



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

Vol. 61, No. 3

Published by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship

Summer 2025

SOF Outreach to High School Teachers Goes into High Gear

by Brent Evans

The Winter 2025 *Newsletter* reported our successful efforts to recruit teachers at last year's National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Convention, and the SOF is now working hard to expand and upgrade our outreach to secondary level teachers. This year's NCTE convention will see us prepared to go all out both attracting secondary level teachers and helping teachers introduce the Shakespeare Authorship Question in their classes.

We have recruited teachers to "work the booth" with us at November's event in Denver, Colorado. At the same time, we are building a permanent Teachers' Resources section on our website, thanks to Trustee Tom Woosnam, that will launch in September.

Oxfordian Pete Fregel, a high school teacher in Pennsylvania, has done an amazing job creating Oxfordian lesson plans for the major plays taught in high schools (*Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo & Juliet*) as well as focused lesson plans for teaching the authorship question itself, with mock debates and an intriguing "authorship trial."

What we've created can be augmented in the coming months and years and additional teaching aids, links and articles can be added. We've designed these course guides for high school teachers to download and immediately use in their classes. We're also creating a private forum of Oxfordian high school teachers that any teacher can reach out to for advice and support.

We're enticing teachers to consider all of this through advertising in a pre-convention special edition of the NCTE's magazine, the *Council Chronicle*, that will reach 11,000 high school English and literature teachers across the country.

Our goal is to foster the next generation of Oxfordians by capturing their attention in high school classrooms. We are grateful to the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition (SAC) for its financial support. Outreach of this kind requires sustained effort, and your support is also needed and appreciated. If you know of any Oxfordian high school teachers who want to help or have thoughts and suggestions about teaching the SAQ or anything else, we'd love to hear your ideas.

Contact us at: info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

Teaching Shakespeare Re-imagined!

Booth 609
NCTE Convention

Bring mystery, history, and lively debate into your classroom!



- ★ Get free classroom-ready resources and lesson plans.
- ★ Spark curiosity and inspire critical thinking!
- ★ Energize Shakespeare as an active, intriguing learning experience.
- ★ Introduce the Authorship Question and watch your students' engagement soar!



SOF
Teachers
Resources



Shakespeare
Authorship Coalition
Declaration of
Reasonable Doubt



SOF's ad in this year's *Council Chronicle* magazine.

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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



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

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

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

TRUSTEES

Brent Evans, President; Education & Outreach Comm. Chair
Richard Foulke, Treasurer; Finance Comm. Chair
Bonner Miller Cutting, Secretary; Nominations Comm. Chair
Ben August, Trustee

Dorothea Dickerman, Trustee; Online Communications Chair
Bob Meyers, Trustee; Publication Communications Chair
Tom Townsend, Trustee; Fundraising & Membership Chair
Tom Woosnam, Trustee
Eva Varelas, Trustee

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

Heidi Jansch, Newsletter editor: newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org

Lucinda S. Foulke, Newsletter layout & design; Alex McNeil, Editor Emeritus

Advertising Rates: \$120 for full page, \$80 for half-page, \$50 for quarter-page.

Printed by Minuteman Press, Waltham, MA © 2025 by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship



LIVESTREAM CONFERENCE OPTION

Attend virtually! SOF has improved the quality of our Livestream option: high definition image, better sound and even tracking question & answer periods. Now you can watch the conference *live* from the comfort of your home, on your computer or phone—or wherever!

Go on the SOF website now and complete the [Livestream registration](#)—\$119 for the four-day event. Everyone purchasing the Livestream will be able to watch the presentations as they happen *and* for 30 days afterward. If you miss a paper or want to hear it again, you can just go back in!

From the President

Dear SOF Members:

It has been my privilege to have served as President of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship for the last two months. In January of this year, the Board of Trustees decided to entrust the leadership of the organization to several experienced trustees in successive two-month rotating presidencies. The purpose was to share the knowledge—that only comes with shouldering the presidency—about all the working parts of the SOF and what makes it run efficiently and effectively. Through this process we have created a more knowledgeable and integrated board that is more able to pool its wisdom and better serve the organization and its members.

Before I hand the presidency to Brent Evans for his two-month term, I would like to warmly thank all of our interim presidents who have shared the experience of leading this organization this year: Bob Meyers, Tom Woosnam and Ben August. I stand on their shoulders!

I want to call to the members' attention the special contributions Tom Woosnam has made—because you would never know if I didn't let you in on the secret. Tom put in countless behind-the-scenes hours organizing all of the documentation and information that the Board uses on a daily basis into an accessible format for all trustees. He also successfully led our search for, and the hiring and onboarding of our two new service providers replacing Jennifer Newton: Light Symphony (led by Ethan Hill), which serves all our video, conference and YouTube programs, and Ross Hogin Design, which services the SOF's website. In my opinion, Tom deserves a standing ovation!

The SOF has grown from 488 members in December 2023 to 560 members as of July 17 this year. That is something of which to be very proud! In light of that growth, the Board is in the process of proactively recruiting talent in areas of need and developing internal processes and policies appropriate for a larger not-for-profit entity. These will allow the Board to be more consistent, efficient and effective in its operation of the organization, and to ensure its programs and projects fulfill its mission.

Here are a few of the new mission outreach efforts of the last quarter:

Targeted Advertising of the SOF in Playbills

The SOF has placed advertising in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival playbills. With the number of Shakespeare plays that the Festival runs every season, we know that the audience has a strong interest in Shakespeare. We are inviting them to learn more about de Vere with an ad and

a QR code linked to our website. You can see the ad and learn more in "What's the News?" on page 6.

Targeted Outreach to High School Teachers

The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported on the difficulties high school English teachers face, both in getting students to read texts closely and in getting texts approved for use in classrooms. One of the go-to solutions is Shakespeare! The Board has expanded and upgraded its outreach to secondary school teachers of English, not only at the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) convention, but in sponsoring the creation of Oxfordian lesson plans for plays taught in high school. See the cover article by Brent Evans for details.

Bob Meyers's *Behind the Scenes*

After a hiatus, Bob Meyers's popular short video interviews of the people "behind the scenes" at the SOF is back! Bob's decades of experience in journalism and interviewing brings the best out of his guests, the people who make the Oxfordian movement and the SOF run. If you want a peek behind the curtain, check out the [Behind the Scenes](#) page on the SOF website.

Annual SOF Conference, New Haven, Connecticut, September 18-21

The program is being printed, the speakers are working on their texts and visual presentations, and the entertainers are rehearsing! So be sure to secure your ticket, either to come in person to New Haven, or to livestream the conference. Details are on page 15.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about one word: the word that appears in the name of this organization, on which so much depends. Not the word "Shakespeare" nor the word "Oxford" but the word "Fellowship." Webster's primary definition of "fellowship" is: "a friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests."

At SOF conferences, I always stand apart for just a moment at the coffee breaks and observe what is happening in the room. The moment applause for the last speaker ends, the room instantly erupts into happy banter. Old friends and new gather in little groups. Hands wave around and gesture in the air. Smiles and laughter abound. Heads bend together in intense discussion over some fine point. Staccato questions and answers go back and forth.

This is fellowship. Fellowship is far bigger and more important than any one of us alone. It is what we do together to change the world's opinion on one very important point. Let's preserve its preciousness.

Ever,
Dorothea Dickerman

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In the Spring 2025 *Newsletter* Thomas Millar brings to life a thrilling story out of Mary Sidney Wroth’s fantasy novella *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, published in 1621. Wroth’s biographers are stumped trying to connect fictional characters and events with reality. They sideline Susan Vere’s influence on Wroth. Millar’s research, producing related correspondence of the time and the fabulous engraving of Queensborough Castle on Sheppey, is stunning. However, I think it is helpful to enlarge the context, to question suppositions Millar makes as a stretch too far.

King James hosted a spectacular wedding for Susan de Vere and Philip Herbert at the turn of 1605. Among other lavish gifts, he granted the newlyweds royal property on the Isle of Sheppey, creating Philip Baron Shurland of Kent (and shortly thereafter, Earl of Montgomery). Whatever the occasion for festivities on Sheppey five years later, Baroness Susan naturally would have an honored role, happily sharing the spotlight with her dear friend Mary. Both women, in their early 20s, were reputedly beautiful and theatrically gifted. Mary also could bask in the royal favor conferred on her cousin Philip. Her proud father Robert Sidney, Lord Chamberlain to Queen Anna, extended fatherly care to Susan, whom in correspondence he always refers to as “My Lady Montgomery.” (Millar cites two letters from Robert Viscount L’Isle to his wife, Mary’s mother, anticipating hardships of the Sheppey adventure.)

The fairytale marriage between the Baron and Baroness of Shurland did not endure so happily ever after—there were shades of Lord Oxford in Philip’s behavior toward Susan—but in 1610 they were stars of the kingdom, and Sheppey offered a fantasy destination for friends and family to embellish the illusion. (To add veracity to the story, in 2021 a silver hawking ring—a “vervel” inscribed with “Montgomery” and bearing the Herbert dragon, i.e., “wyvern” insignia—was discovered by a metal detector hobbyist on Sheppey! [See accounts of the finding online.](#))

Millar’s first stretch, I believe, is taking too literally the story Wroth spins about the adventures on Sheppey. Some embellishments more likely evoke Philip and Susan’s extravagant wedding celebration, which extended to Twelfth Night 1605, when eight plays, six by Shakespeare were performed (the titles fit, but the author isn’t named). While Mary Wroth was a wedding guest, she wasn’t of high enough rank to be in the bridal party, perform in masques or attend selective royal entertainments. Unlike Susan, Mary hadn’t been exposed to “fabulous” royal attention from birth. We can’t deduce from Sir William Browne’s report the scale of the Sheppey fest or that the King’s Players necessarily performed Shakespeare plays. Of course, they could have.

The second stretch too far is to suggest that there was any connection between the Sheppey expedition and the publication of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* in 1609. That episode, quickly suppressed, is yet to be understood, but Susan would not have approved any revelation of her father’s literary disguise at that time. Foremost, Susan and her sisters were Cecils—granddaughters of the great Lord Burghley, daughters of the scandalously mistreated Anne Cecil. Until her marriage, Susan had been under guardianship of her attentive uncle, Lord Treasurer Robert Cecil, who despised her father. Evidence shows Cecil took cunning steps to repress the identity of Oxford with Shakespeare and to diminish him in any way he could. So long as Cecil was alive (d. May 24, 1612), whatever plans that might be brewing to recognize and honor “Shakespeare” would be undercover, and so they were until 1623.

Anticipating stumbling blocks, Tom Millar is on an unexplored path to associate Wroth’s fantasies with Shakespeare, and to examine Sidney-Herbert-de Vere connections. He is leading us towards a stage with many more actors than we’ve imagined. Carry forth! Take us along!

Joella Werlin
Seattle, WA



Plumes © Nonny Creates

From the Editor

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's *Newsletter*?

This winter, an artistic colleague began experimenting with cyanotype printing and has been sharing her knowledge with aspiring artists and crafters of all ages ever since. My attempt at the art was, as most things are, inspired by Shakespeare, and I created a cyanotype print of Sonnet 18 for my office.

This sonnet has special meaning for me since I was asked to read it at friend's wedding ceremony a few years ago. The sight of the print on a daily basis along with this year being the 20th anniversary of Hank Whittemore's *The Monument* sparked the idea to focus this Summer issue on the topic of the Sonnets, and so

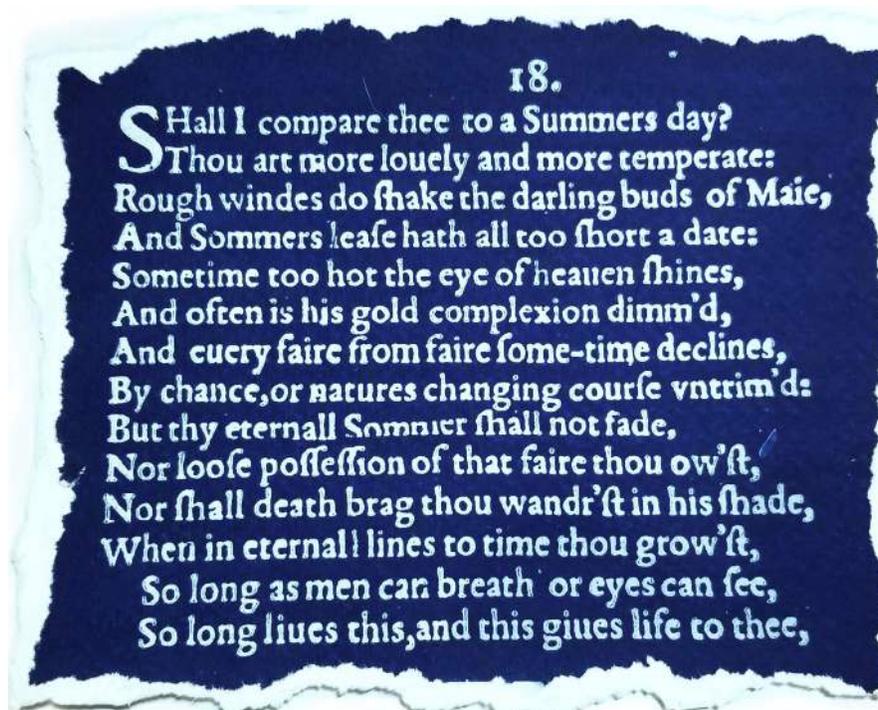
readers will find an interview with Hank and several other pieces from our contributors that focus on different aspects of the Sonnets.

Though Oxfordians have a variety of opinions and understandings about the Sonnets, we all agree Edward de Vere was the moving force behind the Shakespeare works, and in this issue, Brent Evans documents our core principles in an "Oxfordian Narrative" compiled by dedicated members of the SOF and the De Vere Society. He also reports on the SOF's outreach to teachers and playgoers to share our narrative with others.

The *Newsletter* team is looking forward to the upcoming conference for the chance to enjoy the fellowship described by outgoing president Dorothea Dickerman in her *Letter from the President* and although we bid farewell to two longtime members in this issue, we are comforted to also include a report on the Data Preservation Committee's archival work, ensuring Oxfordian scholarship will survive "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see."

I can be reached by email at newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org.

In Fellowship,
Heidi Jansch



What's the News?

Targeted Advertising to Playgoers

by Brent Evans

Anyone who loves Shakespeare needs to learn that there is a legitimate question about who wrote the plays and hear about the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship!

This year the SOF placed advertising in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival *Playbill*, so thousands of playgoers at every performance of every play this summer and autumn at the famous Shakespeare venue will have an opportunity to see our ad and perhaps be inspired to learn more.

Next season, this effort will be greatly expanded to venues in Canada and across the United States. If we can raise the money, you'll see bigger ads in such places as The Stratford Festival in Ontario (reaching 362,000 playgoers!), the Utah Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City, Utah, the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, and, who knows, maybe even the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.! Stay tuned for more outreach efforts in the coming year.

Question Everything You Thought You Knew!

Investigate the gaps in Shakespeare's biography. Explore compelling evidence for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Contact us at:
info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org

Join: 

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD FELLOWSHIP

long as the focus is on de Vere as the true author of the Shakespeare canon.

Applicants should include a strong statement about the proposed project, timeline and budget. The grant, if awarded, may be used with other grants or awards. The award must be used within one year of receipt with a report and financial accounting at the end of the grant period. Applicants must be members of SOF and include their CV. Applications must be sent by email only to info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org. The deadline for receipt of applications is December 1, 2025.

Castle Hedingham featured on *American Countess*

A recent episode of the video series *American Countess* focuses on Edward de Vere's ancestral home of Castle Hedingham. The series, hosted by Julie Montagu, Countess of Sandwich, includes "travelogue tours of British country houses, accenting interviews, history, customs and culture." The episode titled "A Family's Rise from Ruin to Royal Power" features the current owners, Jason and Demetra Lindsay, and invites viewers to "Discover how one ancient English family rose from a dispossessed Saxon to royal power—and became entwined in the greatest literary mystery of all time." The episode has been viewed over 24,000 times and is available to watch for free on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).



Apply Now for an SOF Research Grant

To foster new and original research about Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, and the Elizabethan Age as it relates to de Vere's authorship, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is accepting applications for research grants to be awarded in 2026. The award can be used for travel, research assistance or technical equipment, as

SOF Nominations Committee 2025 Report

The Nominations Committee (chaired by Bonner Cutting with members Cheryl Eagan-Donovan and Alex McNeil) is pleased to present the SOF membership with a slate of four candidates to the Board of Trustees, and one candidate to stand for election as President, at the annual membership meeting in New Haven, Connecticut.

Brent Evans was elected to a three-year term on the Board of Trustees in 2024 and is nominated for a one-year term as President.

Brent 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 40-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.

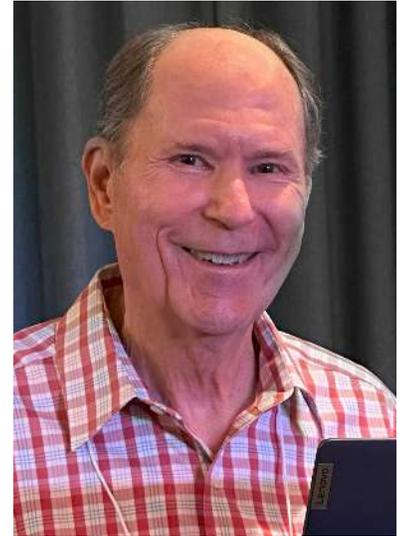


Brent briefly chaired the Nominations Committee, but resigned in order to run for president. He remains Chair of the Education and Outreach Committees and is the SOF's Official Liaison with the UK's De Vere Society. Brent's focus on the board thus far has been on outreach to high school teachers and students, playgoers and "anyone who loves Shakespeare." In the coming year, Brent also supports efforts to increase membership and fundraising and improve the internal operations of the SOF.

Tom Townsend joined the SOF Board in September of 2024 to complete the remaining year of Earl Showerman's term and now is nominated for a full three-year term.

Tom has studied and researched both Elizabethan history and the Shakespeare Authorship Question for over 35 years.

A longtime member of the SOF, he has presented numerous papers at conferences and has twice given his presentation "Introductions to the Authorship Issue" for those new to this subject. He has also published several articles in the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. Tom is 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.



Eva Varelas is nominated to continue to serve the remainder of Michael Dudley's term. Eva is a New York State licensed

CPA and financial professional with over two decades of experience in accounting, auditing, and business administration. Her career spans government, nonprofits, and global companies. Eva holds a BA in English from Fordham University and an MBA in Public Accounting from Pace University.

She is currently a Financial Consultant with the Robin Hood Foundation. In her previous role, she served eight years as an



Nominations 2025 Report *(continued)*

Assistant Controller at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

Eva is passionate about the ancient Mediterranean world, the Renaissance, and the Middle Ages. She enjoys studying philosophy, poetry and drama in ancient Greek, and is learning introductory Latin. Intrigued by the Shakespeare Authorship Question, Eva actively follows contemporary scholarship in this area. She brings creativity and a fresh perspective to her philanthropic endeavors, serving as a strategic partner to humanitarian, cultural, and arts organizations.

Phoebe Nir is nominated to join the Board for a three-year term. As Phoebe tells it, “one fateful evening during COVID

lockdowns, my life was changed forever when I stumbled upon a YouTube video of Hank Whittemore’s one-man show ‘[Shakespeare’s Treason](#).’”

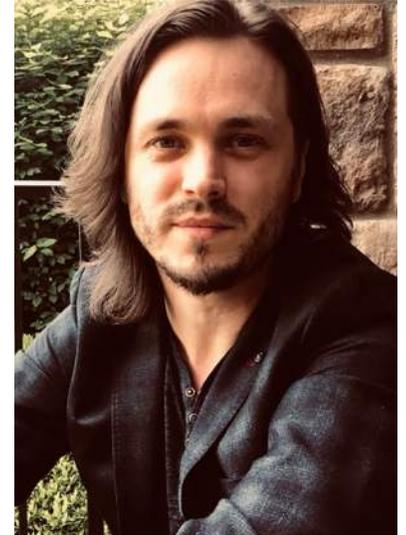
She tumbled straight down the Oxfordian rabbit hole and hasn’t come up for air since. Phoebe has produced a wide variety of beginner-friendly educational videos about the Shakespeare Authorship Question on [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#) as [@phoebe_devere](#). She threw two notorious “[De Vere Ball](#)” influencer parties in New York City, inspiring much online discourse and a cartoon in the *New Yorker*.



Phoebe is a regular cast member on the Blue Boar Tavern and conducts interviews on intriguing Oxfordian topics. She is also the self-appointed capellmeister of the [Ox-Tones](#), the musical group that has performed her choral setting of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 17 at two annual conferences. Phoebe is currently working on a docuseries about Edward de Vere, and her previous film “[Eco Village](#)” was premiered in the Bright Futures section of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Phoebe holds degrees in theater from Brown University and NYU.

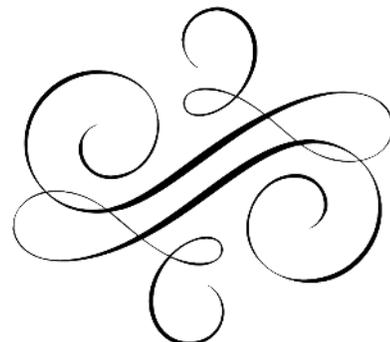
Jonathan Jackson is nominated to join the Board with a three-year term. Jonathan is a multidimensional

artist: an author, musician, actor and filmmaker. His career as an actor began at age eleven on the series *General Hospital*, where his performances garnered him five Emmy Awards. He has worked in feature films, including *Tuck Everlasting* and *Insomnia* and appeared for six seasons in the renowned drama *Nashville*. Jonathan



has toured as the lead singer and songwriter for the band *Jonathan Jackson + Enation*, and has authored works including *The Harrowing of Hell*, *Anthology of Longing* and *The Mystery of Art*. His awards include the Royal Literary Magazine’s Award for Distinction of Excellence. He is the Associate Dean and Primary Lecturer at the Theoria School of Filmmaking.

Jonathan’s interest in the Shakespeare Authorship Question began in 2010 after reading Margo Anderson’s “*Shakespeare*” by *Another Name* and his initial interest was intensified while preparing a lecture the next year. Most recently, his work has culminated in the presentation “The Moral and Spiritual Vision of Edward de Vere,” which he delivered at the 2024 conference in Denver, CO. For more information, visit www.JonathanJackson.com.



James Joyce and Shakespeare: Who Was Joyce's "Dark Lady"?

by Matt Hutchinson

In an illuminating article "Who was James Joyce's Shakespeare?" originally published in *The Elizabethan Review* in 1997 and republished in *The Oxfordian* in 2017, Gary Goldstein details how Joyce alluded not only to the Shakespeare Authorship Question but to Edward de Vere in at least two of his works, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Ulysses is well known for its plethora of Shakespearean references, but Goldstein shows many of these are authorship allusions. For instance, "Good Bacon: gone musty.... Cyberjugglers going the highroads" (195) appears to show Joyce's knowledge that Francis Bacon was an early favorite for the authorship of Shakespeare's works, but had fallen out of favor, possibly due to an over-reliance on cypher decryption. Other tantalizing puns and allusions, such as "Clamn dever, Lenehan said to Mr. O'Madden Burke" (137), "Manner of Oxenford" (217), and "my dodear devere revered mainhirr was confined to guardroom" (*Finnegans Wake* 492) are put into context with many more pages of evidence and explanation before Goldstein concludes that

Joyce had extensive knowledge about Oxford which he chose to include in his two novels. It also shows that Joyce believed Shakespeare wrote in the Earl of Oxford's manner. Moreover, Joyce made his reverence for Oxford explicit in a wilfully obscure book, *Finnegans Wake*. Equally important, Joyce connects Oxford to Shakespeare in allusions in *Wake*. Finally, as both books were published seventeen years apart, the positive references to Oxford, spanning an entire generation of time, represent much more than an awareness of the debate of who wrote Shakespeare. (178)

Perhaps less well known are two interesting articles published in *James Joyce Quarterly*, which illuminate



James Joyce, c. 1935.



Portrait at Longleat House believed to be of Penelope Devereux c. 1581.

who Joyce believed may have been Shakespeare's "dark lady."

The first, by Dieter Fuchs, published in the Winter 2011 edition of *JJQ*, is titled "'Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich': Sir Philip Sidney's 'Astrophil and Stella' as a Prototype for the Rewriting of the Odysseus Myth in *Ulysses*." In it, Fuchs makes the compelling case that Joyce was interested in Penelope Rich's candidacy as Shakespeare's "dark lady," as first proposed by Gerald Massey in the nineteenth century (Massey 1866). Rich had been initially matched to Philip Sidney, but had been married against her will to Robert Rich in 1581. With Sidney dying in 1586, Rich took a long-distance lover from the late 1580s, Charles Blount, a confidant of Penelope's brother Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, with Robert Rich acquiescing to the situation due to Essex's political power. As noted by Fuchs:

In the "Aeolus" episode of *Ulysses*, Professor MacHugh compares Stephen Dedalus to Antisthenes, "a disciple of Gorgias, the sophist," who "wrote a book in which he took away the palm of beauty from Argive Helen and handed it to poor

Penelope.” When, in an immediate reaction to this statement, Stephen thinks, “Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich,” he draws a corresponding link between “poor” Penelope, the faithful wife of the Homeric Odysseus, and Penelope Rich, the Elizabethan gentlewoman who inspired Sir Philip Sidney’s sonnet-sequence *Astrophil and Stella*. Stephen’s pun on “[p]oor Penelope. Penelope Rich” in “Aeolus” therefore suggests Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* as an undiscovered prototype for Joyce’s rewriting of the Odysseus myth. (Fuchs 350–1)

Fuchs then devotes numerous pages detailing the multiple allusions and parallels within Joyce’s work to Penelope Rich’s life and Sidney’s *Astrophel & Stella*. He notes how

the horned Robert Rich becomes a counterpart of Leopold Bloom—the modern Odysseus married to an unfaithful wife. As the adulterous counterpart of the unattainable Stella fashioned by Petrarchan poetry, Molly Bloom, like Penelope Rich, is an all-too-human variant of Homer’s faithful Penelope. (Fuchs 351)

Fuchs also notes that Joyce briefly alludes to another candidate put forward as Shakespeare’s “dark lady,” Mary Fitton, but gives her short shrift: Penelope Rich seems to be the candidate he is most interested in (Fuchs 356). Nevertheless, by alluding to another dark lady candidate, it corroborates Fuchs’s findings that Joyce was indeed interested in the identity of Shakespeare’s mistress. Fuchs concludes:

Joyce’s structural parallel achieves its full effect by presenting both Anne Hathaway and Penelope Rich as counterparts of the Shakespearean Dark Lady.... Sidney’s Penelope-like Stella is a prototype for the rewriting of the Odysseus myth in *Ulysses*, but it also contributes to one of the best-known analogies lying at the heart of Joyce’s masterwork: as a link between Sidney’s “Odyssean” sonnet cycle *Astrophil and Stella* and Shakespeare’s Sonnets, Massey’s bardology reinforces the corresponding tie between the Homeric Odysseus and William Shakespeare. (Fuchs 354)

The second article from *JJQ* which the reader is encouraged to peruse is “‘Contradicting’: The Word for Joyce’s ‘Penelope’” by James Van Dyck Card, from

the Fall 1973 edition. The author demonstrates how the chapter “Penelope” in *Ulysses* has an unusually large number of contradictory sentences, ranging from the innocuous, such as “I hate those rich shops get on your nerves” and later, “I love the smell of a rich big shop” (Van Dyck Card 20).

Yet perhaps the most telling example of contradicting comes from the following passage: “lady Penelope Rich, a clean quality woman is suited for a player, and the punks of the bankside, a penny a time” (*Ulysses* 193). Here, Penelope Rich goes from “a clean quality woman,” as portrayed in the musical pieces dedicated to her from the late 1580s onwards such as “Constant Penelope” and “Content is Rich,” to effectively being compared with a prostitute like the “punks of bankside,” the notorious area known for its theatres and brothels.

Joyce seems to have appreciated that Penelope Rich was a contradictory character, presenting herself to the world as a faithful spouse, styling herself a modern “Chaste Penelope” from *The Odyssey*, while the words of her contemporaries told otherwise. For instance, from John Ford’s *Fame’s Memorial* of 1606:



To eache affected Reader.

P Eruerse construction of a plaine intent,
N E ither is scorn’d, respected, or dispis’d:
L O sing of their sleight loues, who neuer meant,
P E culiar knowledge, willingly is pris’d,
C O N T E nted happinesse, secured peace,
O F selfe content is euer happiest eate.

D E V O tion to the carelesse is meet folly,
N o S H allow enuy of malicious I R E,
 Can moue my resolution, grounded wholly
 On hopes of better iudgement, I desire
 The fauour of my fauourers, not any
 Vn willing eyes, I striue not to please many.

*Non omnibus studeo,
 non maleuolis.*



One can easily see that the capital letters spell out PENELOPE CONTES OF DEVONSHIRE. Less obvious, as Professor George Klawitter notes, is that if we continue the technique of reading the capital letters, it also spells “COI TUI” (U and V being interchangeable at the time). Taken together, “PENELOPE CONTES OF DEVONSHIRE COI TUI” translates as “Penelope, countess of Devonshire, for sex or available for sex.” As Klawitter contends, what appears to be on the surface a sensitive tribute is actually “a hostile piece” (Klawitter 78).

John Weever, in his book of epigrams published in 1599, writes:

Epig. 3. In Stellam [To ‘Stella’]
 Virginitie doth *Stella* still commend,
 That for a virgine so she may be counted;
 Virginitie she might though reprehend,
 Since she with *Rufus* in the coach was mounted
 [copulating]:
 For tell me *Stella* virgine as thou art,
 To beare a virgin [have a baby], is’t a virgins part?

This tells of Stella (who was not explicitly linked with Penelope Rich in print until 1691 and therefore only a coterie of writers knew who she was), who, despite promoting chasteness, is copulating with “red-haired” Rufus, which neither her cuckolded husband Robert Rich nor long-distance lover Charles Blount were, both having dark hair. Edward de Vere has been described as having red hair, and in his presentation “John Weever Knew,” Alexander Waugh further elucidates on many other of Weever’s epigrams, suggesting Rich, Oxford and Southampton were embroiled in a sexual scandal (Waugh, 2018), while Katherine Duncan-Jones saw Rich as the model for the central character of John Ford’s play *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (Duncan-Jones 451).

In Samuel Sheppard’s *Epigrams*, we find one of many epigrams that seem to be directed at Rich:

Epig. 3. To Penelope.
 VVhy should’st not thou as farr renowned be,
 As ever was the chaste *Penelope*
 Wife to *Vlissis*? this I dare averr,
 By contraries thou imitatest her.

To conclude, Joyce not only had an interest in the Shakespeare Authorship Question but appears to have had an acute knowledge of the literary works of the

Shakespearean era. Joyce seemed to have considered Edward de Vere and Penelope Rich as candidates for “Shakespeare” and “the dark lady” respectively in the novel considered by many to be the greatest of the 20th century. And as Goldstein notes, Joyce appears to allude to J. Thomas Looney twice in *Finnegans Wake* (Goldstein 178), implying that Joyce had appreciated Looney’s work.

References

- Duncan-Jones, Katherine. “Ford and the Earl of Devonshire,” *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 116 (Nov. 1978), 447–452.
- Fuchs, Dieter. “‘Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich’: Sir Philip Sidney’s ‘Astrophil and Stella’ as a Prototype for the Rewriting of the Odysseus Myth in *Ulysses*,” *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Winter 2011), 350–356.
- Goldstein, Gary. “Who Was James Joyce’s Shakespeare?” *The Oxfordian*, Volume 19, 2017, 173–179.
- Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, London: Faber and Faber, 1939.
- . *Ulysses*, New York, Vintage Books, 1961.
- Klawitter, George (ed.). *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield*, Susquehanna University Press, 2001.
- Looney, John Thomas. “Shakespeare” Identified in *Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, Frederick A. Stokes, 1920.
- Massey, Gerald. *Shakespeare’s Sonnets Never Before Interpreted: His Private Friends Identified: Together with a Recorded Likeness of Himself*, London, Longmans Green, 1866.
- Sheppard, Samuel. *Epigrams*, London, 1651.
- Van Dyck Card, James. “Contradicting”: The Word for Joyce’s “Penelope,” *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Fall, 1973), 17–26.
- Waugh, Alexander. John Weever knew... (Part I), 2018. Accessed 02/10/2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCGN6K1LkUg>.
- Weever, John. *Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut, and Newest Fashion*, London, 1599.

The Need for a Narrative

“The Oxfordian case suffers from not having a single, coherent theory of the case.”

Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens

by Brent Evans

Where do you begin when, at a dinner party, someone says to you, “What’s this authorship nonsense all about? Who is this Oxford anyway?” Have you ever wished for a conversational aid; a simple statement to which you could refer that succinctly describes why you are an Oxfordian? The Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ) is horrifically complicated and requires real commitment, deep reading and thoughtful analysis to have a full appreciation of the issues. It’s difficult to explain quickly to people unfamiliar with the topic.

The Declaration of Reasonable Doubt has existed since 2007 and Shaksper of Stratford’s claims to the authorship have been all but debunked. But for anyone who accepts this, the next obvious question that bubbles up is, “Well, if he didn’t write it, who did?”

What if we could consolidate and summarize “The Case for Oxford?” What if we tried to winnow down all the research, wisdom and weight of circumstantial evidence accumulated over the past hundred years into a clear set of statements? Is it even possible to declare what all Oxfordians agree on?

This spring, a group of Oxfordians in England, the United States and around the world attempted to do just that. Editors of this effort headed by the De Vere Society’s Matthew Wade and by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship’s Brent Evans developed a first draft. It was subsequently reviewed and edited by a host of distinguished Oxfordian scholars including Bonner Miller Cutting, Alex McNeil, Hank Whittemore, Earl

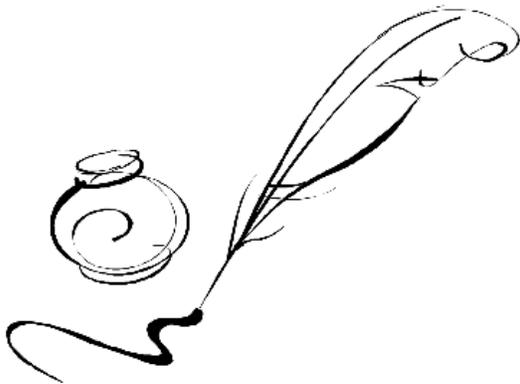
Showerman, Dorothea Dickerman, Charles Beauclerk, Richard Clifford, Jan Scheffer, Eddi Jolly, Richard Malim, and Rosemary Loughlin. All applauded the effort, and many offered edits and advice. At the July meeting of the SOF’s Board of Trustees, a majority of the trustees approved the use of this statement by the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship.

The Oxfordian Narrative was deliberately kept to one page with six statements. This core principles section is supported by a few Frequently Asked Questions, all composed from information available in more detail on the SOF and DVS websites. Every effort was made to focus on the areas upon which most Oxfordians agree. It is assertive and positive and explicitly avoids arguments against Shaksper of Stratford. Implicit in this approach is that the case disproving Shaksper has been made, and now is the time to make a more positive case for Oxford.

It must be made absolutely clear that this narrative is not designed to restrict members from voicing their own views or limiting the exploration of their theories in any way. It is intended to represent a central, grounded position from which discussions with people outside the Oxfordian movement can begin. It is hoped that it can be used for engagement with the media, be a useful tool for outreach and promote our mission statement: “disseminating the evidence that Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604), is the true author of the poems and plays published under the pseudonym ‘William Shakespeare.’”

Oxfordian Narrative

The following set of statements has been compiled to provide speaking and written prompts for Oxfordians engaging externally with the media and more widely. The core principles are concise, positive and authoritative, and are supported by a section of Frequently Asked Questions. They form the basis of the Oxfordian narrative and represent the common ground that is respectful of the many differing views held by our members.



Core Principles

1. “William Shakespeare” was the pen name used by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain of England (1550–1604, hereafter referred to as Oxford). A substantial body of compelling circumstantial and contextual evidence supports Oxford as the author of the works of “William Shakespeare.”
2. Oxford was a prominent member of Queen Elizabeth I’s court and was particularly celebrated for his poetry and his plays. These were originally written and performed for the Queen’s entertainment at court and were later revised for publication and performance in the public theaters. These are the Shakespeare plays that we know and love today.
3. Oxford’s noble status and consequent intimate knowledge of the court, his comprehensive education including honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford and study of the law at Gray’s Inn, his knowledge of foreign and ancient languages, first-hand experience of Italy and France and of military and naval campaigns made him uniquely qualified to write the poems and plays.
4. Oxford’s inherited wealth and a large annuity from the Queen enabled him to sponsor poets, writers and acting troupes throughout much of his life. As a result, he was intimately connected at the highest level with the flowering of the English Renaissance. At least thirty-three known literary and musical works by others were dedicated to Oxford during his lifetime.
5. Oxford’s life is often reflected in the locations, plots and characters in the plays. Several characters share his philosophy and life experiences, none more so than Hamlet. Oxford spent time in France and Italy in the towns used as settings for the plays, and the sonnets reflect his innermost sentiments as an older nobleman who is forced to bury his name.
6. The deliberate use of the pen name “Shakespeare” and the political and cultural disruptions that occurred after Oxford’s death are some of the reasons why his identity as the author has remained hidden for so long. We all now have the opportunity to learn about Oxford’s brilliant and tragic life and celebrate him as the greatest writer in the English language.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why does it matter who wrote the plays?

Modern theater audiences and literary readers have a far richer experience of the plays when they know that they satirized the Queen and prominent members of the court. The plays were not only autobiographical, they related to political and historical events in the 1570s and 80s.

For historians, an awareness of the true author transforms our understanding of the history and politics of the time. It provides a deeper appreciation of how the Italian renaissance impacted the English renaissance, and greater insight into the intrigues of the Elizabethan court. Uncovering the deliberate deception to conceal Oxford’s authorship of the Shakespeare works allows us to reconsider the history and politics of the time. Establishing Oxford’s place as the author of the greatest literary works in the English language is important. His life should be studied in more detail and his true legacy honored.

2. Why do we maintain that Oxford used the pen name “William Shakespeare”?

Oxford’s position as the preeminent poet of Queen Elizabeth’s court was publicly acknowledged as early as 1586 and he was placed first on a list of seventeen living English playwrights who were the “best for comedy.” It was declared that his “Comedies and Entertains deserved the highest prize” and it was specifically mentioned that he did not publish his works under his own name.

When Oxford first used the pen name Shakespeare in the publication of the long narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, contemporary writers identified it as a pen name and suggested that they knew that he was the author. However, it is his own handwritten notes that provide definitive proof. Annotations in his handwriting in books that contained source material for the plays clearly show his creative processes in selecting phrases and formulating the characters and plots. So far, more than five books have been found containing his handwritten notes, providing valuable insights into how and why he wrote the plays.

3. Why did Oxford use a pen name?

In the Elizabethan era there were severe punishments for any opinions that were considered to be critical of

the Queen, politics or protestant religion. This was controlled by the 1581 Act Against Seditious Words and Rumors Against the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty. Many writers published anonymously or under a pen name.

For Oxford, the foremost earl in the kingdom, the stakes were even higher. Aristocratic behavior, particularly in matters concerning honor, status, and lineage were strictly controlled. Engaging in trade, adopting behaviors considered vulgar, such as playwriting, or neglecting traditional aristocratic duties attracted the charge of class disloyalty and betrayal. Poetry was considered a pastime befitting a noble, as long as it was not published for financial benefit.

In his early life he published some of his poems and dedications with the initials E.O or the name Oxenford. He then adopted a series of pen names, including William Shake-Speare and Shakespeare for the publication of his long narrative poems and some of his plays, although most were published anonymously during his lifetime.

4. Why were the works attributed to Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon?

The works were attributed to William Shakspeare (1564-1616) as the result of a deliberate deception to maintain Oxford's anonymity. When the First Folio collection of the Shakespeare plays was published in 1623, Shakspeare had been dead for seven years. He had been living in rural Warwickshire and little was known about him other than his business activities. Creating the false attribution that he was the author went largely unnoticed by the general public at the time. It wasn't until nearly a hundred years after his death that there emerged an interest in finding out about the author and the Stratford narrative was launched.

5. Isn't his name on the plays?

Shakspeare never used the name Shakespeare. During his lifetime, he was never identified as a poet or a playwright, or as the author Shakespeare. The name on the poems and plays was consistently printed as Shake-Speare or Shakespeare. It was never printed as Shakspeare or any other derivative with a short 'a.'

Most of the population of Elizabethan England were illiterate. Their names would be written down based on how they were pronounced to the clerk, so

there were different spellings for the same name. Shakspeare's name was always written as Shakspeare, Shackspere, Shaksper, Shagsper or Shaxsper with a short 'a' sound.

6. Weren't some of the plays written after Oxford's death in 1604?

There is no documentary evidence for a specific date when any of the works were actually written, and none to support any of them being written after 1604. The dates for all the Shakespeare works are speculative and have evolved over the centuries. They have been proposed from the dates of publication, including the dates when the works were entered into the Stationers' Register, the performance record, references to current events, and the availability of sources incorporated in the works. Each of these dating methods is seriously flawed.

The greatest error, however, has been for Shakespeare scholars to only propose dates that fit the time period when Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon could have written the plays. Literary works are not necessarily written in the same year in which they are published. The topics and references in the plays suggest they were written much earlier.



2025 New Haven Conference Schedule Announced

by Don Rubin

The preliminary schedule for this year’s annual SOF Conference in New Haven, Connecticut has been announced. Full details of the four-day event—scheduled for September 18–21 at the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale—can be found in the [2025 SOF Conference section](#) of the SOF website.

Among the speakers this year are SOF Conference veterans Margo Anderson, Bonner Cutting, Michael Delahoyde, Dorothea Dickerman, Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, Sky Gilbert, Rima Greenhill, John Hamill, Matt Hutchinson, Shelly Maycock, Bob Meyers, William S. Niederkorn, Lisa Quattrochi-Knight, Robert Prechter, Earl Showerman, Roger Stritmatter, Elisabeth Waugaman and Rick Waugaman. First-time speakers include SOF Presidential nominee Brent Evans, Canadian poet and novelist Patricia Keeney, Professor Nic Panagopoulos from Greece, cyber enthusiast Sean Phillips, and longtime authorship supporter Joella Werlin.

In addition to a full slate of enlightening lectures, attendees will enjoy a reception on Thursday evening and an exciting docket of activities on Friday afternoon including a New Haven Pizza Party lunch, a walking tour of the Yale campus, and a visit to either Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book Library or the Yale Center for British Art. Two live performances are scheduled for Friday evening, including Ron Destro’s *Shakespeareacy* (a tongue-in-cheek Authorship 101 reading) and Carla Kissane’s *Petty Tyrant: A Shakespeare Cabaret*. The Annual Awards luncheon will take place on Saturday this year, and the Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday morning. After the conclusion of the AGM, Brent Evans will lead an informal visit to the gravesite of Connecticut authorship pioneer Delia Bacon.

At press time, there are still spaces available for in-person attendance at the conference. Anyone unable

to attend the conference in person will be able to follow the conference proceedings by registering for the Livestream option, which is also now open and available through the website. All conference papers will be included in the Livestream. Visit the [SOF Conference Registration webpage](#) to register today.

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!



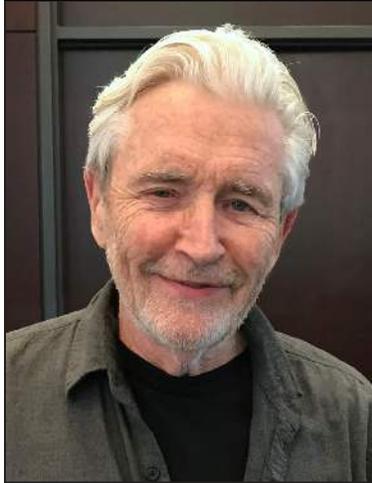
Contact the SON Editor at: newsletter@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org



The Monument: Then and Now: An Interview with Hank Whittemore

by Heidi Jansch

In 2005 Oxfordian Hank Whittemore first published *The Monument*, his comprehensive theory explaining *Shakespeare's Sonnets* as written by Edward de Vere to preserve “the living record” of the rightful heir to the throne: Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. To mark the 20th anniversary of his opus, the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* is pleased to interview Whittemore about his experiences writing and publishing *The Monument* and asked him to share some insights about the new anniversary edition.



THEN: 2005 Edition

SON: Tell us your experience when you first identified the century structure included in Shakespeare's Sonnets. Did you experience an “Aha!” moment?

Whittemore: After several years of trying, things started quickly coming together. It seemed the ground was moving under me. The sensation was that Edward de Vere, on the jury at the Essex-Southampton treason trial on February 19, 1601, was bringing us right into Westminster Hall with him.

This began to happen while reading Sonnet 34, which I saw as related to events just days before the so-called trial. Oxford depicts himself as a Christ figure sacrificing himself to save Southampton. He's in a terrible bind, having to condemn the younger earl to death, but then give up his own identity to save him:

Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss,
Th'offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's loss.
Sonnet 34, 11–12

I had already found that Sonnet 27 is Oxford's reaction to the failed rebellion, on February 8, 1601, when the

earls were imprisoned and Oxford envisioned Southampton as “a jewel hung in ghastly night.” Given the near-universal assumption that most of the Fair Youth sonnets (1–126) must relate to much earlier events during the 1590s, here was a giant leap forward in time that seemed incomprehensible. After all, Southampton was imprisoned from February 1601 to April 1603, so how could he and Oxford have been engaged in any ongoing physical relationship?

Oxford records in Sonnet 35 that he must head the jury as Southampton's “adverse party,” voting for his execution, but also that he also will be his “Advocate” or lawyer trying to save his life, again at great cost to himself:

Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence,
Sonnet 35, 10–11

Eventually I realized that Oxford completed forty sonnets matching the forty days from Sonnet 27 on February 8th until Southampton either remained alive or was executed. This period of anxious waiting comes to a climax with the fortieth verse (Sonnet 66) on March 19, when Elizabeth is about to order his death. On this terrible night, Edward de Vere lists reasons he prefers to die, concluding:

Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.
Sonnet 66, 13–14

In the next verse, 67, it appears the Queen has spared Southampton. At the same time, however, Oxford writes in fury that she continues to keep the younger earl in the Tower with “infection” or criminals:

Ah, wherefore with infection should he live,
And with his presence grace impiety,
Sonnet 67, 1–2

The initial forty sonnets (27–66) are matched by forty more (67–106), a total of eighty verses, followed by twenty more (107 to 126), adding up to one hundred or a century.

Sonnet 107 has been viewed by many critics as referring to Southampton's liberation on April 10, 1603,

following the Queen's death in March. In his groundbreaking book identifying Oxford as Shakespeare, J.T. Looney considered that Sonnet 125 refers to Elizabeth's funeral on April 28, 1603—the official end of the 118-year Tudor dynasty.

The 100-sonnet sequence or “century” is flanked by two much shorter sequences of twenty-six sonnets each (1–26 and 127–152). Here, then, is the “monument” for Southampton in terms of its mathematical design: 26-100-26.

Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
Sonnet 81, 9–10

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.
Sonnet 107, 13–14

The central chronicle starts with Southampton's ordeal in the Tower and concludes with the funeral of the Queen. Everything leads to the succession, when James of Scotland becomes king and the Stuart dynasty begins. From the outset, the diary is heading toward succession, which will substantially affect the future of England.

SON: *Was there a lot of pushback when you first presented the Monument theory?*

Whittemore: Oh, sure, some pushback, but also agreement. Some folks were focused on the poet's language, which, on the surface, can seem all about love and sexual relations; however, once a reader can put aside that surface impression, the more important subject matter has a chance of being recognized. Anyone who reads Sonnets 63, 64, 65 (and so on) in order will see what I mean.

For example, Oxford refers in Sonnet 64 to envisioning “the hungry Ocean gain Advantage on the Kingdom of the shore.” This is a reference to James Stuart as the “Ocean,” a common figure for a king or queen, coming to take over England, and he envisions the replacement of one monarch for the other as an “interchange of state,” a literal description of the royal succession.

When I have seen the hungry Ocean gain
Advantage on the Kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store.
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay,
Sonnet 64, 5–10

Here, I realized, is Oxford's true subject matter—his dread of the coming succession of James and the danger it poses. His entire chronicle is leading to the moment when his beloved England will erupt in civil war and/or fall into the hands of the Scottish king. Those lines of Sonnet 64 are not *literally* about the ocean and its exchange of tides, but, rather, about government, leadership, continuity, national pride and identity, all facing a convulsive turning point.

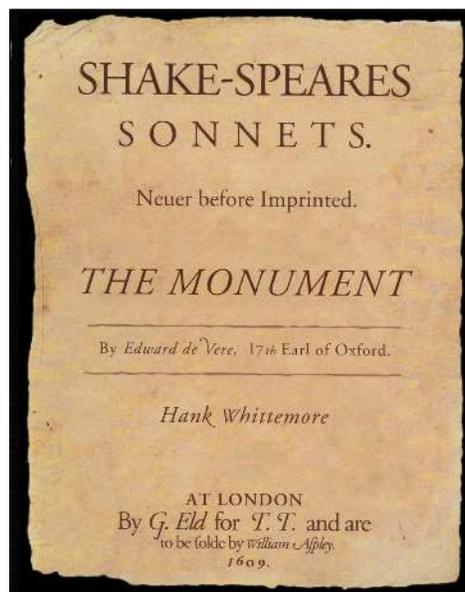
But the language on the surface, along with prior assumptions, can be blinding. Oxford could not write *directly* about his true subject matter. The first two lines of the entire chronicle serve as an example:

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's *Rose* might never die,
Sonnet 1, 1–2

Many critics apparently cannot get beyond the surface of those lines and must view the poet as urging a younger man to procreate and thereby perpetuate his good looks. But with Oxford viewed as writing about England's destiny, he can also be seen as announcing his topic as the need to perpetuate Elizabeth's dynasty of the Tudor Rose.

SON: *Do you remember any instance of initial resistance from anyone who later came around and considered the theory more valid?*

Whittemore: Nearly all resistance came from some who believe Oxford suffered from disgrace for having committed the crime of sodomy. That was the conclusion of Joseph Sobran in 1997, for example, and it was also the conclusion of Dr. Daniel Wright of Concordia University. Wright, however, changed his view completely after reading *The Monument* in 2005. I have always



The Monument 2005 Edition

admired his courage and honesty for this very difficult about-face.

SON: *Were there any criticisms that made you reconsider any of your interpretations? Any revisions of your original understandings suggested by your readers?*

Whittemore: The main reconsiderations were prompted by those who already agreed with *The Monument*—prior to its publication. Alex McNeil, editor of the original edition, made many startling observations, and I incorporated each of them. For example, Alex saw that Sonnet 154 appears to be a much later, more sophisticated version of Sonnet 153. The pair of so-called Bath sonnets, while serving as the epilogue, may have been written in separate time periods while referring to the same royal visit to Bath in 1574.

Bill Boyle realized even before publication that “misprision” in Sonnet 87 refers to a lesser form of treason, sparing the prisoner from execution and enabling his eventual release with a royal pardon. (This happened in Southampton’s case.) It was both Boyle and Peter Rush who saw the “suborned informer” of Sonnet 125 as the official history that is already being written or rewritten by the winners.

SON: *Have additional discoveries been made or new research done that later led you to deeper/increased understanding or an even stronger case?*

Whittemore: In 2011, six years after *The Monument* was published, the winter issue of *English Literary Renaissance* carried a report from Lara Crowley, assistant professor of English at Texas Tech University, who had discovered in the British Library a scribal copy of a 74-line poem to Queen Elizabeth, attributed to Southampton, who had never written any other known poetry.

The imprisoned earl had composed it as a last-ditch, desperate plea for the royal mercy; and I saw he had used many words, phrases, and concepts to be found in sonnets within the same time frame as in *The Monument*. An obvious conclusion was that Oxford, given his own high rank, had gotten sonnets to Southampton in the Tower, as a way of helping him.

For example, Oxford writes: “Thou art the grave where buried love doth live” in Sonnet 31 and Southampton writes: “Prisons are living men’s tombs...” and “There I am buried quick...”

SON: *Have additional discoveries been made or new research done that later led you to change your interpretation?*

Whittemore: No.



NOW: 2025 Edition

SON: *You are marking the 20th anniversary with a new paperback edition of the Monument—what can readers expect to see “new and improved” in the 2025 edition?*

Whittemore: The typeface is larger and easier to read, and I’ve corrected most if not all the errors. The layout is more dramatic, more clearly expressing the chronological story being told. This layout makes it even clearer that it’s a diary of “verse letters” linked to real persons and events in documented history.

SON: *Can you comment on the new edition’s subtitle “The Untold Story of the Sonnets: Sex, Succession, and Sacrifice”?*

Whittemore: Let’s take each of those three words:

Sex: A necessary ingredient for any royal family to perpetuate itself. The need to procreate is most prominent in the early sonnets, when Oxford is virtually commanding Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, to marry and beget an heir. This urgency, I believe, is linked to the fact that William Cecil, Lord Burghley has been pressuring Southampton to marry his granddaughter Elizabeth Vere. It seems that this urgency is linked to Burghley’s power to influence Queen Elizabeth; that is, to persuade her to name Southampton as Henry IX of England (and thereby ensure royal status for the Cecil family and its descendants). It seems that this is the only way that her Majesty might agree to name the young earl to succeed her.

Otherwise, it’s difficult to explain Oxford’s urgency on the matter; as when he writes to the teenage Southampton in 1590–91, for example:

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world’s due, by the grave and thee.
Sonnet 1, 13–14

Succession: I think we need to keep in mind that Edward de Vere, the greatest poet-dramatist of the English language and perhaps in all world history, was

also the premier earl who was deeply committed to England’s survival and national identity. To hand over the country to the King of Scotland was not exactly in line with that commitment, I would say. When Elizabeth, the so-called Dark Lady of the Sonnets, refused to name an English heir, failing in her commitment to ensure the succession, he felt deeply hurt and betrayed:

And all my honest faith in thee is lost
Sonnet 152, 8

Sacrifice: For many of those studying the Shakespeare Authorship Question, the answer is that Oxford sacrificed his identity as the great author to save the life of Southampton and ensure his eventual freedom with a royal pardon. Such was the requirement of Burghley’s son Robert Cecil, whose power and even his life depended upon the succession of James. So, the Sonnets tell the story of Robert Cecil’s victory, and, too, the ultimate victory of the so-called Rival Poet (the “Shakespeare” pen name, which had been linked exclusively to Southampton from its first appearance in print in 1593). For Oxford, and for most “Shakespeare” lovers from then to now, this has been a tremendous

loss; but I believe Edward de Vere left behind this “monument” to the truth in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*.

SON: Any final thoughts for those who, even twenty years later, still prefer other explanations to the so-called Prince Tudor/Dynastic Succession theory that Southampton was the natural son of Oxford and the Queen?

Whittemore: I studied it and argued for it over many years, but so far it can’t be proved, and it only serves to distract us from the real contents of the Sonnets as set forth in *The Monument*. I do believe Oxford is telling us over and over that Southampton was his royal son, but no one has to believe that theory to appreciate the majesty of Oxford’s monument to him. On the other hand, it sure would help.

SON: Many thanks to Hank for sharing his experiences with our readers. For more information about the new edition of *The Monument*, see the ad on page 31.

Hank would like to add his special thanks to Alex McNeil, the original editor, who helped in so many ways and made such extraordinary contributions to the contents and the writing of *The Monument*.

SHAKESPEARE OXFORD FELLOWSHIP LIFETIME MEMBERS

Anonymous in honor of Ruth
Loyd Miller
Paul Arnold
Ben and Simi August
John Milnes Baker
Charles Beauclerk
Carey Behel
Mary Berkowitz
James & Patricia Bonner
Lindy Burnham
Mick Clarke
George & Janine Cornecelli
Bonner & Jack Cutting
Michael Delahoyde
Dorothea Dickerman & Richard
Becker
Brent Evans & Patty Henson
Virginia Evans
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
Philip Jalbert
Richard Joyrich
Regina Kapetanaki
Jo Anne & David Kelch
Lynne & Michael Kositsky
Kevin Lance
Stephen Larsen
Frank Lawler
Eric & Lauren Luczkow
Deborah Mahan
Patrick & Mary McKeown
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
David Taylor
Linda Madge Thomas
Tom & Joy Townsend
Richard & Elisabeth Waugaman
Joella Werlin
Edmund Wilkinson
Tom & Julia Woosnam

Solving the *Shake-Speares Sonnets* Whodunit

by Joella Werlin

I didn't set out to solve a great whodunit of English literature, namely: Who released *Shake-Speares Sonnets* in 1609? Why was the dedicatory page a riddle? Who were Mr. W.H. and T.T.? Taking a hit from *Twelfth Night*, the solution was thrust upon me!

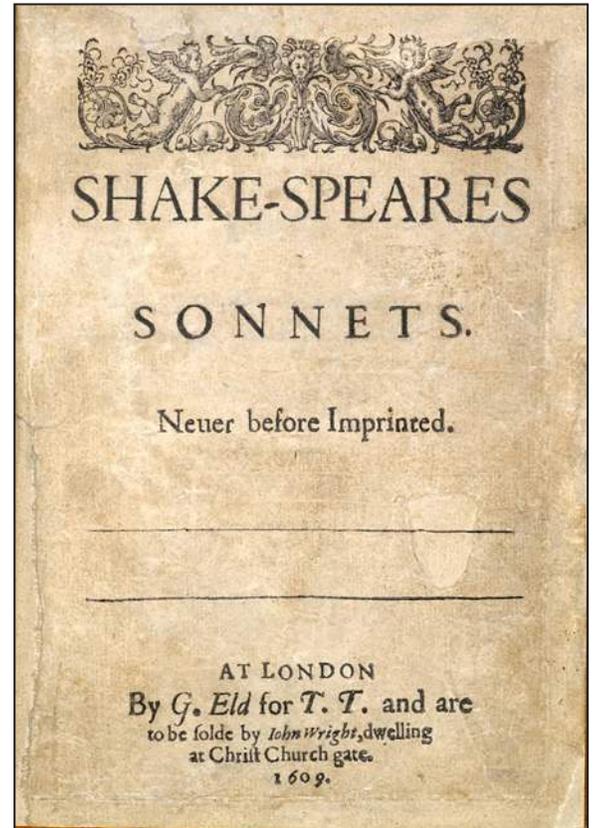
I stumbled over the answer in a broader pursuit to identify the driving forces behind the publication of the First Folio in 1623. In my view, the Folio enterprise was a “family affair,” an undertaking by “the grand possessors” of Edward de Vere’s manuscripts, related through marriage to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery to whom the Folio is dedicated. However, producing a 900-page book is a huge project. Others, in addition to the ingenious Ben Jonson, had to be involved in editing or developing scripts found in various stages of completion. I thought the story behind *Shake-Speares Sonnets* might yield clues to the bigger picture and began asking questions to determine who among the known friends of Edward de Vere might have been trusted by the Herbert-Sidney-de Vere families to be “in on” their concealed enterprise to publish the plays.

Suspect Number 1: Who is T.T.?

I assembled names of Elizabethan era poets and writers who were still alive in 1609 and later. Gabriel Harvey (c.1552–1631), a known participant in Countess Mary Sidney’s literary circle, was high on the list. I recalled that Harvey had famously said of Edward de Vere “Thy countenance shakes spears,” but not remembering the source of the quote, I consulted my go-to Oxfordian reference, “*Shakespeare*” by *Another Name*.

Zounds! There on page 139 of Margo Anderson’s indispensable book are these words: “The satirist Thomas Nashe would later nickname Harvey ‘Timothy Tiptoes’ for his audacious rhetoric in his Audley End verse.” Audley End now resonated after recent reports and scholarly articles by Roger Stritmatter, who is examining books annotated by de Vere in the library of that historic estate, and the initials of Timothy Tiptoes are T.T.! Could Gabriel Harvey be the T.T. in the Sonnets dedication?

In *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Charlton Ogburn provides excerpts of Harvey’s remarks to Oxford at Audley End, spoken in the presence of Queen Elizabeth during her visit with renowned scholar Sir Thomas Smith on her progress to Cambridge in 1578 (596–97). Harvey’s stunning tribute to Oxford before the Queen stands out in the history of English letters, leaving one to wonder what counterforces operated to assure Edward de Vere became a forgotten name. Harvey likens him



to “Phoebus Apollo.” He is said “to exceed Castiglione, “to have “drunk deep drafts of the muses of France and Italy,” “[one whose] merit...is a wonder that reaches as far as the heavenly orbs” and “a poet possessing lofty eloquence.”

The purpose for such over-the-top attention to Oxford—which likely provoked Gabriel Harvey’s “Tiptoes” moniker—is ambiguous on this occasion, but connections between Smith, Harvey and de Vere ran deep. When he was eight years old, Edward de Vere had been sent to live with and be tutored by Sir Thomas Smith. Gabriel Harvey, a cousin of Smith and a Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, had known and admired de Vere from their student days at Christ’s College fifteen years earlier.

Harvey adds, “I have seen many Latin verses of thine; yea, even more English verses are extant.” Consider, this is in 1578, and it is

clear from Francis Meres’s *Palladis Tamia* that “Shakespeare’s sugared sonnets” were circulating in 1598. If Harvey had access to more than one copy or different version of manuscripts, we might assume that his judgment, editing and presentation prevail in the 1609 first edition of the Sonnets. But he wasn’t acting alone; one also needs to consider the position of Mr. W.H.

Suspect Number 2: Who is Mr. W.H. and why is he the “onlie begetter”?

Clues indicate the mysterious Mr. W.H. is William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke. In 1609, William Herbert did not yet have the intimidating political authority he would acquire later under King James. Herbert was admired for his erudition, poetry and patronage of writers. His mother, Countess Mary Sidney Herbert—an esteemed literary force—had long made Wilton House, the vast Pembroke estate, a gathering place for poets and writers. Following the marriage of Susan Vere to Philip Herbert in December 1604, Edward de Vere’s manuscripts were likely to have been safely housed at Wilton House, where Shakespeare plays had been performed since the early 1590s.

Herbert is the “onlie begetter” because he has taken sole responsibility for initiating publication of the Sonnets. There was an ongoing concern to shield “the grand possessors” or the heirs of Edward’s intellectual property: Elizabeth and Susan Vere and William

Stanley Earl of Derby (Elizabeth’s husband). Oxford’s widow, née Elizabeth Trentham, also required protection. Herbert would have sanctioned only a published version of the sonnets that obscured any family association with Shakespeare, significantly that of real-life rival poet Philip Sidney. The families also had to cope with enduring bitterness towards de Vere among the nobility, and all were careful not to raise the ire of (Uncle) Robert Cecil, who manipulated his political power to repress any connection between his despised former brother-in-law Edward and the genius playwright-poet Shakespeare.

What is the happiness, the eternity promised, for the “adventurer” Mr. W.H.?

Given the release of several plays ascribed to Shakespeare in the five years after Oxford’s death, it appears there were plans within the Herbert-Sidney-de Vere nexus to issue collected works in some form. The outcome of the “adventure” was far from taking clear shape, but at this time William Herbert was at the forefront of the effort.

Whodunit?

After determining the answers to these who, what and why questions, the Sonnet dedication identifying Mr. W.H., T.T. and the poet can be understood as:

TO . THE . ONLIE . BEGETTER . OF .
THESE . INSVING . SONNETS .
Mr . W . H . ALL . HAPPINESSE .
AND . THAT . ETERNITIE .
PROMISED .
BY .
OVR . EVER-LIVING . POET .
WISHETH .
THE . WELL-WISHING .
ADVENTVRER . IN .
SETTING .
FORTH .

T . T .

To the only one who provided or authorized
these sonnets published here
Mr. W.H. (William Herbert) (I wish you) good fortune
and everlasting appreciation
assured

by

our immortal poet (Edward de Vere)*

who wishes good fortune

(to you) the aspiring
risk taker (William Herbert) in
setting forth to preserve his works.

— T. T.

(“Timothy Tiptoes” aka Gabriel Harvey)

*Note the volta at line 7 where the voice shifts from T.T. wishing happiness to W.H. to our immortal poet wishing happiness to W.H.

This investigation concludes that the suspects were acting together: William Herbert approached Gabriel Harvey to produce a “sanctioned version” of the Sonnets for publication. Harvey created the master copy, but it reflected Herbert’s concerns and Herbert authorized it. In the dedication Gabriel Harvey was sending good wishes and relaying de Vere’s gratitude to William Herbert for his efforts to preserve and celebrate de Vere’s immortal works.

Just one more thing... Could publisher Thomas Thorpe also be the T.T. “whodunit” or is he just a red herring?

There is reasonable, likely deliberate, confusion. The conflation, I think, is all part of the foolery.

Foolery, Sir, does walk around the orb like the sun.
It shines everywhere.”

— Feste, *Twelfth Night* (3:1)

“Inspector” Joella Werlin will return with her presentation “*First Folio Foolery: Spotlight on Countess Mary Sidney Herbert and Lady Mary Sidney Wroth*” at the SOF Conference in New Haven, Connecticut, this September.

References:

- Anderson, M. “*Shakespeare*” by *Another Name*, Gotham Books, 2006.
- Lamb, Mary Ellen. *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Ogburn, Charlton. *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality*, Dodd Mead, 1984.
- Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, London, 1609.
- Wikipedia contributors. “Shakespeare’s sonnets.” Wikipedia. Accessed July 16, 2025.

Tales from the Archives Update: Oxfordian/SAQ Libraries and Archives

by William Boyle

As our article in the Spring 2025 *Newsletter* reported, the SOF has awarded a grant to facilitate adding to the New England Shakespeare Oxford Library (NESOL) book catalog (called the NESOL Catalog) the entire book collections of the late Oxfordian scholars Ron Hess and Dr. Daniel Wright. This is a major step towards maintaining a permanent Oxfordian archive and book collection. NESOL’s book holdings had been about 600–700, but with the addition of the Hess titles (est. 1,000, consisting of photocopied books in binders) and the Wright titles (about 750, all actual books) the overall NESOL collection will grow to over 2,500, a substantial number, with a large number of authorship and authorship-related titles among them.

As the Spring article also noted, the eventual plans for the Hess collection had been to scan all the photocopies, creating PDF copies that could be uploaded to such sites as the Internet Archive, thus making the entire collection available to everyone, not just those

who could visit Somerville. The issue of online access to public domain works versus works still under copyright, the collecting and storing of the personal papers of notable Oxfordians upon their deaths, and an Oral History project to gather Oxfordian stories and history before individuals pass have all been under discussion by the SOF’s Data Preservation Committee (DPC) this year.

The initial plan for the Hess collection had been to scan the photocopies into PDFs and upload them to sites like the Internet Archive for public access. However, recent developments, particularly the lawsuit against the Internet Archive over its Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) program and a changing political climate, have impacted this plan. Still, despite these setbacks, as of July 2025, we are halfway through cataloging the Hess collection, and have found that two-thirds of the titles are already in the Internet Archive and are actively accessible. The non-public domain titles (with

publication dates of 1931 or later) among these two-thirds are available in CDL mode for consultation or borrowing. So our work is on schedule, and already yielding interesting results, which the DPC will present at the Annual General Meeting in September.

Additionally, recent favorable court rulings on the legality of Artificial Intelligence (AI) training programs, which require full access to copyrighted text, have cited “fair use” as a valid defense. CDL advocates, such as Charlie Barlow of the Boston Library Consortium and Chris Freeland of the Internet Archive, see this as a potential path forward for CDL, despite previous legal setbacks. While the definition of fair use may differ between AI and CDL, the acknowledgment of “fair use” in judicial decisions is significant.

Background

When NESOL joined the Internet Archive in 2022, it was primarily to upload digitized documents and utilize their CDL-based catalog. However, a US District Court ruling on March 24, 2023, in *Hachette vs. Internet Archive*, found that the Internet Archive’s digitization and lending of copyrighted books (CDL) violated copyright law. This ruling was upheld by an appeals court on September 4, 2024.

Charlie Barlow, Executive Director of the Boston Library Consortium, discussed the implications of this ruling in an article published last fall (*Library Futures*, October 7, 2024). He highlighted that “Libraries have hastened the erosion of fair use rights through licensing agreements they sign, with publishers dictating restrictions on how materials are accessed and used, curbing the flexibility traditionally available with physical collections.” He also noted that the ruling does not universally prohibit CDL and leaves room for future implementations that better meet fair use standards. Kyle Courtney further clarified that the decision is limited to the Second Circuit’s jurisdiction (New York, Connecticut, and Vermont), and CDL programs continue elsewhere, endorsed by various organizations.

As Dan Cohen’s newsletter emphasizes, the majority of in-copyright works are not digitally available, underscoring the importance of CDL. The Boston Library Consortium’s anticipated CDL program, for instance, requires that materials loaned via Project ReShare must be owned in print and be unavailable as e-books in the commercial marketplace.

In December 2024, the Internet Archive chose not to appeal the September 4, 2024, appellate court ruling. While some titles have been removed from the Internet Archive as a result of the ruling, our Hess collection project has found that a large number of older academic titles remain available. This allows us to make resources like the Hess and Wright book collections accessible online to our global Oxfordian and SAQ community.

Collection development in a digital future

The Data Preservation Committee has also been discussing criteria for Oxfordian/SAQ Collection Development in the 21st century, and how the evolving digital environment may affect it. With the increasing prevalence of online digital materials, especially books, consideration is being given to expanding such policies as the analytic cataloging of select online titles (i.e., cataloging each chapter like an article in SOAR) to provide more direct access to the contents of a book. We currently use analytic cataloging for content of current and discontinued Oxfordian and other SAQ websites (accessible via the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine) and for chapters in key online authorship books.

By tripling the size of our NESOL Catalog in just over a year, we are also now better positioned to implement ideas presented in the 2022 *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* article “Tongue-tied by Authorities” by Michael Dudley, William Boyle, and Catherine Hatinguais. This article (which was also a [SOF conference presentation in 2023](#)) proposed using the NESOL catalog to reconcile issues in Shakespeare authorship studies, such as name spelling and biographical/autobiographical interpretations in critiques.

A great deal has been accomplished this past year, and we anticipate completing this cataloging project next year. This will achieve our goal of establishing a basic Oxfordian library that owns and has cataloged all major publications covering the SAQ and related Tudor history and literature, including news, journal articles, books, websites, blogs, and podcasts. Our aim is to make these resources available online, ideally for free, but accessible regardless.

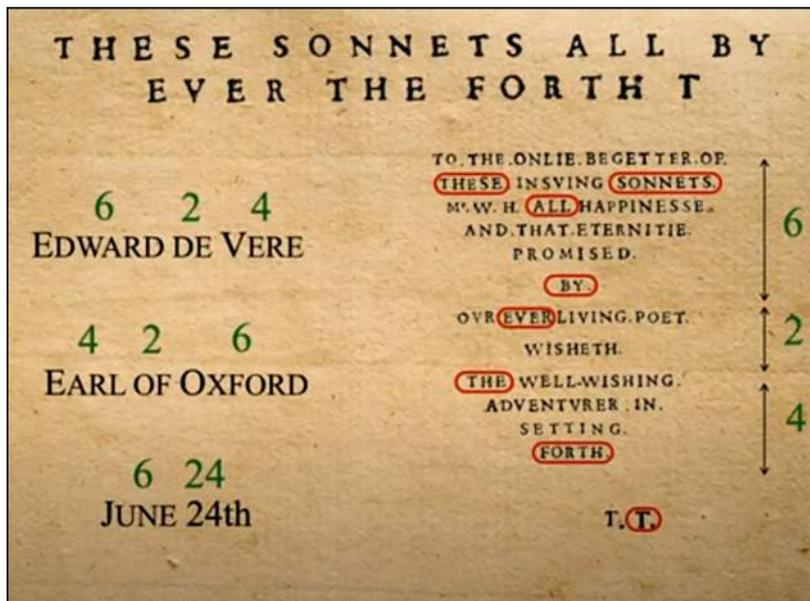


Mysteries of the Sonnets

Many doubters of the traditional authorship story explore *Shake-speares Sonnets* for hidden, coded or numerical messages that might help identify the author. This section includes findings and links to contributor’s presentations for those who may be interested in further exploring these interpretations of the Sonnets.

John Dee and the Sonnets

In his most viewed video “[The Incalculable Genius of John Dee](#)” the late Alexander Waugh understood the hidden message of the Sonnets dedication to read “These sonnets all by Ever the Fourth T.” Waugh explains the “Fourth T” as it relates to the triple *tau* symbol and Edward de Vere’s “number,” 1740. He proposes that the creator of the title page and dedication of the Sonnets was John Dee, the court astronomer for Queen Elizabeth I. Describing John Dee as “an absolute obsessive of putting letters into grids” Waugh also presents additional messages about Edward de Vere that can be seen when the letters of the dedication are arranged in a grid of nineteen columns. Waugh concludes that the encryption created by Dee was not just a tribute to Edward de Vere, but also a tribute to the “absolute mathematical, puzzling, mysterious genius” of John Dee.



From Waugh’s video “The Incalculable Genius of John Dee.”

De Vere’s Name in Sonnet 76

James Leyland, whose interest in the authorship question focuses on Sir Henry Neville (*Who Will Believe My Verse?: The Code in Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 2018), has conducted an algorithmic search of the Sonnets in the hope of finding pertinent names in grids with column widths between two and fifty-one. In May 2024, his friend Mandeep Smagh (whose hobby is digitizing Punjabi texts) built a search engine specifically to perform this sonnet search. So far, the tool has only searched for names associated with authorship (e.g., Aemilia, Cecil, de Vere, Henry, Iames, Marlowe, Nevil) and Leyland states that although there is no occurrence of “Oxford” or “Edward,” Sonnet 76 does include an intriguing appearance of de Vere’s name when arranged in a fourteen-column grid:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	W	H	Y	I	S	M	Y	V	E	R	S	E	S	O
2	B	A	R	R	E	N	O	F	N	E	W	P	R	I
3	D	E	S	O	F	A	R	F	R	O	M	V	A	R
4	I	A	T	I	O	N	O	R	Q	V	I	C	K	E
5	C	H	A	N	G	E	W	H	Y	W	I	T	H	T
6	H	E	T	I	M	E	D	O	I	N	O	T	G	L
7	A	N	C	E	A	S	I	D	E	T	O	N	E	W
8	F	O	V	N	D	M	E	T	H	O	D	S	A	N
9	D	T	O	C	O	M	P	O	V	N	D	S	S	T
10	R	A	N	G	E	W	H	Y	W	R	I	T	E	I
11	S	T	I	L	L	A	L	L	O	N	E	E	V	E
12	R	T	H	E	S	A	M	E	A	N	D	K	E	E
13	P	E	I	N	V	E	N	T	I	O	N	I	N	A
14	N	O	T	E	D	W	E	E	D	T	H	A	T	E
15	V	E	R	Y	W	O	R	D	D	O	T	H	A	L
16	M	O	S	T	F	E	L	M	Y	N	A	M	E	S
17	H	E	W	I	N	G	T	H	E	I	R	B	I	R
18	T	H	A	N	D	W	H	E	R	E	T	H	E	Y
19	D	I	D	P	R	O	C	E	E	D	O	K	N	O
20	W	S	W	E	E	T	L	O	V	E	I	A	L	W
21	A	I	E	S	W	R	I	T	E	O	F	Y	O	V
22	A	N	D	Y	O	V	A	N	D	L	O	V	E	A
23	R	E	S	T	I	L	L	M	Y	A	R	G	V	M
24	E	N	T	S	O	A	L	L	M	Y	B	E	S	T
25	I	S	D	R	E	S	S	I	N	G	O	L	D	W
26	O	R	D	S	N	E	W	S	P	E	N	D	I	N
27	G	A	G	A	I	N	E	W	H	A	T	I	S	A
28	L	R	E	A	D	Y	S	P	E	N	T	F	O	R

Leyland comments that this sonnet, which reflects on the art of writing and touches on the poet's identity (*every word doth almost tell my name*) “seems a likely sonnet in which a hidden poet might remove his mask.”

See his paper “[Little Gifts of Shakespeare](#)” on [Academia.edu](#) to find out more.

Sonnets by the Numbers

Disagreeing with a claim made by Wells and Edmondson in their 2020 *All the Sonnets of Shakespeare* that



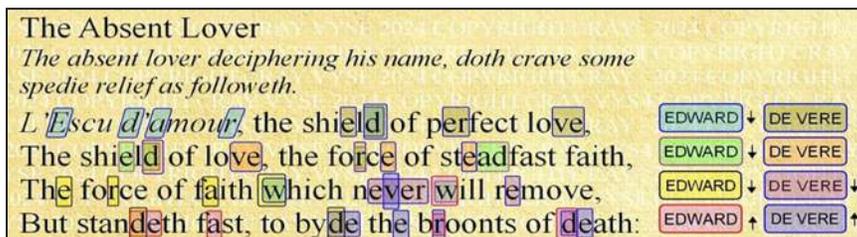
the sonnets can be read in any order, Ron Roffel insists that we must read them in the same order that they were published in 1609 because many of the sonnets are meant to be linked together. In his YouTube video “[Polyptoton's Glue](#)” Roffel proposes that many poems use rhetorical figures to link them into groups or pairs where some sets appear to create either a short narrative or a complete idea. Some adjacent poems have the same words on the same lines using a rhetorical figure Roffel calls “homostoi-khos” (Greek for “in the same line”).

Roffel also claims it is evident that some sequential poems were organized to give readers additional clues to Shakespeare's real identity. Fourteen pairs of poems, for instance, have digits in their numbers that add to 17, de Vere's primary code number. Roffel calls these “digit sum” sonnets and presents his interpretation of Sonnets 17 and 18 as perfect examples. Readers can find out more in his video [Sweet Summer's Child](#) and view many other presentations Roffel has created focusing on the Sonnets by visiting his [Secrets of Shakespeare's Sonnets](#) playlist.

De Vere's Sonnet Ciphers

Ray Vyse, a retired teacher from Devon, England, has been identifying ciphers hidden throughout the Sonnets. He became interested in the subject after reading the poem “The Absent Lover” in a Helen Heightsman Gordon document, “Cryptography in Shakespeare's Sonnets Dedication” (2013). The poem addresses ‘Deare Dame’ (Queen Elizabeth) and invites her to find his name in cipher. Vyse proposes he found de Vere's name in each of the first four lines using a technique of spread-out anagrams—a method which uses the entire line of text and adjacent lines. Vyse notes that Alexander Waugh used a similar anagram method, finding the name “Wriothlesley” in Sonnet 17 in his “[Edward de Vere - Saint or Sinner](#)” presentation.

Vyse has worked on a range of de Vere poems and invites readers to visit his YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@SonnetCipherMan> and to explore his work at his website <https://payhip.com/SonnetCipherMan> where he has posted downloadable slideshows focusing on the ciphers he has found in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. He feels these ciphers prove that Hank Whittemore's book *The Monument* is correct and he is grateful to Hank for the assistance his work has provided in reading the mind of Edward de Vere.



In Ray Vyse's presentations the arrows indicate letters borrowed from a nearby line.

Sonnet 86: a Posthumous Speech by Marlowe to Southampton

by Richard M. Waugaman, MD

Christopher Marlowe is often identified the chief rival poet of the Sonnets. I believe he was not only a literary rival, but also an erotic rival for the favor of young Southampton. Sonnet 86 is the most famous of the Rival Poet sonnets, and I propose that Oxford meant it as a posthumous speech *by* the murdered Christopher Marlowe, after his death on May 30, 1593, spoken *to* the Earl of Southampton, *about* Oxford himself. To my knowledge, no one has previously proposed such a reading.

As I have previously argued (Waugaman, 2011), Sonnet 80, an earlier Rival Poet sonnet, is loaded with allusions to Marlowe’s unfinished poem *Hero and Leander*. Helen Vendler wrote that eight lines of Sonnet 80 involving an ocean metaphor seem “almost to have wandered in from a different poem.” Indeed, they did—from *Hero and Leander*. Scholars have observed that Shakespeare’s works were energized by his rivalry with Marlowe, and changed after Marlowe’s death (e.g., Logan, 2007).

My proposal is likely to be controversial. Many Oxfordians believe the Fair Youth sonnets were written to Oxford’s illegitimate son Southampton, not to Southampton as Oxford’s lover. We are accustomed to viewing Oxford as the speaker of the Sonnets, and few Oxfordians are likely to share my surmise that Oxford, impelled by unbearable literary and erotic rivalry with Marlowe, may have played a role in Marlowe’s bizarre death. Recall, though, that Oxford killed a servant at seventeen, and that he reportedly boasted that he could get away with having his rival Philip Sidney killed (Nelson, 2003). A contemporary reported that Marlowe was killed by “a rival in lewd love.”

Traditionalist Jonathan Bate (1997) agrees that Marlowe was the rival poet of the Sonnets and believes that Shakespeare “remained particularly *haunted*” by Marlowe’s death (105). J. Dover Wilson (1964) observed a possible parallel between Sonnet 86 and George Chapman’s “The Tears of Peace,” in which the ghost of Homer appears and says he inspired Chapman’s translation of Homer’s works.

In *As You Like It*, Touchstone alludes to Marlowe’s death in a tavern when he says, “When a man’s verses

cannot be understood...it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room” (III.iii) and Katherine Duncan-Jones (1997) links “struck me dead” in Sonnet 86 with Touchstone’s words.

Oxford may have been the true author of the highly incriminating “Richard Baines note” that claimed Marlowe accused Christ of being illegitimate, “that all Protestants are hypocritical asses,” “that all the New Testament is filthily written,” “that St. John the Evangelist was bedfellow unto Christ,” and “that all they that love not tobacco and boys were fools.” The note advised, “All men in Christianity ought to endeavor that the mouth of so dangerous a member might be stopped.” Marlowe was killed just a few days later. Marjorie Garber (1987) observes that Shakespeare’s works are full of “ghost”-written letters, that sometimes frame innocent victims. Further, Garber believes that Prince Hal’s victory over Hotspur alludes to Shakespeare vanquishing Marlowe.

Sonnet 86

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
He, nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.
But when your countenance filled up his line,
Then lacked I matter; that enfeebled mine.

What was the “great verse, / Bound for the prize of all too precious you”? Oxford’s first long poem, *Venus and Adonis*, with Adonis representing Southampton, was entered into the Stationers’ Register on April 18, 1593, some six weeks before Marlowe’s death. It is likely that, when Oxford shared manuscripts of his sonnets and of *Venus and Adonis* with Southampton, Southampton in turn showed them to Marlowe.

What is the meaning of “astonished” in line 8 (the last line of the octave)? Several of the earliest OED definitions of the word are relevant here: “to stun, paralyze, *deaden*, stupefy,” “to stun mentally,” “to shock a person out of his confidence, to dismay, terrify.” One reading of Sonnet 86, with its multiple allusions to figurative as well as literal death, is that Marlowe’s poetic creativity was deadened by Oxford’s superior literary skill, as exemplified in *Venus and Adonis*, as well as Oxford’s sonnets.

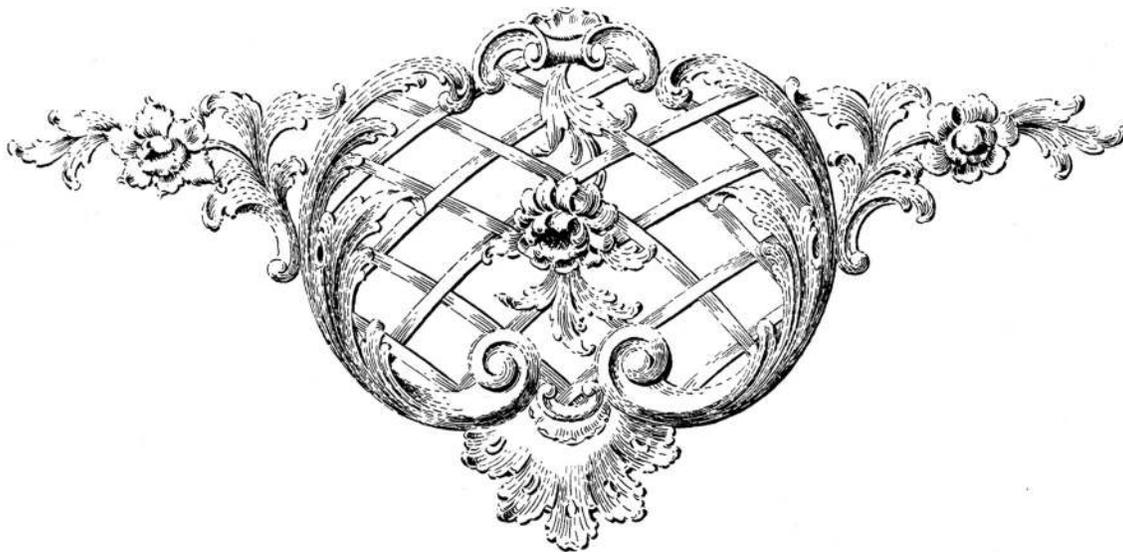
Stephen Booth (1977) makes the important observation that lines 5 through 12 “seem too *sinister* to describe a rival muse. They sound as though they allude to some specific details about some specific rival poet. The lines remain puzzling and obscure” (288). Further, Booth reads “lacked I matter” as implying the speaker of this sonnet is “a disembodied spirit” (290). Booth was always perceptive. My hypothesis offers a way of speculating about just what those “sinister,” “specific details” are.

Oxford consistently shows extraordinary empathy for his dramatic characters. In Sonnet 86, he is closely attuned to Southampton’s feelings about Marlowe’s death. Marlowe’s ghost, in the second and third quatrains, first discounts two related ways that Oxford might have silenced him—through the supreme quality of his “great verse” or through his immortal Muse that inspired his verse. The couplet states that it was instead

when Southampton’s “countenance filled up his line” that Marlowe could no longer write well. “Countenance” has a few different meanings that are relevant here: Southampton’s face, his conduct, and, especially, his favoring Oxford (over Marlowe). It is as though Oxford, like a creative defense attorney, improbably wants Southampton to believe it was Southampton’s favor that is to blame for Marlowe’s silence, rather Oxford’s role in having Marlowe killed.

References

- Booth, Stephen. *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Logan, Robert. *Shakespeare’s Marlowe*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
- Nelson, Alan. *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2003.
- Vendler, Helen. (1997). *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Waugaman, R.M. (2011). “Sonnet 80, Marlowe, and *Hero and Leander*.” *Shakespeare Matters* 10(2): 1, 27–30.



In Memoriam: Edmunds Travis Jr. (1926-2025)

A longtime member of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, Edmunds Travis Jr. was born August 13, 1926, in Austin, Texas, and died two weeks shy of his 99th birthday on August 1, 2025.



He attended Schreiner Military Institute, Austin High School, and the US Military Academy at West Point. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin Law School (BA, LL.B).

A proud member of the “Greatest Generation,” Edmunds served in the Military Police at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, and later in the Judge Advocate General Corps in Europe, during the Allied Occupation of Germany. He retired from the US Army Reserve after more than twenty years, with the rank of Major.

Edmunds served as Assistant Attorney General of Texas, before joining the Legal Department of Humble Oil and Refining Company, later fully acquired by Standard Oil of New Jersey, eventually Exxon / ExxonMobil. He rose to the rank of Chief Attorney in Exxon’s Legal Department, Natural Gas Section after memorable assignments in Africa and the Middle East (most notably Esso Libya before and after the Gaddafi

takeover), as well as at corporate headquarters in New York, and with Esso Exploration.

He was admitted to practice Law as follows: 1951: Texas; 1963: US Supreme Court and US Court of Military Appeals; 1964: US Claims Court; 1975: District of Columbia; 1980: US Court of Appeals, Third Circuit; 1984: US Court of Appeals, Tenth Circuit; 1975: US Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit.

After his retirement, Edmunds became a founding partner in the Law Firm of Travis & Gooch (Washington, DC and Houston), representing clients before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), among others. During his distinguished career, he was supported by his first wife, Mary (Daugherty) Travis (d. 1991), and their son, Edmunds B. Travis, now a retired Landman. Ed met the second love of his life, Marie (Delgado) Travis, in Spain in 1992. They married in Puerto Rico two years later and celebrated their 31st wedding anniversary earlier this year.

In that precious, too brief time, they enjoyed many common interests, including Shakespeare, history and genealogy. Marie and Edmunds attended several of our annual SOF conferences and were fellow travelers on the DeVere Trail Tour of 2013. It is difficult to summarize a good man’s life in one page; each chapter of Edmunds’ rich life merits an entire book. Perhaps only Shakespeare’s words from *Julius Caesar* can come close to expressing what a kind, modest, loving and forgiving man Edmunds was, and how he touched so many lives:

His life was gentle, and the elements
so mixed in him that Nature might stand
And say to all the world “This was a Man!”

In Memoriam: Richard Kennedy (1932-2025)

by Caroline Bauman

Our Oxfordian community has lost another longtime player from the great stage of life. A real maverick, Richard Kennedy passed away recently at age 92 in Newport, Oregon.

Although he did not publish his Oxfordian research, he was an accomplished author with Harper

and Row, publishing some twenty books of fiction. His books were anthologized and translated all over Europe, and one was made into an animated film by the CBC in Canada. At the time his books were considered children’s books, however, today they would be called fantasy or fairy tales for all ages. He also wrote at least three plays, many short pieces, and made cartoons and visual art.

Off and on throughout his life, Richard was a rare book dealer. When it came to his eventual interest in the authorship question, he became a collector of all

types of books on Shakespeare and the Earl of Oxford. His archive includes first editions of such works as the Complete Works of Ben Jonson, a nine-volume set from the 1870s.

In his studies of authorship, he self-published pamphlets and some people might remember his insights into the title page problem with the sonnets in “Between the Lines.” One Oxfordian recalls, “His pamphlets papering the Portland conference tables were always as much missiles as missives.”

As for his legacy, his work on the infamous “Funeral Elegy by WS” saga in the late 1990s was a big deal, and in the opinion of many it still is. He successfully challenged Donald Foster’s attribution of *Funeral Elegy* to Shakespeare by identifying John Ford as the author. There was no escaping the fact that an Oxfordian took down the laughable case for *Elegy*, and Don Foster with it. The case for *Elegy* was all about taking down Oxfordians with a dating argument (i.e., Oxford could not have written it because...). Brian Vickers acknowledges this in one of his books and came to Richard’s defense during the dispute. For this reason, Richard Kennedy is mentioned in mainstream Stratfordian books such as *The Shakespeare Wars* by Ron Rosenbaum.

Richard once traveled to Germany to pick up a literary prize and then toured the Shakespearian sites of England. During this trip he picked up more rare books including the large-format set of Dugdale’s *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. As a result of studying these massive volumes he gained the knowledge that went into his “Woolpack Man” pamphlet in 2005, personally distributing it to attendees at one SOF conference in Ashland.

Richard attended events at Concordia/Portland and in Ashland, hovering at the back of the audience and, ghost-like, disappearing afterward. He would wave to individuals to be acknowledged but seemed to be the shyest of all Oxfordian scholars, never presenting a talk or paper.

RIP Richard Kennedy, and we thank you for everything.



Dear Oxfordian Friends,

I’m writing as the son of Richard Kennedy, who many of you may remember. My dad passed away this July 24th. Before he did, he was still reading, still researching, still “following the poetry,” as he always said. He left behind this short note. It was a draft, still being shaped, but his intent was clear: to share excitement, to pass along something that had lit him up, and to invite others into the same curiosity that had guided him throughout his life. He hoped this would be shared with the group. Not as an argument, not as a rebuttal—just as an offering. A moment of joy and discovery from someone who spent his life searching the margins, playing with puzzles, and stirring the pot when needed.

Warmly,
Matt Kennedy



All I have at the moment is to direct all friends to the Spring 2025 issue of the *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*. “The Curious Events on Sheppey Island in September 1610” is exciting news, worth the price of a year’s subscription! The featured article by Thomas H. Millar introduces us to a 1610 four-day celebration on a small island at the mouth of the Thames, an elaborate party hosted by Oxford’s closest set of friends and relatives where access to the party could be guarded. This elaborate, expensive, intimate Oxfordian gathering has not yet gotten any notice by our heavy Oxfordian scholars. Millar invites us to a fresh study. Astounding, but you must read.

Other projects have my attention, but a quick look at the article might be of interest,

RK

P.S. You thought I was gone? Please. I’m an Oxfordian. I always come back for the footnote.

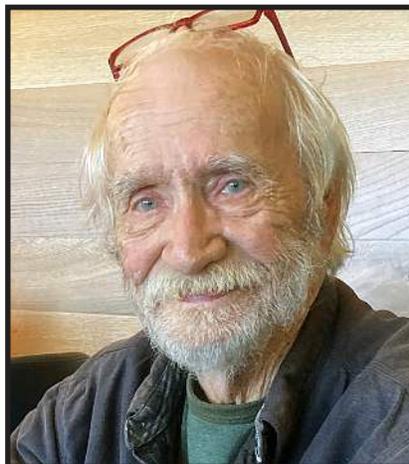


Photo by Carla Perry



The *Oxfordian* editor, Gary Goldstein, reports that the *Wikipedia* entry for “[Sabbioneta](#)” Italy currently includes the following attribution under the heading References in Art: “According to the American lawyer and writer Richard Paul Roe, the play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare was not set in Athens but in Sabbioneta, known as ‘little Athens’ ever since its foundation.” Roe’s 2011 book *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy* was referred to by Sir Derek Jacobi as “essential reading for all concerned with who really wrote the works of Shakespeare.”

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 websites, 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:

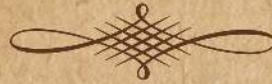
- Identify and organize items to preserve
- Research Notes
- Correspondence
- Photos & Videos
- Website content
- Unpublished Articles and Talks
- Rare, Signed, or Annotated books

Go to: [Preserve Oxfordian Discoveries](#)

PRESERVE OUR DATA FOR THE FUTURE!

Advertisement

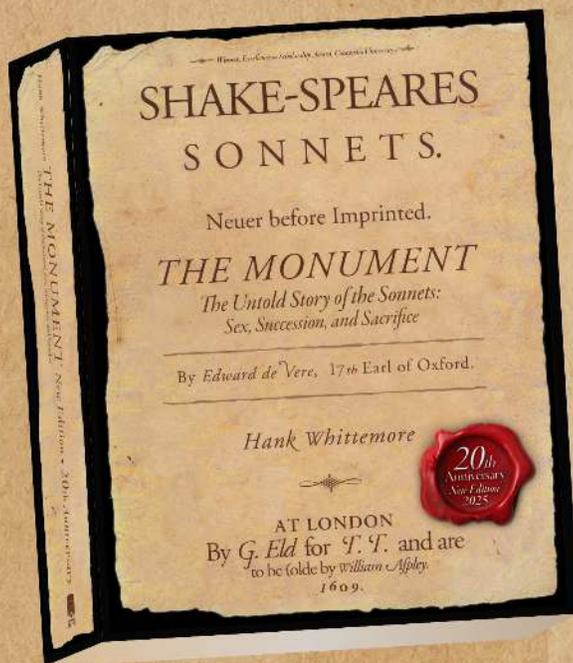
SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS.



THE MONUMENT

The Untold Story of the Sonnets: Sex, Succession, and Sacrifice

Hank Whitemore



Praise for The Monument

“ While I always loved the language of Shakespeare’s Sonnets, I had given up on them...until Whitemore’s ‘The Monument. This is an immense work of scholarship, of a very rare kind, one that serves the reader as a source of revelation...For all of those who like me have been frustrated by a failure to make sense of the most profound autobiographical sequence in any literature, this is a powerful breath of fresh air.

Professor John Robin Fox, PhD—Founder, Rutgers University Anthropology Department, and Rutgers University Professor; US National Academy of Sciences (Anthropology and Evolutionary Biology) member; Stanford University School of Medicine National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) Fellow; visiting professor at Oxford University, Paris Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, and University of California, San Diego; and author (b. July 15, 1934— d. January 18, 2024)



“ I have studied this mystery for thirty-five years and Whitemore’s discovery stands alone in its revelation of the structure and ‘message in a bottle’ of the Sonnets. I believe that with this key, he has unlocked the heart of these immortal poems.”

K.C. Ligon—Broadway actress, playwright, and dialect coach

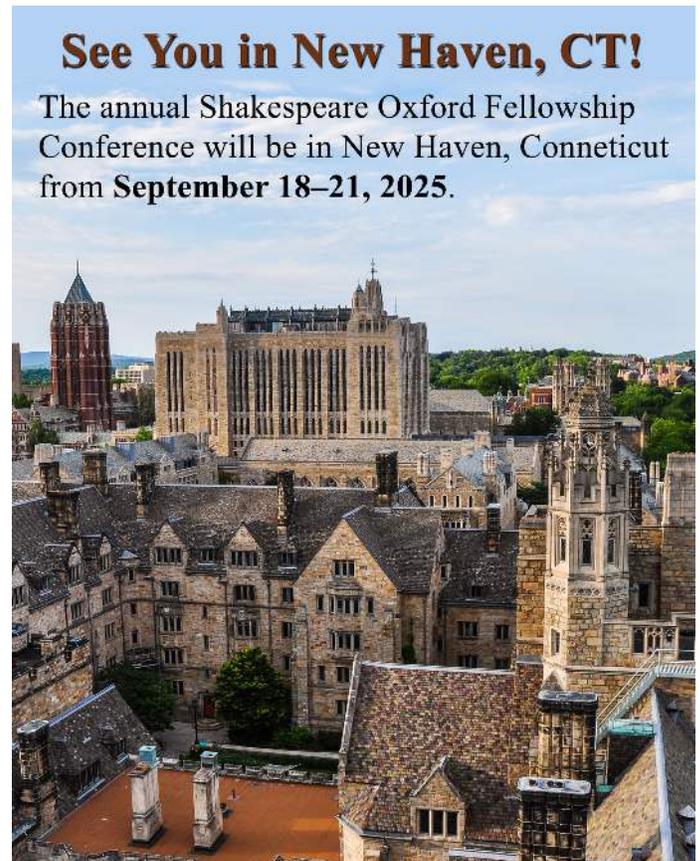
available at **amazon**



BRINGING UNTOLD STORIES TO LIFE™

In This Issue:

Outreach to High School Teachers..... 1
 From the President..... 3
 Letter to the Editor 4
 From the Editor 5
 What’s the News? 6
 Nominations Committee 2025 Report 7
 James Joyce and Shakespeare..... 9
 The Need for a Narrative 12
 New Haven Conference Schedule 15
The Monument: Then and Now..... 16
 Solving Shake-Speares Sonnets Whodunit 20
 Tales from the Archives Update 22
 Mysteries of the Sonnets..... 24
 Sonnet 86: a Posthumous Speech by
 Marlowe to Southampton..... 26
 In Memoriam: Edmunds Travis Jr..... 28
 In Memoriam: Richard Kennedy..... 28



See You in New Haven, CT!

The annual Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Conference will be in New Haven, Connecticut from **September 18–21, 2025.**

The Oxfordian 27 Published

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship’s peer-reviewed journal is now available.

Edited by Gary Goldstein, the 302-page volume offers ten research articles and seven book reviews.

The print edition can be purchased for \$14.99 plus postage from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

The full journal and/or individual articles are now available on the SOF website electronically, where SOF members have access to the entire issue using the 2025 publications password.



Elevate your research results by quickly searching **SOAR** (Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources) at soarcat.com, an independent database of most Oxfordian publications since the 1920s!

You’ll find a century’s worth of articles, essays, papers, book reviews, and news reports published on the Oxfordian movement and Shakespeare authorship debate, including coverage of almost all newsletter and journal articles in SOF publications and its predecessor organizations.

