, Jonson's famous "To the Reader" preface, giving instructions to look not at the proffered engraved portrait but in the book itself to find the Bard, is missing from the Shakespeare Folio that the Folger has chosen to display open, as if Jonson were purposefully being erased not only from the Folio itself and its history, but from his own history.



Open Folio without Jonson's Instruction to "Look not on his picture, but his book" — Dorothea Dickerman

Other plaques inform us that: "In London of the 1590s, Shakespeare was a writer and an actor shouting to be heard in a rowdy theater" and goes on to say he started a riot in 1840s New York, kept miners going in the California Gold Rush and in 1950s Washington inspired a groundbreaking production at Howard University. "In life, Shakespeare was a writer, an actor, and a businessperson, but over the centuries he has come to represent even more... his work and words, all part of his story—and ours." We are Shakespeare now. His life story has now become our stories. He is Brand: Shakespeare for Everyone.

In short, the man himself has atomized, "melted into air, into thin air" as he wrote in *The Tempest*. Like Edward de Vere on June 24, 1604, the Bard is ceasing to be in the same way he previously was. He is now an idea, an "icon," a "spark," a "spirit," according to the Folger's plaques. Fill in his actual life as you will.

Contemplating why the Folger had softened so much on the identity of the Bard, whose paltry life

story now appears in carefully crafted but unlinked snippets throughout the Shakespeare Exhibition Hall, I sampled some of the delectable bites on display hinting at the Folger's true treasure trove, the banquet in its vaults of manuscripts, printed books, paintings, furniture and theater memorabilia. Among many other items, the Folger has chosen currently to display a 1597 first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*, "Robert Greene's" *Groats-worth of Witte* open to the page on which appear the phrases "upstart crow" and "Shake-scene" (accompanied by a declaration that this evidences the man from Stratford's presence in 1592 London), Richard Stoney's diary recording his purchase of *Venus and Adonis*, the "Pavier Quartos" and Holinshed's *Chronicles* accompanied by the text "Shakespeare Goes in Search of an Idea, 1577," intimating that the precocious thirteen-year-old Stratford lad was already researching history plays he would write twenty years later.

Interspersed among these items more wall plaques tell us, for example, "No rich patron decreed that this folio should be made: just two of Shakespeare's friends." While technically true that there was no one rich patron, missing is the fact that according to the First Folio itself, those "two friends" were "an incomparable pair of brethren" specifically named as the very wealthy Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery. They had also married or been betrothed to two of Oxford's daughters.

Peering sideways at the spines of display samples of the Folger's vast collection of period books published in Antwerp, Venice, Rome and Paris in the Rare Book & Manuscript Exhibition Hall, I acknowledged to myself that there is no doubt that interest in Shakespeare has been steeply on the decline in recent years. His words take effort and historical context to comprehend, which is difficult to sustain in a society in which reading skills and knowledge of history are rapidly diminishing. In many ways the new Folger fights the good fight against that decline. Commendably, to save itself to some extent, but also to save the work, the Folger has spent millions of dollars and countless human hours to make "Shakespeare," as it defines that word, relevant and popular again. Backing away from the man from Stratford certainly hedges the institution's bets should it need to pivot suddenly to recognize a new individual as the Bard.



But I kept thinking something more was at play here.

A single exhibit case and plaque nodded to the founders of the Folger Library, Henry and Emily Folger, although Henry's bust still occupies its niche in the Great Hall, hungrily overlooking the café dessert display at the reception. A few children and parents tried out the interactive games and replica of an early modern printing press. Several exhibits highlighted colonization of the New World and the underappreciated role persons of color have played in the development of who Shakespeare has come to be today. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* winked at me from inside a display case, as if alluding to the fact that "Mark Twain" was as much a pseudonym as "William Shakespeare." Samuel Clemens famously doubted the Stratford grain dealer's identity as the Bard. Attendees perused well-stocked shelves in the larger, brighter museum shop.



Puck in the Garden — Dorothea Dickerman

It was not until I emerged back outside into the Folger's Elizabethan garden under the midsummer sun and white-capped clouds that the answer to my perplexing question became apparent. Chiseled right under the feet of the statue of Puck are these words from *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

"Lord, what fooles these mortals be."

I am a native-born Washingtonian. How foolish could I be? I was standing in the middle of it. The Folger Shakespeare Library is located in the epicenter of the most political city on the globe, right next to the

temple-like edifices of the Supreme Court and the Library of Congress, a stone's throw from both Houses of Congress in the Capitol Building of the United States of America. The Folger's gleaming façade even resembles those more palatial facades. Distancing itself from the human Bard and democratizing "Shakespeare" as a brand, an "icon," a "spark," a "spirit" allows the Folger to float more freely on the ever-changing tides of the political ocean. What if credible information came out that the man from Stratford was even more villainous than the hoarder of grain during famines and habitual bringer of lawsuits against his neighbors that historical evidence proves he was? What if disreputable secrets about Henry Folger lie in the vaults? What if the Bard was indeed a superbly educated, well-connected and widely-travelled nobleman? Best democratize "Shakespeare" as a brand and avoid those political risks.

One of the plaques in the Shakespeare Exhibition Hall frames the question thus: "Who was Shakespeare? What is he to you? A hero? An icon? The name on a book you never wanted to open?" If, according to the Folger, "Shakespeare" has become that brand, that "icon," "spark," "spirit," and "connected by his work and words, all part of his story—and ours," then Shakespeare can be anyone.

Shakespeare can be you, or me, or a woman, or even Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford.

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<https://www.dorotheadickerman.com>]

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### Folger Shakespeare Library Online Resources

Find out more about research essentials:

- [OpenAthens](#)
- [Folger's Catalog](#)
- [Request System](#)

# The Playbooks of Sir Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Alban

by Bonner Miller Cutting

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) has, through the centuries, remained one of the best known and most admired historical figures from the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. An attorney by vocation, he vigorously pursued political offices and along the way became an accomplished writer of essays and philosophical works. In his book *Novum organum* (*New Instrument*), Bacon introduced a new method of inquiry known today as the “scientific method.” His last book, *The New Atlantis*, secured his place as a writer of brilliance and vision. Thus, it is no surprise that when doubts about “who wrote Shakespeare” began to surface in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Bacon’s name was the first alternative candidate to receive serious consideration.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, James Spedding published a detailed biography of Sir Francis’s life along with all of his literary works, letters, speeches and documents that were in print or available in manuscript at that time.<sup>1</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a compelling biography of Bacon was written by novelist Daphne du Maurier. Her book *The Winding Stair: Sir Francis Bacon, His Rise and Fall* tells the story of Bacon’s successes and the turn of events that led to his impeachment and imprisonment in the Tower of London.

According to Richard Serjeantson, after Bacon’s death, many editors and collectors created catalogues to account for his massive authorial works (70–71).<sup>2</sup> But what of Bacon’s library? Writing in his book *The Shakespeare Enigma*, Peter Dawkins states that Bacon “bequeathed his extensive library to his brother-in-law [John] Constable, but it seems that the books had to be sold because of the insolvency of his estate when he died” (298). However, it appears that some books from Bacon’s library did survive and were transferred from his home at Gorhambury to the new Palladian mansion, called New Gorhambury, built by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Grimston between 1777 and 1784 (du Maurier, 203).

Du Maurier closes her book with a short follow-up of the whereabouts of Bacon’s surviving possessions, mentioning almost as an afterthought, a volume of sixteen quartos of theatrical playbooks that, at the time du Maurier’s book was published in 1976, were on loan to the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. These

quartos of plays were discovered at New Gorhambury in 1909, stashed behind a bookshelf. It seems that the quartos, wrapped in brown paper, had been forgotten for well over a century after the Grimston family moved to their new home. These books were moved to the Bodleian Library in 1923 to ensure their preservation. At some unknown point in time, they were bound together in a single volume. It is unclear if this volume still remains at the Bodleian or is now back at New Gorhambury. It is possible that du Maurier did not actually see this book with the sixteen plays and may have only been told about it.<sup>3</sup>

In providing the list of plays in the volume, du Maurier does not give her curious readers much to go on, nor does she comment on what these choices of plays might suggest about Bacon. Only the titles (sometimes shortened), authors and publication dates (when known) are provided (203–204). It does not seem likely that these sixteen plays would be the total number of theatrical works in Bacon’s library. Yet even if these quartos are only a small sample, it is enough to reveal that Bacon was, at the very least, staying informed on what was happening on the London stage.

In the rest of this article, we will take a closer look at the plays in Bacon’s collection and try to extrapolate as much meaning as possible from the small amount of available information.

Though du Maurier does not state the author’s name, seven of the sixteen plays in the collection are Shakespeare’s:

*Richard II*, 1614 (1597 first printing)<sup>4</sup>  
*King Richard III*, 1602 (1597 first printing)  
*King Henry IV*, 1613<sup>5</sup>  
*King Lear*, 1608 (first printing)  
*Hamlet*, 1605 (1603 first printing)  
*Titus Andronicus*, 1611 (1594 first printing)  
*Romeo and Juliet*, 1599 (1597 first printing)

Of the seven Shakespeare plays, three are histories and four are tragedies. Only *King Lear* is a first quarto printing, though the earliest publication date in Bacon’s collection is the 1599 Q2 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Q2 *R&J* is considered to be a better text than the “bad quarto”

of 1597, so it makes sense that Bacon would prefer the improved version.<sup>6</sup> Though not pleasing to Baconians, it might be suggested based on this date that Bacon did not notice “Shakespeare” until after 1598 when Meres revealed the name “William Shakespeare” as the author of twelve plays that had been previously published anonymously.

Of the other nine plays, two are Ben Jonson’s (*Sejanus*, 1605 and *Volpone*, 1607), two are John Marston’s (*The Malcontent*, 1604 and *The Wonder of Women*, 1606.) There is one quarto each from Thomas Heywood and John Lydgate (*King Edward IV* and *The Siege of Troy* respectively with no publication dates).<sup>7</sup> The medieval poet Lydgate is the only author on the list who was not a contemporary of Bacon’s. The volume of Bacon’s playbooks also contains two tragedies published anonymously: the *Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* and the *Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius*. Du Maurier gives no publication dates for these two plays.

The collection also contains the *First and Second Parts of King John*, a play that may well be an early version of Shakespeare’s canonical *King John*. The early play, fully titled *The First and Second Parts of the Troublesome Reign of John King of England*, presents a conundrum to orthodoxy as it is “intimately related” to the canonical *Life and Death of King John* first published in the 1623 First Folio. Published anonymously in 1591, Bacon owned the 1611 second printing of *Troublesome Reign* with the author’s initials “W. Sh.” on the title page. The third printing in 1622 has the full name “W. Shakespeare” as its author.

Today’s orthodox scholars accept the close parallels between the plays, but can’t come to the logical conclusion that the two versions were written by the same author.<sup>8</sup> In his book *Shakespeare’s Apprenticeship*, Ramon Jiménez discusses the similarities between the earlier 1591 *Troublesome Reign* and the Folio’s *King John*, demonstrating that, indeed, the two versions are likely from the pen of the same author. If today’s orthodox scholars were to recognize *Troublesome Reign* as canonical, it would be the first of Shakespeare’s plays in print. That the initials “W. Sh”

and “W. Shakespeare” appear on the second and third printings respectively are powerful indicators that someone back then agreed with Jiménez.

Bacon had a personal connection to *Richard II* as its performance at the Globe before the Essex Rebellion factored into his prosecution of the Earl of Essex in 1601. With the string of quartos following the first printing of *RII* in 1597, it’s hard to believe that Bacon waited until 1614 to purchase its fifth Quarto (*Riverside*, 837). Surely, he owned earlier quartos of this play.

Bacon was more prompt in obtaining the “newly augmented” third quarto of *Richard III* published in 1602. Again, Bacon had a compelling personal reason to be interested in this play. It has been thought that the hunchback tyrant king was modeled on Bacon’s first cousin, Robert Cecil, later Earl of Salisbury. It was thought, even then, that Bacon’s essay “On Deformity” was

intended as a commentary on the physical deformities of his cousin Robert (Akrigg, 109–111).<sup>9</sup>

Since eleven of the sixteen plays in the volume are on historical subjects, it speaks to Bacon’s interest in history, both that of England and of antiquity. Bacon owned a quarto, again a later printing, of *I Henry IV*. Again, Sir Francis’s personal connection to this historical subject may account for this play in his library. When the historian John Haywood published a biography of Henry IV in 1599, he made the mistake of dedicating it to the Earl of Essex, inviting the comparison of Essex to the usurper Bolingbroke.<sup>10</sup> Haywood was summarily arrested, questioned and brought before the Star Chamber (*DNB*, 311). In conversations with Queen Elizabeth, Bacon famously said that “forbidden things are most sought after” (Lacey, 255).

It is noticeable that only two of the plays in the collection, Jonson’s *Volpone* and Marston’s *Malcontent*, are technically comedies, though both are wickedly satirical.<sup>11</sup> Marston’s *Malcontent* was published three times in 1604 with material added to the second and third states. Clarification is needed on which of these states was in Bacon’s possession.

Two plays known for their bloodthirsty dramaturgy were in Bacon’s library: Marston’s *Wonder of*





*Women* is described as a “blood-curdling tragedy” (DNB, 1143), and “Shakespeare’s” *Titus Andronicus* is an “exhibition of horrors.” Nevertheless, it may have been the political content in the latter play that caught Bacon’s attention (*Riverside*, 1021).

Throughout his life, Bacon spent much time striving to attain high administrative offices in the Elizabethan and later the Jacobean courts, and the political aspects of many of the plays in this collection, particularly Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, would surely not have been lost on him. He would not have needed to be told that Polonius, the devious, long-winded advisor to the monarch, was modeled on his uncle William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

Jonson’s *Sejanus* was politically dangerous. The performance of *Sejanus* in 1603 brought Jonson to the attention of the Privy Council on charges of treason. In *Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority*, Janet Clare details how Jonson responded to state censorship in many of his plays and even suffered occasional imprisonment for seditious writing. Clare also relates the evidence of state intrusion into Marston’s *Malcontent* (132–139). A small but curious fact is the connection between the plays of Marston and Jonson found in Bacon’s library: Marston’s *Malcontent* of 1604 is dedicated to Jonson, and Jonson’s *Sejanus*, published a year later in 1605, has complimentary verses written by Marston.

Interestingly, the anonymous *Tragedy of Tiberius* in Sir Francis’ library has the same historical characters found in Jonson’s *Sejanus*. It was published anonymously in 1607 and reprinted in 1914 by the Malone Society from six extant copies. Edited by the eminent W. W. Greg, this reprint contains notes on the dozens of differences between the copies, indicating, it is thought, that corrections were being constantly made throughout the printing process. That many copies of this play have survived and are now archived in several university and private libraries indicates that *Tiberius* was widely read upon its publication in the early Jacobean era. Also, it appears that Greg did *not* consult the quartos in Bacon’s library, suggesting that literary scholars did not know of the existence of Bacon’s playbooks before they were moved to the Bodleian Library in 1923.

The play *King Edward IV* was reprinted many times after its first printing in 1599.<sup>12</sup> Q1 and its subsequent printings in 1600, 1605, 1613, 1619, and 1626

were all anonymous. An examination of the plays in Bacon’s volume might shed light on which of these printings of *Edward IV* was the one that he owned. It is odd that the earliest suggestion that this play is “by Haywood” was in a 1661 play list. It may be that du Maurier knew of the attribution to the playwright Thomas Heywood and assumed that it was correct.<sup>13</sup>

The appearance of *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* in Bacon’s collection presents something of a dilemma. Du Maurier does not supply the author’s name, but it is attributed by the usually reliable authority E.K. Chambers to George Chapman (*Elizabethan Stage*, vol. iii, 159). Though considered to be a later work of Chapman’s from 1612–1613, it was not published until 1631, when it was entered into the Stationers’ Register. This would, of course, place its publication after Bacon’s death unless there was an earlier quarto unknown to modern literary historians. It is also possible that Bacon read the play in manuscript, and his literary executor purchased the printed version. In any event, this is an interesting anomaly that should be investigated.

If the volume containing the original quartos of all sixteen plays could be viewed, several questions surrounding the quartos that he owned might be answered. It would also be good to know if any of these quartos have marginalia or underlined passages. If these sixteen plays are representative of the theatrical works that Bacon owned (bearing in mind that he probably had many more quartos of plays in his library), it would seem that his theatrical reading inclined toward highly satirical material, and some of the plays touched dangerously on current events. We can see from Bacon’s comments during the interrogation of the historian John Haywood that he understood how current political satire was often disguised in historical settings (Clare, 74–76).

From the vantage point of future centuries, most of these plays, especially Shakespeare’s but some of the others as well, have stood the test of time. A certain conclusion is that Sir Francis Bacon knew important work when he saw it.

**Editor’s Note:** After preparing her article, Bonner learned that the Bodleian catalog record lists a second volume of Gorhambury Quartos, including ten additional works of which du Maurier was unaware. She intends to follow up on these works and share her findings in a future issue of the *Newsletter*.

## Endnotes

1. Bacon left an enormous collection of unpublished materials at the time of his death in 1626. Through the centuries, these literary documents—including essays, composition books, letters and speeches—have had a circuitous journey from their beginning in Bacon’s own “highly structured archive.” Richard Serjeantson provides a riveting account of the efforts of scholars through the centuries to secure the survival of Bacon’s papers from the “ravages of time.” Sadly, many documents “perished” along the way. Bacon’s invaluable papers that survive now reside mostly in the Harleian collection at the British Library and the Library at Lambeth Palace. For more details, see Serjeantson’s paper titled “The Division of a Paper Kingdom: The Tragic Afterlives of Francis Bacon’s Manuscripts,” Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2018.
2. Serjeantson, 29.
3. In June of 1977, Lawrence Gerald blogged on [sirbacon.org](http://sirbacon.org) that he viewed facsimiles of these quartos on a visit to New Gorhambury, and images of the title pages can be seen on his website.
4. Dates of first printings are from Kevin Gilvary’s *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays: A Critical Review of the Evidence*. UK: Parapress, 2010.
5. Gilvary notes that Meres’s reference to *Henry IV* makes no distinction between parts 1 and 2 (236). The two parts were both printed in 1600 but in separate books (Riverside, 923).
6. See Gilvary (343).
7. It is odd that the work by John Lydgate, a medieval poet, is included in this collection along with the contemporaneous writers. Moreover, a check of Lydgate biography in the *Dictionary of National Biography* does not report anything in Lydgate’s output that might have been a play or converted to the stage at a later time. Also, the name *Siege of Troy* may be incorrect, as Lydgate wrote a poem titled *Troy Book* and another the *Siege of Thebes*. What this entry represents in Bacon’s library needs further clarification.
8. See *Riverside Shakespeare* for more details and orthodox opinions on the significance of the close relationship of these two plays—something that “is not open to dispute” (765). It is not likely that orthodox scholars will accept Jiménez’s thorough research as it would wreak havoc on the traditional dating scenario.
9. See J.P.V. Akrigg’s *Jacobean Pageant* for more details on the “storm of revulsion and spite” directed toward Cecil after his death in 1612. Akrigg provides the text of a broadside calling Lord Robert “Richard the Third and Judas the Second.”
10. See Robert Lacey’s *Robert, Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus* for more details.
11. Critical evaluation considers Marston’s *Malcontent* to be a tragicomedy, a middle ground between tragedy and comedy.
12. On the title page of Q1 of *Edward IV Parts 1 and 2* is the notice, of interest to the authorship question, that this play was acted by “the Earl of Derby his servants.”
13. The DNB lists *King Edward IV* among Heywood’s plays that appeal to “city sentiment,” noting “Heywood’s pathetic power in the episode of Jane Shore” (790).

## Enjoy the Thrill of an *Edward de Vere* Play — with Oxfordian Friends!

A limited number of tickets for *Hamlet*, the September 27 performance at the Denver Performing Arts Center, are available on the [SOF website](#) through August 28. After that date, bookings must be made through the theater itself (if tickets are still available).



## Shakespeare in Ohio: T.C. Mendenhall, Tallmadge, and Delia Bacon

by Harry Campbell

In the October 1923 issue of the *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society Quarterly* (Vol XXXII, p. 590–612) there appears the text of a lecture titled “The Town of Tallmadge—The Bacons and Shakespeare,” given by Thomas Corwin Mendenhall at the Society’s annual meeting, on the founding of Tallmadge, Ohio, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was a time when that area was experiencing a great migration of post-Revolutionary pioneers moving west from New England along the southern edge of Lake Erie, an area formally known as the Connecticut Western Reserve, or colloquially, “New Connecticut.” Tallmadge—a wilderness settlement at the time—is today a suburb of Akron, just south of the Cleveland area.

David Bacon, an intrepid Connecticut colonist and missionary, settled his struggling pioneer family in what eventually became Tallmadge in 1807, and by 1809 he had established a religious community there. He was a preacher, an idealist, and a dreamer, but he ultimately could not sustain his family in the newfound settlement and church community that he created (both of which eventually thrived and endure today), and four years later their resulting poverty and continuing hardships forced him and his family to return to their home in Hartford, Connecticut.

The invited guest lecturer, T.C. Mendenhall, was a native of Northeast Ohio, and was, in the early 1870s, the first appointed of the original seven faculty members of the newly established Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College—now known as The Ohio State University. His self-educated areas of expertise included physics, meteorology, geology, and geodetics (Mendenhall Glacier in Alaska was named in his honor in 1891).

In keeping with the perplexing title of his lecture, the subject matter took a surprising turn. One of Bacon’s several children was born in their Ohio wilderness log cabin in 1811. Her name was Delia. Later that year, they would make the long journey back to Old Connecticut and Delia grew up in Hartford, surrounded by caring family and friends who helped her develop a love of reading and learning. Some of her closest friends and neighbors were the Beecher family

daughters, and she was taught in her early years by Catherine Beecher, older sister of Delia’s close companion and classmate, Harriet (later to become Harriet Beecher Stowe—another Ohio connection).

As Mendenhall wound his historical and biographical remarks to a conclusion, he described a popular list of “My Ten Favorite Books” that had been publicized recently. Shakespeare and the Bible appeared at the top of the list (with Mark Twain close behind). He observed that the “two most talked of and least read of all books” were “*the only books whose authorship was in doubt.*” Spoken like a true skeptic!

Among Mendenhall’s other interests: Stylometry—he is known as the founder of the field of author profiling. He left the university in 1878 but eventually returned to OSU as a Trustee from 1919 until his death in 1924. In 1887, he published an article titled “Characteristic Curves of Composition” in *Science* magazine, comparing the writing of several authors, in which he suggested his new Stylometric system might be used to solve questions of disputed authorship, such as those that “exist in the plays of Shakespeare.”

In 1901, Mendenhall was commissioned by a wealthy Baconian to perform a stylometric experiment to compare the writings of Shakespeare with Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and some others, to determine any similarities in their writing styles. He published his results in *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 60, December 1901, in an article: “A Mechanical Solution of a Literary Problem.” Those results were probably not what most people at the time would have expected. Of all Shakespeare’s contemporaries, only one came close to his style: “Christopher Marlowe agrees with Shakespeare as well as Shakespeare agrees with himself,” the article concluded. Too bad for Bacon and all the others (Edward de Vere was not included in the test). This interesting article is available online, showing the graphs used in the testing, and is really quite impressive. It made me take a closer look at Marlowe, and I have now read most of his known work. I agree with Mendenhall’s conclusion: I could be reading Shakespeare.



I must admit that I worked for many years as the book and paper conservator for the Ohio State University libraries, and daily passed by Mendenhall Lab on the famous Oval—a prominent location (as was the library), with buildings named after the founders. For all that time I had no idea of Mendenhall’s history, beyond his scientific record, especially his interest in the authorship of works attributed to Shakespeare. It was not until I read Elizabeth Winkler’s *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies* last year that I learned about Mendenhall’s skepticism and his experiments in stylometry. I suppose some Oxfordians and other skeptics may already be aware of this, but I was not.

In his lecture, Mendenhall gradually transitioned from the story of David Bacon and Tallmadge to an extended discussion of the history of Shakespeare authorship doubts. By this point it was obvious he was building to a recitation of the accomplishments and authorship theory of Delia Bacon, which he described in these words: “a profound political philosophy is imbedded in the text or concealed beneath the surface of plays” by “a group of learned men about the court of Queen Elizabeth, including Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh and others.” It is interesting to imagine his audience of archaeologists, historians, and other Ohioans who might have been expecting a purely historical and biographical telling of the early days of Ohio and one of its founders. In fact, half the lecture—eleven pages out of twenty-two of the printed transcription—are focused on the authorship controversy and pitiable story of the fraught conception and creation of Delia Bacon’s 1857 “magnum opus,” *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare, Unfolded*.

Although her massive book had few readers (unfortunately still true) and received brutal reviews in the English press, as Mendenhall observed, it “startled some people into thinking as they had never thought before.” It was also THE book that launched the modern Shakespeare authorship controversy to which Mendenhall and many other American scholars were drawn.

He also noted that “Delia Bacon had hit the bullseye of the controversy when she flung into the teeth of Thomas Carlyle (her friend and Shakespeare true believer) the assertion that no one could know the meaning of the plays of Shakespeare who believed ‘that booby’ wrote them.”

As Mendenhall nears the conclusion of his lecture, he states, “This is neither the time nor place for a discussion of the merits of the Shakespeare controversy....” He then suggests that Ms. Bacon had the right idea in the sense that the controversy should



not be about Shakespeare-Bacon or Shakespeare-Marlowe, but that it is primarily the case about Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon, and whether he could have actually written “the greatest dramatic compositions to be found in any language.” Then, in addition to Ms. Bacon’s admonition to Carlyle, he cites the words of eight or ten formidable intellectuals—“those whose opinions will command attention”—in support of Delia Bacon’s “advocacy of what she conceived to be the truth.” Most of these were from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, although one citation dates from 1645.

It is important to note that even by 1923, when he gave this talk, he was able to wrap up his litany of skepticism with the statement that “Citations of similar views might be extended almost indefinitely, but these are enough for my purpose.” Bravely, T.C. Mendenhall closes with these words:

“No belief or doctrine, other than a few religious dogmas, has ever rooted itself more deeply in the human mind than this faith in Shakespeare as the author...His tomb has become a shrine, at which all nations worship and an invisible monument of huge dimensions has been erected to his memory. But some of those who, in recent years have contributed most generously to its building, are now ready to acknowledge the weakness of its foundation. Should it ever fall, and there are many who believe that it must fall in the not distant future, it will not be forgotten that the first assault upon it was made by Delia Bacon, born in a log cabin the Town of Tallmadge.”

## In Memoriam: Alexander Waugh (1963–2024)

Alexander Evelyn Michael Waugh, author, critic, journalist and Chairman of the De Vere Society, was born December 30, 1963. He passed away on July 22, 2024, at age 60.

Born in London, England, Alexander was the eldest son of Auberon and Lady Teresa Waugh, and the grandson of author Evelyn Waugh. He attended Taunton School and the University of Manchester and later became an opera critic for *The Mail on Sunday* and the *Evening Standard*. He was a Senior Visiting Fellow at the University of Leicester and General Editor of the scholarly edition of *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*. He authored several books, including *Classical Music: A New Way of Listening*, *Opera: A New Way of Listening*, *Time: From Microseconds to Millennia: A Search for the Right Time*, *God, Fathers and Sons: The Autobiography of a Family*, and *The House of Wittgenstein: A Family at War*.

After signing the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's Declaration of Reasonable Doubt in 2012, Alexander coedited *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial* with John Shahan in 2013 and coordinated with Shahan to offer the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust £40,000 if they could convince a panel of British judges that William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon was the true author of the plays and poems commonly attributed to him. The Trust refused to participate, but Alexander was inspired to create a courtroom dramatization of how the event might have unfolded in *Shakespeare in Court* in 2014, which was also recorded as a [radio play](#).

In 2014, Alexander debated on behalf of the Oxfordian theory in the Fleet Street debate, [Does the Authorship Question Matter?](#) and testified at the Moot Court Trial of William of Stratford at Middle Temple in 2023. Throughout the years, he provided engaging and entertaining presentations at SOF annual conferences in Ashland, Oregon; Madison, Wisconsin; and Chicago, Illinois. His contributions to Oxfordian scholarship include dozens of articles published in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, the *De Vere Society Newsletter*, and *The Oxfordian*. He introduced a new theory about the phrase "[Sweet Swan of Avon](#)" in the First Folio, demonstrating that "Avon" was the ancient name of



Hampton Court, where Shakespeare's plays were performed for Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. He also introduced a "[holistic](#)" [interpretation of the Stratford monument](#), in which he argued that the references to Nestor, Socrates, and Virgil on the monument are allusions to three great English poets: Beaumont, Chaucer, and Spenser, all of whom were buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster

Abbey, and that "Shakespeare" (i.e., Oxford) is also buried there. In 2016, he co-edited *Contested Year: Errors, Omissions and Unsupported Statements in James Shapiro's "The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606"* with Margo Anderson and Alex McNeil. He also coedited the forthcoming three-volume *New Shakespeare Allusion Book* with Roger Stritmatter.

In 2017, Alexander began posting videos on his [Youtube channel](#) devoted to contemporary evidence showing that "William Shakespeare" was the pseudonym of the poet and playwright, Edward de Vere, 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford (1550–1604). The sixty-one videos he created include a series focusing on writers who knew about the Shakespeare authorship ruse, Alexander's deductions about where de Vere was buried and his theories on the paternity of the 18<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford. Since its inception, Alexander's video series has generated well over a million views.

Most recently, Alexander co-hosted the [174T podcast](#) with Maudie Lowe to "talk to bright enlightened people from across the world about Shakespeare, Edward de Vere and all things Elizabethan."

His tireless efforts to promote the Oxfordian cause were recognized in 2015, when he was granted the Oxfordian of the Year award by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and in 2023 when he received the SOF's Tom Regnier Veritas Award, bestowed from time to time by the SOF Board of Trustees upon individuals "who best demonstrate through their creative endeavors, dogged scholarship, and overall tenacity the potential to make a lasting impact on the history of the Authorship Question."

He is survived by his wife Eliza, his three children: Mary, Sally and Auberon, and twin granddaughters.

## Remembering Alexander Waugh

I had the good fortune to work over a period of many years with Alexander Waugh in assembling a multi-volume reference work on the earliest Shakespeare allusions in the record (forthcoming, 2025). Our own independent research reconnaissance had led each of us to the conclusion that these early Shakespeare allusions had long been misinterpreted in the Stratfordian tradition of the previous Stratfordian *Shakespeare Allusion Books*.

I was and remain in awe of Alexander's versatile mind, large heart, devastating wit, and prodigious productivity. These qualities led to his widespread acclaim, not only as a public intellectual, but also as a musician, writer of musical comedies, opera critic, cartoonist, and author of many books. He became an editor of the Oxford University Press 43-volume edition of the collected works of his famous grandfather, Evelyn Waugh (1903–1966), a prolific journalist, novelist, and writer of acerbic satires. As a scholar of Shakespeare and early modern literature—the common interest that drew us together—Alexander became an ingenious analyst of the esoteric paper trail of early modern commentary on “Shakespeare” as well as an enthusiastic and erudite promoter of a post-Stratfordian and Oxfordian reading of the Shakespeare plays.

With the help of the internet, between 2013 and 2020, we ferried versions of manuscripts back and forth across the Atlantic to eventually complete a book covering all the major Shakespeare allusions from 1584 to 1786. While we worked and researched for the *New Shakespeare Allusion Book*, Alexander was busy developing a YouTube channel on the authorship question that would grow to attract 17,000 subscribers and eventually include sixty-one videos, each crafted with exquisite attention to visual and pedagogical detail to back up his many insightful observations about the historical record of the Shakespeare allusions. On this topic, before his passing, Alexander undoubtedly became the most experienced expert in the world.

On YouTube, Alexander's oratory, pedagogical finesse, and production skills gained him thousands of followers, most introduced to the authorship question for the first time, and many inspired by his lucid explanations of the esoteric strategies of early modern commentators on Shakespeare. His video on John Dee has

over 160,000 views, with combined total views of over a million. At the same time, he was writing a miniseries about de Vere that we may still hope to see produced in the coming months or years.

A caption to his photo in the July 23 memoriam in *The Telegraph* remembers Alexander as “An entertaining debater, with a hatred of pomposity, he proved a doughty opponent of Stratfordian scholars and led the De Vere Society” and captures the creative sense of the absurd that made Alexander such a delight to be around, “an impish, amused expression as though a smirk is always twitching at the corners of his mouth.” Although Alexander was far wittier than I, I did stir his laughter once when I joked that our work together on the Shakespeare allusions felt quite unfair. It was, I opined, more like “shooting fish in a barrel” than a fair fight. Certainly, it was not like the Stratfordian uphill battle to fit uncongenial documents into the Procrustean bed of unexamined assumptions. Everywhere we turned the historical record was replete with innuendo or proof against Stratfordian dogma. Alexander knew the data well enough to relish the joke and repeat it.

Alexander Waugh is survived by his loving wife Eliza Chancellor, two daughters, Mary and Sally, and son, Auberon. But he is also survived by a large and growing family of admirers and intellectual fellow travelers, including myself, who have been inspired by his wit, humbled by his intrepid research talents, and enlightened by his intelligence and intellectual daring. With gratitude and enduring respect, we will carry forward Alexander's seminal and original work on Shakespeare to prosecute the case against the Stratfordian fiction and restore the real Shakespeare to his rightful place in history.

— Roger Stritmatter



For over a decade Alexander has served as the most successful and influential Oxfordian in the entire world, and whose legacy opus, *The New Shakespeare Allusion Book*, will keep his spirit ever refreshed in our minds. His untimely departure from our ranks will in no way diminish the massive impact of his starring role.

I first became aware of Alexander's craftiness at the 2012 Pasadena authorship conference when John Shahan informed us he had reliable reports from an Oxfordian mole that the Birthplace Trust and



Cambridge University Press were planning to publish their anti-Oxfordian polemic, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy* in 2013. To our absolute delight, our spymaster Alexander joined with John to coedit *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing an Industry in Denial*, which was assembled in less than six months and mysteriously designed to mirror the style of the CUP edition and has demonstrably outsold it many times over.

Alexander's indomitable personality was too large to limit his contribution to publications, but most delightful to me was his ebook exposé of the Birthplace mythmaking industry in *Shakespeare in Court*, with its mock trial and serial biting ironies on the fraudulent claims. He righteously debated Jonathan Bate, found Avon's "sweet swan" at Hampton Court, gave testimony in the Middle Temple, and presented his unique cases at Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship conferences in Ashland, Madison and Chicago. Alexander's special genius is equally evident in the production of his fascinating series of YouTube educational videos that will long continue to deliver his enriched imagination to future millions of seekers.

Alexander made us visible and took great satisfaction through the developments and following he fostered. His combination of brilliance, humor, sincerity, and self-assurance was never better represented in this uncertain world. We have been blessed by an avatar and shared an initiation that will last well beyond the shuffling off of Alexander's mortal coil.

— Earl Showerman



Being relatively new to the Oxfordian cause, I never had the opportunity to meet Alexander in person or talk to him face to face. Nonetheless, I felt a tremendous sense of loss when I learned of his passing because I became interested in the SAQ and an Oxfordian because of him.

Being born, raised and schooled in Germany, it is by no means a safe bet to get into contact with Shakespeare, let alone the SAQ and Oxfordianism. My interest started when I saw Alexander's YouTube presentation on the dedication of the *Sonnets*, given at Brunel University in 2017. It blew my mind and so I started watching more of his presentations and very soon began reading SAQ literature. After reading

Diana Price's *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography*, Richard Roe's *Shakespeare Guide to Italy* and John Shahan's and Alexander's *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* I wanted something distinctly Oxfordian. I wanted to take the next step but didn't know where to go. So, without knowing anyone in the SAQ/Oxfordian community personally, I wrote an email to the anonymous admin email address of the De Vere Society in February, 2022, and my request for Oxfordian reading recommendations was answered by none other than Alexander himself! He led me to Margo Anderson's "*Shakespeare*" by *Another Name* and other Oxfordian texts, and for the next year, I had an ongoing email conversation with him.

It was Alexander's distinct ideal to share knowledge, so he took me and my questions seriously in our conversations, supported my work, and, most importantly, he connected me to Bonner Cutting, who provided me with many new contacts and manifold opportunities for interesting exchanges. These connections led me to become a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and the De Vere Society.

To this day, I have signed the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt and have convinced five other people to do so, as well. I have written an article on the coining of words in Shakespeare in connection with Castiglione's *The Courtier* that will be published in *The Oxfordian* journal this September and I am finalizing a second article on Shakespeare's significance in German theatre and the importance of good translations that I hope to get into *The Oxfordian* next year. This latest article starts with three simple, yet true lines:

*Dedicated to the memory of the ever-living Alexander Waugh,*

*Without whom I would never have become an Oxfordian,*

*And without whom this article would never have been written.*

I assume Alexander would have liked the reference to the *Sonnets*' dedication and the lighthearted play on "ever" and "never" that he found in so many Elizabethan texts. I hope he will forgive me that I didn't make my dedication 17 lines or 40 words long.

Alexander, wherever you are, your work has had an impact and will be continued.

— Jens Münnichow



I am most grateful to Margo Anderson, author of *Shakespeare By Another Name*, for introducing me to Alexander in 2015. She suggested that I interview him for my film *Nothing Is Truer than Truth* and I reached out to him immediately. Although he did not know me, he generously agreed to participate in the film project.

He suggested that we film an interview at Westminster Abbey so I secured the necessary permissions. On a rainy November morning, we met outside the Abbey and proceeded to Poets' Corner. Here Alexander would explain the meaning of the inscription on the Shakespeare monument at Stratford, pointing the reader to Westminster as the final resting place of the great poet. His theory that Edward de Vere, who wrote under the pseudonym Shakespeare, was buried at Poets' Corner amidst his peers, Chaucer, Beaumont, and Spenser, became the coda for the film, entreating us to continue the search for proof that the Earl of Oxford lies buried there.

Alexander was a commanding presence even in the majestic edifice that has seen so many great kings and queens walk its aisles. He was perfectly at home amidst so many writers and statesmen. We shot for about four hours, before the Abbey opened to the public, and it was magical. Alexander was a great admirer

of Dr. John Dee, Queen Elizabeth's trusted advisor and renowned alchemist, astronomer, and antiquarian, so I suspect he too sensed the magic of the moment. Throughout the making of the film and after its release in North America, Alexander continued to be a great mentor and advisor to me.

I had the honor of speaking at the most recent meeting of De Vere Society in March in London, where Alexander welcomed the members and guests via video with his characteristic good cheer and optimism and shared his latest discoveries and research. I had met with him on Zoom to discuss his ongoing projects and my new film and sent him a few notes over the last few months to let him know that he was always in our hearts as he fought valiantly to finish his groundbreaking works.

Still, the news of his passing was devastating for me, just as it was for so many members of our community. This is a great loss for the world of letters and for Shakespeare studies, but there is no doubt that his star will ascend to take its place next to Edward de Vere's. It was my great good fortune to travel in his orbit and I am ever grateful for his camaraderie, encouragement, and generosity.

— Cheryl Eagan-Donovan

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## A Remembrance of Alexander Waugh

by John M. Shahan

On July 2, 2012, I went online to the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's website to check for new signatories to the SAC's Declaration of Reasonable Doubt. I do this every day, and I scrutinize each signature for authenticity before approving it to be added to the public lists. This is necessary because Stratfordian trolls occasionally submit false names and signing info, hoping it will be posted to the list so they can then call attention to it and discredit us. Most fakes are easily detected, but not always. After Justices J. P. Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor signed and their names were posted, someone signed as Justice Antonin Scalia, using the correct address and phone number for the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC. Scalia was a known doubter; but when I wrote and asked, he replied that he had not signed.

The other reason I scrutinize signatures is because I'm always looking for prominent, highly credible people to add to the SAC's list of "notable" signatories, which now has 124 names. That day in 2012, I logged in and found this name and signing statement awaiting approval:

Mr. Alexander Evelyn M. Waugh: Author of several books, including 'Time', 'God', 'Fathers & Sons', 'House of Wittgenstein'; Editor, 42 Vol. 'Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh', OUP (forthcoming)

My first reaction was to wonder if this was another phony, but it didn't seem like the sort of person someone would try to fake and slip past me. And, indeed, to my delight, it was legit. I emailed him immediately to

thank him for signing and ask how he had happened to do so. He said that he had been interested in the authorship question for quite some time, and he reeled off a list of books he had read that rivaled what I had read in more than twenty years. Clearly this was no dilettante but a serious scholar who seemed ready to be more involved.

We exchanged many emails in the following months. He was already a confirmed doubter, although he had not gone public about it before, plus he also had clear Oxfordian leanings. He seemed embarrassed to admit that he knew Jonathan Bate (they were longtime friends) and had recently had lunch with Bate, Professor Stanley Wells and Paul Edmondson of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. He said they all just seemed to assume he was on their side, and he did not let on otherwise. I don't think he meant to be spying on them, just lying low. Then something happened that led him to take sides, and what a difference that has made!

The Birthplace Trust had launched its "Authorship Campaign" in the fall of 2011, leading up to the release of the film *Anonymous*. And in 2013 they planned to issue a new installment—a book entitled *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt: Evidence, Argument, Controversy*, edited by Edmondson and Wells and with contributions by twenty-two leading Stratfordian scholars. It was the SBT's first book on the authorship controversy and was meant to put an end to it.

Six months before its release, they mailed review copies, including one to Alexander shortly before the 2012 SOS conference in Pasadena. He offered to share it with me and proposed that we write a competing book to be released the same day as the Birthplace Trust's book. Ours would be an anthology, featuring outstanding articles by leading authorship doubters, many of whom were at the conference and readily agreed to participate. The book would be just about

making the case against the Stratford man, for which the SAC was well prepared.

I agreed to take the lead and soon drafted an outline of the book and selected contributors. It was our great good fortune that many highly relevant works had recently been published, and everyone I asked to make them available agreed. But there was one gap I needed to fill: a chapter based on Richard Roe's recently published book *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*. I asked Alexander if he would take that on, and he agreed.

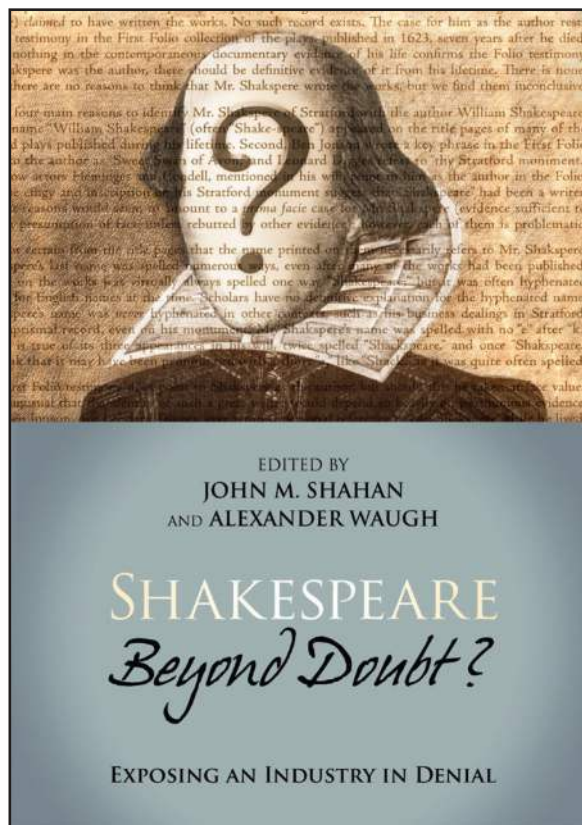
Not content with recapping Roe, he researched the

topic himself and wrote what is widely regarded as the best chapter in a book full of outstanding contributions. Giving it the title, "Keeping Shakespeare Out of Italy," he wrote an in-depth, scathing, sarcastic critique of Stratfordian "scholarship" on the topic. It is a *tour de force*, demonstrating that he is a worthy heir to his illustrious literary forbears.

But that chapter was hardly his only contribution. Having learned what he was capable of, I asked if he would be willing to join me as co-editor of the book, with his name on the cover. In addition to improving the book, his name had the potential to attract lots of attention. He agreed and proceeded to review and comment on the rest of the book, improving it greatly. But

perhaps his most important contribution was a brilliant change to the book's main title. Having written *Fathers and Sons: The Autobiography of a Family*, with a main title the same as Tergenev's novel, he knew that book titles cannot be copyrighted and we could give ours a main title identical to theirs: *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing an Industry in Denial*.

As a result, whenever anyone searches on the title of their book, our book comes up with it. This was quite a coup. It meant that efforts to promote their book would also promote ours. It also made it easy to compare ratings of the two books at Amazon, and ours





proved better. At Amazon's US website, our book has 135 reviews with an average rating of 4.5, while their book has just 53 ratings with an average rating of 3.8. Our book also sells better than theirs, so if one searches on their title our book comes up first! As a result, the Birthplace Trust no longer does anything to promote its book, and the last time anyone reviewed it was in 2018. This represents a major defeat for the SBT: a fiasco for their one and only book on the issue. And the credit belongs largely to a clever insight by Alexander Waugh. It helps that our book is, in fact, excellent, tied for eighth among the top ten books on the SAQ in a vote by Oxfordians.

We missed our goal of publishing *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* the same day as *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* by just two weeks, which was amazing considering we got it out in just six months, while the SBT took two years for theirs.

The introduction to *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?* included a challenge to the Birthplace Trust to prove its claim that the authorship was “beyond doubt” in a mock trial before an unbiased panel of judges, and to prove it “beyond a reasonable doubt.” They could not deny that they had made the claim, since they had put it right in the title of their book. But would they stand behind their claim? The next step was to put the challenge in a letter to the Birthplace Trust, but to increase the force of the challenge and make it difficult to ignore, I wanted to put Alexander's name on it. So, I described the plan and invited him to be honorary president of the SAC, and he agreed. We sent the letter, and Stanley Wells replied that they had nothing more to say on the topic.

This was no surprise. We never expected that they would oppose us on a level playing field, but we did want them to pay a price in lost credibility for refusing to defend their own claim. So next we issued the challenge publicly in a full-page ad in the *Times Literary Supplement*, combined with an offer to donate £40,000 to the Trust if they succeed in proving their case. To make the offer, we secured pledges from forty doubters to pay up if the Trust were to win. It was a testament to the confidence of doubters, but Alexander's involvement also helped. Again the Birthplace Trust refused, but at the cost of lost credibility with those who noticed.

Alexander was delighted that we had exposed the SBT's cowardice and mentioned it often, but he did

not drop it there just because we did not get as much publicity as we had hoped. He took the initiative and soon wrote and published an e-book titled *Shakespeare in Court*, including a fictional version of how such a mock trial might have gone had the Trust agreed. He began with an explanation of what the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is, focusing on their five top tourist attractions: the so-called “Birthplace” (where Will Shakspeare was *not* born), “Anne Hathaway's Cottage” (where she *didn't* live), “Mary Arden's Farm” (*not* Mary Arden's), “Hall's Croft” (which was *not* Dr. Hall's home) and “Tom Nash's House” (which was *not* his). Based on documents in the Trust's own archives, Alexander showed that none of these five museums is what the Birthplace Trust claims them to be in what is posted on their website.

He also blasted the Trust for declining our challenge and donation offer with this headline: “**Famous charity turns down opportunity to collect \$67K for explaining its own cause!**” The online blurb is worth quoting:

This explosive new salvo in the hard-fought war over the identity of William Shakespeare exposes the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust ... as a prime source of misinformation and subversion concerning the life and times of the World's greatest playwright. Author and scholar, Alexander Waugh, provocatively accuses the Trust of “making false statements” about its tourist museums, concealing information about Shakespeare authorship, abusing those who challenge or contradict its “expert authority” and of having “a clear and obvious conflict of interest...”

With wit, ingenuity and a profound knowledge of his subject, Waugh combines his exposé of the Birthplace Trust and those ... driving its “Authorship Campaign,” with a dramatic courtroom cross-examination of “a typical orthodox Shakespeare pundit.” This lively scene, in sharp, confrontational dialogue, challenges the traditional belief that Shakespeare's works were composed by an illiterate butcher's apprentice from the British Midlands and clearly reveals why the case for Shakespeare of Stratford, if submitted to the judicial scrutiny of any court of law, would be instantly dismissed.

During that same year—2014—Alexander accomplished *two* amazing feats of scholarship. In two articles he refuted what had been called the “twin pillars” of Stratfordian orthodoxy—Ben Jonson’s reference to Shakespeare as “Sweet Swan of Avon!” long thought to refer to the Avon River in Stratford-upon-Avon and to prove that Shakespeare was from there, and the Stratford monument with its cryptic inscription that had defied analysis for 400 years. Waugh showed that “Avon” referred not to any river but to a *place* along the River Thames where Queen Elizabeth and King James I had often watched plays: Hampton Court Palace. And he showed that the Stratford monument’s inscription seems to suggest that the author is buried not in Stratford but with Chaucer, Spenser, and Beaumont in Westminster Abbey! (Both articles are on the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship’s website and are must reading.)

If Alexander Waugh had accomplished no more, he would still be a giant of our movement. But he went on from there to do so much more. After the SAC’s strategy played out with our efforts to attract additional attention to our cause during the 400th anniversary year of 2016, he moved on to become chairman of the De Vere Society and advocate for Edward de Vere. Although I am a staunch Oxfordian, and I followed Alexander’s efforts on that front, I think it best that I let those who worked more closely with him on it offer their own remembrances.

In sum, Alexander entered my life quite unexpectedly and moved me along like a whirlwind. I had a strategy to try to move us forward, but just limited ability to implement it on my own. With his energy, ability, knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, kindness, and generosity of spirit, he helped to make it work much more effectively than would have been possible otherwise. This was just a small part of what he achieved, but I am grateful to have known such a man. His name, achievements and love “will still shine bright” when his opponents are forgotten.

[John Shahan is chairman and CEO of The Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and principal author of the Declaration of Reasonable Doubt About the Identity of William Shakespeare at [doubtaboutwill.org](http://doubtaboutwill.org). He was a trustee of the Shakespeare Oxford Society during 2003–04, and named Oxfordian of the Year in 2012.]

## How Pleasant to Know Mr. Waugh!

by Tom Goff

Like all Oxfordians, I was stunned to hear of Alexander Waugh’s passing. So very much too soon—a brilliant man. I remember reading of his discovery that the “Swan of Avon” worked his magic at the real Avon, Hampton Court. In retrospect, I think that discovery is also proof that Elizabethans wrote in word-code, one meaning for regular folks, another for the initiate—much as Percy Allen argued decades ago.

We had one brief exchange of emails, when I sent him a poem complimenting his take on Oxford and the rhetoric of Petrus Ramus. He said kind things.

In memory, here is a little poem, which I wish he could have read. I like to think he’d get the reference right away—it’s to Edward Lear’s “How Pleasant to Know Mr. Lear.”

### *How Pleasant to Know Mr. Waugh!*

(Alexander Waugh, grandson of novelist Evelyn Waugh, Shakespeare scholar, musician, biographer, past Chairman of the De Vere Society)

How pleasant to know Mr. Waugh!  
Who has written such thoughts of De Vere  
His Oxfordian friends read with awe,  
But Stratfordian foes with some fear.  
His mind is astute and fact-filled,  
His dark suit is remarkably rumpled.  
He tells us of the pens who once quilled  
For “Shake-speare,” whose pages age-crumpled

Give us many a clue to the Phoebus  
At the center of this poets’ clique,  
Cipher, pseudonym, cryptogram, rebus:  
And yes, He knew Latin and Greek.

Alexander’s hair spreads out quite wild,  
But his mind is remarkably calm,  
Like his Poet whose lines are fine-filed;  
Holds his hearers in his open palm.

He derides the hack scholars who fool us  
Into worshipping Brave Stratford Will  
The raw playwright who knew how kings rule us  
Without book learning, wisdom, or skill?



He can lampoon great fools without stint  
Who deny “Shakespeare” traveled to Italy,  
Think Verona lacked ale, had no flint;  
He’ll dispose of them handily, wittily.

He lambastes those who pander to nitwits  
That cry “Who cares who wrote the great plays?”  
Skimming Shakespeare while tracking their Fitbits,  
Posting Instagram recipes, cosplays.

Alexander leads us to the Avon,  
Not the Stratford town’s huddle of hovels  
But Hampton Court, palace that gave on  
To the Thames, where as playhouse it doubles.

Where Eliza goes for her amusement,  
Knowing full well who’s the playwright,  
Putting up with jests short of traducement,  
Puns that need the right joker to say right.

Mr. Waugh decodes Jonson’s inscription  
On the Shakspeare “tomb” in the old Church:  
“Nestor,” “Socrates,” “Virgil”? Ben’s fiction,  
Meant to leave slower wits in the lurch:

For those three, reckon Beaumont and Chaucer,  
Spenser, buried in Westminster Abbey;  
Does rare Ben the cryptographer-glosser  
Know De Vere lies by those three? Not shabby.

Alex finds here’s where ironies treble;  
A “Bard” statue, in Westminster church,  
Gives our quest for the coffin more trouble:  
Bids us go back to Stratford to search...

Our Crusader may rank with the Templars,  
Versed in many a symbolic law,  
Ranking high among Oxford exemplars;  
How pleasant to know Mr. Waugh!

## SHAKESPEARE OXFORD FELLOWSHIP LIFETIME MEMBERS

Anonymous in honor of Ruth Loyd Miller  
Paul Arnold  
Ben and Simi August  
Charles Beauclerk  
Mary Berkowitz  
James & Patricia Bonner  
Mick Clarke  
Bonner & Jack Cutting  
Michael Delahoyde  
Dorothea Dickerman & Richard Becker  
Lucinda & Richard Foulke  
Robert Fowler  
Richard Furno  
Margit & Reinhard Greiling  
John Hamill & Jose Caratini  
Catherine Hatinguais & Susana Maggi  
Charlotte Hughes & Christopher Combs  
Michael Hyde  
Lawrence Jacobsen  
Richard Joyrich  
Regina Kapetanaki  
Jo Anne & David Kelch  
Lynne & Michael Kositsky  
Kevin Lance  
Stephen Larsen

Eric Luczkow  
Deborah Mahan  
Alex & Jill McNeil  
Robert Meyers  
Sally Mosher  
James & Sally Newell  
Richard Phillips, Jr.  
Robert R. Prechter, Jr.  
John & Flinn Rauck  
Michele Roberge in memory of David Birney  
Mary E. Ross  
Don Rubin & Patricia Keeney  
Paula Sharzer  
Earl Showerman  
Jack M. Shuttleworth & Patricia Cruser  
Mike, Liz, Spencer & Graham Stepniewski  
Nancy Stewart  
Roger Stritmatter & Shelly Maycock  
Peter Sturrock  
David Taylor  
Linda Madge Thomas  
Tom & Joy Townsend  
Richard & Elisabeth Waugaman  
Joella Werlin  
Tom & Julia Woosnam



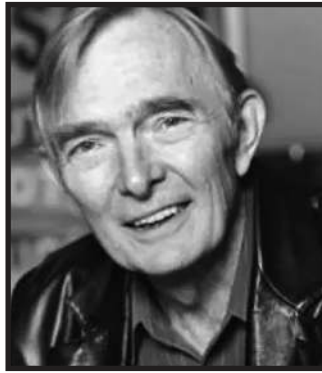
## In Memoriam: Theodore (Ted) Story (1936–2024)

Producer-director Ted Story, a major player in the off-off-Broadway theatrical scene and a longtime Oxfordian, passed away on June 11, 2024, at age 88.

Born on May 13, 1936, in Batavia, New York, Ted eventually moved to New York and attended Columbia University. He studied acting at HB Studio in Greenwich Village and performed in summer stock plays and on Broadway, in a variety of productions that included *The Deputy* and *South Pacific*. He later transitioned from acting to directing and producing. He founded and was artistic director of the Impossible Ragtime Theatre (IRT), for which he produced more than 100 plays on three different stages. He also directed plays, including *Suicide in B-Flat* by Sam Shepard, *Ivanov* and *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov and many others.

Ted's knowledge and love of Shakespeare led him to explore the authorship question and to attend many conferences of the Shakespeare Oxford Society (SOS) now the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship (SOF), as well as annual gatherings at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, led by the late Dr. Daniel Wright, who established the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre.

At the SOF conference in 2007 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Ted approached Hank Whittemore about developing and producing a solo stage show based on Whittemore's recently published book *The Monument*. Over the following months, they worked together on a ninety-minute script for Hank to perform under Ted's direction. They began tryouts of the show in private homes, progressed to various stages in New York City and the Boston area, and then to productions around the country. They presented the show at the SOF conference in Houston and on a stage of Shakespeare's Globe in London for members of the De Vere Society. Along the way, Hank performed *Treason* over two weekends in two different years at Flathead Valley Community College, arranged and hosted by Professor Brian Bechtold of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. Two performances were staged at Gonville and Caius College



of Cambridge University and another at York University in Toronto, Canada, at the invitation of Don Rubin, Professor Emeritus of Theatre. An early performance at the historic Hudson House in Nyack, New York, was caught on video and has nearly 37,000 views on YouTube.

Ted also wrote his own authorship book, *The Shakespeare Fraud: The Politics Behind the Name* (Forever Press, 2016). In a clear writing style, Ted pieced

together a logical timeline that incorporated the major historical characters, presenting new perspectives on the relationships between persons and events. The result is an enjoyable as well as informative narrative, based on Ted's many years of absorption in the subject matter.

Ted is survived by his wife of sixty years, Cynthia Crane, their daughters Alexandra and Samantha, and grandsons Declan and Bowie. During their time together, Ted and Cindy transformed their home in Greenwich Village into a welcoming hub for relatives, friends, and colleagues drawn to the vibrant atmosphere of love, laughter, and lively discussion that the couple inspired. A funeral service for Ted in New York City was attended by dozens from many walks of life, as well as from the theatrical world, who stood one-by-one to share fond memories of this lively, talented, fearlessly outspoken man.

## Remembering Ted Story

I already miss hanging out with Ted. The trip to England to perform *Shakespeare's Treason* was certainly a high point in our friendship, and of our working relationship as actor and director. Ted encouraged and inspired me to get back on stage for a full ninety minutes without a break, something I had thought was no longer possible for me. For reasons I couldn't fathom, Ted never doubted it would work. He taught me many things about performing a solo show (although I hardly managed to incorporate them all). Ted was an independent thinker, unafraid to speak his mind to anyone at any time—which often came as a shock to others. He was certainly unafraid to tell *me* whatever he thought, and I have always been grateful to him for it.

— Hank Whittemore

Ted Story was one of those individuals that we Oxfordians come to know only through our mutual interest in the Shakespeare Authorship Question. Otherwise, our paths most likely would never have crossed. I first met Ted in the late 1990s, during all the incredible activity that went on in the first decade of the internet and the explosive growth of interest in the SAQ. Ted was then working closely with Hank Whittemore in promoting his Monument Theory of the Sonnets, which included co-writing and directing Hank's one-man show *Shakespeare's Treason*, based on that theory. I had the privilege to be working with both Hank and Ted during those years, and also (later) to work with Ted on his book *The Shakespeare Fraud*, a brief overview of the Oxfordian Shakespeare story (and the Monument Theory) as a political showdown at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

In addition to all this work, Ted was also a Board

member of the Shakespeare Fellowship during the twelve years that our movement was split into two groups (2001-2013). I worked closely with him during those years, and often at many conferences enjoyed partying with him afterwards.

In the nearly three decades that I knew and worked with Ted he was always a bundle of creative energy, and a wonderful storyteller (how fitting!). His book *The Shakespeare Fraud* reflects his skill as a storyteller, summing up much controversial and complicated material, and presenting it in an easily readable narrative. It was a privilege for me to help get it published, and I highly recommend it.

RIP Ted. And if there is such a thing as the great beyond, and we all meet again, well, I'll be looking forward to seeing you again. Save me a seat, and let's share a beer or two.

— William Boyle

## SOF DATA PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

### Preservation Matters

Oxfordian discoveries and contributions inform future generations of researchers, but until the Authorship Question gains mainstream acceptance, the work of past and present researchers will be marginalized and hard to access.

It's up to us to help the SOF create archives and preserve our valuable materials, so they're available for the future—to enable education and research, witness the past, extend human memory, and ensure our Oxfordian legacy.

The committee works to preserve Oxfordian documents about the Oxfordian movement, as well as the research and analysis of the authorship question. Our initial goal in 2016 was to preserve independent Oxfordian Web sites, but Oxfordian historical and research records are not only online, they are on pieces of paper that must be located, digitally copied, shared

online, inventoried, and preserved in their original form, where possible.

#### Visit the SOF website—See What You Can Do:

- Identify and organize items to preserve
- Research Notes
- Correspondence
- Photos & Videos
- Website content
- Unpublished Articles and Talks
- Rare, Signed, or Annotated books

Go to: [Preserve Oxfordian Discoveries](#)

## PRESERVE OUR DATA FOR THE FUTURE!

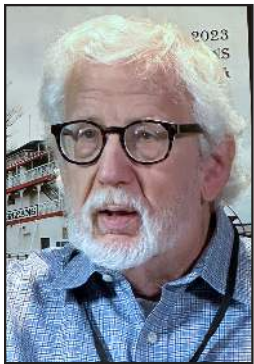
## SOF Nominations Committee 2024 Report

The Nominations Committee (chaired by Don Rubin with members Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and John Hamill) is pleased to present the SOF membership with a slate of four candidates to stand for election to the Board of Trustees, and one candidate to stand for election as President, at the annual membership meeting in Denver, Colorado.

**Earl Showerman** (presently SOF President, whose current three-year term as a Trustee ends in 2025) has announced that he will leave the Board one year early. The results of the Board election will be posted on the SOF website immediately after the annual meeting and reported in the *Newsletter*.



### Nominee for SOF President:



**Bob Meyers** served for 21 years at the National Press Foundation, including 19 years as president and chief operating officer. He also worked as a reporter at the *Washington Post*, including its Pulitzer Prize-winning Watergate investigation, and as an editor at the *San Diego Union*. He has written two books, one of which won the American Medical Writers Association Award for Excellence in Biomedical Writing. For the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, Bob has edited the popular “How I Became an Oxfordian” essay series on the SOF website since 2015 and moderated the Looney SOF Centennial Symposium at the National Press Club. He previously served on the Editorial Board of *The Oxfordian*. His interviews with news-making Oxfordians regularly appears on the SOF website. Bob is currently a member of the Board of Trustees and is

Chair of the Communications Committee. He previously served as President for 2021–2022.

Although, under the SOF bylaws, the nomination is for a one-year term, Bob informed the Committee that he accepts the nomination with the caveat that he does not envision serving a full year as President, but rather anticipates serving as an “interim” president through early 2025.

### Nominees for three-year terms (2024–2027):



**Dorothea Dickerman** (nominated for a second three-year term) was awarded her BA from Amherst College *summa cum laude* in English and Political Science and her JD from the University of Chicago Law School. She retired as a partner from a thirty-four-year career in a large international law firm to

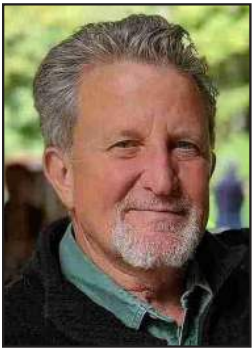
research and write on the Shakespeare Authorship Question. Using her legal skills, primary source historical and literary documents and her travels to locations where Oxford lived and visited, she focuses on giving context to Oxford’s life, to the Shakespeare canon, and to Tudor law, history, politics and personalities. She is currently working on a series of Elizabethan historical novels.



**Tom Woosnam** (nominated for a second three-year term) was born in England, where he earned his BSc in physics from Imperial College, London. After teaching in Chile, he received his MA from Stanford in 1976 and taught high school physics and math in California before retiring with his wife Julia to Ashland, Oregon, in

2019. His avocation is acting. He has performed in over 60 amateur and professional productions, including seven Oxfordian plays.





**Brent Evans** (nominated for a first three-year term) has a master's degree in Asian history from the University of Pennsylvania and two additional years of intensive Japanese language study at International Christian University in Tokyo. He is retired after a forty-year career in international trade. In terms of

the authorship question, as lifelong devotees of Shakespeare, Brent and his wife, Patty, were thunderstruck when they stumbled upon a YouTube video of two of their favorite Shakespearean actors, Derek Jacobi and Mark Rylance, convincingly outlining their incredulity about “the man from Stratford.” For Brent, the traditional “genius” explanation quickly disintegrated. It was replaced by a passionate interest in the authorship question, which has prompted years of reading and study. In addition to the SOF, Brent is a member of the UK's De Vere Society and has visited Hampton Court Palace, Castle Hedingham and St. Stephen's Chapel in

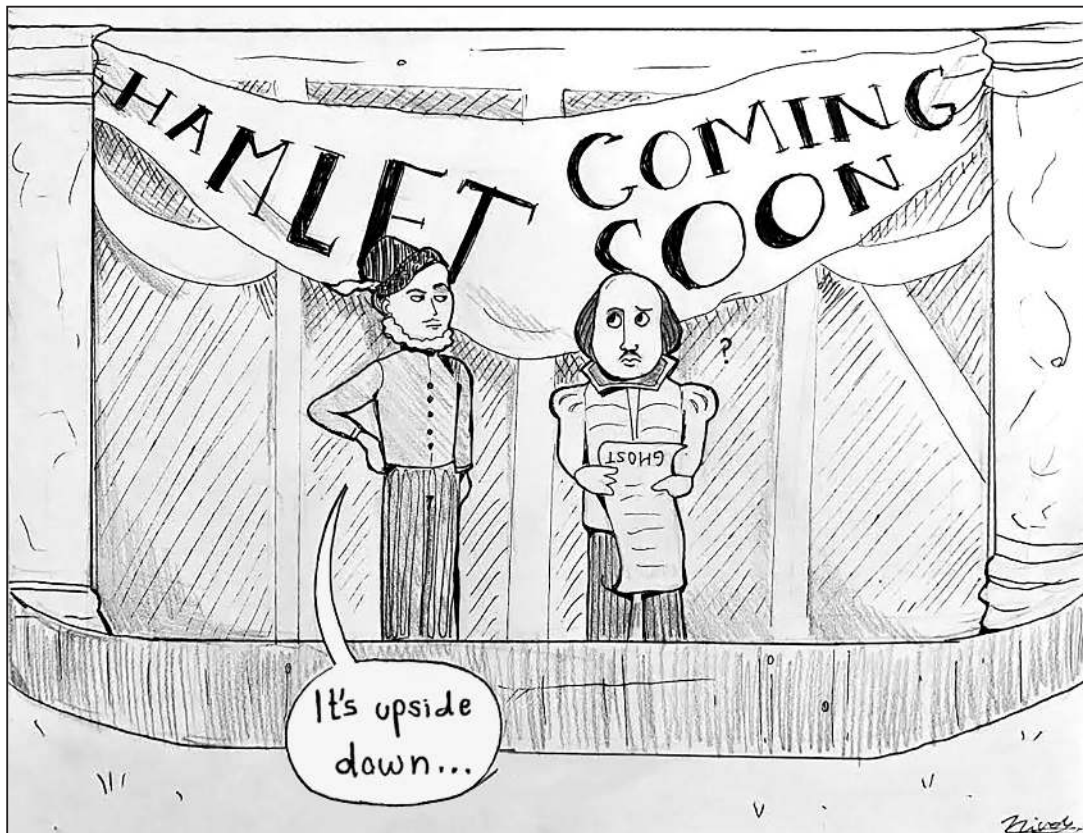
Bures. He is currently researching primary documents for a reassessment of the life of Delia Bacon.

### Nominee for one-year term (2024–2025):



**Tom Townsend** (nominated for a one-year term to complete Earl Showerman's 2024–2025 term) has been studying and researching both Elizabethan history and the Shakespeare Authorship Question for over thirty-five years. A long-time member of the SOF, he has presented numerous papers at conferences and twice presented introduc-

tions to the authorship question for those new to the subject. He has also published several articles in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. A former Director of Consumer Insights (a senior research position) for a large advertising agency, he holds a master's degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.



Cartoon by Nivedya Sudhir

## Book Reviews

**Lawrence Wells. *Ghostwriter: Shakespeare, Literary Landmines, and an Eccentric Patron's Royal Obsession***

University Press of Mississippi, 2024; 176 pages  
(\$28.00)

**Lawrence Wells. *Fair Youth: A Novel***

Sanctuary Editions/Yoknapatawpha Press, 2024;  
247 pages (\$24.95)

Reviewed by Allen Boyer

Out of a strange quest, Lawrence Wells has fashioned a strong, uncommonly sensitive pair of books.

In 1987, when Wells had one novel under his belt and had gotten the Yoknapatawpha Press under steam, the University of Mississippi reached out to him with a peculiar ghostwriting inquiry. An elderly benefactor, Gertrude C. Ford, had offered to endow a theatre and concert hall. Before finalizing the gift, Mrs. Ford asked a favor: that Ole Miss find a writer to help her complete a lifelong research project, a study proving that Shakespeare's plays were actually penned by Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, an Elizabethan courtier and minor poet.

Wells presents the "Oxfordian thesis" in terms of the Prince Tudor theory; that the Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth were madly in love—could not marry—but conceived a son, who was reared as Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. To conceal Southampton's parentage, Elizabeth forced Oxford to publish under a false name the stage plays that he wrote. "Southampton was the 'Fair Youth' of the sonnets; Shakespeare wrote sonnets that hinted that the Fair Youth was Elizabeth's illegitimate son and unacknowledged heir; denied his birthright, Southampton joined the Essex Rebellion and tried to seize the throne by force."

No one in the English department would touch Mrs. Ford's project, and several previous ghostwriters had found Mrs. Ford impossible to work with. Wells took the assignment.

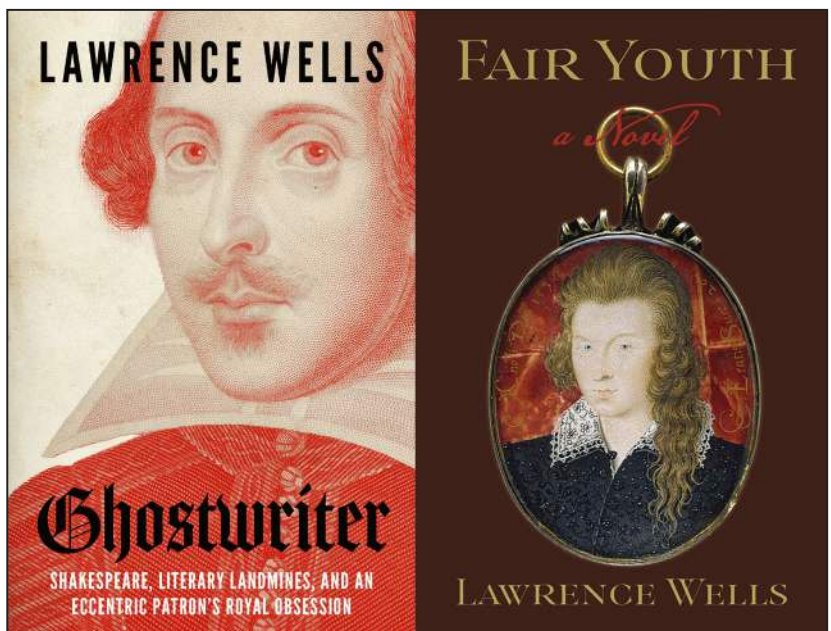
*Fair Youth*, a historical novel, is the study that Wells was hired to write. *Ghostwriter* is his memoir of writing it.

On its surface, *Fair Youth* is a bodice-ripping, sword-and-soulmate historical novel—an Elizabethan romantasy book before the term was coined. Its characters eat from trenchers and drink from flagons, and Oxford muses about his rival, Sir Thomas Knyvet:

"Tomcat Knyvet fancies himself a swordsman. Did he not study fencing under Signor Bonetti? No doubt he has mastered the *passado*, *fendente*, and *punto reverso*. . . . Ah, dear Tomcat, think you that I cannot dance to that tune?"

*Ghostwriter* is a book about Wells writing *Fair Youth*. It recreates his conferences with Mrs. Ford and the research trip he made to Britain with his wife Dean. It is a travelogue, in first person, sweeping crisply through the British Library, National Portrait Gallery, Stratford, and Castle Hedingham, for nine centuries the ancestral seat of the de Vere family. As befits a work on Shakespeare, there are a host of vividly drawn minor characters: Oxfordian enthusiasts, bluffly flirtatious aristocrats, cheerful and impossibly learned Royal Shakespeare Company actors—Ole Miss chancellor Bob Khayat, too, in a crucial cameo appearance.

Wells manages skillfully both the bombast of *Fair Youth* and the first-person narrative of *Ghostwriter*. There is no self-conscious display of literary artifice—none of the clichéd "blurring of fiction and reality" that novelists too often use when writing a book about



a writer writing a book. Rather, scenes from one story echo in the other.

When the young Earl of Oxford answers the Queen's summons to her chambers, their encounter as lovers foreshadows another meeting, three decades later, when he revives his dying queen by feeding her spoonfuls of broth.

The speculations of the Prince Tudor theory provide human moments that a novelist might ponder. (If Oxford wanted to shape his son's destiny, only to be thwarted by Queen Elizabeth at every turn, does that rhyme with Oberon quarreling with Titania over the upbringing of a changeling page-boy?)

While Oxford fruitlessly seeks to win fame as a soldier, Shakespeare's plays gain fame across England. Meantime, the real William Shakespeare, a minor character, the stage-manager under whose name Oxford's plays are published, remains a journeyman drone, competent to run the Globe, ready to ask money for keeping Oxford's secret. He silently wonders whether Oxford is mocking him with the rustic clowns he writes into the comedies.

The two books move together. One narrative parallel matches Oxford's service to Elizabeth and

the tasks that Wells carries out at Mrs. Ford's bidding. Imperious as any queen, and very nearly as rich, she issues commands in shouted transatlantic telephone calls. Then, without warning, the phone calls cease. When Wells returns to Mississippi, he finds his patroness silenced by a series of strokes, as subdued as Oxford finds Elizabeth.

Both these books have drawn interest. An early draft of *Ghostwriter* earned the 2014 Faulkner-Wisdom Prize for narrative nonfiction, and *Fair Youth* was a finalist choice in the 2024 Hawthorne fiction competition. One book is fiction, the other a memoir, and yet the two fit seamlessly together. *Fair Youth* is the tale that Wells set out to write; *Ghostwriter* is the framing tale that comments on it. The device is one that Shakespeare knew, and that William Faulkner employed, and with these books Wells handles it masterfully.

[Allen Boyer grew up in Oxford and now writes in New York City. A version of this review was previously published July 9, 2024, in the Oxford Eagle, the newspaper and website for Oxford, Mississippi. It has been edited here in order to clarify references to the Prince Tudor Theory.]

## Ned Devere. *Metametamorphoses*

Good Name Press, 2024, 554 pages (paperback \$24.99)

Reviewed by Dr. CJ Taylor

*Metametamorphoses* by Ned Devere, the pseudonymous writer of the [edevere17.com](http://edevere17.com) blog, is a serious, scholarly reworking of the 1567 Arthur Golding translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Devere's translation shines when considered beside two other versions of Ovid's original text: one a more historically proximate benchmark, that of Melville in the *Oxford World's Classics* version of 1986, and, more remotely, but obviously more stylistically relevant, that of Edward de Vere's uncle, Arthur Golding.

The lush Ovidian luxury of Devere's translation opens:

Of shapes transformed to bodies strange I purpose to  
entreat,  
You Gods, consent (for you are they who wrought  
this wondrous feat)

To further this my enterprise. And from the world  
begun,  
Grant that my verse may to my time its course  
directly run.

In Devere's hands, gone is the rambling and clumsy phonology of Golding, and also the mystical wooshiness of Melville with his fondness for constructions such as "ere," "naught" and "scarce." In their place, we enter a poetic medium of deftly controlled elegance, *videlicet*:

before the sea and land were made, and heaven's  
cover wide,  
in all the world one single face of Nature did abide  
[Book 1]

[...]  
now when she saw Narcissus stray about the forest  
wide  
her blood ran warm, and step for step fast after him  
she hied  
[Book 3]



Placed alongside Melville and Golding, we can discern immediately the change in lexical and phonological style here—away from heavily accented iambs and intrusive archaisms, towards a lighter, tripping, *allegro* style, as part of which, or even hidden within which, the iambic rhythm is more of a thread and less of an iron cable. Words are deftly positioned and settled next to one another, rather than being lashed and cemented into place. Devere's translation, for my money, certainly supersedes those of his predecessors, and this is a clever trick to pull off when one considers that his is not intended as a novel or original translation, but as a sprucing up, modernising and reclamation of Golding's: "I've revised the 1567 text to make it easier to read and enjoy," he says in his prologue. Has he? I think so, yes. Most definitely.

There are, however, some minor defects in Devere's metre, rhyme and punctuation. Not that scansion is everything, but if a writer deploys a foot such as the iamb, the reader naturally falls into an iambic rhythm, or the expectation of one, and this means, necessarily, that any deviations from the metre, or blips in the line, stand out, as here:

and so the silver age came in, somewhat more base  
than gold [Book 1]

The first four iambs to the caesura (after "in") scan perfectly, but that stubborn little comma shifts the accent of the next syllables (in "somewhat") to give a rather jarring spondee, or, at the very least, an unexpected trochee. The succeeding phrase "more base than gold" is clearly iambic, and so the effect of the "somewhat" in the middle of the line is unsettling—unless one insists that the qualifier "somewhat" *is* iambic, when it is not. This would be to force the reader to read against the rhythm of the poetry, and so to create a degree of rhythmic angst or discordia where none ought to be. Perhaps a better translation might have been

and so the silver age came in, *more base by far*  
than gold

—but I blush to suggest so simple a fix.

Next, rhyme. Again, I am not, I hope, massively *à cheval* about full rhyme—insisting upon it to the detriment of sense or general euphony. Still, rhyme is important to the reading experience, and, as with

metrical irregularity, can impair rather than guide the reader if it be in any (however minor) way deficient. Aside from such line endings as

all weighty kind of *matter* [...]/  
and then the waving *water*  
[emph. mine]

which bring to mind Tony Harrison's observations that Wordsworth's "matter and water were full rhymes" (but are they meant to be here? I cannot say), we have obviously deficient pairings such as:

fast/chaste  
augment/he sent [a moderately Byronic mosaic  
rhyme]  
flighty/weighty  
worthily/apply  
Mercury/fly  
doom/come

none of which rhyme, nor can be made to, and which are made more obvious, and hence intrusive, by the fact of the masculine endings of the iambic fourteeners (which do so much to create beautiful melodious poetry where the rhyme *does* work, elsewhere).

And, finally, the matter of the always problematic Anglo-Saxon genitive case, specifically in relation to nouns ending in *'s*. For example:

when Mercury had punished thus Aglauros's spiteful  
tongue

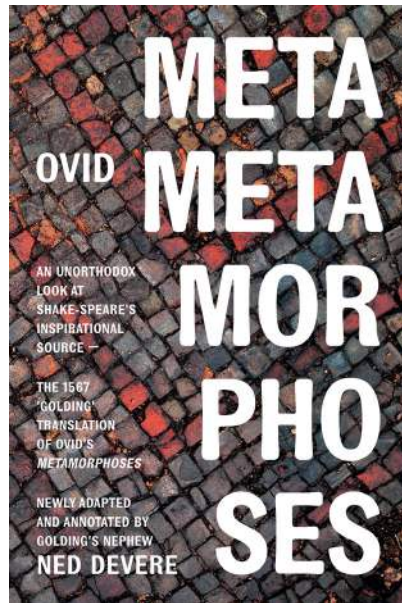
If we scan the line, we get fully four iambs before hitting the proper noun *Aglauros*, which, with its superfluous *'s* reads as a four-syllable unit: Ag-lau-ros-es—a problem which could have been avoided by dropping its use altogether.

But these are piddling concerns as set aside the totality of the work and its melodiously crafted and consistently beautiful, sonorous music. Devere's translation is a triumph, and any minor subjective misgivings raised here may be ignored as the ramblings of a grouchy grammarian or vituperative versifier.

In the closing sections of *Metametamorphoses*, Devere presents his readers with a series of highly engaging appendices: a summary of the various metamorphoses in the text "for people who don't like the poem"; a section "On Venery," listing every sexual assault, rape and near-rape in the poem; a wonderful

little vignette on Ovid (sent into exile late in life because of an unnamed *carmen et error*); and a section devoted to a full bibliographical list of the “thirty seven (or so) texts written over thirty-three years” by Arthur Golding.

In summary, Ned Devere’s *Metamorphoses* is a most intriguing achievement: updating a work ostensibly penned by Golding, itself a translation of an “antique Roman” that then turns out to be a reworking of de Vere by *de Vere himself* (a bombshell that Devere saves until page 511 to drop) thus inviting the reader to ponder the implications of this claim in relation to the Shakespeare Authorship Question (viz., if Oxford did use a



front man for his Ovid translation, wouldn't this give further credence to the idea that he then went on to pen the plays and poems of “Shakespeare,” all of them stuffed with Ovidian images, characters, allusions and themes?) If what Ned Devere claims is true, we need to rethink our view of Edward de Vere as author of “lost works” and head back to the SAQ newly armed with evidence that would tie together the two vast projects that bookended his momentous life: Ovid at one end, Shakespeare at the other.

I commend this book to the reading public: Niche? Yes. Intimidating? Certainly. Too much for the “sluggish gaping auditor?” Quite possibly. Worth your time? *Take this from this, if this be otherwise.*

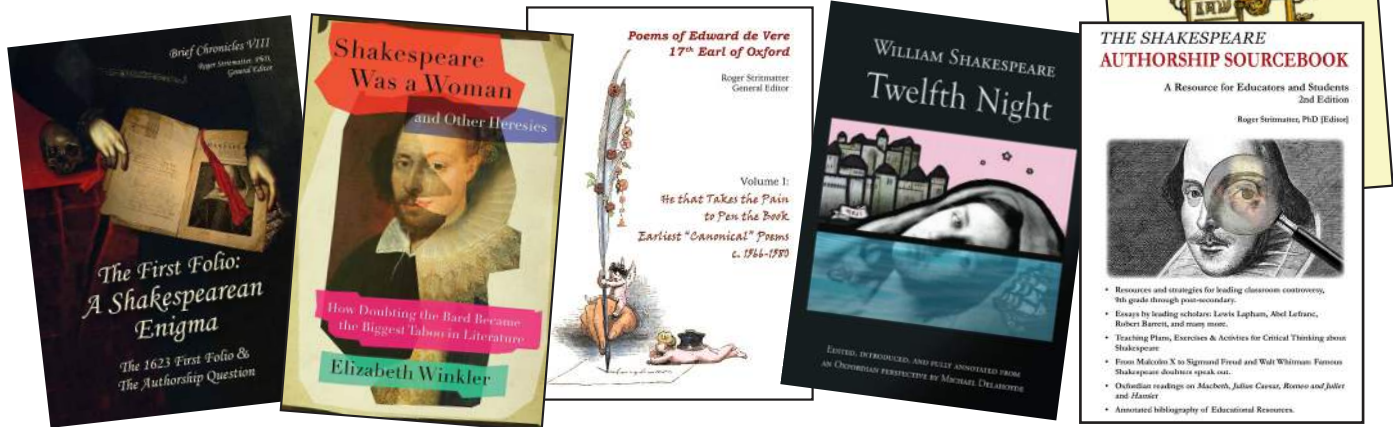
[Dr. CJ Taylor studied at the University of Leeds, gaining his BA (Hons) in English and French, an MA in English Literature, and his PhD, writing his doctoral thesis (entitled ‘Barbarian Masquerade’) on the poetry of Tony Harrison and Simon Armitage. He cohosts an Authorship Question podcast called *Much Ado About the AQ* and LARPs as Kit Marley on Amazon.]

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