

Oxford's Metamorphosis into Shakespeare

German publisher Verlag Laugwitz has brought out the research of Shakespeare editor Gary Goldstein in *Oxford's Metamorphosis into Shakespeare* — which reveals the many topical allusions to English and European politics that Shakespeare incorporated into his 37 comedies, histories and tragedies during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James.

“My goal is to provide modern interpreters of Shakespeare with his original intent in writing six of the plays,” said Mr. Goldstein, recently the editor of the peer-reviewed history journal, *The Oxfordian* (2018-2025). These include *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Twelfth Night*, *Richard III* and *Henry IV*, and the tragedies *Othello* and *King Lear*.

“Although he used a myriad of literary sources — from the ancient Greek and Roman authors to contemporary French and Italian writers — Shakespeare also responded to the social and political events of his day in overt and sometimes subtle ways.”

In *As You Like It*, the playwright criticizes the Puritans by having a character describe them as “vile” in this brief exchange in Act V, scene i.

Audrey: Faith, the priest was good enough, for all the old gentleman's saying.

Touchstone: A most wicked, Sir Oliver, Audrey, a most vile Mar-text.

This brief interplay refers to the Martin Mar-prelate pamphlets published from October 1588 to September 1589 by a pseudonymous author named Martin Mar-prelate, which satirized the Anglican church for corruption in the name of Puritan principles. A Welsh preacher named John Penry was sentenced to death for sedition as the author in 1593.

Shakespeare, though, not only mocked the Puritans, but had the temerity to make fun of the Lord Chancellor of England.

In *Twelfth Night*, he ridiculed Sir Christopher Hatton in the character of Malvolio, who stumbles upon a prank letter written by Maria directing Malvolio to wear yellow stockings and smile grotesquely, making him look ridiculous to the household. The letter is signed Felix Infortunatus (“the fortunate unhappy”) — a reversal of the Latin pen name *Fortunatus infoelix* (“the happy unfortunate”), which Lord Chancellor Hatton used for his poetry in Elizabethan anthologies such as *A Hundred Sundry Flowers* in the mid-1570s. This identification was confirmed by Elizabethan contemporary Gabriel Harvey, Professor of Rhetoric at Cambridge University, who wrote in his copy of the collection: “*Fortunatus infoelix* – lately the posy of Sir Christopher Hatton.”

In *Othello*, Shakespeare launched an allegorical attack on Spain's political relationship with Venice, vilifying King Philip II of Spain as Othello by using the public testimony of his former Secretary of State Antonio Perez, who accused Philip in his published memoirs from 1598 of murdering his third wife Elizabeth Valois of France in her bed — by smothering her with a pillow in a jealous rage, just as Othello does in the play.

“The only way to recover Shakespeare's original intent is by acknowledging the proof of the authorship skeptics who have demonstrated that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), used the pen name William Shakespeare in writing the Shakespeare canon,” said Goldstein. “Though it is a circumstantial case, the evidence is compelling and based on four main lines of evidence.”

- Oxford's contemporaries publicly praised his skill as a poet and a playwright throughout his life, but no play or play list bears his name.
- Oxford's biography is incorporated throughout the Shakespeare plays in terms of incident, plot and characterization.
- The language of Oxford's poetry and private letters can be found throughout the poems and plays of William Shakespeare.
- Oxford's travels to France and Italy are reflected in a dozen Shakespeare plays in terms of geography, language and culture.

“The authorship controversy has appealed mostly to professors of English and History but rarely has it engaged the interest of the modern interpreters of the plays – the actors, directors and producers of the Shakespeare canon,” added Goldstein. “How does the authorship change the ways in which Shakespeare is produced for modern audiences? The most effective way is to reconnect actors and audiences with the historical context of the period in which Shakespeare wrote.”

Verlag Laugwitz specializes in literature of the English Renaissance, with a strong focus on Shakespeare, the Elizabethan period, and the Shakespeare authorship question. In addition to critical scholarship of Shakespeare, such as *Shakespeare's Education* by Robin Fox, Verlag Laugwitz publishes German translations and editions of Renaissance drama, including four plays by Christopher Marlowe and five Shakespeare plays (for example *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear* in German editions edited by Frank-Patrick Steckel). Also, German editions of Elizabethan plays *Edward III*, *Woodstock*, and a planned German edition of *Arden of Faversham*.

Oxford's Metamorphosis into Shakespeare, 165 pages, with illustrations. Available [online at Amazon](#) in hardcover for \$33.00.