



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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Winter 2026

New Ad Campaign Invites Playgoers to Discover Edward De Vere

by Michele Roberge and Brent Evans

We are all tired of hearing, “What d’ya mean, Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare?” so the SOF Outreach and Education Committee is implementing a campaign to get people to instead say, “Tell me more about this Edward de Vere.” With the Vere-y generous support of SOF Lifetime Member Jack Shuttleworth and the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, a half-page ad for the SOF will appear in the performance programs of many prominent Shakespeare productions this year.

The ad was designed to appeal to avid theater patrons posing a question about the mystery of Shakespeare authorship. This same ad will appear in select theater publications this year as a control, but it includes a QR code specific to each theater that will take the patrons to a landing page with a welcome message and introduction to the authorship question. For example, the ad in the Stratford Festival 2026 Visitors Guide will open a page saying, “Welcome Stratford Festival Shakespeare lovers!” These distinct QR codes will also allow us to monitor the numbers of patrons who use the code and investigate our website, the first step toward membership and eventual support. The data will also help guide us in designing future efforts.

How did we select the theaters? As our first foray into this campaign, we targeted major festivals that attract thousands of patrons, such as the Stratford Festival in Ontario, the Shakespeare festivals in Oregon, Atlanta, Idaho, Lake Tahoe, Alabama, and Utah and the American Shakespeare Center in Virginia. All in all,

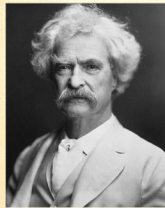
these ads will reach over 1.4 million playgoers!

There are hundreds of small Shakespeare productions held every summer throughout the country. Is there one near you? Please let us know. We’ll contact them for ad information. Ads in those summer production programs are much less costly than those in the playbills of the larger companies. Perhaps you would consider sponsoring

such an ad in your local community. By doing so, you would extend the reach of our limited outreach budget. You would also support your local arts community, help to promote the SOF and may enjoy a tax deduction. For more details, please contact Michele Roberge at mmroberge56@gmail.com

At the end of the season, we will report on our results and how each theater fared in generating visits to the SOF website.

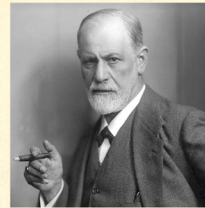
Were all these Bard lovers wrong?



Mark
Twain



Helen
Keller



Sigmund
Freud



5 Supreme
Court Justices

Learn more



They thought there’s a **Mystery**
about **Who** “Shakespeare” was.

Are YOU curious?



Scan the QR code in this ad and try it for yourself!

From the President

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship continues to be a lively community of inquiry—one that nurtures scholarship, dialogue, and creative thinking. Through conferences, research projects, publications, and outreach, our members carry the Oxfordian story forward. In 2026, we’re adding something new and inspiring: a series of animated short videos designed to bring Oxfordian ideas to classrooms and social media audiences alike. We’re also running an ad campaign that targets playgoers in select theater playbills. You’ll find stories about these projects and more in this issue.

What’s less visible, though just as important, is how our shared work is sustained. Before joining the board, I didn’t realize how much the Fellowship depends on the steady generosity of our members—not only through dues, but through voluntary annual gifts. Members like you make so much of what we do possible.

SOF 2025 Income—\$141,810

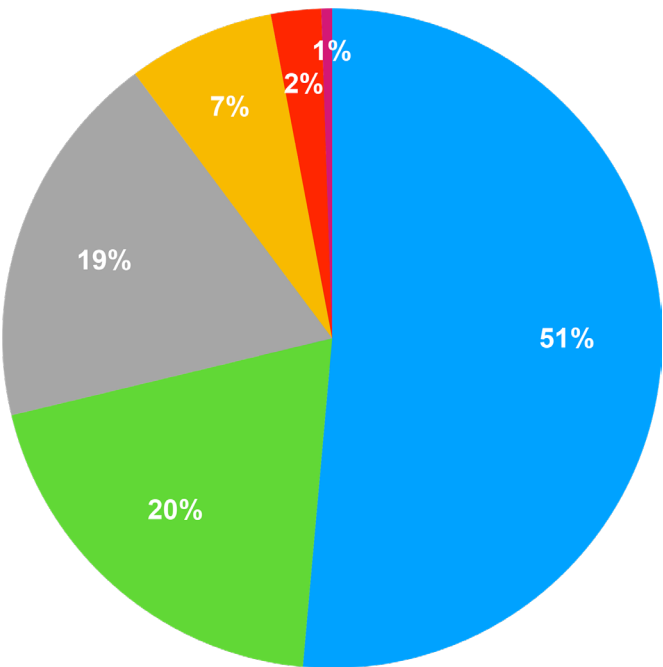
Annual memberships provide about 19% of our income—an important start, but just a fifth of what’s needed each year. More than half—about 51%—comes

directly from donations given by members who believe in the Fellowship’s mission and want to see it thrive. Every contribution, large or small, keeps our programs vibrant and our scholarship visible.

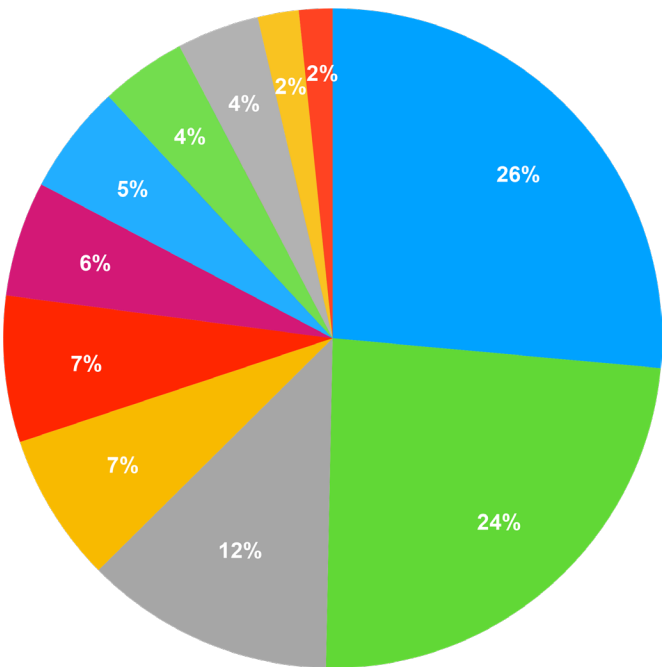
Some of you may remember that we introduced lifetime memberships a few years ago to give members a lasting way to show their commitment. That program brought an early boost of nearly \$40,000, but as most who wanted to join have already done so, this income source has naturally tapered off. The second year we received about \$30,000, the next \$20,000, and less than \$10,000 in 2025. Today, we’re budgeting for no new lifetime memberships in 2026. The regrettable result? Among our ninety-plus lifetime members, only nineteen made donations last year. While one-time dues represent a powerful past commitment, our ongoing work depends on renewed annual support from everyone who believes in the cause.

SOF 2025 Expenses—\$139,115

Where do your dollars go? In 2025, about half of our spending supported the annual conference and website and digital news services, which together reached hundreds of scholars, members and the broader public.



- Contributions 51%
- Annual Memberships 19%
- Other Income 2%
- Conference 20%
- Lifetime Memberships 7%
- Institutional Memberships 1%



- Website/Digital News 26%
- Conference 24%
- Newsletter 12%
- Administration 7%
- The Oxfordian 7%
- Education/NCTE 6%
- Data Preservation 5%
- Video Services 4%
- Grants 4%
- Fundraising/Other 2%
- Blue Boar Tavern 2%

Breakdown of Expense Categories:

- Website and digital news (26%)—Supports the Fellowship’s primary public-facing platform, reaching an estimated 25,000 to 40,000 annual visitors, including students, journalists, researchers and general readers.
- Conference (24%)—Funds our annual conference, which convenes approximately 150 to 250 attendees in person and online, including scholars, independent researchers, educators and interested members of the public. This investment pays for itself normally. This year we had a \$2,145 profit.
- Newsletter (12%)—Produces and distributes our quarterly newsletter to approximately 400 members, 60 public libraries, 15 honorary members and cultural influencers, and 61 high school and college educators.
- Administration (7%)—Covers essential governance, compliance, financial reporting and member services that enable the Fellowship to operate as a credible, transparent nonprofit organization.
- The Oxfordian (7%)—Supports the publication of our peer-reviewed scholarly journal, distributed to institutional libraries, independent scholars and major research collections worldwide.
- Education and NCTE (6%)—Funds outreach to teachers and participation in the National Council of Teachers of English, reaching dozens of educators annually and introducing Oxfordian scholarship into secondary and postsecondary classrooms.
- Data preservation (5%)—Maintains digital and physical archives of Oxfordian research materials, manuscripts and correspondence, ensuring long-term scholarly access and preservation.
- Video services (4%)—Produces animated and educational video content for classrooms and social platforms, with an anticipated reach of tens of thousands of viewers as the series expands.
- Grants (4%)—Provides direct support to independent researchers and scholars pursuing original Oxfordian research projects.
- Fundraising and other (2%)—Supports donor communications, membership outreach and financial development to sustain the Fellowship’s mission.

- Blue Boar Tavern (2%)—Maintains our long-running scholarly forum, which hosts hundreds of posts and discussions annually among members and researchers.

Our mission—supporting research, conferences, publications, archives, and outreach—is continual, not one-time. Each year brings new discoveries, new opportunities, and new responsibilities. Every annual contribution, no matter the size, is an act of partnership—a way of saying “I’m part of this continuing story.”

Together, we are ensuring that Oxfordian scholarship not only endures but grows stronger, more visible, and more connected each year. I hope you’ll take pride in all that your generosity makes possible.

—Brent Evans

Ways to Give

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, as a tax-exempt organization, can receive donations that entitle the donor to income and/or estate tax deductions to the extent allowed by law.



Generally, donations can be categorized as either “**current**” or “**planned**.” Current gifts are those that are made to the SOF now. Planned gifts are those that are arranged at the present time, but will be received by the SOF at a later date. If you have any questions about how to accomplish any of the following gift methods, please [email us](mailto:info@shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org).

To learn more, visit:

<https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/ways-to-give/>

The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter

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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.

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

Heidi Jannsch, 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.

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Book Your Room Now for the Seattle Conference!

Join SOF Members at the Grand Hyatt Hotel

Downtown Seattle, Washington — September 24–27, 2026



The Annual Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Conference will be held in the beautiful Hyatt amphitheater. See the details on page 5.



What's the News?

Hotel Bookings for the 2026 Conference Now Open

The SOF's 2026 conference will take place this coming September 24–27 at the beautiful Grand Hyatt Hotel in Seattle, Washington. Presentations will begin on Thursday the 24th at 1 p.m. and will continue through Friday and Saturday. There will be a wine and cheese reception on Thursday evening, an awards banquet on Saturday and the Annual General Meeting for members will take place on Sunday morning, September 27.

The SOF has negotiated a very special group rate for rooms at the Hyatt during the conference, \$259 per night (single or double). That rate is guaranteed for the Wednesday before and the Sunday after the conference and should be honored for further extensions. Please use this link to book: <https://www.hyatt.com/events/en-US/group-booking/SEAGH/G-SOF6>

If you have any problems with your booking, please contact Conference Chair Don Rubin at drubin@yorku.ca and he will try to work his magic to solve them.

Registration for the full conference is set at \$350 and will be able to be booked through the SOF website shortly. A \$25 discount will be given to all SOF members and an additional \$25 discount will be given to anyone registering on or before August 23, meaning that for most, the conference cost will be \$300. The special conference rate is also extended to partners of members. Online attendance is set at a flat rate of \$125.

Conference space is, of course, limited by our facilities. Our last three conferences in New Orleans, Denver and New Haven were sold out weeks in advance, so book early to ensure your place. See you in Seattle!

Call for Papers

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship is now accepting proposals for papers and panels for its upcoming annual conference in Seattle this coming September 24–27. While the organizers are happy to consider papers, panels or group presentations on any aspect of Oxfordian and authorship studies, the conference

Planning Committee is particularly interested in receiving proposals for papers connected to the suggested conference topic for 2026: “North by Northwest—Madness, Travel and Discovery in Oxford’s Shakespeare.”

Anyone interested in proposing a paper or hosting a panel on any topic should send a 250–500-word abstract plus two or three sentences of biographical background (if a new speaker) to the Conference Chair:

Prof. Don Rubin
York University, Toronto
E-mail: drubin@yorku.ca

Papers can be presented in 20-, 30- or 45-minute sessions (all presentations must include a *minimum* of five minutes for questions). Panels can be 60 or 90 minutes. A limited number of prerecorded video presentations (maximum 25 minutes each) will also be accepted. All proposals will be acknowledged.

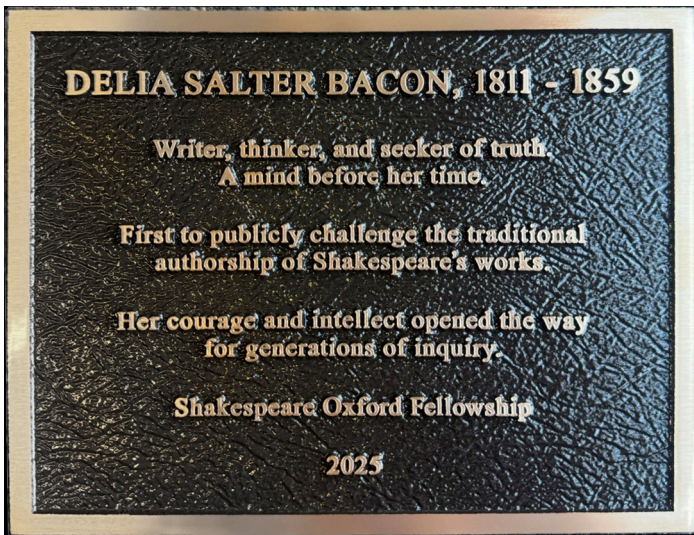
The deadline for this first round of papers will be April 15, 2026, with an announcement of acceptances shortly thereafter. Depending on the number of proposals accepted in this first round, a second round MAY be announced. To be sure your proposal is considered for the 2026 conference please do not assume there will be a second round.

Honoring Delia Bacon's Legacy

This year the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship will properly commemorate the life and legacy of Delia Salter Bacon. Delia's extraordinary accomplishments have remained unrecognized in the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven, Connecticut, since her early and tragic death 167 years ago. Her gravestone is a red sandstone monument topped by a simple, rounded cross. The only words carved into it are “Delia S. Bacon, 1811–1859.” At its base, now hardly legible, is written “In grateful remembrance, this monument is erected by her former pupils.” She deserves more than that.

On the last day of the SOF conference in New Haven in September 2025 many conference attendees visited Delia's gravesite (see *Shakespeare Oxford*

Newsletter, Fall 2025, pages 24–25). A few days later we reached out to Grove Street Cemetery officials who authorized the SOF to install an additional marker at the foot of Delia’s gravestone. The sandstone monument itself is too fragile for anything new to be affixed directly to it, but once the spring thaw comes to New England, a concrete footing can be poured. Permanently attached to this footing will be a marble base and a bronze plaque reading:



Your generous donation will help cover the \$1,400 cost of this installation. If you would like to contribute, please go to the [SOF website's donation page](#) click on “Select a Cause” and choose “Delia Salter Bacon Memorial Fund.” Thank you!

2026 Research Grant Announced

In its continued mission to “support and promote new research about Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford: his biography, his literary life, and the evidence that he is the true author of the Shakespeare canon,” the SOF Research Grant Selection Committee has chosen Rima Greenhill as the recipient of this year’s research grant.

Rima Greenhill, PhD is a senior lecturer in Russian at Stanford University in California. Rima has authored several Shakespeare authorship articles for *The Oxfordian*, including “From Russia with Love: a Case of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*” and “Who Really Wrote *Love’s Labour’s Lost*?” In 2023, she published a book titled *Shakespeare, Elizabeth, and Ivan: The Role of*

English-Russian Relationships in Love’s Labour’s Lost with McFarland & Company.

Rima previously received research grants from the SOF in 2018 and 2024. This year she was awarded a grant of \$3,220 to revisit the Dubrovnik State Archive in Croatia. Rima comments:

My visit to the Archive in 2024, supported by the SOF’s generous grant, showed me that my search for the Earl of Oxford is far from over. I plan to take a leave of absence from teaching in fall 2026 to explore whether Edward de Vere visited Ragusa and, if so, what possible reasons for his visit might have been. So far, I have only investigated documents from 1575–6. This time, I want to expand my search and examine the collection of papers from the early 1600s, which includes documents from much earlier decades.

I am very grateful to the SOF for this year’s generous grant, which will help me continue searching for our man in Ragusa. I look forward to sharing my findings with SOF members through Oxfordian publications and at future conferences.

To learn more about the requirements and application process for the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship Research Grant Program visit the [SOF website](#).



Shake-speare's Sonnets: Villainous Books

by Thomas H. Millar

Over 100 years of study have produced a majority view among scholars that the 1609 publication of *Shake-speares Sonnets* was suppressed. This view is based on circumstantial evidence. Robert Giroux points to the lack of any contemporary discussion of the quarto and the absence of a reprinting until a bowdlerized version in 1640 (5–12). Katherine Duncan-Jones notes the limited number of extant copies (thirteen) and the unusually good condition of them, suggesting the books were cloistered in personal libraries (6–7).

A rediscovered letter printed in the 1849 book *The Court and Times of James the First, Volume I*, by Thomas Birch, provides direct evidence of suppression. It casts new light on the events of 1609 leading to new and important insights into the authorship of the Shakespearean works. In a letter dated May 1609, Sir Henry Fanshaw wrote to John Chamberlain:

Much ado hath been for inquiring after the villainous books. Many books are taken, and were yesterday to be burned at St. Paul's Cross, Dr. Fenton preaching by [about] discretion. The stationers have been examined [about] whom they have sold them to, and among the rest Sir Dudley Digges is in question, which I am sorry for. Here was a secular priest, taken in or about the Venetian ambassador's house, with those books about him. He is committed to the ambassador's custody. (97)

One might wonder whether Fanshaw's use of the word "books" indicates multiple copies of one book or multiple publications. As we examine the context of the letter, the vigorousness of the censorship, the timing, the vested interest of both Fanshaw and Digges and Fanshaw's characterization of the books as "villainous," it will become clear that Fanshaw's words relate to multiple copies of *Shake-speares Sonnets*.

According to Robert Brazil, for cash flow reasons, most publications were printed and sold as quickly as possible after listing in the Stationers' Register (195). A review of the English Short Title Catalog for the 34 books entered in the register in April and May 1609 reveals no books, except for *Shake-speares Sonnets*, that remotely approach the level of controversy that would

justify the enforcement measures described in Fanshaw's letter. The aggressive suppression would have required the involvement of authorities higher than the Stationers' Company. The primary purpose of the Stationers' Register was to evaluate and block objectionable books before they were printed (Willoughby 21–22). In rare instances when books were suppressed after printing, the Stationers' Company would send wardens into bookshops to confiscate the offending works. The actions described in Fanshaw's letter—the apprehension of book customers, the public book burning and special sermon at St. Paul's Cross—were highly unusual. The objectionable features of the Sonnets must have been subtle enough to escape the attention of the Stationers' Company but troublesome enough to trigger quick action by high authorities once the book was in the market.

The date on Fanshaw's letter gives us a new understanding of when sales of *Shake-speares Sonnets* began. The date previously believed to represent the first sale, June 19, 1609, was noted in a household account scribbled on the back of a letter (Duncan-Jones 6). That date could have referred to a resale of the book or the sale of a copy hidden from the authorities. *Shake-speares Sonnets*, a quarto edition of 154 sonnets, was entered in the Stationers' Register on May 20, 1609. Of course, Oxfordians know "William Shakespeare" was a pen name used by Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (hereafter Oxford). Fanshaw's letter was dated May 1609. The shift in our understanding from mid-June to late May is not in itself a significant change, but the May date helps bring into focus an important concurrence between the Sonnets and another notable event.

On May 23, 1609, King James issued what has become known as the Second Charter of the Virginia Company of London. This charter established a joint stock company to fund and manage an expedition to reinforce a settlement on the James River. An initial expedition had been launched in 1606 but had proven to be under-resourced. By 1609 it was on the brink of failure. The 1609 Charter was the result of energetic fundraising by company organizers beginning early in the year (Craven 12). Apparently, the organizers were able to catch the imagination of the whole city of

London because the number of investors was impressive. The final Charter listed 655 individual investors along with 55 companies.

The list of individuals began with the Earls of Salisbury (Robert Cecil, Secretary of State of England and High Treasurer), Suffolk (Chamberlain of the King's Household), Southampton, Pembroke, Lincoln, Dorset, Exeter and Montgomery, along with 647 other lords, knights, yeomen and commoners, many identified by occupations such as Lord Mayor of London, merchant, minister, fishmonger, etc. The listed companies included haberdashers, ironmongers, carpenters and many others. In addition to the roster of subscribers, the Charter included a list described by the King as, "...oure Counsell for the said Companie of Adventurers and Planters in Verginia." This list of 52 counselors was headed by "Henrie, Earl of Southampton," followed by "William, Earl of Pembroke, Henrie, Earl of Lincoln, Thomas, Earl of Exeter, Roberte, Lord Viscounte Lisle [and] Lord Theophilus Howard..." (Bemiss 48).

The counselors were listed in order of heraldic rank; nevertheless, Southampton must have been pleased to be so conspicuously recognized for this important enterprise. Indeed, his designation as a leading counselor represented a full restoration of status from the disaster of his involvement with the Earl of Essex's rebellion against Queen Elizabeth. Convicted as a co-conspirator with Essex in 1601, he was imprisoned in the Tower for over two years, until Elizabeth's death. When James ascended to the English throne in 1603, he freed Southampton from the Tower. Southampton's appointment as a leading counselor for the Second Virginia Company marked his return to prominence as a trusted member of the King's circle.

Along with Southampton, our letter writer, Sir Henry Fanshaw and his friend, Sir Dudley Digges, were listed as investors in the Second Virginia Company and as counselors. This helps explain why Fanshaw had such a keen interest in the affair and why Digges would have, judging from the letter, purchased several copies which were confiscated by authorities. To Fanshaw and Digges, the publication of the Sonnets would have represented an attack on their exciting new enterprise. They would have recognized that the homoerotic Sonnets, with the name "Shake-speare" on the title page and with a vaguely described dedicatee, made it look like the Earl of Southampton had been the lover of

the author of the works. The dedication in the Sonnets disguises the initials of the dedicatee as "W.H." rather than "H.W.," probably to avoid a libel charge by Southampton, Henry Wriothesley.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare as the stated author of erotic poems dedicated to Southampton was a familiar pairing for Londoners. In 1593 and 1594 the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were published. Both books included dedications to Southampton, over the name William Shakespeare. They were wildly popular, especially *Venus and Adonis*, which was reprinted ten times between 1593 and 1609. This made it the most popular non-religious book in England leading up to the printing of the Sonnets. Both Fanshaw and Digges would have seen the Sonnets as an attack not only on Southampton, but also an attack on their exciting new Virginia enterprise. Hence Fanshaw's "villainous" characterization.

What about the timeline? Could *Shakespeare's Sonnets* have been registered on May 20 and been printed and made available in bookshops in time for the suppression measures and for Fanshaw's letter dated May 1609? A review of 1600s printing technology suggests this was possible if more than one printing press was used and if the project was treated as urgent. The Sonnets were printed by George Eld, one of the largest printers in Shakespearean London. Throughout his career, Eld was known to operate two, and sometimes three presses. He had married the widow of two master printers and consolidated their businesses. The idea that the Sonnets were printed in a rushed fashion is consistent with studies of extant copies. Even though Eld's normal standard of work was excellent, Giroux deems the Sonnets quarto to be "riddled with errors" (8). Duncan-Jones notes, "many scholars have also regarded the text itself as exceptionally badly printed" (36). If printing of the Sonnets began immediately after registration, the completed copies could have been rushed into bookshops by about Friday, May 26, in time for suppression measures on Saturday, the book burning and special sermon on Sunday and, in time for Fanshaw's letter on Monday, May 29.

If anyone reading the dedication in the Sonnets failed to make the connection between Shakespeare and Southampton, the writer of the dedication provided a further clue. Much ink has been spilled over the one-page dedication. Northrop Frye described it as "one

floundering and illiterate sentence...no more likely to be an accurate statement of fact than any other commercial plug" (29). The dedication is enigmatic, but no one in 1609 London would have read it without recognizing that the dedicatee was a member of the Virginia Company. The last phrase of the dedication reads "The Well-Wishing. Adventurer. In. Setting. Forth." The words "adventurer" and "adventure" were catchwords for the members and enterprise of the Second Virginia Company. The Charter uses these words to describe both those who would travel to Virginia and those who merely invested. The catchwords were used twenty times in the second Charter. In the first Virginia Charter, issued three years earlier, those words appear only twice.

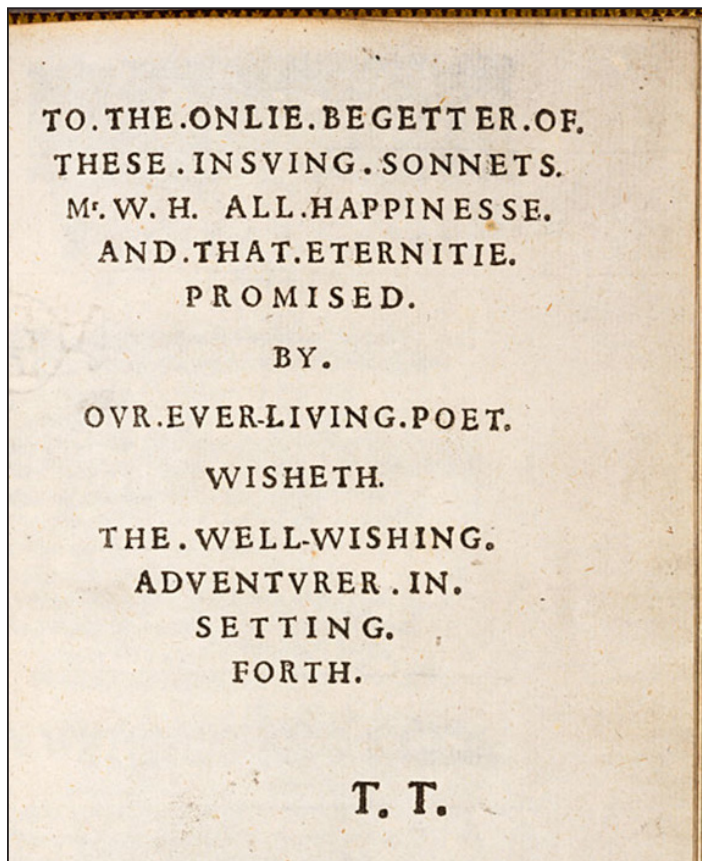
The Charter organizers would have realized that to attract the hundreds of investors needed to fund the project they would have to capture the imagination of potential partners. In the months leading up to the issuance of the Charter, in the scores of meetings that

must have been required, the word "adventurer" would have been repeated with great effect. For a subscription price of only 12 pounds 10 shillings, about \$4,000 in today's money, any tradesman in London could become not only an investor, but also an adventurer, along with some of the highest lords in the realm. In these ways the Sonnets publication was linked to the Second Virginia Company and both the Sonnets and the second Charter were linked to Southampton. Trashing Southampton's reputation would have been a blow to the entire Virginia enterprise.

Many Virginia Company investors would have been chagrined to find they had been enticed to invest in an enterprise with such a scandalous connection. The promoters of the expedition, the counselors, even the King would have been embarrassed to have misjudged things so egregiously. The reputation and public image of Southampton would have been ruined. The implications extended beyond Southampton's person and family. He was a highly visible leader of the non-radical (i.e., non-Puritan) protestant faction that held great power at court and in government. Southampton, along with fellow moderates Salisbury, Pembroke, Montgomery, and Sidney were aligned with the King to resist Puritan and parliamentary efforts to limit the prerogative of the monarch. If Southampton was scandalized by *Shakespeare's Sonnets* it would be a blow against the entire power structure of England.

Once Salisbury, the likely authority behind the suppression, realized the Sonnets quartos were being sold it must have become clear from the interrogation of booksellers that not all the books could be accounted for. Complicating the matter, Thomas Thorpe, the publisher, had taken the unprecedented step, for him, of arranging for the Sonnets to be sold from two different bookshops. The lingering threat that the Sonnets could re-emerge was enough to cause Salisbury to take certain precautions beyond closing sales. We will return to this point.

Seeing the Fanshaw letter as evidence that the Sonnets were suppressed and that they pointed to Southampton as the Fair Youth of the poems only confirms what scholars have guessed for a long time. But our new knowledge does more than that, it makes it clear that the publication of the Sonnets was not just an inconvenient coincidence but rather, a deliberate attempt to inflict pain. There is no other way to explain



The dedication in *Shakespeare's Sonnets* uses the word "Adventurer," linking the dedicatee to the Second Virginia Charter.

the timing of the publication to coincide with the Second Virginia Charter, timing the attack on Southampton to be virtually simultaneous with the announcement of him as a lead counselor to King James, fully restored from his difficulties with Queen Elizabeth.

It would be reasonable to ask, what does all of this have to do with the 17th Earl of Oxford? Couldn't Southampton have had a past relationship with Shakespeare, the man from Stratford, and couldn't an enemy of Southampton have worked to reveal that relationship in order to attack Southampton? That question can best be answered if we consider who it was that had so much ill will against Southampton.

The perpetrator of the attack on Southampton must have had knowledge of the Sonnets, the means to gain possession of the manuscript, the intelligence and wealth to engineer such a scheme and the evilness of character to attempt to bring Southampton down in this way. I propose that there was one man, and only one man, who satisfied these criteria: Henry Howard the 1st Earl of Northampton. The case for Northampton is provided in detail in an earlier article, "Shakespearean Intrigue," found here: www.OxfordianFirstFolio.wordpress.com. Briefly, Northampton had both personal and

political grievances against Southampton. He was a member of the Privy Council and the leader of a faction in opposition to Southampton's political sentiments. A paid informer for Spain and a secret Catholic probably all his life, Northampton had ingratiated himself with King James when he served as an intermediary for correspondence between Salisbury and James during the sensitive period prior to Elizabeth's death.

In addition to Northampton's political differences with Southampton, he had a personal grudge. Northampton's father, the Earl of Surrey, had been a popular, aspiring courtier during the latter years of Henry VIII's reign. Henry grew suspicious of Surrey and had his trusted aide, Lord Thomas Wriothesley, supervise the arrest, trial and execution of Surrey. Surrey's son, the future Northampton was stripped of his titles and inheritance while Wriothesley was elevated to be the 1st Earl of Southampton. Fifty-nine years later Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton, Thomas Wriothesley's grandson, would be the target of Northampton's attack.

Northampton was a first cousin of Oxford. Northampton, Oxford and Southampton all had longstanding ties to Cambridge University where Northampton was a tutor after earning degrees. According to Levy Peck, Northampton had a proclivity for young men (3). When Francis Meres referred to Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets among his private friends" in 1598, those private friends may also have been friends of Northampton. In any case, Northampton would have kept a close eye on Southampton, he would have been aware of Oxford's friendship with Southampton and the rumors of Oxford's love poems to him.

Letters from Oxford's widow to Northampton show that he was viewed by the dowager countess as a trustworthy family friend. As a member of the Privy Council, Northampton would have been the logical person for the countess to ask to inform the King of Oxford's death in 1604. As set out in my "Shakespearean Intrigue..." article, Northampton, I believe, created an opportunity to steal the Sonnets manuscript from Southampton's quarters on the night of Oxford's death. Northampton had probably guessed that Oxford, near the end of his life, would bestow the manuscript on Southampton. Realizing that Southampton would probably destroy the poems shortly after Oxford's death, Northampton acted, I believe, on the



Portrait of Henry Howard, 1st Earl of Northampton (1540-1614) circa early 17th century.

very night of Oxford's death to convince the King that Southampton's quarters should be searched to protect against a rumored plot, a plot that existed only in Northampton's devious mind. Northampton then took the opportunity to seize the incriminating manuscript. At least, someone scared the King on the evening of Oxford's death. The King had Southampton arrested and his quarters searched, Southampton was questioned and exonerated the next day. The eminent historian of Jacobean England, G.P.V. Akrigg, pinned the blame on Northampton, writing,

Beaumont [the French ambassador] in his dispatch says that Southampton was accused by 'quelques uns Catholiques,' but indicates later that the chief accuser may have been either Sir George Home or that tortuous old conspirator, Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton. The latter, an ardent Catholic and sometime spy for Spain, seems the more likely candidate. (142)

There is insufficient space here to relate the many assessments of Northampton's character by both his contemporaries and modern scholars. Suffice it to say, Northampton's reputation as a devious plotter was virtually unanimous.

As I noted earlier, Southampton's position in the Second Virginia Charter as the first of 52 counselors to the King helped link him to the Sonnets and burnish his reputation as a distinguished leader. It is therefore quite interesting to see that Northampton took the initiative to involve himself in the Second Virginia Company Charter, specifically in the listing of investors and counselors. Found in the Harley manuscript collection at the British Museum is an order from three Privy Counselors to the "Colledge of Heraulds" dated May 9, 1609. Signed by the Earls of Northampton, Suffolk (Northampton's nephew) and Worcester (a political ally of Northampton and Suffolk) the order advises the heralds that the order of names in the upcoming charter for the Second Virginia Company is important and instructs them to submit a draft for review:

After our hastie commendacons, whereas divers honourable personages, Knightes and others have undertaken to settle a Collonie...in Virginia...by his Majesties letters pattente with which the names of the principalle Adventurers are particularly to be inserted... We have thought good to let you

know that our desire is that you call with you the Colledge of Herauldes, or so many of them as you shall thinke fit, and by their advise you marshall and sett in order the names of such noble men, Knightes, and doctors, as you shall receive here-with in there due places and ranke and send them unto us fayre written on paper, with your hande and names subscribed, with as much expedience as you can... (Neill 42–43)

We can see from this order that Northampton had a keen interest in the details of the charter, particularly the precise listing of names. He was taking no chances that Southampton's name would be buried and overlooked. Northampton's May 9th order reinforces the idea that he was managing events to elevate Southampton with the charter and bring him down with the Sonnets.

If Northampton was in possession of the Sonnets in 1609 and was prepared to use them against Southampton, then Akrigg's assertion that it was Northampton who scared the King into launching a search of Southampton's quarters on the night of Oxford's death must be true. Surely Northampton's purpose on that night was to steal Oxford's Sonnets. If Oxford authored the Sonnets, then Oxford must also have authored *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, both dedicated to Southampton and printed over the name William Shakespeare. If the poems were written by Oxford, then the plays printed under the name Shakespeare must have been written by Oxford as well.

And what about Salisbury's dilemma in May of 1609 when he realized that some of the copies of the Sonnets could not be accounted for? What further steps did he need to take to protect against a future leak? Those actions are described in my earlier article, "The Curious Events on Sheppey Island..." (*SON*, 61-2, Spring 2025). Based on the evidence presented in that article, Salisbury enlisted the help of Robert Sidney to convince Susan Vere, Oxford's daughter, to cancel her plans to publish the plays under her father's name. That led to the festivities on Sheppey in September 1610, a four-day party in a remote location to celebrate Susan Vere for her role in keeping her father's authorship a secret. The risk of people knowing about a love affair between Oxford and Southampton was even worse than thinking a young Southampton had an affair with a little-known commoner. News of a male-to-male

relationship between two high ranking Earls would fall too close to the King for comfort and it would give the Puritans new material for their exhortations against James and the divine right of Kings.

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Dusting Off Shakespeare by Bringing Oxford into the Classroom

What high school English student doesn't love a good mystery? Especially one that spices up boring old Shakespeare, makes him much more interesting personally, and explains a lot in his plays that had been completely mystifying?

Come join the discussion in the Blue Boar Tavern on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 8PM Eastern and 5PM Pacific time, when the Tavern's dauntless regulars, Dorothea Dickerman and Alex McNeil, host Peter Frengel and SOF President Brent Evans, to discuss their work with high school English teachers bringing Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, into the classroom.

Jonathan Dixon will be pouring stiff drinks and fielding your audience questions from behind the bar for this episode!



Success at the NCTE Convention

by Brent Evans

In a short but intense two-and-a-half days, November 20–23, 2025, the SOF's booth at the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Convention in Denver, Colorado was busy and productive. Hundreds of high school teachers stopped by to learn more about the Shakespeare Authorship Question and how best to teach Shakespeare in their classes. 135 high school English teachers registered with us and downloaded the links to our Oxfordian lesson plans and many hundreds more went home with flyers and books introducing them to the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

SOF members Pete Frengel, Bryan H. Wildenthal and Brent Evans found that of the scores of teachers who came by the booth, almost all were open to the authorship question if not already aware of it. Only a handful, maybe two or three, expressed any skepticism. Many were intrigued by our lesson plans that suggest using the authorship mystery to engage students.

Over 400 copies of The Oxfordian Narrative and Declaration of Reasonable Doubt were distributed along with many Oxfordian books such as *"Shakespeare" by Another Name*, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt?: Exposing an Industry in Denial* and others left over from the SOF conference in New Haven.

A surprising draw to the SOF booth was a display of a Taylor Swift poster stating "I love Shakespeare" along with a number of Taylor Swift flyers and stickers provided by Oxfordian Ellie Slotkin. For those who don't follow pop culture, Taylor Swift has been writing and performing songs on Shakespearean themes recently, bringing a renewed interest in Shakespeare among young people around the world.

Making inroads with secondary level English teachers is one of the ways the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship pursues the last half of its 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." Teachers are great amplifiers. For every teacher who adopts and uses our teaching materials, many hundreds of students learn a new way to think about the poems and plays of Shakespeare.

During the coming year, the SOF will be creating and emailing news and updates specially designed for educators. Called "The Teacher's Desk," these emails will offer additional tips and insights on teaching the authorship question. We will be reaching out to English teachers during the year to get their feedback and inviting them to share their experiences, insights and responses to our lesson plans.

We will be even more prepared for next year's NCTE Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with better displays and materials. Many, many thanks are due to Pete Frengel, our experienced and talented high school teacher who has developed these wonderful teaching materials. He will be adding more lesson plans to our website during the coming year.

If you haven't explored these educational assets yet, follow the link below and see for yourself: shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/teacher-resources/



Pete Frengel and Bryan H. Wildenthal welcome teachers to the SOF booth at the NCTE Convention.

Producing *Shakespeare's Shadow*: An Interview with Jared Randolph

by Phoebe Nir

This past November I attended a staged reading of *Shakespeare's Shadow* by Anonymous in Lafayette, California. Produced by Oxfordian Jared Randolph, the play dramatizes the case for Edward de Vere as the Bard, frequently breaking the fourth wall to engage with audience members and to interrogate them on what they really know about Shakespeare. The reading, directed by Karina Gutierrez, featured many of the Bay Area's most prominent Shakespeare actors, including Alan Coyne, Nic Moore, Rob Seitelman, Steve Price, and Charisse Loriaux. I later spoke with Jared Randolph about the history of *Shakespeare's Shadow* and his plans to help spread the Oxfordian message.



Jared Randolph, producer

Phoebe: Tell us about how this project got started.

Jared: *Shakespeare's Shadow* began at a moment of reckoning. In August 2024, as California Shakespeare Theater (where I began my professional theater career as a teenager) was nearing the end of its life, I found myself reflecting on what it means for Shakespeare to disappear from our shared cultural spaces. That loss reawakened a question I had carried quietly for years: who was Shakespeare (really), and why does that question remain so carefully contained within academic circles?

This reflection led me to collaborate with a playwright who shares similar convictions. They have chosen to remain anonymous due to the professional risks still attached to the authorship question. Because engaging publicly with this topic can still carry real consequences, I serve as producer and dramaturg, conducting the historical research to support the writing process and to be the public face so the work can move forward without compromising their livelihood. From the outset, this project has been a deliberate attempt to move the authorship question out of books and debates and back into the theater, where Shakespeare originally

lived: in bodies, in language spoken aloud, and in communal experience. *Shakespeare's Shadow* exists to make the conversation tangible.

Phoebe: I was really impressed by how many prominent members of the Bay Area theater community you brought into the production. What kind of reaction have you gotten from professional Shakespeare actors and directors who were not already a part of the Oxfordian movement?

Jared: The most surprising response was how little resistance we encountered. In our first reading, the room was full of thoughtful, experienced theater

artists, and very few had strong opinions about the authorship question. Most had simply never been asked to engage with it. The familiar refrain was: "I don't care who wrote it. I just like the plays."

That realization fundamentally reshaped the project. We initially assumed we were entering a debate—instead, we discovered we were opening a door. As the play developed through subsequent readings, artists from across the Stratfordian-Oxfordian spectrum stayed engaged. Some who identified as firmly Stratfordian chose to remain part of the process, which I take as a sign that the work is doing what it should: inviting critical thinking rather than demanding allegiance.

Phoebe: What were your key takeaways from seeing the play up on its feet during this staged reading?

Jared: Seeing the play embodied clarified two essential truths:

First, audiences need help distinguishing documented history from dramatic reconstruction. While *Shakespeare's Shadow* is theatrical, it is rooted in verifiable events, timelines, and relationships. Early feedback made it clear that if we don't actively foreground that history, the work risks being dismissed as "another work of fiction."

Second, the reading revealed a practical challenge: gathering people in one place, especially those who could help move the project forward, is increasingly difficult. That reality pushed us toward rethinking how theater can function beyond the traditional venue. Rather than defaulting to Zoom-style readings, we began developing a hybrid approach, preserving the integrity of live performance while using film and broadcast tools to expand access. That realization directly led to our upcoming recorded staging.

Phoebe: *What are your goals for the next stage of Shakespeare’s Shadow? How can our community support your efforts?*

Jared: Our immediate goal is to reimagine how people experience online theater, and to use that form to introduce the authorship question to new audiences. In March and April, we will record the first portion of *Shakespeare’s Shadow*, focusing on Edward de Vere’s early life, in a shared theatrical space with the full cast present. This will not be a Zoom reading. The aesthetic is inspired by John Barton’s *Playing Shakespeare*: intimate, actor-driven and intellectually rigorous. The broadcast will be followed by live discussions with authorship experts, allowing us to connect moments from the play directly to documented history, essentially “footnoting” the drama in real time.

Based on the response to these events, we will either continue recording the remainder of the play in this format or, ideally, partner with a theater company for a world premiere stage production. This piece is intended for Shakespeare festivals and collegiate settings, and we hope producers from those communities will join us in April for a preview of the work.

For the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship community, support can take many forms:

- Attending and promoting the April broadcasts
- Participating in post-show discussions
- Sharing and distributing the events within your networks
- Direct financial support. Our online event will cost \$4000–\$7000 to produce.

Ultimately, *Shakespeare’s Shadow* is designed to be an entry point, especially for younger audiences, into a conversation that deserves to live in public, using theater as a communal catalyst that brings people together first and then invites them to go deeper through the rich scholarship and resources cultivated by the Oxfordian community.

Find out more about Jared Randolph and *Shakespeare’s Shadow* at: <https://sites.google.com/view/shakespeareshadow-com/home>.



Alan Coyne as Robert Cecil.



Rob Seitelman as Lord Burghley.

King John's Historical Sources

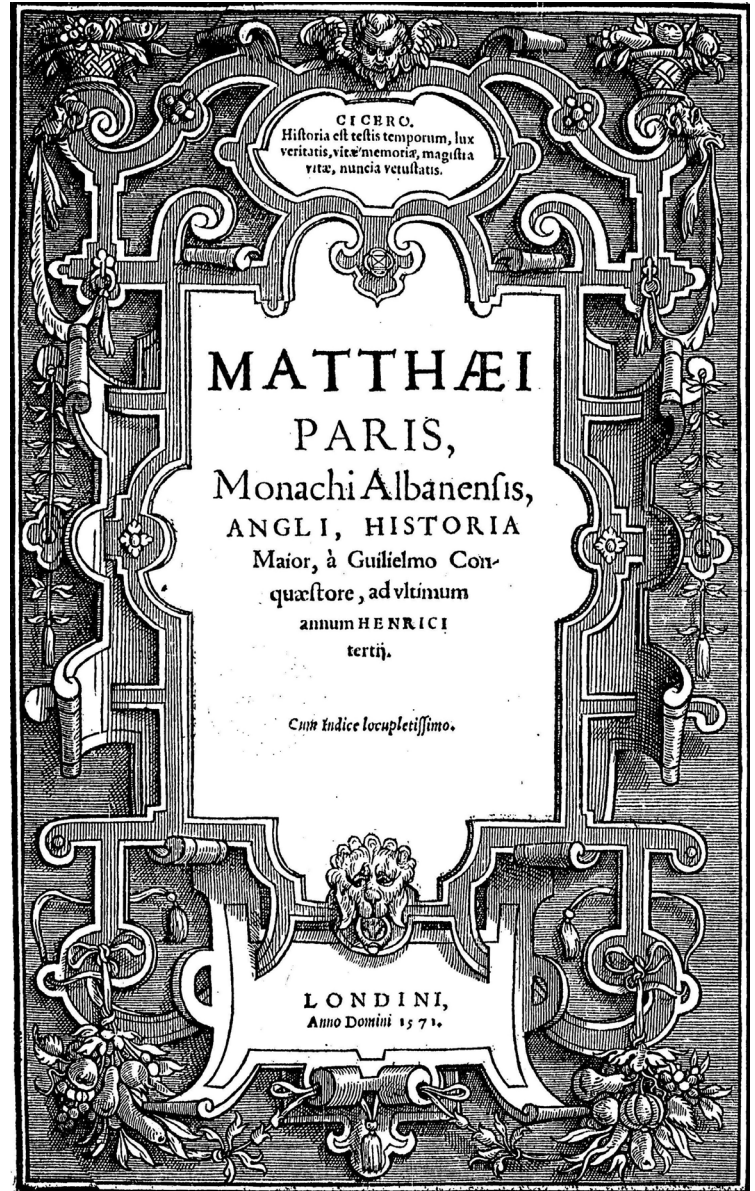
by Elisabeth Waugaman

Oxfordian scholars believe *The Troublesome Reign of King John* was an earlier version of the play *King John* written by a young Shakespeare/Oxford. Scholars agree that one of the historical sources for *The Troublesome Reign* is the *Chronica Majora* (Jiménez 158). Begun by Roger Windover and continued by Matthew Paris, both abbots of St. Alban's, the *Chronica Majora*, a medieval manuscript, recorded history beginning with the creation and ending in 1256, shortly before Paris's death. The *Chronica Majora* is of special interest for its English history from 1215 including the *Magna Carta* and the Barons' War against King John.

Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury (d.1575), was known to have multiple copies of the *Chronica Majora* (Robinson 1076) and issued the first printed edition in 1571. It is a massive, illustrated volume of well over 1,000 pages titled *Matthæi Paris, Monachi Albanensis, Angli, Historia Maior: a Guilielmo Conquæstore, ad ultimum annum Henrici tertii; Cum Indice locupletissimo*. It was printed in London by Reyner (Reginald) Wolfe, the official printer for Queen Elizabeth's books in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Historians have gradually realized the extent to which the original was edited by Archbishop Parker and the scholars working for him to create a Protestant view of English history. This has enraged and shocked modern scholars as illustrated by the discovery that Lyly added five folio pages to the medieval Paris text (Robinson 1076–1078). Burghley and Parker did not hesitate to rewrite history as they saw fit—a myth-making enterprise also taking place in Shakespeare's plays. We know almost nothing about the writers helping Archbishop Parker in his mythologizing of history (Robinson 1079) just as we know almost nothing about Shakespeare. The rewriting of history must stay in the shadows, or risk exposure for what it is—bias at best or propaganda at worst.

A sale catalogue titled *Bibliotheca Illustris, sive Catalogus Variorum Librorum*, published for an auction beginning on November 21, 1687, lists over 3,600 books and 250 manuscripts belonging to the Cecils, including the *Historia Maior* published by Archbishop Parker in London in 1571. The catalogue notes the



Title page of Parker's *Historia Maior*.

copy belonging to William Cecil, Lord Burghley. Burghley worked closely with Archbishop Parker to create a Protestant English history—viewing previous English history as Catholic propaganda. Archbishop Parker's massive book, with his Protestant interpretation of King John's history, was available to Edward de Vere, who was married to Anne Cecil, Burghley's daughter, in 1571, the same year the *Historia Maior* was printed.

Needless to say, the acquisition of such a monumental, illustrated tome was unusual and would have been especially appreciated by a bibliophile like Lord Burghley. Such large, illustrated books were not readily available because of the expense not only for publishing, but also for purchasing them. Because Archbishop Parker and Lord Burghley shared their libraries, and because Lord Burghley owned one of the largest libraries in all of Britain, he may have had his own copy of the medieval manuscript, a subject that requires further investigation. If so, then Oxford would have had access to the manuscript even earlier.

This is yet another example of the connection between Lord Burghley's library and Shakespeare's plays. Many other examples were highlighted by Eddi Jolly (*The Oxfordian*, 2003) while I have assessed the influence of French texts in Shakespeare (*The Oxfordian*, 2019).

Stratfordians maintain “Shak(e)spe(a)r(e)” began to possibly learn French as a boarder with a Huguenot family in 1602–04 *after* many plays with a French influence had been written and performed (e.g., *Hamlet*). As more evidence accumulates indicating that

Shakespeare was using books in Lord Burghley's library as historical sources for his plays, it becomes more difficult to believe that the Stratford businessman had access to medieval manuscripts and rare, expensive books, not only of massive size, but also in French.

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King John. “Kneel thou down, Philip, but arise more great,—Arise Sir Richard and Plantagenet.” (Act 1, scene 1)

The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare, London (1839), illustrator: G.F. Sargent, From *Shakespeare Illustrations* online.



From the Archives: Who is this Anonymous Oxfordian Writer?

by Caroline Bauman, Data Preservation Committee

I am hoping readers can help me solve a little mystery: who wrote the anonymous article in *The Oxfordian*, Volume 1, October 1998? I have a strong suspicion that it was Richard Kennedy, but even though I'm his archivist, I don't know for sure. Do you?

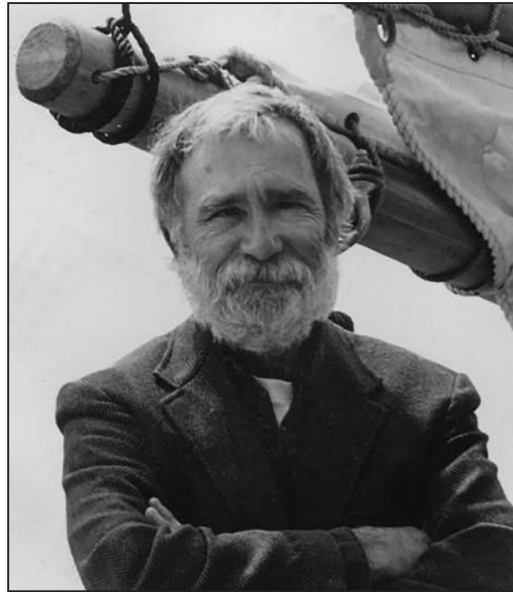
Who Is Richard J. Kennedy?

Many Oxfordians, even those active in the last half-century, have never heard of Richard Jerome Kennedy. It is not surprising. Kennedy is rarely cited at the end of an Oxfordian article or book because his endeavors in Oxfordian studies were, by his own choice, largely unpublished. I say "largely" because he did write a few Oxfordian newsletter articles that can be found on [SOAR](#). He wrote extensively on "Funeral Elegy" and "The Woolpack Man" and the pieces were read and commented on widely.

Non-Oxfordian writers did cite Kennedy as a source within their articles and books. He was typically given credit for his Shakespearean scholarship, although Rosenbaum's *The Shakespeare Wars* got his name wrong as "John Kennedy" on page 187, a mistake I fear was propagated, and I don't know if Rosenbaum ever corrected it.

Kennedy maintained an active correspondence with a large network of early Oxfordian scholars, but his scholarly contributions often leaked out rather than being recognized formally. He was a private person and had an inner struggle regarding how to share his findings and opinions. Taking oral histories is important, and I tried, but he was unwilling to let me record him.

I became Richard's archivist around November of 2024 and remained so until his death in July 2025. I was much more than that, which will be material for a separate essay. This served many purposes: it was



Richard Jerome Kennedy
Dec. 23, 1932–July 24, 2025

a way to further my own studies on Oxford's life and times and the Shakespeare canon. It was also a way to contribute to Oxfordian studies by bringing Richard's work to a larger audience. Finally, I was able to help him in a time of need and ease his mind about his legacy. He wanted his archive to be of use to future generations and made me promise to take care of it.

I read the anonymous article in the 1998 issue of *The Oxfordian* after his passing and wish I could have asked him about it.

Who Wrote the Anonymous Article?

The first volume of *The Oxfordian* offers one example of Kennedy being cited: in the context of an article by Ron Hess (page 93). Only a few pages later we get to the last article in the journal (page 102). It is entitled "Yet another interpretation of Sonnet XXXIII" and the editor makes the following statement as an opening paragraph.

We feel the following bit of exegesis important enough to defy the wishes of the author, who importuned us most urgently to consider his reputation before putting it into print. We trust that as long as his identity rests uncertain, his reputation remains unsullied, and that in time to come he will consent to oblige us with more of the same.

At that time, the *Table of Contents* was printed as the cover of this annual journal. On Richard's copy, in his handwriting, is written at the top margin "Funeral Elegy, p. 93." Also, in the Table of Contents itself, next to the title "Sonnet XXXIII, and Much, Much Less" is written the underlined word "Kennedy?" This possible clue as to the author in an annotated original shows the importance of locating and preserving Oxfordian researchers' archives.

The anonymous article itself is a bit of fun about the widely varying interpretations of the Sonnets. It is almost real and almost satire. It is in a language and style that I recognize from reading many other

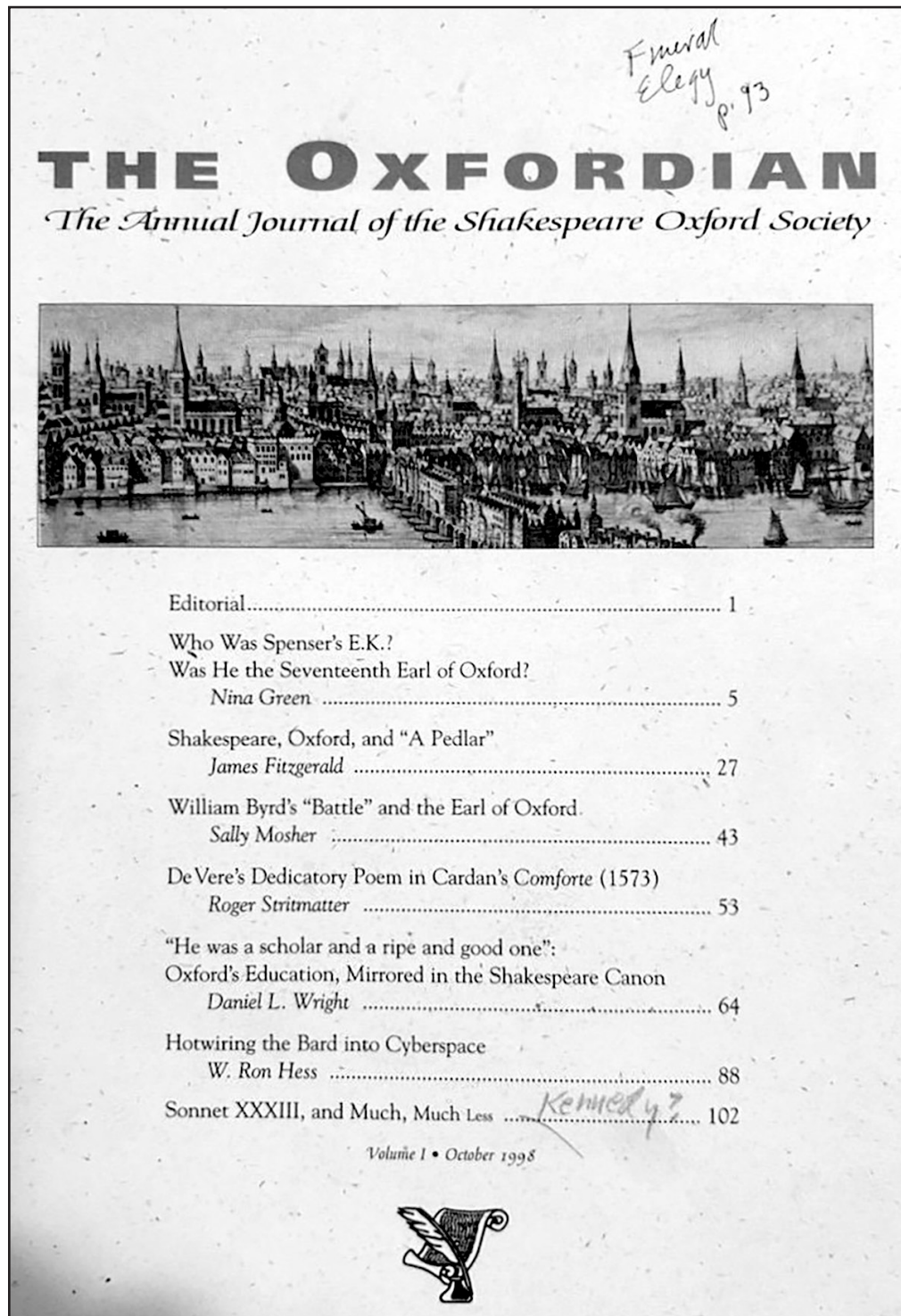
humorous, short pieces by Richard Kennedy that apparently were done for his own amusement. Preserving the full archive is important, as you may uncover early drafts and pieces the author did not know what to do with.

Looking through his archives, I see that Richard owned three or four copies of this issue of *The Oxfordian*. My theory is that he had multiple copies to give away to friends. Perhaps he was concerned about his reputation during this time due to the fact he was a best-selling author of children's literature.

Why does the authorship of this article matter? It is a part of Oxfordian history, which we must correct and preserve ourselves, since no academic institutions (yet) are interested. Also, it was in the first issue of a prestigious new Oxfordian journal, and its history is important, too.

I believe that the final article in *The Oxfordian*, Volume 1, was written by Richard J. Kennedy. If anyone can confirm or refute this, please contact newsletter@theshakespeareoxfordfellowship.org. It could be a response as simple as "We all knew it at the time." If confirmed, the record can be corrected, and I will have helped Richard Kennedy get a little of the recognition he deserves.

The article in question is pictured on page 20.



Cover of *The Oxfordian*, Volume 1, October 1998, with "Kennedy?" handwritten.

THE OXFORDIAN Volume 1 1998

Yet another interpretation of
Sonnet XXXIII

WE feel the following bit of exegesis important enough to defy the wishes of the author, who importuned us most urgently to consider his reputation before putting it into print. We trust that as long as his identity rests uncertain, his reputation remains unsullied, and that in time to come he will consent to oblige us with more of the same.

What Shakespeare wrote:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
 Even so my sun one early morn did shine
 With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
 But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
 The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
 Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
 Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

What Shakespeare wanted to say, but was afraid to, so he hid his meaning in poetic images:

"glorious morning" = the morning betokens a death.
 "mountain tops" = the person was buried on a hill.
 "sovereign eye" = weeping, "eyes that rain." (reign?)
 "golden face" = they should have buried the person sooner.
 "heavenly alchemy" = decomposition.
 "basest clouds" = it was also a rainy day, clouds low set.
 "ugly rack on his celestial face" = bad makeup.
 "his visage hide" = closed coffin would have been better
 "this disgrace" = "glace" is "ice" in French. They ran out of it.

The rest of the poem is sad, for someone's son has died, and at last the concluding line: "Suns of the world may stain, when heavens sun staineth," returning to the chief objections of the poet, the overlong delay of the interment, the lousy makeup job, and so forth.

THERE is a suggestion here that Philip Sidney was the dead youth, brought all the way from the Lowlands to be buried, and that Shakespeare wrote the poem as a commission for Sidney's uncle, Leicester, or perhaps the Countess of Pembroke.

There is a suggestion also, cleverly put in, that Shakespeare did not care for Sidney's verse and couldn't abide him for very long: "he was but one hour mine." Also another pun in that his mine of poetry was not worth more than an hour's digging into, very likely a reference to Sidney's *Art of English Poesie*.

Sidney's heroic, I suppose, but foolish death is accounted in the lines: "Even so my Sun one early morn did shine ... But out! alack!" This seems to be a reference to Sidney's tossing off of his armor before the battle, which, alack indeed, got him killed.

And there is more, much more, much, much more. In fact, I think a good case could be made that all the poems are about Sidney, especially the first seventeen in premonition that the young poet would soon be dead in the wars and should get married so his wife could see to the funeral arrangements and get a better job done preserving his beauty for those who wanted a final look at him. _____

Falstaff's Fencing—Shakespeare's Special Knowledge in *Henry IV, Part 1*

by Jens Münnichow

Erasmus of Rotterdam, a Dutch polymath of the Renaissance, coined one of the best-known mottos of Renaissance humanism; *Sed in primis ad fontes ipsos properandum*, i.e., *first and foremost, one has to go to the sources*. In its shortened form *ad fontes*, i.e., *to the sources*, Erasmus's idea has survived the centuries and become one of the foundations of the scientific method that we still adhere to in scholarship today. Applied to studying works of literature, *ad fontes* means to read the primary literary texts closely and to base theories about them on actual text references rather than on ideas based on traditional narratives.

A close reading of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* reveals interesting special knowledge about fencing. In Act 2, Scene 2 Falstaff robs travelers on a highway near Gadshill and is himself robbed immediately afterwards by Prince Henry and Poins, who had set up the whole scene to play a trick on Falstaff for their own amusement. In Act 2, Scene 4 Falstaff reunites with Prince Henry, still not knowing that the Prince himself had robbed him, and brags about how he fought bravely against one hundred robbers. When Prince Henry questions this, Falstaff replies: "I am a rogue, if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together" (2.4.162–3).

He goes on to exaggerate the blows he took and how he stood his ground. Yet his bragging is less interesting than a specific word he uses in his introductory sentence. As a historian from Germany, I recognized the word "half-sword" immediately and was excited to find this technical term in Shakespeare. It is a direct and literal translation of the corresponding, originally German term "Halbschwert," which describes a fencing technique that evolved in the late Middle Ages, beginning in the 14th century and becoming ever more important in the 15th and early 16th centuries.

When exercising this technique, the swordfighter grabs the sword with two hands, one at the hilt, the other on the top of the blade, at about half its length. If well-trained fighters used a very tight grip on the blade and moved both hands simultaneously forward in the thrust, they could perform this technique even

if the top of the blade was sharp. Professional fighters wore padded gloves and gauntlets, of course, so they didn't rely on their technical training alone for protection. Consequently, the sword is not used for strikes and slashes, but for stabs, which can be directed very precisely towards the gaps in an opponent's armor. This two-handed grip of the sword allows the fighter to use a lever and direct the sword's point far more accurately than he would be able to when holding the sword with only one hand.

This technique is a consequence of the development of ever heavier full-plate armors that had become more prevalent in the 15th and early 16th centuries. The sword's edge became effectively useless as a cutting tool against the steel plates of such armors and, therefore, it became necessary to exploit the gaps in those armors with precise stabs. Given that the gaps of the armors were limited to the spaces of the human body where joints are located, the potential targets for a stab were relatively small in number and area, thus, great precision was an absolute necessity.

Elbows and knees were among the potential, but not very attractive, areas of attack because a hit on these joints does not guarantee a quick incapacitation of the opponent. Attacking shoulders, armpits and the hip and groin was far more promising because several arteries run very close to these areas of the body where a stab is far more likely to cause massive bleeding and kill an opponent very quickly. In using half-sword, the fighter gives up the advantage of reach that one-handed sword fighting offers and gains the advantage of precision in a close-quarter-combat situation.

Consequently, the word "half-sword" was also used in a metaphorical way to describe close-quarter-combat. In addition to a sword of lesser length, the OED provides a second definition for "half-sword" as "to be at half-sword, to be at close quarters with swords."

In Shakespeare's time, the word "half-sword" itself was still new in the English language—it didn't even appear in specific English fencing treatises. Wiktenauer.com, an online portal dedicated to connecting scholars and practitioners of HEMA (Historical



Plate 214 of Codex Wallerstein, depicting half-sword and mordhau techniques, 15th century, Augsburg University Library.

European Martial Arts), provides full texts of fencing treatises and states that the technique itself was first described in the English language in the so-called “Ledall Roll” written by J. Ledall between 1535 and 1550 (“Ledall Roll”).

The technique next appeared in George Silver’s 1599 treatise “Paradoxes of Defence.” Neither Ledall nor Silver use the actual word “half-sword.” Silver refers to the technique as “within the half rapier” (“George Silver”).

The OED lists the first recorded use of “half-sword” in “1589: Pasquil’s Ret. Db,” in the phrase “To meete with his wisdom at the halfe sword.” “Pasquil’s Ret.” refers to “The Returne of the renowned Cavaliero Pasquill of England, from the other side the seas, and his meeting with Marforius at London upon the Royal Exchange.” Better known as simply “The Return of Pasquill,” this pamphlet was published in 1589 as part of the Marprelate controversy—a bitter exchange of satires and rebuttals between defenders of the Church of England and Puritan reformers.

The pseudonym “Pasquill” (sometimes “Pasquil”) was used by supporters of the Church of England and “The Return of Pasquill” was likely authored by a Church of England supporter. Although Nashe scholar Ronald McKerrow was not perfectly convinced of Thomas Nashe’s authorship, he nonetheless included

“The Return of Pasquill” in his publication of Nashe’s works in 1910.

Antony Munday has been proposed as an author for “The Return of Pasquill” since the early 20th century. Although this attribution is not uncontested, it is, nonetheless, still upheld to this day, for example, by Eric D. Vivier, in his 2014 dissertation on Early Modern English Satire (93).

Previous biographers of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, have shown that both Nashe and Munday were closely connected to Oxford. Munday was employed by Oxford as a secretary and supported his literary activities (Anderson 159, Ward 174, 185), while Nashe praised Oxford’s literary achievements hoping for Oxford’s support for his own publications (Anderson 259–60).

Returning to the linguistics of the term “half-sword,” we find that it was not only a rare combination of words in the general English language in Shakespeare’s time, but also in his works. A full text search of Shakespeare’s works shows that the aforementioned quote from *Henry IV, Part 1* is indeed the only appearance of the expression “half-sword” in the entire Shakespeare canon, including spelling variants like “half sword” or “halfsword.”

Although the specific word “half-sword” is used only once by Shakespeare, he presents us with two more details in the very same play that add to the notion that the author indeed understood the technique of half-sword correctly. It is again Sir John Falstaff who shows us Shakespeare’s understanding of fencing. Although he is presented as a drunk, lying, bragging buffoon character in general, he is, at least at the very core of his person, still an old soldier. He knows, in theory at least, how to fight and fence.

When he sees the deceased Henry “Hotspur” Percy on the battlefield of Shrewsbury in Act 5, Scene 4, he musters up all his bravery and dares to stab the dead rebel leader. In doing so, he tells us: “Therefore, sirrah, [Stabbing him] with a new wound in your thigh, come you along with me” (5.4.127–28).

Of all the areas of the human body that might be suitable for a decisive blow, Falstaff chooses the thigh. Although quite unpretentious in itself, the thigh is one

of the few areas where a nobleman like Henry Percy, who would have been well-equipped with the best full-plate armor available at the time, would have been vulnerable at all. So, Falstaff chooses a target for his attack that a soldier trained in military style fencing would choose in order to kill an opponent effectively, rather than to look good in a choreographed theatre stage fight.

Falstaff even mentions the thigh a second time. When he next meets Prince Henry and brags about his oh, so brave action on the battlefield, he mentions: “I’ll take it upon my death, I gave him this wound in the thigh” (5.4.148–49). Falstaff could just have told us, “I gave him this wound,” but instead he specifically repeats the “wound in the thigh.” Regarding the plot and the character, this repetition is perfectly superfluous, and yet, Shakespeare includes it into his work. It is a frequent pattern in Shakespeare that the repetition of seemingly superfluous details is not only an artistic playing around with words, but the Bard’s deliberate way of showing his special expert knowledge in many fields.

In summary, the author Shakespeare presents a relatively new technical term from the field of military-style fencing that originated in Germany and had not yet appeared in English language fencing treatises in its exact English form. The word was first used by close associates of Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, and was so rarely used at the time that the second recorded appearance is Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part 1* (OED). In addition, the author Shakespeare adds information that indicates his profound understanding of military fencing, in contrast to theatrical stage fencing.

Given that neither military fencing nor German were part of the contemporary grammar school education, but were indeed part of the education of a nobleman, it is everybody’s guess if an alleged theatre manager from Warwickshire or a sophisticated nobleman like Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is the more probable candidate for including the aforementioned word and associated details in a piece of literature.

(Readers who would like to see late medieval fencing techniques like the aforementioned might look for the clip “Half swording” on the “Junon Armory” channel on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi757-7XD94>).

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On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I'm thrilled to announce our new 2026 outreach project: a series of animated short videos designed to introduce new viewers to the basics of the Shakespeare Authorship Question. These visually engaging, five-minute videos will serve as flagship resources for students and online audiences, helping us to broaden our reach and spark curiosity about the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Our organization already offers a rich collection of long-form lectures and interviews online, but these concise, beginner-friendly videos will allow us to introduce viewers to Oxfordianism like never before. We're partnering with British animator Nick Hilditch to bring the life of Edward de Vere to the screen, exploring topics like the history of the authorship question, famous skeptics, parallels between de Vere's life and *Hamlet*, and fascinating details from the First Folio.

High-quality animation comes at a cost—just under \$1,000 per finished minute—but it's one of the

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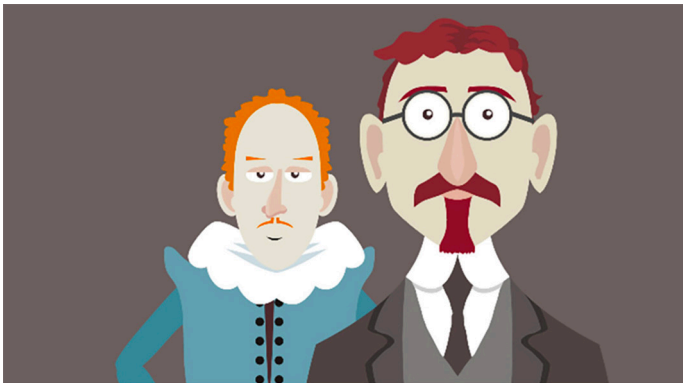
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J.T. Looney discovers that Edward de Vere was the true author behind the pen name.



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Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers were the original audience for Shakespeare's plays.



The fantasy of scribblin' Will is about to implode!

“Who’s there?” Ghost of the SAQ Hovers over *Hamnet* from Beginning to End

by William Boyle

First off, I’ll have to admit I had no idea the film *Hamnet* was even coming. In the midst of our current crazy world, it was easily lost in all the noise. But now it’s here, and like all things claiming to explain the life of the author William Shakespeare, it carries with it the inevitable authorship questions.

The film is based on a novel published in 2020 (*Hamnet*, by Maggie O’Farrell), and that book was based in part on an article by Stephen Greenblatt in 2004 (“The death of Hamnet and the making of Hamlet,” *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 21, 2004). As usual, such mainstream Shakespeare articles attempt to fill the void of the non-life of the non-author, and are for many of us just part of the authorship landscape. I had never taken the Hamnet-Hamlet “connection” very seriously, since there literally wasn’t one.

But the sudden blitz of ads starting in November 2025 couldn’t be missed, followed by the rave reviews, and then by the film winning the Best Picture award at the Golden Globes in December. And now it is being talked about as the front runner for winning Best Picture at the Oscars. Shades of 1998 and *Shakespeare in Love*, and in this instance *Hamnet* director/writer Chloe Zhao is someone who has been there before, having won Oscars for both Best Picture and Best Director with *Nomadland* in 2020.

So just what is it with this film and the response it’s getting? Here are a few thoughts I’ve had in recent weeks, garnered from some of these recent reviews, and then from my finally seeing it.

The film opens with a classic text prologue (white on black) stating that in the 16th century, the names “Hamnet” and “Hamlet” were considered interchangeable due to a lack of standardized spelling. Some reviewers criticized this, arguing that it forced an obvious connection between the son and the play onto the viewer before the story even began. But in her book O’Farrell included a blurb notifying readers that the



Shakespeares lost a son whose name appears in historical records as either “Hamlet” or “Hamnet,” thus informing readers at the outset about both the possible connection of Hamnet and Hamlet, and also informing them that Hamnet dies, thus setting the stage for considering that Hamnet leads to *Hamlet*. So, even though the Hamnet/Hamlet thing is supposedly not about the SAQ, right off the bat we get a very SAQ-like note (about spelling no less) introducing the film, and only then (seemingly) are we ready to proceed to the story.

Another review, raising another significant question, comes from none other than

Shakespeare scholar Jonathan Bate, who wrote that he was “curious” as to why there was so much buzz around this film, so he went to see it. Amid his review (in *The Sunday Times*, January 17, 2026) he makes this observation about who Hamlet is:

Besides, *Hamlet* is a play about mourning and avenging a dead father, not a dead son. As the action of *Hamnet* is moving towards the staging of *Hamlet*, there is brief mention of Shakespeare’s father’s death. For a moment I thought we might be going down Sigmund Freud’s rabbit hole: he was convinced that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* as a way of dealing with his Oedipal relationship with his father and mother. But this idea was not pursued, despite the film making use of the tradition that Shakespeare’s best performance as an actor was in the role of the ghost of old Hamlet. As for Freud, shortly after proposing his theory, new scholarship revealed that the play was written before Shakespeare’s father died, so in order to stick with his reading the good doctor switched horses and proposed that the plays were really written by the Earl of Oxford, whose father was dead.

Bate’s gratuitous remark about Freud “switching horses” and only then arriving at the Oxfordian theory is—well, what can we say? Nice of him to mention Oxford, and yet still manage not to mention that the entire Oxfordian authorship thesis is very much the fit between the fictional Hamlet and the very real Earl of Oxford. It is, really, the core issue of the authorship debate, that “Who was Shakespeare?” and “Who is Hamlet?” are in fact the same question.

Most reviews of *Hamnet* have been raves at the “fact” that everyone is moved to tears by the ending, and that the film’s emotional ending helps explain the meaning of *Hamlet*, and the power of art in general, and all at once. It’s quite a major point in many reviews.

One of the most significant reviews of this type (i.e., that it’s a successful tearjerker ... you will cry) came about not in print, but in public remarks made by a major celebrity, living legend Jane Fonda, who loved the film enough to go out to a Palm Springs Film Festival to endorse it. Fonda devoted several minutes of her time to giving *Hamnet* the sort of publicity that money cannot buy. She said that, at the urging of her son, she had ventured out to a movie theater to see it, and came away with the following:

This is what film is supposed to be. This is a perfect film, in my opinion. It’s ironic that a film about Shakespeare or about his family has little to do with words; it’s beyond words. If you give yourself over to it, you can feel the scales falling off your heart as you watch. You feel yourself being taken down to bedrock; it’s a primal film that I believe could only have been made by a woman like Chloé.... This was a great year for films—there are so many great films this year and so many great performances—but *Hamnet* is in a world of its own.... Everyone in the theater where I was, like me, was sobbing. And I’m sure the others, like me, if you asked why, would not have been able to say. But I was taken somewhere that I have never been before. I feel so proud of being in the business of moviemaking when I see a film like *Hamnet*. And I am so thrilled and honored to have been asked to come here and honor this movie...a perfect film and a great, great piece of art. (From *The Hollywood Reporter*, January 4, 2026)

Indeed, quite an endorsement. Everyone in the theater was sobbing? Really?

Yet other reviews, such as in the December 5, 2026 *New Yorker* podcast with David Remnick, say *Hamnet* is not great, but is instead a form of “grief porn,” a masterclass in manipulation. This review is more in line with my reaction, that Zhao’s *Hamnet* version of *Hamlet* is in effect reducing the great masterpiece to some sort of Bambi story (but with the child dying, not the parent), and in bragging about how effective it is in making people cry, what the film is really doing is reducing Shakespeare to an Elizabethan Walt Disney. This is not, in my book, bringing us any closer to understanding Shakespeare, or to how (as Greenblatt famously said in his 2004 *Will in the World*) “Shakespeare became Shakespeare.”

After reading all these reviews and articles, I finally got to see the film for myself. I was not crying at the end but rather laughing at the absurdity of the storytelling, and especially at the climactic moment when Anne/Agnes reaches out to touch the boy playing Hamlet. The dramatic ending where the audience reaches out to the performer seemed a bit familiar and can be seen in any of a number of pictures from just about any rock concert from recent decades.



Hamlet the rock star?

Well, why not, I guess? Just so long as he’s not you-know-who.

An Oxfordian Response to *Hamnet*

by Matt Hutchinson

The 2025 film *Hamnet*, based on Maggie O’Farrell’s 2020 novel of the same name, tells the tragic story of the grief of William Shakspeare and his wife Anges (usually referred to as Anne) after the death of their eleven-year-old son Hamnet from plague in 1596. The film argues that Shakspeare went on to create and name his great play *Hamlet* after his son, with ‘Hamlet’ and ‘Hamnet’ seen to be interchangeable in an era before standardized spelling. The book has sold over two million copies, and the film has become an awards magnet, especially for Jessie Buckley’s incredible performance as a grief-stricken mother. *Hamnet* will therefore likely have an enormous impact on how the general public views the life of Shakespeare and the creation of his masterpiece.

Unfortunately, several of the “facts” portrayed in the book are incredibly tenuous. Sir Jonathan Bate, one of the most famous Shakespeare scholars in the world, was so upset by the inaccuracies in *Hamnet* that he penned not one but two negative reviews castigating the film for its faults and stating it is based on “a false premise.” For instance, in an “Author’s note” O’Farrell writes that:

...it is not known why Hamnet Shakespeare died: his burial is listed but not the cause of his death. The Black Death or ‘pestilence’ as it would have been known in the late sixteenth century, is not mentioned once by Shakespeare, in any of his plays or poetry. I have always wondered about this absence and its possible significance; this novel is the result of my idle speculation.

This bizarre statement is simply not true, and it is remarkable that it continues to be printed in recent editions of the book. As noted by Austin Tichenor, writing for the Folger Shakespeare Library, the word “plague” appears 107 times across Shakespeare’s works, not mentioning synonyms such as “pestilence” such that;

From his earliest plays to his later ones, Shakespeare’s plays are filled with references to disease, infection, corruption, and contagion, so it’s probably fair to consider *all* of Shakespeare’s scripts “plague plays” (Tichenor 2021).



“Hamnet,” cropped from an engraving of William Shakespeare and his family by George Edward Perine, c.1890, public domain.

The beginning of O’Farrell’s book contains an “Historical note” with alleged historical facts, including:

- The boy, Hamnet, died in 1596, aged eleven.
- Four years or so later, the father wrote a play called *Hamlet*.

O’Farrell takes the composition date of *Hamlet* to around 1600 seemingly as fact. The composition dates of all of Shakespeare’s plays are a matter of speculation, not fact, as illustrated in E.K. Chambers’s study “The Problem of Chronology” in his book *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*. That Chambers used the word “problem” illustrates the difficult attempt to date plays due to a fragmentary historical record.

A tragedy called *Hamlet* existed in London from at least 1589

Scholars have long accepted that a tragedy *Hamlet* existed from at least 1589, seven years before Hamnet Shakspeare died. In a 1589 pamphlet, a young Cambridge graduate writer, Thomas Nashe, refers to a play *Hamlet* and its “tragical speeches.” Nashe would soon become embroiled in a “pamphlet war” with an old Cambridge pedant Gabriel Harvey. As preeminent Nashe scholar Ronald McKerrow noted, the pamphlet war between Nashe and Harvey had at its root the famous tennis court quarrel between the courtier poets Philip Sidney and Edward de Vere. While the stuffy Harvey took the side of Sidney, Nashe was very much “team Oxford,” peppering his pamphlets with allusions to his master, calling him “Will Monox” meaning “Will, my Ox” and “the blue boar,” a symbol of the Oxford family.

The Harvey-Nashe pamphlets contained many more allusions to *Hamlet* well before Hamnet died. Both Dennis McCarthy and Katherine Chiljan have noted how Harvey riffs on the “to be or not to be” soliloquy in Harvey’s 1593 *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (Chiljan 277–8), while McCarthy observes that Nashe’s *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem* of 1594 parodies *Hamlet*’s gravedigger scene (McCarthy 91–93).

***Hamlet* is clearly based on preexisting material.**

The story of *Hamlet* stretches back millennia. Originally a Scandinavian myth dating back to 1200 CE called *Amleth*, the original contained the same elements of the hero avenging the death of his father, murdered by his uncle, who quickly married the hero’s mother, the hero feigning madness, killing a hidden spy and his testing by a young woman.

In 1570 Francois de Belleforest published *Histoires Tragiques*, which included the story of *Hamlet*, but doubled the story’s length and added many new



“Amleth” c. 1590, artist unknown.

elements that were incorporated into Shakespeare’s play, such as the character’s melancholy. The name ‘Hamlet’ then, and sense of melancholy were not Shakespeare’s invention based on his personal life but based on pre-existing material.

“Shakespeare” added many episodes from the Earl of Oxford’s life to his version of the play.

Like Hamlet, de Vere was captured by pirates and let go on the seashore. Hamlet referring to “a falling out at tennis” (2.1.59) has been seen by many scholars (e.g., Chambers 142), as an allusion to the infamous Oxford-Sidney “tennis court quarrel.” Oxford’s brother-in-law visited the court of Denmark and returned with a report featuring Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Polonius has long been seen as representing William Cecil, Elizabeth’s chief advisor who arranged the eventually fractious marriage of his daughter Anne to

Oxford, with many seeing it mirrored in the triangular relationship represented in *Hamlet*-Polonius-Ophelia. Anne would tragically die in 1588, leading many to ponder if the first appearance of *Hamlet* the following year was directly inspired by her tragic passing.

The most famous soliloquy of all time was based on a source sponsored by Edward de Vere.

Both the book and the film *Hamnet* quote from Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy, although they stop short before his extended meditation on death. As long noted by scholars, this speech is influenced by philosopher Gerolamo Cardano’s book *Cardanus Comfort*, often referred to as “Hamlet’s book.” Edward de Vere was so enamoured of the book he helped finance the 1573 English translation.

O’Farrell’s *Hamnet* is an amalgam of unsupported and dubious contentions.

While the connections between Oxford and *Hamlet* are vast and substantial, the connection between

Shakespeare's son and the creation of his masterwork is not. *Hamnet* is deemed a "story of the plague." As mentioned, there is no evidence Hamnet died of the plague; 1596, the year he died, was not a large outbreak in Stratford upon Avon. As Bate notes, there was a myriad of ways a young man could die in those days such that statistically "It is almost certain that Hamnet did not die of the plague." Further, Bate notes, "*Hamlet* is a play about mourning and avenging a dead father, not a dead son."

When one of the most famous Stratfordian scholars points out this simple yet glaring point about the wrong-headedness of the creation of *Hamlet*, you know you have a problem. Oxford lost his father at the tender age of 12 in what some have contended may have been a suspicious death. The Oxfordian interpretation of the creation of *Hamlet* is built upon a tight nexus of historical documents and contemporary corroboration. O'Farrell's *Hamnet* is mere speculation.

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In Memoriam: Paul Hemenway Altrocchi (1931-2026)

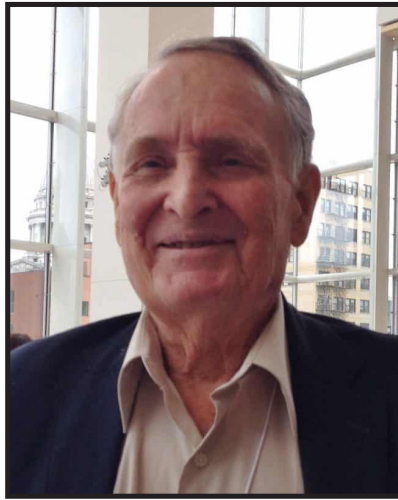
Paul Hemenway Altrocchi was born in San Francisco on June 8, 1931, son of Rudolph Altrocchi, Chairman of the Dept. of Italian at the University of California, Berkeley, and Julia Cooley Altrocchi, noted poet and Historian of the West. He died in Honolulu on January 28, 2026.

Paul graduated from Andover (1948), received his AB from Harvard College (1952) and his MD from Harvard Medical School (1957), after completing his neurology training at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in NYC. He fulfilled his two years of military service as a researcher at the National Institute of Neurological Diseases, National Institutes of Health, in Bethesda, Maryland. Subsequent degrees included a Master's in Public Health (1978) from U.C. Berkeley and a Diploma in Tropical Medicine (1979) from the University of São Paulo, Brazil.

Paul worked nights to pay his way through medical school. During his first year, he was elected President of his class. After his third year, he was awarded a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship from Harvard in International Health; he spent eight months in the South Pacific, New Zealand, Australia, and Africa. His final week with Dr. Albert Schweitzer at Schweitzer's hospital in French Equatorial Africa was one of Paul's lifetime high points.

Over the years, Paul's love of the peoples of the world and aspiration to do good during his time on earth led him to teach neurology in Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Brazil, the Navajo Reservation, and Okinawa. He also participated in water projects in Mexico, and, with the Rotary Club of Honolulu, several work projects in schools in the rural Philippines. At age 88, he helped build a Job Training Center in Thailand with the Rotary Club of Honolulu.

In 1957, he married Penelope (Pencie) McBride, and they moved to the Bay Area, where he joined the full-time faculty of Stanford Medical School and later became Head of the Department of Neurology at the



Palo Alto Medical Clinic. He and Pencie had five daughters, Sally Altrocchi, Catherine Waidyatilleka, Polly Clark, Alexandra Wolbach, and Julia Slatcher, all of whom he imbued with a love of our world and a keen understanding of one's obligation to contribute to the world in a positive way.

After he and his wife separated, Paul moved to Bend, Oregon, where he practiced neurology until his retirement in 1998. During that time he became President of the Bend Rotary Club and helped to establish the first

Rotary Club in the Soviet Union. He became an enthusiastic skier, fly-fisherman, bow-and-arrow hunter, and continued his world travels and teaching.

He lived his final 20+ years in Hawaii, during which time he published prolifically: a medical book on back pain and seven other books on diverse topics, in addition to a dozen books and two dozen scholarly papers on his favorite hobby, the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

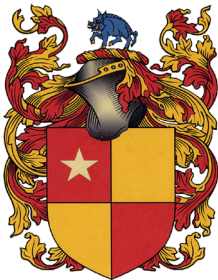
An Oxfordian since the age of 16, Paul learned about the SAQ from his mother, Oxfordian scholar Julia Cooley Altrocchi. He was recognized for his contributions to the Oxfordian movement at the 2014 SOF conference in Madison, Wisconsin, where the board of trustees awarded him the Oxfordian Achievement Award. Hank Whittemore presented the award, praising Altrocchi as a physician, artist, and indomitable seeker of truth, stating: "We honored Paul for his years of diligent research, his sharply written papers, several books, and one novel. His 2010 collection of his papers titled *Malice Aforethought* is the greatest expression of his work."

Surviving him are his five daughters, nine grandchildren (Caden and Dillon Waidyatilleka; Lucy, Cameron, and Caroline Clark; Otis and June Wolbach; Bennett and Wade Slatcher), and his partner since 2006, Wailani Broad, travel companion extraordinaire. He will be buried next to his parents in the family plot in Seymour, Connecticut.



*"Neurologist, De Vere scholar,
he savored his planet well."*

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“I can no other answer make but thanks,
And thanks, and ever thanks.”

— Twelfth Night Act III, sc iii

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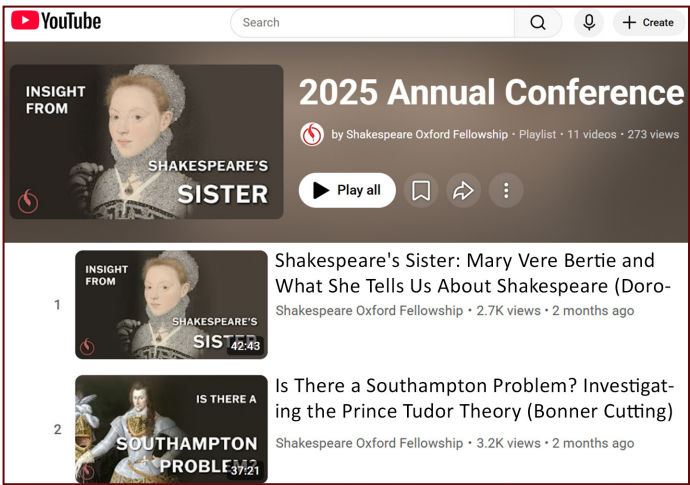
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2025 New Haven Conference
Videos Now Available

Eleven presentations from the 2025 SOF Annual Conference in New Haven, Connecticut, are now available to view on the [SOF YouTube channel](#). The conference, held September 18–21 at the Omni Hotel in New Haven, focused on the theme “Women and the Authorship Question.”

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