



THE SHAKESPEARE OXFORD NEWSLETTER

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2018 SOF Conference Report Successful Interactions, Added Distractions

by Alex McNeil, Bob Meyers, Earl Showerman, James Warren and Hank Whittemore

About 100 people attended the 2018 SOF annual conference, which took place from October 11 to 14 at the Marriott Oakland City Center Hotel in downtown Oakland, California. The event was not without distractions: the hotel's union employees were on strike and maintained picket lines outside the front and rear entrances, using drums to make considerable noise most days from about 8 AM to 10 PM. A second, larger conference was also taking place at the hotel: the Cannabis Tech Conference. Perhaps not surprisingly, the aroma on the 10th Street sidewalk was pungent at mealtimes.

Attendees who arrived a day early were able to travel by chartered bus to a late afternoon reception at Ben August's house in Napa, where they socialized and sampled several wines that he produces.

First day: Thursday, October 11

Wally Hurst, former director of the Norris Theatre at Louisburg College, was the first speaker. In "Blame It on the Bard: Why the Author 'Shakespeare' is Responsible for World War I and World War II," Hurst summarized his recent research into the phenomenon that "Germany completely and utterly adopted Shakespeare." It is rare that residents of one nation lionize as a cultural hero someone from another country who doesn't even speak their language. Even today there are Shakespeare festivals throughout the country, and most of the world's non-English literary criticism of Shakespeare is in German. The German bardolatry began in the mid-19th century and grew over the next few decades. Nietzsche explored several Shakespeare plays in depth, especially *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*.

Influential German poet Stefan George (1868-1933) translated some of the Bard's works into German. Hitler owned a 1925 German edition of Shakespeare's works, and ordered him to be studied in schools. In his diary, Goebbels wondered how it came to be that Shakespeare had created Shylock. Hurst emphasized that Germany "perceived [Shakespeare] through the lens of his plays and characters," not in the context of his supposed biography. Nationalistic German writers and politicians incorporated some of his themes into their political ideology, particularly those of the need for an orderly society and for strong, decisive leaders; in Hurst's view, they saw "Shakespeare as a genius about power and conquest." Interestingly, Italy and Japan also celebrated Shakespeare in the years before World War II, though not to the extent that Germany did. Hurst noted that his research into this area has only just begun.

(Continued on p. 22)



photo: Kevin N. Hume/S.F. Examiner

From the President:

Everyone is tired of fake news, and we are Tired of Fake Shakespeare!

I am your new President, and I need your help!

I'm asking for your assistance in this **new, concentrated effort**. While we have the facts about Oxford being the real author behind the alias Shakespeare, as we know from current times, **facts are not enough!** Facts can be ignored or simply dismissed if they present a threat to current belief. There is much money at stake and reputations are threatened when we challenge the traditional myth that the author was William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. The evidence indicates that **the real author was Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford**. This claim impacts the validity of doctorates and biographies of so many Shakespearean "experts."

Shakespeare plays are presented every day in every country in the world. Many plays, movies, symphonies, and operas are based on his writings. His writings impact our daily speech. Yet, **the majority of the world doesn't know his real biography**. That by itself should lead to a renewal of interpretation of his works. There are many allusions that were topical to personalities of his time. To

investigate these allusions would create a **new Shakespeare Renaissance**. **People should be interested in the truth.**

Yet we are ignored by almost all of academia, the press and the population at large. Nobody seems to care. We are treated like an **irrelevant fringe cult!** We are basically Untouchable! Very few in academia will admit to even reading our evidence:

- They **ignored the seminal discovery** by J. Thomas Looney in 1920 with his book "*Shakespeare Identified*," where he revealed, through skillful detective work, that Oxford was the real author.
- They ignore the 2007 Shakespeare Authorship Coalition's "Declaration of Reasonable Doubt About the Identity of William Shakespeare," which has been signed by over 4,000 people now, including many academics.
- They ignore Richard Roe's 2012 book, *The Shakespeare Guide to Italy*, which demonstrates that the author traveled to Venice, Padua, Verona, Florence, and other places where the Shakespeare plays were set. We know that Oxford visited these cities, but there is **no** evidence that Shakspere of Stratford ever left England.
- They ignore Mark Anderson's 2005 biography of Oxford, *Shakespeare by Another Name*, in which he

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

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

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

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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."

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clearly **ties the life of Oxford to many scenes in the plays.**

The list of Oxfordian books and journals goes on and on. **All ignored!**

Stratfordians claim that Shakespeare was a genius who had an outstanding imagination and therefore the plays do not reflect his life. **Absurd!** Everyone's work—in literature, painting, music, science—reflects one's experience, education and travel.

Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon is not known to have had **any education**, and his parents, wife and children were **illiterate**. His will shows that he did not own any books, not even a family bible, or copies of Shakespeare's plays or poems that had been printed at that time. Neither he nor his family ever claimed that he was a writer (there is no evidence that he ever even wrote a letter!), never mind the author of some spectacular poems and plays. Many of the sources of the plays were available only in foreign languages—Italian, French, Greek, and Latin. How could he read them? Oxford, we know, was fluent in all these languages and had access to these sources. Oxford was also praised by several of his contemporaries as one of the best writers of his time, but one whose “doings” had **not** been “found out and made public,” as stated in a book published in 1589! Was it an open secret? Remarkably, no play under his name has survived.

Anyone with an inquiring mind who wishes to investigate the authorship question will turn to what the “experts” have to say. The “experts” are the professors of the leading universities: Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Stanford, etc. **These “experts” refuse to discuss the matter.** The famous Shakespearean actors Sir Derek Jacobi and Sir Mark Rylance have been ignored and ridiculed in England by academics for questioning the Shakespeare Authorship. An astrophysics professor at Stanford, Peter Sturrock, who wrote *AKA Shakespeare: a Scientific Approach to the Authorship Question*, has great difficulty in getting English professors to respond to his inquiries. One of his rare responses was, “You will never get me to believe that the works of Shakespeare were not written by the man from Stratford.” This is a Catch-22. It reminds me of the story that Galileo, having been the first to see the moons of Jupiter through his telescope, invited a math professor to take a look through the telescope; the professor declined because, he said, he knew there was nothing to see. “Experts” like these quash all inquiry and discussion, the opposite of what a university is supposed to foster.

Historically, our membership has hovered around 400 members. The Flat Earth Society has more members. Considerably more people claim to have been abducted and molested by space aliens. And they get press coverage! Recently, *CBS Sunday Morning* ran a feature on the Flat Earth Society. PBS runs a series called *Secrets of the Dead*.

A new documentary film by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan, *Nothing is Truer than Truth*, is now out and provides documented facts about Oxford. We need contacts in the media who will interview us. We are initiating a number of podcasts on the Authorship question.

This is what I need you to do:

1. **Renew** your SOF membership for 2019, if you haven't already done so. Ask your friends and family to join the SOF, and if possible, make an extra donation to support our research and outreach initiatives.
2. If you know **anyone in the media** (TV, radio, cable, local paper, local access channel) contact them, send them a personal note and a copy of this article. Have them interview you. We will join you if possible, and if not, we'll send you marketing material.
3. **Spread the word** through your personal network: friends, civic clubs, community centers, etc. You'd be surprised how people that don't know much about Shakespeare become riveted by this story.
4. **Link** our SOF website to your online posts.
5. Try to arrange a **local screening** of Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's documentary (and let us know if you succeed).

As President, my main objective is to focus on **outreach and public relations** in order to **increase membership**.

We are establishing closer coordination with the De Vere Society in England since it is the only other organization in the English speaking world promoting Oxford as the true author. Its Chairman, Alexander Waugh, has made many important discoveries, such as that the phrase “Sweet Swan of Avon” is a reference not to Stratford-upon-Avon, but rather to Hampton Court, which was referred to as “Avon” during the 16th century, and where Shakespeare plays were performed for Queen Elizabeth and King James. Surprise! This major discovery is also **ignored**.

We held our 2018 Conference in Oakland, California, where many of these ideas were discussed. We had an exciting video contest on the Authorship Question, and you can see the winners on our SOF website. Please share these videos with your friends. They are excellent in spreading the facts in three minutes! They are educational and fun.

Above all, **please renew your membership, have your friends join, and if possible donate to our Research Grant and our Outreach Programs.** These are the most significant ways to invest your money to ensure the future of our study of the true author Shakespeare. Remember, we are the only institution in the world that provides funding for Oxfordian research. Your donation is essential to maintain this program.

We have been too nice and respectful, trying not to offend the hallowed Stratfordians. And the Strats continue to get away with their malarkey! It's time for our voices to be heard!

GET THE WORD OUT!

We're here and we're clear. It had to be Edward de Vere! — get used to it!

No more “fake news”! We need to educate the world about this fascinating TRUE history.

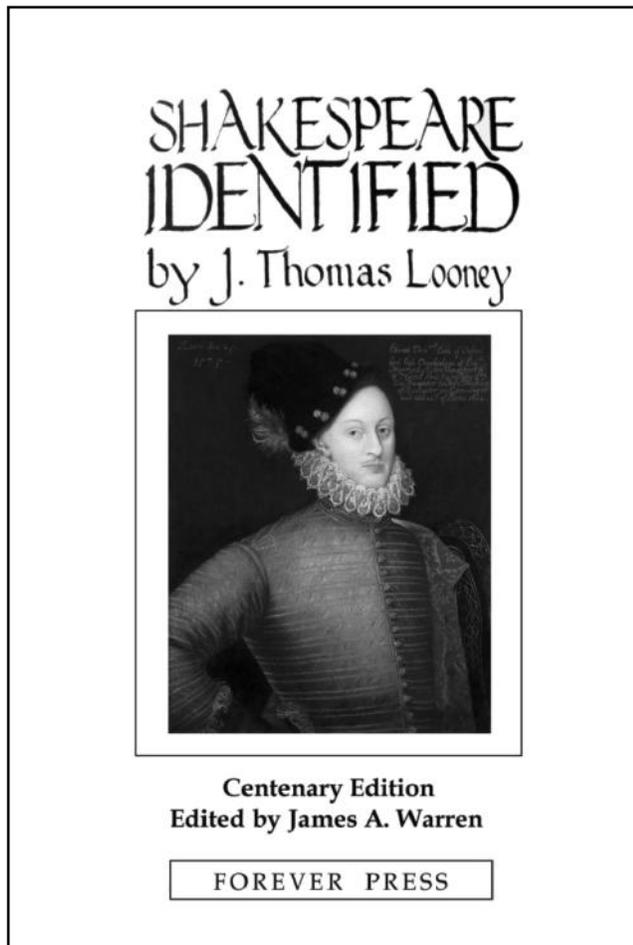
I look forward to your support and to hearing about your successes in this effort.

John Hamill, President

Advertisement

Centenary Edition *“Shakespeare” Identified*

Edited by James A. Warren and published by Forever Press, this new edition of the most revolutionary book on Shakespeare ever published lays out the full text of J. Thomas Looney's classic book in the first new typesetting since the 1920 U.S. edition.



Both the cover re-creating the dust jacket of the original 1920 Cecil Palmer English edition and the modern setting inside are designed to enhance readers' enjoyment as they make their way through Looney's fascinating account of how one man, shining light from a new perspective on facts already known to Shakespeare scholars of his day, uncovered the true story of who “Shakespeare” really was and how he came to write his works.

Perhaps most importantly for scholars, this edition identifies the sources of more than 230 passages that Looney quoted from other works, providing readers for the first time with accurate information on the books and papers he consulted in his research.

So even if you've read the book before, get set to enjoy, again, in a clean, modern format, the book that novelist John Galsworthy called the best detective story he had ever read.

Available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

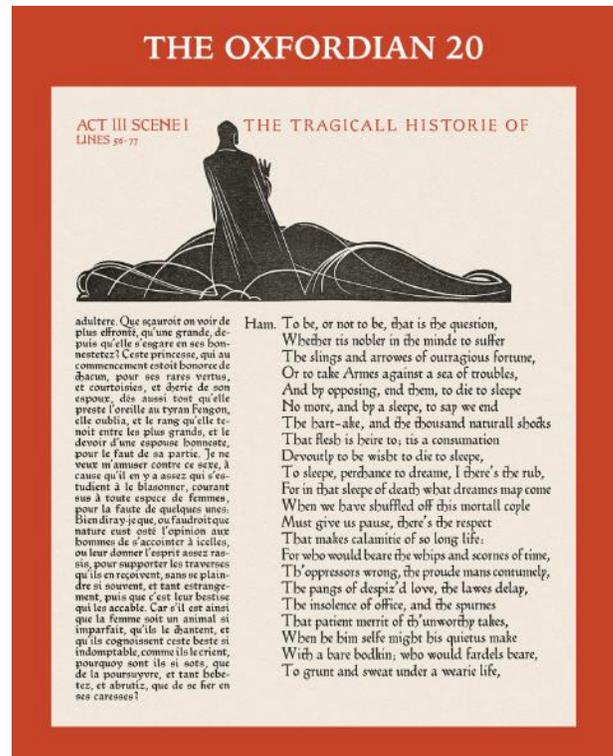
What's the News?

Volume 20 of *The Oxfordian* Published

The 20th issue of *The Oxfordian*, the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's annual peer-reviewed journal, has been published with six research papers and five book reviews, along with a short note and a feature article. Members of the SOF can access the journal online at <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/the-oxfordian/>. You may purchase a print copy at https://www.amazon.com/Oxfordian-Vol-20/dp/1726181545/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1541962470&sr=8-1&keywords=Oxfordian+20 for \$9.99 plus shipping. This is the first issue of *The Oxfordian* edited by Gary Goldstein, who previously edited *Elizabethan Review* and co-edited *Brief Chronicles*.

The lead article, "Did Edward de Vere Translate Ovid's *Metamorphoses*?" by Richard Waugaman, M.D., of Georgetown University, is a philological study of the 1565-67 English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It examines the widespread use of hendiadys (the expression of a single idea by two words connected by *and*, e.g., "sound and fury," rather than "furious sound") in both the translation and the Shakespeare plays, providing exact parallels in each. It also reveals unusual spellings in the Ovid translation that also appear in de Vere's private letters. The paper demonstrates that de Vere was the actual translator of this ancient masterpiece and not his uncle Arthur Golding, a Puritan whose religious beliefs conflicted with the licentious contents of Ovid's narrative poem. While most of the online articles in Volume 20 are password-protected, [Dr. Waugaman's article is freely available on the website](#) in pdf format.

Editor Gary Goldstein sent copies of Waugaman's article to a number of mainstream academics and to several news organizations, as part of the SOF's outreach program. Among the recipients are academics with an interest in the Shakespeare authorship issue, such as Alan Nelson from the University of California, Berkeley, and William Leahy at Brunel University. The paper has also been forwarded to scholars who have published on Golding's translation. The latter group includes professors Jonathan Bate and Madeleine Forey at Oxford University, Gordon Braden at the University of Virginia and Christopher McDonough at Sewanee. Publications that received a news release and copy of the full paper include journals such as the *Review of English Studies*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* and *Renaissance Quarterly*, as well as national media including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, and the Associated Press.



Other articles in Volume 20 include: "The 17th Earl of Oxford in Italian Archives: Love's Labours Found," by Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty, in which the authors detail the contents of four historical documents they uncovered about the 17th Earl of Oxford in the archives of northern Italy during the past three years; "The Knotty Wrong-Side': Another Spanish Connection to the First Folio," in which Gabriel Ready examines the ramifications of Ben Jonson's use of a particular Spanish poetic form in his prefatory poem in the First Folio; part two of "Ben Jonson's 'Small Latin and Less Greeke': Anatomy of a Misquotation," in which Roger Stritmatter reveals that the traditional interpretation of this famous phrase is at odds with its actual intended meaning; "The True Story of Edward Webbe And *Troublesome Travailes*," by Connie Beane, in which she proposes that this Elizabethan travel book should be attributed to Edward de Vere; "J. Thomas Looney in *The Bookman's Journal*: Five Letters (1920-1921)," in which James Warren republishes and discusses five long-forgotten letters by Looney that he recently discovered, where Looney defends the methods and conclusions of his 1920 book, "*Shakespeare Identified*"; "Geoffrey Fenton," a note by Warren Hope looking at connections between Fenton and Oxford and his circle; and "The Tragedie of Hamlet Prince of Denmark," in which editor Gary Goldstein revisits a 1930 edition of the play. Volume 20 also includes five book reviews.

The Oxfordian was founded in 1998 by Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, who served as editor through 2007.

The Oxfordian *Hamlet* Is Published

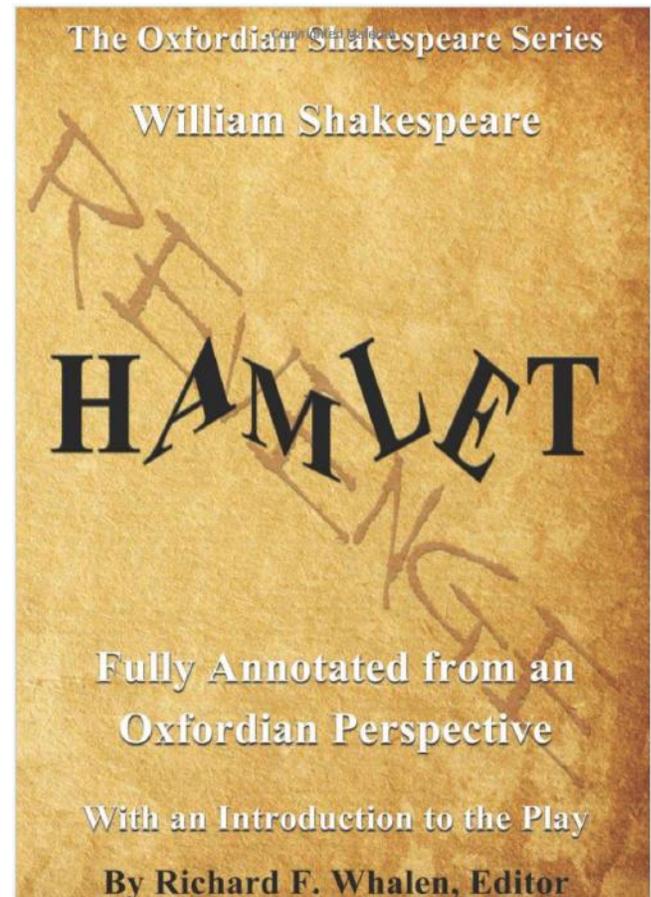
Richard Whalen has released his Oxfordian edition of *Hamlet*, which he calls the most personal and “autobiographical” of the Earl of Oxford’s Shakespeare plays and the play that Stratfordian editors have found enigmatic and the most intellectually puzzling. The reason, no doubt, is because they have the wrong man as its author.

Like the three other plays published so far in the Oxfordian Shakespeare Series and available at Amazon.com, *Hamlet* is fully annotated from an Oxfordian perspective. An Overview section includes a concise biography of Oxford and a description of the controversy over the identity of the author of the Shakespeare canon. An introduction to the play details the many and striking correspondences between Oxford’s life story and what happens in *Hamlet*. Extensive line notes expand on the parallels.

The other plays in the series so far and their editors are *Othello* from Ren Draya, of Blackburn College, and Whalen; *Anthony and Cleopatra* from Michael Delahoyde of Washington State University; and Whalen’s *Macbeth*, now in a second edition. He is the founding general editor and publisher of the series, a past president of the Shakespeare Oxford Society and a prolific contributor to Oxfordian publications, including a dozen research articles.

Central to this Oxfordian edition of *Hamlet* are the resemblances of the leading characters to significant people in Oxford’s life. Polonius, the principal adviser to King Claudius, is a satirical portrait of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, principal adviser to Queen Elizabeth. In the past, Stratfordians recognized the satire, but modern-day editions of the play have chosen to ignore it. Cecil was the fatherless Oxford’s surrogate father and guardian during his teens and then his father-in-law. Polonius’s only daughter, Ophelia, was inspired by William Cecil’s only daughter, Anne. For years, she and Oxford were raised in the Cecil household almost as sister and older brother. Both Anne and Ophelia in the play feared pregnancies and sought drugs to abort. When she was fifteen and Lord Oxford turned twenty-one, they were married and she became a countess. Just months before, the Queen had made the commoner Cecil Baron Burghley.

King Claudius, the charming but villainous poisoner in the play, was no doubt inspired by Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, a charming, handsome courtier and the Queen’s favorite. The ambitious Leicester was widely believed to have had anyone standing in his way poisoned, and Oxford would have had good reason to suspect that, when Oxford was twelve, Leicester had his father poisoned in a scheme to gain control of the revenue of his vast estates. In the play, the ghost of Hamlet’s father enjoins him to exact revenge on King Claudius, who poisoned him for his estate. Hamlet’s



revenge, however, takes a surprising and generally unremarked turn at the end of the play.

Another important parallel described in this edition is the remarriage of Oxford’s mother, the widow of the 16th Earl of Oxford, soon after his sudden and unexpected death, as if by poison, and, in the play, the “hasty” marriage of Gertrude, Hamlet’s mother and widow of the poisoned King Hamlet, to Claudius, the poisoner. He contrives to marry her and succeed old King Hamlet, his brother, on the throne of Denmark, the teenage Hamlet being too young to claim the throne just as the teenage Oxford was too young to claim his inheritance.

Whalen also shows how throughout the play the many knowledgeable references and subtle allusions to law and astronomy point to Oxford as the dramatist. He credits Tom Regnier, an appellate lawyer and past president of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship, for his analysis of the law in *Hamlet* and Oxford’s reading law at the Inns of Court. He cites Peter Usher, emeritus professor of astronomy and astrophysics at Pennsylvania State University, for the extraordinary number of references and allusions to astronomy in *Hamlet*, nearly all unremarked by Stratfordians. Many of them reflect the emerging awareness among mathematicians and astronomers of the new and revolutionary Copernican theory, overturning the Earth-centered cosmology of Ptolemy. Living in the Cecil household, a center of learning, Oxford would have heard about Copernicus. It

would have been most unlikely, Whalen argues, for Will Shakspere of Stratford to have learned about all the law and astronomy found in *Hamlet*.

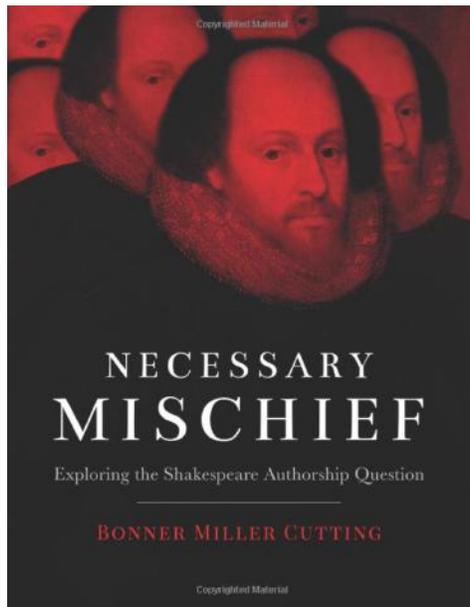
In the Note on the Play Text and in his Acknowledgements, Whalen credits Brigadier General Jack Shuttleworth (USAF ret.) for his transcription of the play text from the second quarto of *Hamlet*. Shuttleworth was head of the English department at the United States Air Force Academy for two decades. His Ph.D. in English literature is from the University of Denver. He wrote a draft of the line notes and began a draft of the introduction before he had to leave the project for personal reasons. His scholarly paper of 1998 first proposed an Oxfordian Shakespeare Series.

The Oxfordian *Hamlet* is available from Amazon at “Shakespeare Hamlet Whalen” in soft cover and ebook formats. (To date, the ebook format and screen size does not allow for the line notes to appear side-by-side on pages facing the play text pages on ebook screens, as they do appear in the soft cover print edition.)

A New Book by Bonner Miller Cutting

Bonner Miller Cutting has published *Necessary Mischief: Exploring the Shakespeare Authorship Question*. It includes ten chapters, two appendices, a bibliography and in index. Among the topics she treats in detail are Will Shakspere’s last will and testament (two chapters), wardship in Elizabethan England (two chapters), censorship, the Privy Seal warrant that authorized Oxford’s £1,000 annuity, a portrait of Lady Anne Clifford, the misidentification in another portrait of Lady Susan Vere as Lady Anne Clifford, “Historical Evidence for the Seymour PT Theory,” and a response to James Shapiro’s book *Contested Will*. Many of these were originally published separately in other publications such as *Brief Chronicles*, *The Oxfordian*, *Shakespeare Matters*, and in the book *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*.

Necessary Mischief is available for \$12 at Amazon.



Stritmatter Makes Headlines, But Not for Shakespeare

Prominent Oxfordian Roger Stritmatter was the subject of a page one article in the *Baltimore Sun* on October 17, but the topic was Herman Melville, not William Shakespeare. In an article by Mary Carole McCauley, Stritmatter announced that he is reasonably certain that a document he bought from an antiques dealer for \$850 in 2009 was produced by Herman Melville. The item in question is a satiric mock newspaper called “The Extr. Gazette,” produced by hand on both sides of a single 15 by 11-inch sheet of paper with “articles” and seven hand-drawn illustrations. Stritmatter believes that Melville composed it in April 1846, “to amuse his ailing older brother, Gansevoort, who died the following month from tuberculosis.”

Stritmatter was quoted in several places. “Finding this document was a lucky fluke. As soon as I saw it, I was transfixed by the intellect and the profound sense of humor, the creativity of the text and illustrations. The more research I do into Melville’s handwriting and his biography and the language he used, the more convinced I am that this is authentic.” Stritmatter noted that the handwriting “has been authenticated as Melville’s by a New York forensics laboratory, and [the] findings have been published in a major peer-reviewed publication, the *Journal of Forensic Document Examination*.”

As further evidence in support of his claim, Stritmatter pointed out that Melville was an “avid amateur artist,” that the paper was folded so as to fit into an envelope that could have been mailed, and that one of the illustrations depicts a sea monster. If the document is eventually accepted as by Melville, it will be the only example of an original drawing of his (a photograph exists of another drawing). Gansevoort Melville was “the secretary to the chief U.S. diplomat in England, who had been instrumental in helping” his younger brother find a publisher for his first book, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*, which was published first in England. Interestingly, Herman Melville’s most famous work, *Moby-Dick*, has a chapter about the discovery of the bones of a supposed sea monster.

Stritmatter hopes to present his findings in June 2019 at the Melville Society conference celebrating the 200th anniversary of the novelist’s birth.

John Shakspere Had Financial Troubles, Therefore . . .

In an article by Alison Flood in the *Guardian* on September 13 (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/13/william-shakespeare-father-legal-skirmishes-john-shakespeare-national-archives-glyn-parry>), it was reported that a British academic has—almost literally—unearthed twenty-one previously unknown documents detailing how Will Shakspere’s father, John, was “victimised by informers who wanted to extract money from him” and was in legal and financial trouble until at least 1583, when his son was nineteen. Professor Glyn Parry of the University of Roehampton went through about 100 boxes of old documents that were stored underground in the salt mines of Cheshire. Parry said: “Quite quickly I turned up one writ, then more, working through May into early June. In August I found more It was very exciting to have an educated hunch pay off, which is quite rare when working in the less-used parts of any archive. It’s a bit like that Christmas morning feeling as a child, unwrapping the box and finding the perfect, longed-for present.”

The *Guardian* article noted that the “documents Parry found include multiple writs against John Shakespeare, and record his debts to the Crown, including one for £132—around £20,000 today. They reveal how his property remained at risk of seizure by the Crown, hampering his credit as an entrepreneur, and that this continued until 1583.” Parry believes that living under this cloud “shaped the teenage Shakespeare’s attitude to power and morality, later explored in plays from *King Lear* to *Macbeth*.” Parry continued: “William Shakespeare learned in the schoolroom what he experienced at home, that, under monarchy, men who served the monarch immorally could flourish. There’s a deep desire for justice and equity, not the strict letter of the law, that runs through all his writing, and a critical view of the pretensions of the mighty.”

Professor Parry is to be commended for his diligence, and it is interesting to learn new facts about Shakspere’s family. For those who believe that the Stratford man was the true Shakespeare, much will probably be made of this apparent new connection. However, authorship doubters can take away several things from these discoveries. First, if John Shakspere was in such difficulties during his son’s first nineteen years, wouldn’t he have even more strongly needed Will to help out at home and have been less willing to spare him for school? Second, if John Shakspere was heavily involved in moneylending and wool dealing activities, doesn’t that make it more likely that his son would (as has already been documented) follow in his footsteps? Third, the playwright’s attitudes toward money and “the pretensions of the mighty” apply with equal force to Oxford, whose estates were avariciously mismanaged by

others following his father’s death, setting him up for a lifetime of financial misfortune. And fourth, what else can be uncovered in those boxes in the Cheshire salt mines?



Undercover work . . . some of the many thousands of documents stored in a Cheshire salt mine. Photograph: Graeme Robertson for the *Guardian*

Hedingham Castle: Britain’s Best Home?

If you have access to Netflix on your TV, you may want to search for *I Own Britain’s Best Home*, a 2008 reality show that is available here in the US ten years later. During each episode, each of the show’s three co-hosts visited a posh home and spent twenty-four hours there. The viewing audience then voted on which of the show’s three homes they liked best. The winning homes from the first eight episodes were all presented again on the final episode, and another round of audience voting produced the winner.

In Episode #4, one of the three competing residences was introduced as “The Ancestral Home.” Ancestral it certainly was, as the property was none other than Hedingham Castle! Strictly speaking, the featured home was not the ancient castle itself, but rather the house adjacent to it on the grounds. Co-host Charlie Luxton introduced viewers to “Jason” and “Demetra,” who had quit their jobs to live there full-time with their three small children (the show did not mention the last names of any of the homeowners).

The eight-bedroom residence consists of a Tudor era house with a Georgian era addition. Jason and Demetra had renovated part of the premises, but still had more to do. They had rewired, replumbed and reroofed the house. They said that it had not been used as a single-family residence for more than 100 years. In the post-World War II years it had been subdivided into eight apartments.

In the episode shown, co-host Charlie Luxton also



Views of Heddingham Castle and the “Ancestral Home”

strolled around Heddingham Castle itself, noting that its main stone arch is the largest such arch in England, if not all of Europe.

“The Ancestral Home” was the winner of its episode. The eight winning homes were all shown again on the ninth and final episode, where the winner was announced. Unfortunately, “The Ancestral Home” was not among the top three vote-getters. The winner was “The Yorkshire Castle,” featuring an indoor swimming pool.

Curiously, the show did not mention that Heddingham Castle was the ancestral home of the de Vere family or the Earls of Oxford. Thanks to information supplied by

Jan Cole, we have learned that Jason and Demetra’s last name is Lindsay, that they were still residing in the house as of 2018, and that Jason Lindsay traces his descent over nineteen generations from John de Vere, 7th Earl of Oxford (1311-1359).

For more information about the castle:
<https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/essex/castles/heddingham.htm>



In Memoriam: Daniel L. “Dan” Wright (1954-2018)

The Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Wright, retired English Professor at Concordia University and former Director of the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre at Concordia passed away at the age of 63 on Friday, October 5, in Vancouver, Washington. He had been battling health issues for a number of years, largely related to diabetes. His untimely death was due to complications from this disease. He is survived by his mother, Della Hatfield, brothers Mike and Darryl Wright, numerous nieces and nephews, and a host of friends and colleagues.

Daniel Wright was born in La Porte, Indiana, on November 30, 1954, to Della and Alden Wright. He earned his B.A. in 1976 at Valparaiso University in Indiana, with a double major in English and political science. In 1980 he received a Master of Divinity degree from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He was ordained in August 1980 and later served as a U.S. Navy chaplain. He then earned a Master of Arts in English from Valparaiso and a Ph.D. in English from Ball State University in Indiana, where he also taught English. After his years at Ball State he taught English at Indiana University and Auburn University.

In 1991 Dr. Wright moved to Portland, Oregon, to accept a position at Concordia College (later Concordia University) as a Professor of English in the College of Arts and Sciences from 1991 to 2013. Dr. Michael A. Thomas, the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, wrote a memorial tribute to him for the Concordia community in which he eloquently summed up Wright’s years at Concordia as a teacher, and as an Oxfordian heretic rocking the academic boat:

For those of us lucky enough to have served as his colleague, we knew him to be a brilliant and passionate scholar. His primary interests were in British and Continental Literature, yet he moved seamlessly through other disciplines as diverse as theology, philosophy, American studies, international affairs, theatre, music, etc.

Along with his colleagues in the English Department, he established the Sigma Tau Delta Honors Society for English majors. Most significantly, he inaugurated the Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre, served as its Director, and presided faithfully over the annual academic conference held at Concordia. This Centre was dedicated to the quest to identify the author of the Shakespearean corpus. For the record, Dan was staunchly an Oxfordian, and he wrote voluminously on this topic and presented at conferences around the world.

In addition to serving as the Director of the Centre for more than a decade, Dan was a wonderful,



Dan Wright

engaging—dare I say mesmerizing?—classroom teacher. Those of us who were blessed to have him as a professor would sit in awe of his ability to move seamlessly through myriad topics with aplomb. He inspired dozens of students at Concordia over the years to pursue advanced academic degrees, including this one.

James Gaynor, an alumnus of Concordia and now a Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at the University of Washington, credits his own pursuit of a doctoral degree to Dr. Wright’s example and guidance during his student years, when Gaynor was also assisting him in putting on the authorship conferences. He said of Dr. Wright’s profound influence: “I think it is fair to say that the brilliance, wit, passion, dedication, and generosity that characterized Dan’s work and life will be severely missed. The loss of a person with character of the magnitude of Dan’s is terrible.”

Within the Oxfordian community Wright’s presence had great impact from the moment he joined the Shakespeare Oxford Society in 1996, and continued right up until the day he left Concordia in December 2013. He regularly presented at society conferences and published papers in the society’s newsletters and journals.

In the fall of 1997 Wright joined the Board of

Trustees of the Shakespeare Oxford Society, shortly after taking the dramatic step of launching an authorship conference on his own campus (made possible by obtaining the permission of Concordia's president). The first Edward de Vere Studies conference was held in April 1997. It was memorialized by Mark Anderson in a May 1997 *Valley Advocate* (Springfield, MA) article. The opening paragraphs of Anderson's article captured the moment:

For all the heated accusations he faced, you'd think he was a slash-and-burn corporate raider on the rampage or a revolutionary scheming the overthrow of some third-world despot. In reality, all Daniel Wright did was plan an academic conference.

This past January, the professor got the green light to organize the First Edward de Vere Studies Conference at Concordia University in Portland, Ore., where he is chairman of the English department. Wright sent an announcement to the moderator of the Internet's worldwide Shakespeare discussion group—and was promptly told to take his call for papers elsewhere. That was the first sign of trouble.

"I fail to see the value of such a service if topics as central to the discussion of Shakespeare as the authorship of the works is forbidden by executive fiat," Wright replied to the discussion group's moderator. "What are you afraid of learning—or allowing others to learn? Please unsubscribe me. I have no place among such closed minds as yours."

By the time the conference began on April 4, English professors from around the country were sending Wright vitriolic messages that consisted of "spitefulness mingled with astonishment," as Wright now recalls.

The conference was a smash hit; at its height in the early 2000s nearly 200 persons attended each year. Charlton Ogburn, among many old-time Oxfordians, was delighted, and felt that this was a breakthrough moment for the Oxfordian cause. The conference was renamed The Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference in 2004 as Concordia planned on creating a Shakespeare Authorship Research Centre within its new library building. The Centre opened amid much fanfare during the April 2010 conference, while at the same time interviews were being filmed in campus offices for Lisa Wilson and Laura Wilson Matthias's authorship documentary *Last Will. & Testament*. Wright was one of those interviewed, sharing the screen with (among others) actors Mark Rylance and Derek Jacobi, both of whom he knew and visited during his trips to London.

One of the hallmarks of the conferences at Concordia was the wide range of points of view, ranging from Oxfordians to Marlovians, Baconians, Stratfordians, and

others, and the wide range of presenters, ranging from undergraduate students to tenured professors from around the world. Oxfordian scholar Dr. Roger Stritmatter remarked:

Dan Wright founded and steered the Concordia University Shakespeare Authorship Studies Conference, creating an event and a forum for Oxfordians and other authorship skeptics that was both unique and invaluable. A gifted and charismatic speaker, Dr. Wright brought to the Oxfordian movement over a period of many years an opportunity for exchange and scholarship without which all of us would have been greatly diminished in our experience. Some of us had our disagreements about some of the ways Dan developed the conference, but that should not distract from the underlying importance of the forum that he initiated and maintained over many years to the mutual benefit of many looking for a more realistic understanding of Shakespeare.

A frequent presenter was Alan Nelson, Professor of English at U.C. Berkeley, a staunch Stratfordian who was also a long-time friend of Wright's. Dr. Nelson recalled these years:

Daniel Wright became my best friend in the Shakespeare "authorship" movement, in part because we held similar academic posts, but more because Dan was endowed with an unsurpassed gift for friendship. He welcomed me to conferences at Concordia, whether as a debater or as a presenter, both of which helped me clarify my own thoughts. Though Dan occasionally cornered me with an appeal to change sides, he respected my decision to stick to "orthodox" beliefs. Looking back over the years, I particularly remember—in random order—our joint analysis of Earl of Oxford manuscripts recently donated to Concordia University; my joint presentation with Paul J. Altrocchi of our "Roscius" paper, later published in *Shakespeare Quarterly*; the day after July 7, 2005, when "London's 9/11" brought Dan to my London residence as a refugee from a temporarily isolated suburb; and a meeting at the Senate House, University of London, where we jointly examined the so-called "Cowell manuscript." Memorably, for me, Dan was open-minded enough to include me as a "Vero Nihil Verius" laureate. I lament the loss of a friend at once so gentlemanly, so urbane, so passionate and well informed in his own beliefs, so tolerant of the earnestly held beliefs of others.

The Oxfordian movement is not just a controversy between Oxfordians and the traditional Shakespeare academic community. It has its own share of controversy

within it, with many disagreements among Oxfordian scholars over how and why Edward de Vere became dispossessed of his life's work. At the 2005 conference Wright publicly switched his own position on that issue from a sexual/homosexual based theory to a more controversial, politically based one (the so-called "Prince Tudor" theory). In 2011 he arranged for the conference to take place in September in order to host the American premiere of the Roland Emmerich authorship film, *Anonymous* (partially based on the PT theory).

In addition to launching the annual authorship conferences on his campus, and presiding over them for the next sixteen years, Wright also played a significant role in several other important events in the Oxfordian movement.

Shortly after the first conference in 1997 he became acquainted with Stephanie Hopkins Hughes, who had just moved from Boston to Portland to be with family members. After accepting a place on the SOS Board that fall, Wright was instrumental in persuading the Board to fund *The Oxfordian*, with Hughes as its editor, which allowed her to produce a peer-reviewed annual scholarly journal dedicated to authorship research. At his suggestion Hughes enrolled at Concordia, partly to finish a degree begun years earlier, and partly to delve into the question of how the Earl of Oxford got the astounding education revealed in Shakespeare's plays. It was largely to assist her studies that he agreed to take her and a group of Concordia students to England in 1999 for a three-month exchange with their English cohorts at Oak Hill College on the outskirts of London, thus giving Hughes an opportunity to explore the British archives. By 2004 he had raised enough money at the annual conferences to send her back to England for six weeks, where she was able to identify Sir Thomas Smith as the primary source of Oxford's incredible education.

After learning of Dan's passing, Hughes said: "Dan is still and will always be one of the best and dearest of my lifelong friends. Words cannot express how grieved I am by his death. Since we've been close only by phone

for so many years, I had no idea of how sick he was. All we ever talked about was English history, English literature, and anything that gave us cause to laugh at the absurdities of the human condition. I miss him terribly."

Another important moment in Oxfordian history involving Dr. Wright was the awarding of a doctorate degree, based on a study of Edward de Vere, his Geneva Bible, and the Shakespeare authorship question, to Roger Stritmatter in April 2000. Wright was on the five-member Dissertation Defense Committee that reviewed Stritmatter's defense of his Ph.D. thesis (held at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst on April 21, 2000) and accepted it, thus making Stritmatter the first person to gain official recognition of the Shakespeare authorship question as a "reasonable" proposition within academia, one worthy of study in a Ph.D. thesis.

During the last two decades of his life Dan Wright was deeply involved in every aspect of the Shakespeare authorship debate, playing a key role in making the Oxfordian movement a significant fact of life in the world of Shakespeare studies. His presence will be sorely missed but his many contributions will live on.

Remembering her son, Dan's mother, Della, said, "Dan lived a very full life. He was a self-motivated child always striving to do his very best. This characteristic became the very core of him for all his life." Recalling some well-known lines from writer Erma Bombeck ("When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'"), she continued, "This, Dan, you did. May God hold you in the palm of his hand. Rest in peace."

A memorial service was held on Wednesday, November 14, 2018, at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Vancouver, Washington, with a mass preceding the memorial. There was a live webcast of the memorial for those who could not attend.

- Contributed by Bill Boyle

In Memoriam: Robert Detobel (1939-2018)

Noted German authorship doubter Robert Detobel, who made many contributions to improving our understanding of Oxford and his time, passed away on September 22, 2018, a week after collapsing while taking a walk near his home. He left no immediate family.

The fifth of seven siblings, Robert Detobel was born in Beert, Flanders, on August 12, 1939. His mother died

when he was six, after which he was raised by an aunt in Brussels for six years before returning to Beert. By the time he finished public school, he was fluent in German, French and English, as well as his native Flemish. He attended the University of Löwen, intending to study political science; it was there that he read Shakespeare for the first time. For several years he worked for a German-French translation agency. In 1971 he enrolled

at the University of Cologne, from which he graduated in 1976. A year later he moved to Frankfurt am Main and began working as a freelance translator.

His interest in the Shakespeare Authorship Question was sparked in a roundabout way in 1981.

Having written a paper on Polonius as “the forefather of classic psychiatry,” he then began reading the works of Sigmund Freud. As Detobel recalled in his “How I Became an Oxfordian” profile on the SOF website, “I started studying Freud, especially his *Interpretation of Dreams* and meta-psychological essays. In a footnote (and another in his short autobiography) he writes that after having read Looney’s work he no longer believed the man of Stratford was Shakespeare but was convinced that Edward de Vere,

17th Earl of Oxford, was the true author. I still had no interest in the authorship question. I just thought that Shakespeare must have had before his eyes some model for Hamlet. However, I began to think I could perhaps learn from Looney who this model was. I was—vaguely—thinking of the third Earl of Pembroke. I borrowed the two volumes (Looney and Ruth Miller’s complement). I read them the same evening... and I knew: Edward de Vere = Hamlet = Shakespeare.”

Detobel’s involvement with the authorship question deepened throughout the 1980s, and he spent much time at the libraries of the Max Planck Institute and the Universität Frankfurt am Main. These institutions afforded him access to important works like Arber’s transcription of the Stationers’ Register and Holdsworth’s 17-volume *A History of English Law*, which very few German libraries offer. He did much research on the history of the publication of Shakespeare’s works and on English law in Elizabethan times; in doing so he turned into an expert in these special fields.

In 1994 he published *Das Shakespeare-Komplott*, the first German-language book on the authorship issue. In 1997 he co-founded, with Dr. Uwe Laugwitz, *Das Neue Shakespeare-Journal*, and was a major contributor to that periodical. He later worked with many American Oxfordians, including Peter Moore, Christopher Paul and Robert Brazil. He was a frequent participant on several online authorship discussion forums.

In 2001 Detobel was honored by the Shakespeare Authorship Research Center at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, with its *Vero Nihil Verius* award. In 2010 he was actively involved in the founding of the German Oxfordian association, Neue Shakespeare



Robert Detobel

Gesellschaft. Shortly afterward his book *Will–Wunsch und Wirklichkeit* (“Wish and Reality”) was published, a thorough refutation of James Shapiro’s book *Contested Will*.

Among the dozens of articles Detobel wrote, in German and English, several stand out for their depth of analysis, including “Authorial Rights in Shakespeare’s Time” (published in two parts, *The Oxfordian* IV and V, 2001 and 2002); “Francis Meres and the Earl of Oxford” (coauthored with K.C. Ligon, *Brief Chronicles* I, 2009); and “Henry Chettle’s Apology Revisited” (*Shakespeare Matters*, Summer 2013).

Detobel collapsed on a bench while taking a walk near his home on September 15; tellingly, the book he had with him was *My Shakespeare: The Authorship Controversy* (2018, edited by William Leahy). He had told friends he intended to write a review of it, but, sadly, that was not to be.

Learning of Detobel’s passing, Hank Whittemore wrote, “I’ll always value the private communications I was privileged to share with him. He was a giant among us. A stubborn, dedicated, insightful giant who will be greatly missed.” Earl Showerman offered this remembrance: “Robert came all the way to Portland to speak at a conference at Concordia University on Shakespeare’s disconnect from all the anonymous quartos published in the 1590s. He was a dedicated translator, contributor and editor, and was immensely helpful to me in my research on *The Merchant of Venice*. He was a true mensch in our shared cause and will be sorely missed.”



Summary of SOF Annual Meeting

by Bryan H. Wildenthal, Secretary

Outgoing President Tom Regnier called to order the SOF's Annual Meeting at 8:30 AM on Saturday, October 13, 2018, during the SOF conference held at the Marriott City Center in Oakland, California. Several dozen members attended.

After approval of the minutes of last year's meeting in Chicago, the chairs of key committees delivered a series of reports on the Fellowship's activities during the past year.

A highlight of Treasurer Tom Rucker's Finance Committee report was that the SOF is investing more of our funds in suitable investment accounts to earn a greater return on our savings. Rucker also expressed heartfelt thanks for the extraordinary and selfless work done by Jim Warren, Trustee since 2015, in managing and helping with the Fellowship's membership database, bookkeeping, financial statements, and related tasks, serving on the Fundraising, Membership, and Finance Committees.

Warren had been nominated for a second three-year term on the board, but announced before the conference that he could not continue to serve, given his pursuit of several important Oxfordian projects, including more research and a forthcoming book and articles on J. Thomas Looney, founder of the Oxfordian movement. Warren recently published the first footnoted and thoroughly reformatted new edition of Looney's landmark 1920 book, *"Shakespeare" Identified*. He will continue to serve on the "SI-100" (Looney Centennial), Public Relations, and Data Preservation Committees.

Trustee Joan Leon, chair of the Fundraising Committee, reported that overall revenues remain on pace with previous years. She noted that the usual end-of-year membership and donation appeal would be going out soon. Leon noted that members have tended in recent years to make more targeted donations, especially to the Fellowship's Research Grant Program and to support headstone and centennial efforts honoring J. Thomas Looney. Leon also reminded members about the planned giving program launched two years ago, by which supporters may use a will or other long-term arrangement to make a bequest to the SOF. She invited members to read the brochure on this program and talk to her or anyone in the Fellowship's Legacy Society of people who have made such gifts, who are happy to explain how this may be done and their own reasons for doing so.

First Vice-President Don Rubin, chair of the Outreach Committee, delivered a brief report discussing the Fellowship's long-term challenges in building membership. He also discussed, partly in response to questions from members, the possibility of contracting with a part-time director of public relations.

Second Vice-President Julie Sandys Bianchi, chair of the Public Relations Committee (set to be merged with the Outreach Committee under her continuing leadership), followed up with a report noting the importance of

coordinating the Fellowship's public outreach goals and programs. Bianchi described pre-conference publicity efforts in the Bay Area, including an advertisement placed in UC-Berkeley's campus newspaper, the *Daily Californian*, flyers placed in numerous local bookstores, coffee shops, and other locations, and a press release sent out to dozens of area editors, reporters, English teachers, and professors.

Bianchi also described the SOF's new "podcast" program launched during the conference at her instigation. Half a dozen audio presentations featuring some of the SOF's leading writers and speakers were recorded during the conference, and will be released nationwide in coming months (stay tuned for updates on the SOF website and email listserv). Topics include "Shakespeare and the Law," "Sex and the Sonnets," and "Shakespeare's Will." Questions continued to focus on the need expressed by several members for the SOF to engage in more concerted and well-funded public relations efforts, an idea she indicated that she and other board members strongly support.

John Hamill, chair of the Research Grant Program (RGP) Committee, delivered a report on the RGP, now in its fifth year. More than \$6,000 has been raised during 2018 so far to support the RGP, with more than \$3,000 still needed to reach the goal of \$10,000. Hamill noted that the SOF is the only organization in the world currently funding any research on the subject of Edward de Vere's likely authorship of the "Shakespeare" canon. He noted that some research by past grantees is still in progress and awaiting reports. Research grants over the past four years to Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty for archival research in Italy have produced several reports at annual conferences (including this year) and in articles in the *Newsletter* and (this year) *The Oxfordian*. During 2016 and 2017, Nina Green received a grant to research Oxford's funeral, Eddi Jolly received grants to research Oxford's activities in Paris and to explore documents relating to Oxford in English archives and libraries, and Gary Goldstein received a grant to seek out the present location of books from Oxford's personal library.

Kathryn Sharpe then gave a brief report on the Data Preservation Committee, which she chairs. The Committee's mission includes four main tasks: (1) to create a legal framework by which creators and owners of important Oxfordian websites and blogs may, if they wish and the SOF agrees, hand over maintenance of such sites to the SOF once they are no longer able to do it themselves; (2) to support the development of the Shakespeare Online Authorship Resources (SOAR) database (created by Bill Boyle, working with Jim Warren) (see <http://opac.libraryworld.com/opac/home.php>); (3) to launch a preliminary inventory of documents and research materials now held in private hands, with a view toward eventually scanning such collections to make them more accessible to researchers; and (4) to keep the SOF membership regularly informed of the Committee's work and progress.

Trustee Richard Joyrich, chair of the Conference Committee, and Don Rubin reported on plans for the SOF's next annual conference in Hartford, Connecticut, October 17-20, 2019. It will be held at the Mark Twain House and Museum, with primary lodgings at the Hilton Homewood Suites Hotel. A highlight will be actor Keir Cutler's performance of his one-man show, "Is Shakespeare Dead?" (See p. 32 for further information.) Earl Showerman announced that the following year's conference would again be held in Ashland, Oregon (home of the renowned Oregon Shakespeare Festival), during September 10-13, 2020).

Tom Regnier then provided an overview of his final report as president (a full printed version of which was provided to all members). He noted that he was completing four years of service as president and also stepping down from the board. Regnier noted that longtime Trustee Richard Joyrich was also stepping down from the board, and thanked him for playing a crucial role for many years in organizing our conferences. (Following the Oakland Conference, Joyrich confirmed that he will remain an active member of the Conference Committee; Regnier, for his part, will continue as website editor and chair of the Communications Committee.)

Regnier highlighted the interest generated by the Fellowship's online Video Contest. In September 2017, when voting was open to the public for the first annual contest, the SOF website garnered 20,874 views (and 4,751 visitors), by far the highest number of monthly views in our history. In September 2018, during the second annual contest, that record was broken with 21,037 views (and 6,306 visitors). This compares to an average rate of about 10,000 views (3,800 visitors) per month during 2017, and about 11,300 views (4,400 visitors) per month during 2018 so far.

Jennifer Newton has been doing a great job as our webmaster, steering the overall technical maintenance of the SOF website, which has been viewed in 161 countries so far this year, up from 147 in all of 2017. The top three countries, not surprisingly, are the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. But intriguingly, Italy replaced Australia in fourth place this year, with Germany in fifth place. Perhaps our increasing contacts with Italy, including a recent tour of Shakespearean and Oxfordian locales in Italy by SOF members and repeated research visits and outreach by Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty, and the impact of Cheryl Eagan-Donovan's new documentary, *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth*, which focuses on Oxford's travels in Italy, have played a role in this heightened Italian interest in our authorship work.

Regnier noted that 2018 has seen several exciting developments in the SOF's printed and online communications. As announced earlier, Gary Goldstein is the new editor of *The Oxfordian*, our flagship major scholarly journal, the latest annual issue of which (Volume 20, Gary's first) was released before the Oakland conference (see p. 5); Lucinda Foulke provided excellent

layout assistance for the journal. Regnier thanked her and all the volunteers on the journal's editorial board. He also thanked Alex McNeil, editor of the quarterly *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, now in its 54th year, which continues to be an informative contribution to the Oxfordian cause.

As announced earlier, Professor Roger Stritmatter is the editor of a new book series to be published by the SOF, the first volume of which deals with the early known and possible poems of Edward de Vere before he pseudonymously penned the works of "Shakespeare" (see Conference report in this issue). A second volume will focus on "Teaching the Authorship Question," with additional volumes also planned.

As a prelude to Stritmatter's book on Oxford's early poems (the juvenilia of "Shakespeare"), a comprehensive comparison of twenty of those poems with the canonical works of "Shakespeare" was published on the SOF website in June 2018. This online study, a collective effort based on the work of several past and present scholars, demonstrates *hundreds* of parallels between Oxford's early poetry and numerous Shakespearean passages. Stritmatter's book will greatly amplify and further document these findings, which further bolster the already powerful case for Oxford as the true author of the Shakespeare canon.

President Regnier reminded members that on November 8, 2017, Jennifer Newton, Kathryn Sharpe, and Linda Theil inaugurated "Shakespeare Authorship Mystery Day," creating more than two dozen witty and delightful memes posted on Facebook and Twitter. To get a sense of them, visit the SOF Twitter page (<https://twitter.com/ShakeOxFellows>) and view the posts from that date. "SAM" Day will be repeated in this and future years, but even bigger and better.

Regnier reported that as of September 30, 2018, the SOF had 375 paid memberships (396 total), with 407 people in the Fellowship including family members, plus thirteen institutional subscribers (mainly universities and libraries) to our publications. The board once again decided not to increase membership dues for 2019, keeping them at the same level since 2015. This is largely dependent on the generous level of donations by members above and beyond their dues. Dues may need to increase in the future, at least for those choosing the printed newsletter option, due to higher printing and mailing costs.

Regnier echoed Trustee Joan Leon's comments about the planned giving program, noting that he himself has arranged for a percentage of his estate to go to the SOF. Other board members, including Don Rubin, Wally Hurst, and Tom Rucker, have done the same. Please remember and consider the SOF the next time you revisit or adjust your own estate plans. Regnier concluded his report by thanking all the many members of SOF's committees.

First Vice-President Don Rubin, as chair of the Nominations Committee (composed of himself, Trustee Joan Leon, and Cheryl Eagan-Donovan), formally

presented the nominees to succeed Tom Regnier as president and to fill the three board seats opening up at this meeting.

Rubin first noted that the Nominations Committee had nominated Jim Warren to serve a second three-year term on the board, but that Warren's announcement that he was unable to accept the nomination was made after the deadline allowed by the bylaws to select a different nominee. Thus, that board seat is vacant as of this meeting and, under the bylaws, the remaining Trustees will appoint a Trustee to serve until the next annual meeting in Hartford on October 19, 2019.

The Nominations Committee's nominee for president and to fill the board seat being vacated by President Regnier is John Hamill, and its nominee to fill the board seat being vacated by Richard Joyrich is Earl Showerman. Both are highly respected past presidents of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship or its predecessors (the Shakespeare Oxford Society and Shakespeare Fellowship). No other candidates having been nominated under the bylaws for any of these positions, Rubin asked the membership for its approval, which was granted by acclamation. Hamill will serve a one-year term as president, and will be eligible for renomination and reelection as president in 2019. His board term, along with Showerman's, runs until 2021.

President Hamill briefly addressed the members and spoke about the challenges and opportunities facing the SOF as it approaches the centennial of J. Thomas Looney's landmark publication of the Oxfordian theory of Shakespeare authorship. He then gaveled the meeting to a close at 10:00 AM.

Theresa Lauricella Appointed to SOF Board

Pursuant to the organization's bylaws, the Board of Trustees has appointed Theresa Lauricella to fill a vacancy on the Board. As noted in the Annual Meeting Report above, the vacancy arose when James Warren, who had been nominated to serve a second three-year term, announced that he would not continue to serve. Under the bylaws, Lauricella will serve for a one-year period, and in 2019 the Nominations Committee will nominate someone to fill the remaining two years of that term (in addition to nominating three other persons for three-year terms).

Theresa Lauricella has an M.A. in Theatre History and Criticism and a B.A. in Theatre from Ohio University. Currently, Theresa is Associate Professor of Theatre and Program Coordinator for Theatre and Music at Clark State Community College and serves as the Artistic Director and Producer to the Theatre Program. Prior to Clark State, Theresa worked as Company Manager for the Human Race Theatre Company. She is a DayTony Award recipient in Direction for her production of *The Foreigner* by Larry Shue. Her recent directing credits include *The Clean House* by Sarah Ruhl and a stage adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* by Simon Levy for Clark State and *Much Ado About Nothing* for Wittenberg University. Theresa lives in Springfield, Ohio, with her husband, Joe, and their two daughters, Sidonie and Claudia.

No Dues Increase -- Time to Join the SOF for 2019 or Renew Your Membership!

SOF membership dues will not be increased for 2019, as announced at our Oakland conference. That means that dues for 2019 will be the same as for 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. We are able to maintain these rates because of the enthusiastic support of our members. We thank you for your generosity and your loyalty. Your 2018 membership expires on December 31, but please don't wait until then to renew. You can renew now to ensure your membership through the end of 2019. You can renew online or by mailing in the form inserted in this newsletter.

Basic Membership means that you will have free access to the online *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, when it is published, through all of 2019. Newsletter Membership means that you will also have the printed newsletter delivered right to your home. Your 2019 membership also includes online access to the latest annual issue of *The Oxfordian* and the next issue when it is published in the fall of 2019.

Most importantly, your membership helps to promote the Oxfordian cause. It supports our newsletter, journal, book project, conferences, website and social media. Did you know that during the months that our video contest voting takes place the number of monthly views that our website receives virtually doubles—from 11,000 to over 21,000? The SOF is constantly putting the Oxfordian message out where more and more members of the public can hear it, see it, and learn about it.

Your membership dues are the engine that drives our outreach. You can show your commitment to the cause for as little as \$44 a year for Basic (online) Membership. That's about 12 cents a day. You can get a membership that includes the printed newsletter for about 19 cents a day. And, above all, you will be helping us spread the word about Oxford. If you've never been an SOF member before, this is the time to join. Please join us in bringing the truth to light!

The more we do now, the sooner the world will accept Oxford as the true Shakespeare! Please join us for 2019!



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Book Review

Joseph Rosenblum, “The Authorship Questions,” in *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion: Overviews, Documents, and Analysis* (vol. 1), edited by Joseph Rosenblum. Westport, CT: Greenwood (2017), pp. 79-94

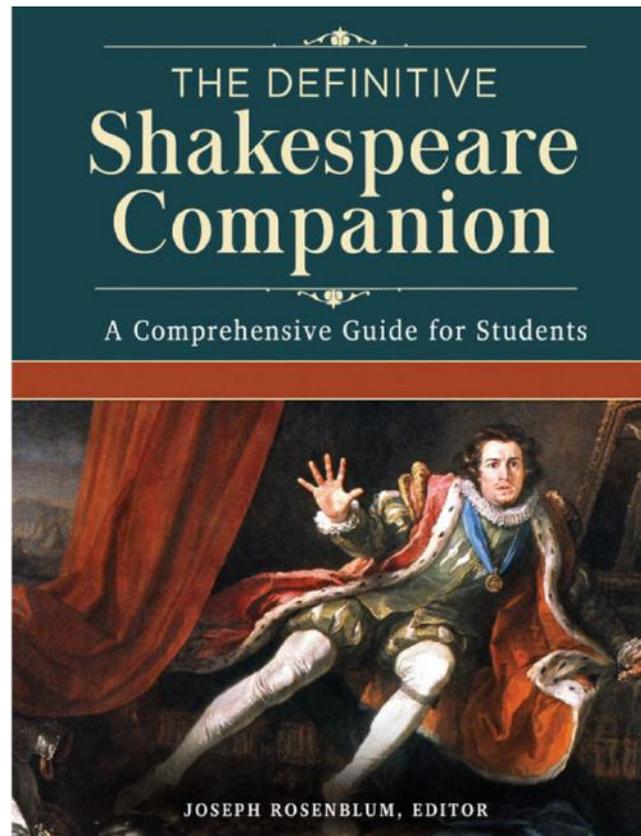
Reviewed by Michael Dudley

At first glance, the mere presence of a chapter on the Shakespeare Authorship Question within a major reference work from a respected academic and educational publisher would seem to represent remarkable progress. After all, Shakespeare orthodoxy—the academy, publishers, arts journalism—as a rule simply ignores the SAQ, pretending that it doesn’t exist and therefore isn’t worthy of consideration. Unfortunately, as was demonstrated by 2013’s *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Edmondson and Wells, eds.), when orthodox scholars do turn their attention to the debate, their efforts are almost always pejorative, poorly researched, and replete with baseless assumptions and misrepresentations.

Such is indeed the case with the mammoth, four-volume *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion* (DSC) from Greenwood Publishing, which touts the set as “an indispensable ready reference” to the author and his works, with detailed essays and historical documents concerning each of the plays. According to the publisher, the DSC is intended to “elucidate[] key controversies regarding Shakespeare’s literary work through alternate viewpoints that will help promote critical thinking skills.” Accordingly, the first volume prominently includes among its key controversies the SAQ, addressing it in the first “Overviews” section in a chapter curiously titled “The Authorship Questions,” written by project editor Joseph Rosenblum. However, far from promoting critical thinking about Shakespeare or offering alternative viewpoints, Rosenblum’s chapter not only falls back on the familiar Stratfordian suite of misinformation, mischaracterization, omission and ridicule, but racks up an impressive collection of logical fallacies.

A professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Rosenblum is the author and editor of several other Shakespeare reference works, including *Shakespeare: An Annotated Bibliography* (1992), *A Reader’s Guide to Shakespeare* (1999) and *A Critical Survey of Shakespeare’s Plays* (2015). He also teaches courses on mystery novels at UNCG, which, one would think, might dispose him to recognize a mystery when he sees one, but, alas, such is not the case.

For Rosenblum, there are several authorship questions, only one of which—“was Shakespeare



Shakespeare?”—concerns the author’s identity. The other two questions addressed in his essay, “was Shakespeare a literary author?” and “what did Shakespeare write?” also very much touch on identity, but Rosenblum appears to be unaware of that fact, as his answers to both unintentionally speak to the internal contradictions of orthodoxy.

Rosenblum actually tips his hand many pages earlier in the (unsigned) “Preface for Users,” where he states confidently:

On one point scholars agree: the William Shakespeare who wrote the plays and poems discussed in this companion was the son of John and Mary Shakespeare, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, and died there fifty-two years later. Since the nineteenth century, various nonscholars have proposed dozens of alternative authors (xiv)

The number of intellectual sleights of hand in a sentence and a half is impressive: (1) “scholars agree,” and the only ones who don’t are “nonscholars” (argument from authority); (2) suggesting to the reader that the Stratford man, and his parents, all spelled the name as “Shakespeare”; (3) declaring that authorship doubt didn’t develop until the 19th century; and (4) implying that, since “dozens” of putative candidates have been put

forth (all by “nonscholars”), they’re all equally wrong (i.e., that the case for each is comparably weak). With all that in mind, why would anyone need to read his chapter? Yet, I did, and the preface proved an excellent preview of the rhetoric to come.

Rosenblum opens the chapter with a dismissive reference to the 2011 film *Anonymous* before repeating verbatim from a litany of historic complaints about the Stratford Man, including those in Benjamin Disraeli’s 1837 novel *Venetian*, Joseph Hart’s *The Romance of Yachting* from 1848 and Ralph Waldo Emerson’s 1850 *Representative Men*. As might be expected, Rosenblum devotes an inordinate amount of time and attention to the Baconian theories of the 19th century (refreshingly omitting mention of Delia Bacon’s mental illness) before turning to Looney’s claims for Edward de Vere and briefly dismissing Raleigh, Derby and Manners.

The bulk of the chapter consists of the standard array of Stratfordian defenses against skepticism: “Hand D”, the *Ur-Hamlet*, the Upstart Crow, the chronology of the plays precluding Oxford’s authorship, the fact that other authors of the age were unlearned or left behind no manuscripts, claims of Warwickshire dialect in the plays, and the presumed excellence of the Stratford grammar school, replete with an unaccountably detailed description of its supposed curriculum. Et cetera.

Whether through ignorance or design, Rosenblum gives no indication of knowing that all of these arguments have been repeatedly proven by anti-Stratfordian and Oxfordian authors to be erroneous, misleading or based on unfounded assumptions. Yet a quick glance at his bibliography attests that he has read none of the relevant literature produced over the past thirty years: instead, to marshal his entirely predictable arsenal of “facts” for this section Rosenblum cites a mere five sources, all but one of which are Stratfordian rebuttals of the SAQ. Most are summative rather than analytical and two—*Shakespeare and His Betters* by Reginald Churchill (1959), and *The Shakespeare Claimants* by H.N. Gibson (1962)—are horribly dated. The more recent Stratfordian titles he cites are James Shapiro’s *Contested Will* (2010) and *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* (Edmondson and Wells 2013), but only *The Shakespeare Controversy* by Warren Hope and Kim Holston (1992, 2009) adopts an Oxfordian viewpoint. Such a dated and one-sided bibliography would scarcely pass muster for a first-year undergraduate paper on the subject. For a work billing itself as “definitive”—and written by the project’s managing editor no less—this is lazy scholarship.

It is inexcusable for a major reference work addressing this debate in the supposed interest of offering “alternative viewpoints” and “promoting critical thinking skills” to fail to so much as crack open *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (Ogburn 1984, 1992), *Shakespeare’s Unorthodox Biography* (Price 2001),

Shakespeare by Another Name (Anderson 2005), *Shakespeare Suppressed* (Chiljan 2011) and—in the spirit of balance—*Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial* (Shahan & Waugh, eds., 2013).

On the other hand, in its sheer scholarly inadequacy the chapter may, however unintentionally, support the publisher’s stated goal of encouraging critical thinking on the part of students, as a careful reading of the author’s rhetoric should reveal his overwhelming dependence on logical fallacies, among them:

- **Ad hominem:** Skeptics are tarred as “anti-Shakespeareans” and the text peppered with sarcastic asides that portray them as fundamentally misguided and ill-intentioned, rather than addressing their arguments.
- **Non-ontological:** Rosenblum asserts that proponents of alternative candidates not only lack positive evidence for their Shakespeares, but that “no evidence *can* exist” [*italics mine*] (83). It’s one thing to argue that the available evidence fails to meet the burden of proof, or is insufficiently compelling. It’s even acceptable to argue that no such evidence may ever be found. But it’s quite another to declare, with the omniscience usually reserved for deities, the absolute non-existence of something which, all things being equal, could quite reasonably and conceivably exist. Breathtaking in its arrogance, this statement also fails to distinguish between different types of evidence and therefore is demonstrably wrong: the case for Edward de Vere is, of course, incredibly rich in circumstantial evidence, as many researchers have discovered (Whittemore 2016).
- **Ignoratio elenchi:** Irrelevant arguments are offered that in no way address the objection. For example, he says the expansive knowledge in the canon does not reflect a learned author, but rather one “intimate with the world of the theater” (86). How knowledge of stagecraft could furnish knowledge of the law and Italy—among many, many other subjects—Rosenblum doesn’t even try to explain, apart from the old standby, “he got his information from reading and talking to people” (86).
- **Cherry picking:** On the flimsiest and most reductionist grounds, Rosenblum brushes aside Shakespeare’s use of classical literature, intimate knowledge of the law, obsession with royal succession and the divine right of kings, and familiarity with aristocratic sports and courtly manners by stating that Shakespeare couldn’t have been a highly-educated aristocrat because he employed the pronoun “thou” which, he claims, is older and lower-class, rather than the “you” employed by the Cambridge-educated John Fletcher.
- **Double standard:** Rosenblum goes straight from

dismissing the proposition that any of the canon could have come from lived experience of an aristocrat to asserting himself that “[t]he plays... testify to Shakespeare’s Warwickshire connections [and] include references to places and people Shakespeare knew” in Warwickshire (85-86). In other words, the “biographical fallacy” which Rosenblum otherwise mocks serves his purpose when he needs it.

- **“No true Scotsman”:** Rosenblum wraps up with the classic “no Shakespeare scholar questions the authorship of the plays and poems...”, ignoring not only the scholars behind *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (Taylor and Egan, eds., 2017), which attributed a substantial portion of the canon to other writers, but also the many scholars represented in the anti-Stratfordian literature he so studiously avoided reading.
- **Contextomy:** In a final, head-shaking flourish on this statement, Rosenblum then opines that, rather than looking for the lived experience of the author in the canon, readers should take the advice in the First Folio’s dedication (allegedly penned by John Heminge and Henry Condell): “Reade him therefore; and againe and againe....” On its face, Rosenblum would be seeming to suggest that Heminge and Condell were somehow anticipating by some 340 years Roland Barthes’s “death of the author”—that the author’s biography and intentions are irrelevant, that all meaning-making derives from the reader alone. Yet, this line is actually immediately followed by, “And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him.” With the original context restored, we can clearly see that the emphasis here is not solely on the *reading*, as Rosenblum would have it, but on *him*, the author, and the need to *understand him by reading his work*. In other words, the quote has precisely the opposite meaning from the one Rosenblum intends.

As well, like most Stratfordians—mired as they are in a mass of strange and contradictory evidence that they refuse to acknowledge as such—Rosenblum can’t keep track of his own arguments. He tries to debunk claims of aristocracy by arguing that some of the quartos include actors’ names rather than those of the characters (the assumption being that the author was a working playwright, not a nobleman), but then in the second section he admits that the quartos might have been built from memorial reconstructions from the actors themselves, indicating the great and mysterious distance between the author and the printed versions, as Price (2018) has demonstrated. As Rosenblum admits, the publishing history of the plays is extremely fraught, yet he also acknowledges that the plays show signs of

authorial revision and that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be read as works of literature, as were his poems; none of this seems to strike him as odd and connected, perhaps, to the question of authorial identity.

“The Authorship Questions” chapter in *The Definitive Shakespeare* is yet another wearying example of the orthodox refusal to actually read the relevant and recent scholarship and honestly address the defects of their tradition—defects which can never be erased by superficial efforts such as this. Instead, all scholarly methodological and epistemological conventions that would otherwise obtain in the academy simply do not apply where the authorship of Shakespeare is concerned.

All authorship partisanship aside, this chapter’s overwhelmingly fallacious reasoning and woefully inadequate bibliography mark it objectively as weak scholarship; indeed, its dubious and disappointing content might reasonably call into question that of the entire four-volume reference work. Had the publisher actually sought to promote students’ critical thinking on this debate, it could have at least insisted that Rosenblum bring in an additional author to offer an opposing perspective. Instead, *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion* must be lamented as a major lost opportunity to introduce students to the issue and actually encourage critical thinking about it, and not only as an unintended opportunity to study unfortunate rhetoric.

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Time Isn't Necessarily on Our Side: Thoughts for My Fellow Oxfordians

by James Warren

With so much evidence having surfaced to weaken the case for authorship of "Shakespeare's" works by the man from Stratford and to strengthen the case for Oxford's, it's tempting for Oxfordians to conclude that it's only a matter of time before the paradigm shift to Edward de Vere as Shakespeare occurs. But there exist, I believe, stronger reasons for concluding just the opposite, that time is not necessarily on our side.

Consider two recent discoveries favorable to the Oxfordian claim and the near zero effect they have had on academia.

First, Alexander Waugh's discovery that the "Avon" was the nickname used by the nobility in Oxford's day for Hampton Court Palace, the venue for theatrical performances given for Queen Elizabeth, King James and members of their courts. This finding undercuts one of the Stratfordians' strongest pieces of evidence: the link between the phrase "Sweet Swan of Avon" in the First Folio and the town of Stratford-on-Avon, and hence between the author William Shakespeare and William Shakspeare.

Second, Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty discovered in Venice a document giving Oxford special access to the Doge's private quarters in order to see the works of art displayed there, further establishing Oxford's interest in art and strengthening the likelihood that he saw, in the artist's home, the one and only copy of Titian's "Venus & Adonis" painting with the specific

features that Shakespeare would describe in his long poem.

Here are two stunning discoveries—one undercutting belief in Stratman, the other linking Oxford to Shakespeare—and what was academia's response to them? Nada. Zilch. Stratfordians continue unperturbed in their stroll down Stratford Lane.

Then consider that the events that brought many of today's Oxfordians into the Oxfordian camp occurred *three decades ago*:

- Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* was published in 1984—thirty-four years ago.
- The Supreme Court Justices' Moot Court was held in 1987—thirty-one years ago.
- "The Shakespeare Mystery" was broadcast on *Frontline* in 1989—twenty-nine years ago.

Of course many important books have been published and video programs broadcast since then, but none have captured the public imagination or resulted in large increases in SOS/SOF membership to the extent those earlier events did. The one exception—the hundreds of talks given across the United States and Canada by Charles Beauclerk that resulted in record numbers joining the SOS—occurred in the first half of the 1990s—twenty-five years ago.

Those of us introduced to the Shakespeare authorship question and the Oxfordian claim by those events are now thirty years older. Barring any unforeseen developments, actuarial tables tell us to expect a reduction in the number of people interested in the SAQ and in membership in the SOF.

Then consider how the steepness of that decline could only be increased by academia's move away from teaching Shakespeare. Most university English departments no longer require even English majors to take a course on Shakespeare and his works.

So, what can we do about it?

It's tempting to want to leap into action—into immediate and more energetic engagement of academia—using the resources at the disposal of the SOF and the broader Oxfordian movement.

But a moment's reflection gives rise to doubts about the effectiveness of *any* effort, no matter how energetic, given the refusal of the large majority of literature professors even to discuss the authorship issue. If evidence that seems so strong to us—the Avon and *Venus and Adonis* examples cited above—is ignored by academics like rain on their backs is ignored by ducks, we should stop to ask what kinds of information or evidence or reasoning they would ever find relevant and convincing. Oxfordians must understand *that* before they can determine what strategies and tactics would be most

effective in engaging academia, and they must understand those things in order to know how to best use their scarce resources.

These subjects, it seems to me, are the most important topics that could be discussed and debated whenever Oxfordians meet. How best to engage academia should dominate all other subjects at the SOF's annual conferences. The SOF cannot afford to let yet another conference take place without the subject of engagement with academia being directly and

extensively discussed and debated. It cannot afford to let more conferences slide by with little or no effort made to reach out to and engage cultural and educational institutions—and, through the media, the general public—in the cities and regions where the conferences are being held—to generate greater interest in Oxford's authorship and increased support for the SOF. We can no longer afford to remain invisible, talking only to ourselves about issues of secondary importance, because, I have come to believe, time is not on our side.

Hamnet: The Play's Not the Thing

by Alex McNeil

Some Stratfordians cling to the notion that Shakespeare's masterpiece, *Hamlet*, must somehow be connected to the fact that Will Shakspeare's only son was named Hamnet. To them the one-letter difference in the names must be meaningful. That idea has spawned a new stage play, *Hamnet*, written and co-directed by Bush Moukarzel and Ben Kidd, which had its U.S. premiere in Boston in late September.

Moukarzel told the *Boston Globe*: "I was quite intrigued by the idea that people would think we'd made a mistake with the title . . . and then realize on a second look that actually there was somebody named Hamnet and indeed he's the one to feel sorry for. Because he lived just eleven short years, and we have little information on him, and of course he's overshadowed by his famous father. . . . [He] was born, and he died eleven years later, and that's it. The lack of information, that scarcity of life was the intriguing thing."

That "lack of information" led Moukarzel and Kidd to construct an hour-long multimedia production in which the title character (played by Ollie West) wears blue jeans and carries a backpack, sings part of Shel Silverstein's "A Boy Named Sue," has a mobile phone, and whose famous father (played by Moukarzel) appears on film.

In his review, *Boston Globe* theater critic Don Aucoin was not kind, finding it "a frustratingly murky, solemn, and pretentious foray into metaphysical abstraction. . . . [Its] emotional impact is circumscribed by its affectless, cryptic nature; *Hamnet* mutters when you want it to shout, and when the play does turn up the volume, it seems an arbitrary theatrical gesture, arriving out of left field."

One wonders whether Moukarzel and Kidd acknowledged the fact that the name Hamnet

has no known connection to that of the Danish prince. Hamnet Shakspeare and his twin sister, Judith, were born in 1585 and were almost certainly named in honor of their parents' neighbors, Hamnet and Judith Sadler (Hamnet Sadler is named in Will Shakspeare's 1616 will). Hamnet Shakspeare died in 1596 at age eleven; the exact date and cause of death are unknown. One wonders what connections they purport to see in the plot of *Hamlet*. Did they ask themselves if any of Shakespeare's plays have a major story line involving a father grieving over the untimely death of his young child?

The traditional dating of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* helps, of course, to foster a connection between it and young Hamnet's death. Most Stratfordians are wedded to the idea that *Hamlet* was written between about 1599 and 1601, some three to five years after Hamnet's death in 1596. However, if they were to consider the abundant evidence that *Hamlet* was actually written in the 1580s—possibly even before Hamnet was born—any connection disappears.

As for me, I'm waiting for a few more new plays, like maybe *Rodeo and Juliet*, *Simon of Athens*, or *Julius Teaser*.



SOF Conference (continued from page 1)

David Rains Wallace spoke next. Wallace is the author of more than twenty books about natural history and related subjects; his most recent book is *Shakespeare's Wilderness* (reviewed in the Summer 2017 issue of the *Newsletter*). In "Shakespeare, Beowulf and Wilderness," Wallace began by noting Ogburn's observation that Shakespeare was the first English writer to find solace and comfort in nature, rather than seeing it as a foreboding entity. Wallace pointed out that Shakespeare's works are set less in settled countryside than in forests, mountains and seacoasts. He cited the wilderness settings of *Venus and Adonis*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *As You Like It*, and other works. He further noted that Shakespeare's treatment of the wilderness is often different from that in the source materials of his works; for example, Ovid shows little empathy for animals in his version of *Venus and Adonis*, whereas Shakespeare is arguably more sympathetic toward the "wild beasts" than to the human characters. Understanding how Shakespeare arrived at his point of view of nature and wilderness is, of course, dependent on the author's true identity. Wallace reminded us that the only known copy of the old English epic poem *Beowulf* was owned by Laurence Nowell in 1563, precisely when Nowell was Oxford's tutor. Wallace cited the influence of *Beowulf* on *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Timon of Athens*. *Titus* reflects *Beowulf's* negative attitude to wilderness, an attitude that is reversed in "later" plays like *Timon*, wherein wilderness is an antidote to civilized evils. Concluding, Wallace hailed Shakespeare as a "prophetic critic" who attacked the greed of those who tried to usurp nature and natural resources. He also noted that, in his last surviving letter, Oxford thanked King James for restoring to him the position of Keeper of the Forest of Waltham.

The next presenter was **Theresa Lauricella**, Associate Professor of Theatre at Clark State Community College in Ohio, who serves as the artistic director and producer in its theatre program. In "'I took thee for thy better': The Prestige of Polonius," she made a convincing case that Hamlet knew full well that Polonius was hiding behind the arras and did not mistake him for the king when he killed him. Taking a careful look at "how the play moves" and analyzing the script according to what the characters do (rather than what they say), she showed that, immediately before Hamlet's scene with Gertrude in her chamber, Hamlet was in the same room as King Claudius. In the stage directions in the Folio version of the play, Hamlet does not exit before Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter. Lauricella pointed out a rare instance of consecutive rhyming couplets spoken by Hamlet and Claudius; she observed that rhyming couplets often serve as a "forward" in the play, calling the audience's attention to events that will be happening. The 1604 Quarto text established that

Gertrude comes onstage promptly after Claudius leaves. It is established early in the play that Polonius is a spy, sometimes employing agents to do the work and sometimes doing it himself; thus, Hamlet cannot be uncertain about who is lurking behind the arras. Polonius also strives throughout the play to prove his importance to King Claudius and to enhance his own status. With that understanding, Lauricella interprets Hamlet's lines ("I took thee for thy better...") not to mean that Hamlet "mistook" Polonius for someone of "better" rank (the king), but rather, in the context of the entire speech, that Hamlet expected more ("better") from Polonius and is disappointed to have found his behavior so predictable ("to be too busy," i.e., spying).

Before reading **Robert Detobel's** paper, SOF Trustee **Don Rubin** gave a moving tribute to the late German Oxfordian scholar (Detobel passed away in late September; see "In Memoriam," page 12 of this issue). In "The Soul of Nero" (a paper originally written in German, which Detobel translated into English with guidance from Rubin), Detobel examined why Hamlet, on the way to speak to his mother, says "Let not ever the soul of Nero enter this firm bosom." Why, Detobel wondered, would Hamlet refer to Nero, and not some other matricidal maniac from literature? Perhaps the answer lies in Nero's public behavior, particularly his penchant for performing on stage. Early in his reign, Nero had been provided with a private space where he could act and play music. But after his mother's death, he "went public" and began to act in plays, and to play the harp and sing in public. Indeed, just before his death he said, "What a great artist perishes with me." In Roman times, just as in Elizabethan times, such public exhibitions by rulers and members of the nobility were considered shameful, bringing disgrace not just to the performer and his family, but to the entire aristocracy. Detobel suggested that there was a similar "vulgar scandal" in Oxford's life, which is supported by John Davies of Hereford's writing that Oxford had "played kingly parts in sport." Detobel also argued that a deeper reading is needed of Henry Chettle's "apology" to *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, and that Chettle was intimating that the third offended playwright was an aristocrat who was also an actor. In conclusion, Detobel stated that "the allusion to Nero has a peculiar association to the creator of *Hamlet*."

Thursday's final speaker was **Steven Sabel**, producing artistic director of the Archway Theatre Company in Burbank, California. In "Not to Modernize: Why the 'translating' of the Bard's text to modern language corrupts performance of the works and further conceals the true author," Sabel noted that attempts to modernize Shakespeare's text aren't new—William Davenant was doing it in the 1660s. Sabel focused on "Play On!," the recent effort undertaken by the Oregon

Shakespeare Festival to have thirty-six contemporary playwrights develop thirty-nine “modern” Shakespeare texts. Sabel illustrated many of the shortcomings of such an effort to make Shakespeare “more understandable,” noting that studies have shown that reading or watching the Bard’s works (in their original version) actually stimulates the brain. He summarized the guiding principles that the “Play On!” organizers have given to the revisers: (1) translate every line, unless the line doesn’t need it; (2) feel free to ignore iambic pentameter; (3) translate prose text by the sentence, not by the line; (4) feel free to disregard or insert new punctuation; (5) modernize all pronouns (“thee,” “thou”) and verbs (“doth,” “doest”); (6) change “obsolete” words to new ones; (7) change words that had different meanings at the time from their modern meanings; (8) modernize expletives and curse words; (9) modernize insults; (10) replace Latin phrases; (11) replace classical allusions, e.g., references to Greek and Roman gods; (12) rework sentences that are “too dense”; and (13) retain rhymed couplets, but feel free to change the rhymes. All of this, of course, operates to “dumb down” Shakespeare, not only obscuring his actual meanings, but, in so doing, also his true identity.

Second day: Friday, October 12

Friday began with SOF Board Member **Julie Sandys Bianchi**’s fascinating talk, “Twins Separated at Birth? A Cultural and Genealogical Investigation of Two Identities Set in Stone.” Drawing on her research into art patrons in Restoration England, her knowledge of socio-political practices at the time, and her expertise in genealogy, Bianchi presented persuasive evidence that the Shakespeare bust in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-on-Avon was replaced by another bust while undergoing beautification and repair in 1746. She identified the new bust as being that of Carlo Vizziani, an Italian attorney and Rector of La Sapienza, University of Rome, who

died in 1661 and had never set foot in England. She further showed that all of the people she considered as most likely to have been involved in the Shakespeare head-swapping were 18th century descendants—by blood or marriage—of the 17th Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere. The persuasiveness of the evidence she marshalled in support of her astonishing conclusion left the audience virtually convinced that she’s right.

Incoming SOF president **John Hamill** then reported on the Fellowship’s Research Grant Program. Funded mostly by donations from SOF members, the Program has supported a dozen research projects since it was founded in 2014. Recipients in 2018 were Gary Goldstein, for research into books donated to the Bodleian Library by Edward de Vere’s relatives and descendants; Eddi Jolly, for research into documents in Public Records Offices throughout England; and Michael Delahoyde and Coleen Moriarty, for continued research into Italian archives. All three projects aim at finding documents that strengthen the case for Edward de Vere’s authorship of the Shakespeare canon. The Research Grant Program is halfway toward its fundraising goal this year, and additional donations are needed to fund the next set of grants that will be announced in January 2019.

Michael Delahoyde, Clinical Professor of English at Washington State University, and independent researcher **Coleen Moriarty**, whose previous research in Italy had uncovered five documents signed by or related to Edward de Vere’s travels in Italy in the mid 1570s, gave a highly entertaining slide show titled “De Veres di Venezia.” They noted de Vere’s trip probably had a diplomatic component related to the establishment of official relations between England and Italy, something that didn’t happen until after the end of the Anglo-Spain war in 1604. Using personal contacts developed on their previous trips to Italy, Delahoyde and Moriarty were able to view an important letter from the Venetian ambassador in Paris about appointing an Ambassador to England. The letter, long inaccessible to the public due to its fragile state, was available only in an excerpted translation made during the 1800s. They were able to photograph the entire document and will soon provide a more complete and accurate translation. They also stated that the dearth of documents related to Oxford’s travels in Italy has led them to suspect two things: that secret archives exist related to sensitive diplomatic activities, and that Oxford had at times traveled incognito in order to immerse himself in the world of the theatre free from the diplomatic formalities that would have hampered his activities—a practice that not only prepared him well for incognito involvement in the theater in London after his return to England, but also appears to have launched the practice of incognito travels by other Englishmen, including the 18th Earl of Oxford.

The Friday morning sessions concluded with the first panel discussion of the conference, in which researchers



Julie Sandys Bianchi

Ramon Jiménez, Katherine Chiljan and Kevin Gilvary presented their latest findings on the critical subject of “An Oxfordian Timeline for Dating Shakespeare’s Plays.” The panelists noted that Oxfordians and Stratfordians generally agree on the order in which the plays were written even while differing over the dates, with Oxfordians placing them fifteen or more years earlier. They stressed the importance of not letting Stratfordians get away with claiming that actual dates of composition are known, when all that is really established are dates of performance and publication. All three panelists cited facts related to dates that virtually rule out authorship by the man from Stratford and that tie the plays to Oxford. Drawing from work presented in his newly published book, *Shakespeare’s Apprenticeship*, Jiménez showed that Lilian Winstanley established that *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* refer to events in Scotland during the 1560s—a time when Oxford visited Scotland but when Shakespeare was only a child. Chiljan informed the audience that the number of “too early” allusions in Shakespeare’s plays to topical events—too early for authorship to have been by Shakespeare—has grown from the ninety-three such allusions cited in her book *Shakespeare Suppressed* to more than 700 today. During the Q&A the audience encouraged her to publish that information; Chiljan responded with a smile, saying that the actual number might eventually reach 1,000 and that she is working toward publishing them when that number is reached. Gilvary then described how the book he edited, *Dating Shakespeare’s Plays*, came into being, and the careful, scholarly work that he and the other contributors engaged in to determine the most likely range of dates when each play was written and revised.

The first speakers after lunch were **Ron Hess** and **Jan Scheffer**, discussing their work on “A Wedding Joust in Trebizond: Commedia Euridita and Sinister Politics in 1575.” A central theme was that the “Tirata dell Giostra” or “Tirade of the Joust” resulted from Oxford’s challenge to the world in Palermo (1575) and that he may have written it with Miguel Cervantes (see their extensive report in the Summer 2018 issue of the *Newsletter*).

Next was **Katherine Chiljan**, speaking on “Oxford’s First Posthumous Defamation” and exploring why Oxford’s death was not acknowledged near the time it occurred. Her answer is that the silence stemmed from de Vere’s participation in Robert Chester’s 1601 book *Love’s Martyr*. Through allegory, she said, that publication revealed that the Phoenix (Queen Elizabeth) actually had a child who could succeed her. Oxford (“Shakespeare”), among other poets, had contributed verses to Chester’s book, proclaiming his position on the succession—that a royal child existed and



Katherine Chiljan

should have been named her successor. By the time the queen died in 1603, however, her supposed child had been sidestepped and Robert Cecil had engineered the succession of King James of Scotland.

Oxford’s death, which occurred only thirteen months later, dampened public enthusiasm for praising him and his literary achievement, Chiljan said. Also contributing to the posthumous silence was a “smear campaign” against him, waged in the public theater by playwright Thomas Dekker, who “inserted Oxford-like characters in *Satiro-mastix* (1601) and *Westward Ho* (late 1604). Both plays, she submitted, portrayed the earl as an immoral lecher. Constantly in debt, Dekker was “likely paid” to smear Oxford, possibly by Robert Cecil. Chiljan further argued that the quick penning of *Eastward Ho* (1605) by Ben Jonson, George Chapman and John Marston (each of whom had contributed to *Love’s Martyr*) was done to counter these deceptions and slanders. The three authors wanted to show “Shakespeare” (Oxford) as a moral, upright and hardworking artisan. Their play, featuring numerous allusions to various Shakespearean plays (especially *Hamlet*), can be viewed as an homage to the true author.

James Warren spoke on “J. Thomas Looney—An Unknown Fighter,” reporting his discovery of fifteen previously unknown letters that Looney wrote during the eighteen months following the 1920 publication of “*Shakespeare Identified*.” The traditional notion that Looney had done little to defend his discovery of de Vere’s authorship is inaccurate; on the contrary, Looney was “intensely engaged in defending himself and his ideas” and in “further substantiating the validity of the Oxfordian claim.” Finding these articles and letters in response to the critics has revealed that “the apparently



James Warren

mild-mannered Looney was a fighter: mild-mannered on the outside, perhaps, but with a spine of steel inside.” Looney had been under “no illusions about the severity of the test to which his ideas would be put” and knew he was “exposing myself to as severe an ordeal as any writer has been called upon to face.” As “a gentleman of the old school,” however, he expected literary journals would “throw open their columns to such a discussion as will let in the fullest light upon the question” and that his arguments would be “most carefully weighed.” Instead, Warren reported, Looney encountered “reviewers who hadn’t read his book, or hadn’t read it carefully, and who attacked his weakest arguments while ignoring his strongest.” In Warren’s view, Looney must have been “caught by surprise by the hostility” and “taken aback” by attacks lacking what the schoolmaster called “the spirit of impartiality and truth, by which alone any problem can be solved.” Moreover, the “personal nature” of the attacks must also have taken him by surprise; but he “met the challenge head-on by writing fifteen letters to editors challenging the accuracy or fairness of their reviews.” The critics “laid a few gloves on him and he was a bit bloodied,” Warren added, “but at the end of the day he was still standing.” Interestingly, Looney did not feel it was necessary to discuss *how* or *why* Oxford’s authorship was hidden. Nonetheless “later generations of Oxfordians, including ourselves, cannot leave such important questions unanswered,” Warren observed. “We must seek explanations for such critical issues in order to understand what happened.”

Then a panel with **Kathryn Sharpe (Chair)**, **James Warren** and **Bryan Wildenthal**, members of the Shakespeare Identified 100 (SI-100) Committee, reported

on the upcoming 2020 Centennial celebration of Looney and his 1920 publication of *Shakespeare Identified*. Warren announced his own republication of Looney’s book, the first since the original to have a new layout, along with accurate citations to more than 230 passages, and the restoration of material omitted from previous U.S. editions. The panelists discussed ideas to mark the anniversary and use it for “rediscovering and honoring Looney” as well as to generate greater awareness of Oxford’s authorship. The main focus was on how to craft “an appropriate centennial salute” to Looney and key individuals who kept the Oxfordian movement alive during the last century: Percy Allen, Charles Wisner Barrell, the Ogburn family, Ruth Loyd Miller, Gordon Cyr and Morse Johnson, and others.

Sharpe reported on the new headstone for Looney (1870-1944) and his wife, Elizabeth (1866-1950), for which the SOF raised over \$3,000, now installed at the Saltwell Cemetery, Gateshead, in northeast England (*Newsletter*, Fall 2017). She also informed members that the name “Looney” in Gaelic derives from “Luan,” meaning “warrior” or “descendant of a warrior”—a fitting description of the man who had the courage to present his discovery of Oxford’s authorship to the world and then defended it with courage and vigor.

Wildenthal advised Oxfordians to likewise “stand up to the bullies” and “turn the tables” on their objections by using their own evidence against them. A case in point is when Looney pointed out (in one of the newly discovered letters) that, given the stoppage of publication of Shakespeare’s plays in 1604, the year Oxford died, “it is not too much to claim that the date of Oxford’s death, instead of being a weakness, is one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence.

Meanwhile, Wildenthal noted, there is now “a flood tide of new books” on topics related to de Vere and his authorship of the Shakespeare works. “We need to tell people what we already know,” he said, adding we must continue to explore “how to frame” the Oxfordian argument and “make it effective.” He noted that a new opportunity will come in 2019 with the SOF conference at the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut, followed by the planned 2020 conference in Ashland, Oregon.

The afternoon concluded with a rousing game of “Oxfordian Jeopardy!” emceed by **Alex McNeil**, with three multi-person teams competing to come up with the correct response to each of sixty “answers” appearing on the game board. Ramon Jiménez’s team eked out a victory. Here is the final “Oxfordian Jeopardy!” answer



Oxfordian Jeopardy! (first round)

(the correct response appears at the end of this article).
 Category: Oxford’s poetry. And the answer is: The first poems published with Oxford’s initials were in this 1576 anthology. Dum dum dum dum dum dum dum . . .

On Friday evening there was a showing of **Robin Phillips**’s video, *Oh Mistress Mine: The Secrets, Disguises, Loves & Wives of the REAL Shake-speare*. Her one-woman show was first shown at the 2017 SOF conference in Chicago. Since then Phillips has spent more than 1,500 hours revising and reworking her show, which offers a comprehensive introduction to the authorship question.

Third day: Saturday, October 13

After the SOF’s official business meeting (see article, page 14 of this issue), **Kevin Gilvary**, president of the De Vere Society, spoke on “The Origins of the Curtain Theatre in 1577-78.” Named for the adjacent Curtain Wall, the Curtain was London’s second public theater, founded about eighteen months after the Theatre, and

situated virtually next door to it. Unlike the Theatre, which was newly constructed, the building that housed the Curtain already existed, and had been used as a monastery. We know less about the Curtain because, unlike the Theatre, it was not the subject of litigation. But recent archeological excavations have shown that it was a rectangular structure with a long raised stage along one wall, not a round building with a proscenium. It is not known who owned the land on which the Curtain sat, or who leased the property. Gilvary believes that it was leased by Oxford, and cited a Frenchman who wrote in 1578 of a London “playhouse ... erected by a great lord.” Oxford’s activities between mid-1576 and 1580 are not well documented. By the latter date he had taken over the acting company known as Warwick’s Men and had bought Fisher’s Folly (not far from the Curtain). Gilvary believes that Oxford was writing plays for several acting companies in the late 1570s and used the Curtain to rehearse material for performance at court as well as for presentation at that theater. His own company, now

known as Oxford's Men, performed at court between 1580 and 1583.

Bonner Miller Cutting spoke next, on "Alas Poor Anne: Shakspeare's 'Second Best Bed' in Historical Context," demolishing any claims that Will Shakspeare of Stratford thought well of his wife, Anne, or that dower rights would have entitled her to a share of his estate. The bequest itself ("item, I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furniture") is odd in many respects: it is interlineated, it is the only mention of his spouse in the entire three-page will, and (unlike his other female relatives) she is not mentioned by name, or with any words of affection. Having read transcripts of some 3,000 wills of the era, Cutting deduces that Shakspeare was deliberately intending to disparage his wife. Almost without exception, married male testators named their spouses and included words of love and affection toward them; in the vast majority of wills, the spouse was named the residual legatee, and in a great many cases she would be named executrix or co-executor of the will. If Anne were incompetent, and Shakspeare knew or intended that one of his daughters would care for her, such a provision would have been included, especially considering the detail of this three-page will in which Shakspeare provided for contingencies concerning his two daughters. As for dower rights, Cutting showed that, while the concept of dower existed, in practice it could be hard to establish those rights, as it necessitated traveling all the way to London and the filing of a separate writ of dower for each affected property. More importantly, the Statute of Wills (enacted in 1540 during the reign of Henry VIII) essentially vitiated the right of dower, and gave full power to testators to dispose of their property as they saw fit. Indeed, the insertion of the terse bequest "unto my wife" may have been made to preclude any claim that Shakspeare had unintentionally neglected to make any provision for his spouse. In short, Cutting concluded, "this is all that he intended for her to have." [The full text of this presentation may be found on the SOF website:

http://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/Oxfordian2011_cutting_poor_anne.pdf]

The lunchtime speaker was outgoing SOF president **Tom Regnier**. In "Opening a Door in Academia," he recounted his recent experience in speaking about the authorship question to two college English classes. The professor who invited Regnier stated that he thought that the authorship question should be studied in academia. The professor became interested in authorship because, he said, his students kept asking him about it. After Regnier's presentation at the conference, he led a brainstorming session with the audience about how to open more doors in academia.

The afternoon session began with a spirited three-way debate, "Who is the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets?" The debaters were **Hank Whitemore**, who championed Queen Elizabeth; **John Hamill**, arguing for Penelope Rich; and **Katherine Chiljan**, advocating for Anne Vavasour. After the debate, the audience cast secret ballots to determine the winning "Dark Lady." All three advocates agreed that Edward de Vere was the real author of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, and that the addressee of the first 126 sonnets—the "Fair Youth"—is Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, a young man of arresting beauty, to whom Shakespeare's two long narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, were expressly dedicated.

As to Sonnets 127-152, which introduce a personage known by commentators as the "Dark Lady," Whitemore argued that the author clearly has a love-hate relationship with her, and there appears to be some kind of triangular relationship involving the author, the Dark Lady, and the "Fair Youth." He argued that the Dark Lady's blackness referred not to the color of her hair or eyes, but to her actions: "In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds." When Southampton was convicted of treason for his involvement in the Essex rebellion, Elizabeth refused to save him from execution (Southampton was pardoned and released by James I



Bonner Miller Cutting



John Hamill, Katherine Chiljan and Hank Whitemore

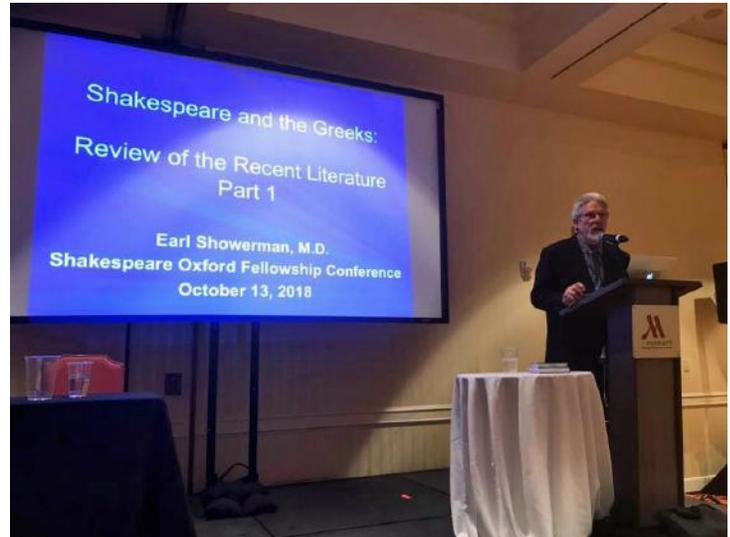
after Elizabeth's death). Oxford, the highest ranking hereditary lord in the kingdom, was deeply frustrated by her failure to pardon Southampton and by her refusal to settle the question of her succession before she died.

Hamill argued that Penelope Devereux Rich, sister of the Earl of Essex, was the Dark Lady. Penelope had five children by her husband and six children from an extramarital affair. Hamill maintained that Penelope also had an affair with Southampton. He stated that the anonymous 1594 poem *Willobie His Avisas* provided clues to the Dark Lady's identity. It retells the ancient Greek myth of Penelope and Ulysses about a "chaste and constant wife" who is pursued by suitors. Two suitors are identified as "H.W." and "W.S.," who are generally accepted as Southampton (Henry Wriothesley) and Shakespeare (Oxford). Hamill argued that many of the details about Avisas fit Penelope Rich.

Chiljan argued that Anne Vavasour, Oxford's dark-haired mistress and mother of his illegitimate son, was the Dark Lady. Her affair with Oxford led to Romeo-and-Juliet-like street brawls between Vavasour's family and Oxford and his servants. Oxford was injured in a duel with Vavasour's uncle in 1582. Chiljan hypothesized that Oxford resumed his affair with Vavasour after Oxford's wife died in 1588. Like Hamill, Chiljan believes that *Willobie His Avisas* provides clues to the Dark Lady's identity, but she suggested that the clues pointed to Anne Vavasour, not to Penelope Rich.

The results of the audience vote were announced on Sunday. The final tally was Queen Elizabeth, 41 votes; Anne Vavasour, 30; Penelope Rich, 10. One vote each was cast for the tandem of the Queen + Vavasour, Emilia Bassano (a poet), and Eliza Varich (about whom nothing seems noted during the Elizabethan era). Eight ballots were submitted without a candidate.

Following the break, **Earl Showerman** gave the first of a two-part review of the impact of classical Greece on Elizabethan England. In "Shakespeare and Greece: A Review of the Recent Literature," he reviewed a number of recent books, especially those that claimed that Shakespeare could read classical Greek. Shakespeare of Stratford "could not have read Greek," Showerman noted, citing his limited education and access to resources. Showerman focused on a new work, *Shakespeare and Greece*, edited by Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou. He said that the editors sought to rebut Ben Jonson's often-cited dictum that Shakespeare had "small Latin and Less Greek," but, regrettably, they failed to do so. Several of the book's essays looked at how Greece-inspired ideas influenced the structure of commercial plays, but, in their view, that did not prove Shakespeare could read the language. Part 2 of Showerman's presentation will be delivered at next year's conference.



Earl Showerman

John Shahan, founder and acting chairman of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition, was the day's final speaker. Asking "Is the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Lying?" Shahan replied with a firm "yes." He cited several specific examples of matters the SBT left out of its published works:

- *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, the 2013 book intended to stifle all criticism of the Stratford man, does not mention William Shakespeare's will. Why not? Shahan says "because it doesn't support their theory." And no mention of the will and its "second-best bed" is better than any mention at all.
- By contrast, the answering volume, *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial*, edited by Shahan and Alexander Waugh, contains an entire chapter on the will, by Bonner Miller Cutting, as well as a transcribed copy of the will itself. To take just one example of what Cutting shows is *not* in the will, there is nothing left to any of his supposed friends in court, no mention of books, or musical instruments, and no mention of Henry Wriothesley, the Third Earl of Southampton, or others.
- Shahan said that the Trust miscited records of the spelling of the Stratford man's name so as to make it appear to be "Shakespeare" (with a long *a*). The family name is consistently spelled with a short *a* (Shakspeare, Shaxpere, Shagsper, etc.).
- He said the Trust omitted mention of a 1624 list of famous Elizabethan poets that did not mention Shakespeare.
- He noted that there was a 1635 complaint involving investors in the Globe, in which "Shakespeare" is

listed as a “worthy” man, but not as an author. In short, Shahan concluded, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has a lack of belief in its own “evidence.”

On Saturday evening **Cheryl Eagan-Donovan** presented the California premiere of the final cut of her documentary film, *Nothing Is Truer Than Truth*, which offers an in-depth look at Oxford with particular emphasis on his time in Venice. The film is completed, and last-minute post-production details are being made (e.g., insurance, copyright formalities, subtitles, etc.).

Nothing Is Truer Than Truth

(See the trailer on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUrrE3yd4n8>)

Fourth day: Sunday, October 14

Coppin State University Professor **Roger Stritmatter** opened the proceedings with a discourse on his forthcoming book, *He That Takes the Pain to Pen the Book: The Poetry of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford...And the Shakespeare Question*. Stritmatter began by noting the irony of how scholars have asserted that Shakespeare was the most talented letter writer of the Elizabethan age, and yet there are no extant personal letters of the Stratford denizen. Oxford, on the other hand, did leave evidence of being a letter writer and poet. William Plumer Fowler’s tome, *Shakespeare Revealed in Oxford’s Letters* (1986), reveals multiple parallelisms of thought, diction, and vocabulary between de Vere’s letters and Shakespeare’s works.

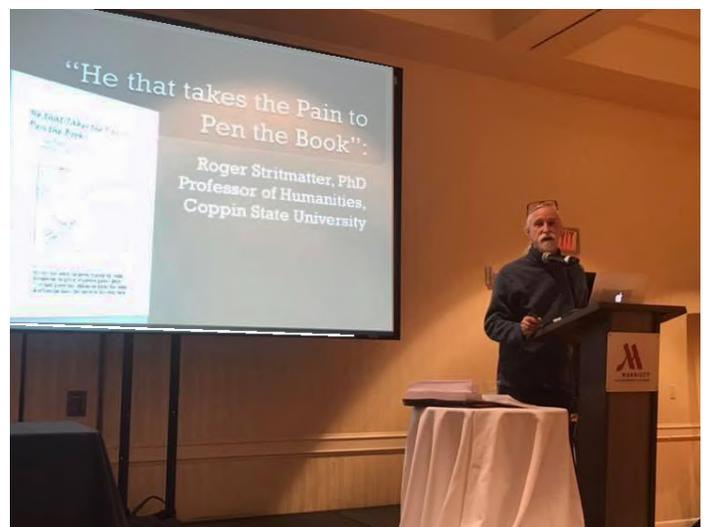
Stratfordians, predictably, characterize Oxford as an unimpressive poet who “could not possibly have scaled the literary heights visible in the plays and poems attributed to Shakespeare.” Stritmatter’s position is that a close reading of Oxford’s poems reveals the dynamics of the development of Shakespeare’s art over time. By “Oxford’s poems” Stritmatter includes those that were published or existed in manuscript under Earl Edward’s own name or initials, and those appearing in various pseudonymous or collaborative contexts (especially under two sobriquets, “Ignoto” and “Shepherd Tony,” that Stritmatter argues are really Oxford’s works).

Stritmatter suggested that the editors of such anthologies as *England’s Helicon* (1600) were “cognizant of de Vere’s literary cover and left distinct testimony to his authorship of literary materials otherwise attributed to Shakespeare.”

The first collection of Oxford’s poems was published by J. Thomas Looney in 1921, and other poems have subsequently been attributed to Oxford by mainstream scholars. Stritmatter’s new collection includes the following: twenty of Oxford’s canonical poems, song lyrics from John Lyly’s plays, poems from the *Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), and the “Ignoto” and “Shepherd Tony” poems from *England’s Helicon* (first published 1600). *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (first published 1576) was the most reprinted poetry anthology of the Elizabethan era; it contained eight poems by Oxford, which proved to be the main source of his reputation as the best lyric poet of his generation. Seven poems attributed to “Ignoto” from other Elizabethan collections are also included.

Much of Stritmatter’s book cites the extensive parallels between Oxford’s poetry and the works of Shakespeare. For assistance with that task Stritmatter used Open Source Shakespeare, a free online source supported by MIT that enables sophisticated searches of words and phrases from the Shakespeare canon, and Early English Books Online (EEBO), which includes 125,000 searchable titles from 1473 to 1700.

Demonstrating his methodology, Stritmatter cited Oxford’s poem “In Peascod Time,” first published in 1580, and republished in *England’s Helicon* (1600) as by “Ignoto.” An EEBO search of “peascod time” yielded three hits: the 1580 and 1600 editions with the poem and Shakespeare’s *2 Henry IV*. Stritmatter’s new edition contains over 1,700 footnotes illustrating parallelisms of vocabulary, syntax, or idea between Oxford’s poems and



Roger Stritmatter

canonical Shakespeare texts. The new volume also includes essays by Bryan Wildenthal, Richard Waugaman, Katherine Chiljan, Gary Goldstein, and Robert Prechter.

Stritmatter concluded, “I started off planning to compile a . . . set of parallels demonstrating the closeness of vocabulary, diction and concept between these poems and canonical ‘Shakespeare.’ To my surprise I unexpectedly discovered a set of independent proofs in the form of Elizabethan editorial practices and statements suggesting that the editors of the volumes in which these poems appear were fully aware of the authorship question and intended their subtle efforts to identify de Vere as the author to be received by posterity.”

Kevin Gilvary next spoke on “Who was James I’s Favorite Dramatist?” Skeptics usually divide the authorship question into two parts: first, why not William of Stratford, and secondly who was the real author? Gilvary’s doctoral thesis, recently published by Routledge as *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare*, demonstrated how many anecdotes and assertions about Shakespeare as Shakespeare are not founded upon contemporary documents. One topic not covered in his study, however, was the belief that Shakespeare received many favors from King James, who soon after his arrival in London in 1603 authorized the former Chamberlain’s Men (now the King’s Men) to perform at The Globe and elsewhere. For the King’s first London progress in 1604, the Account of the Master of the Great Wardrobe recorded the issue of red cloth to Shakespeare and other members of the acting company, as well as to over forty other persons. In the same year, twelve members of the King’s Men waited upon the Spanish Ambassador at Somerset House. As Gilvary noted, “between 1603 and 1616, the King’s Men acted before the King and Court on 187 occasions, more than all the other companies combined. In 1604-05, the King’s Men performed at court on eleven occasions, including seven plays by

Shakespeare.” Shakespeare, however, was never mentioned in documents concerning any of these performances.

On the other hand, Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton were known to have provided texts for speeches during the 1604 “Magnificent Entertainment for King James,” orations delivered as James passed through each of seven specially designed triumphal arches. Jonson also wrote many court masques and pageant entertainments, providing over two dozen entertainments for King James and Queen Anne. In 1616 he began receiving royal support in the form of an annuity of 100 marks, leading some scholars to dub him England’s first Poet Laureate. Gilvary further noted that Shakespeare was not a documented contributor to any of the London “Lord Mayor’s Pageants,” lavish entertainments organized yearly from the 1580s to the 1630s to celebrate the oath of the new mayor, and involving such authors as Middleton, Dekker, Munday, Thomas Heywood and John Webster. Although orthodox scholars have long maintained that it was only when Shakespeare died that Ben Jonson stepped out from Shakespeare’s shadow, the documentary evidence suggests to the contrary that Jonson was indeed the King’s favorite from much earlier.

The plenary sessions of the Oakland conference concluded with an amusing, satiric presentation by **Mark Alexander**, “Closing Argument: The Grand Jury Indictment for the Crime of Writing the Shakespeare Poems and Plays.” Alexander asked the attendees to imagine being members of a grand jury, and the question being considered: Is the evidence for committing the crime of authorship stronger for Will of Stratford or for Edward de Vere? As Will’s legal advocate, Alexander made the case that no significant evidence exists against Will, while the evidence against de Vere is much stronger. Alexander noted the absence of documentation of an education for Will, the illiteracy of his daughters,



Kevin Gilvary



Mark Alexander

the lack of surviving letters, his crabbed signatures, the lack of eulogies after his death, and the failure of his son-in-law to ever mention him in his copious notes, as evidence against his client ever being a writer. The ambiguity of literary references to “Shakespeare” and the lack of any portrait during his lifetime are also mitigating factors.

Instead, a multitude of circumstantial associations strongly suggest the 17th Earl of Oxford is much more likely to be guilty of writing the Shakespeare canon: his education, his ownership of a Geneva Bible, his stay in Italy, his close connections to other writers, the praise he received during his lifetime for his writings, etc. William Cecil sought a marriage between the Earl of Southampton and Oxford’s oldest daughter, Elizabeth Vere, near the time *Venus and Adonis* was dedicated to Southampton. The “incomparable brethren,” the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who received the dedication of Shakespeare’s First Folio, were connected to Oxford through marriage of his youngest daughter, Susan Vere, to Montgomery. Turning to *Hamlet*, which many scholars agree is the most autobiographical work in the canon, Alexander listed the numerous striking parallels between Oxford’s life and Hamlet’s: both were noblemen and courtiers, both were attacked by pirates, both had mothers who remarried shortly after their father’s death, both were patrons to players and playwrights, both had a lover whose father was counselor to the throne, and both had been thought mad by others in Court.

Alexander concluded by citing historian David McCullough’s introduction to Charlton Ogburn’s *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984): “The strange, difficult, contradictory man who emerges as the real Shakespeare, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, is not just plausible but fascinating and wholly believable. It is hard to imagine anyone who reads the book with an

open mind ever seeing Shakespeare or his works in the same way again. That Charlton Ogburn persisted and succeeded in so monumental a task, all alone, without institutional backing, without the support or blessing of academia, makes the accomplishment all the more extraordinary.” Case closed – Oxford is the guilty party!

The Conference concluded with the annual luncheon and awards presentations.

The audience viewed the three winning entries from this year’s “Who Wrote Shakespeare?” video contest. Third place went to **Mark Alexander** for “Oxford Is Hamlet.” Second place went to **Haeri Tollefson** for “QUESTION Everything.” The first place award went to **Lowell Widmer** for “The Author of My Imagination.” [All three videos can be viewed on the SOF website: <https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/winners-in-2018-who-wrote-shakespeare-video-contest/>]

Outgoing president **Tom Regnier** received an award for his four years of service leading the SOF. **Richard Joyrich** received an award for his tireless work in planning and organizing more than a dozen annual conferences. And, for the first time, the Oxfordian of the Year award was presented to two persons, who also happen to be married to each other: **Ramon Jiménez**, for his exhaustive research (especially into the composition and dating of early plays that should be attributed to Shakespeare), and **Joan Leon**, for her longtime leadership in raising funds for the SOF.

[Correct response to Friday’s Oxfordian Final Jeopardy: What is *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*?]



Ramon Jiménez and Joan Leon, Oxfordians of the Year



Outgoing president Tom Regnier passes the gavel to new president John Hamill; Don Rubin asks for crowd affirmation.

SOF 2019 Conference to Take Place at Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford

The Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's 2019 conference will take place at the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, October 17-20. Mark Twain lived for seventeen years in the house that now bears his name. It is where he wrote *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *The Prince and the Pauper*, among other great works. Mark Twain's importance to the Shakespeare authorship controversy cannot be questioned, as he is perhaps the most prominent writer to doubt openly that William Shakspere of Stratford was the author of the works of "William Shakespeare."

Twain addressed the authorship question in his usual witty manner in his book *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, published in 1909. At the end of a chapter summarizing the conjectures, surmises, and speculations about how the Stratford man came to write these great plays and poems, Twain asks: "Shall I set down the rest of the Conjectures which constitute the giant Biography of William Shakespeare? It would strain the Unabridged Dictionary to hold them. He is a Brontosaur: nine bones and six hundred barrels of plaster of paris."

The SOF conference will take place in the 175-seat auditorium in the modern Mark Twain Museum, located next to the Mark Twain House. On the Saturday evening of our conference, our attendees and the public will be invited to Keir Cutler's performance of Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?* You can see a 2½-minute video of the facilities at the Museum [here](#).

There is also a six-minute video about the Mark Twain House itself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLqzYALyKMc>



Conference details, including information on hotel reservations and conference registration, will be announced by January 2019. The SOF will arrange shuttle service between the hotel and the Museum. Groups of SOF members will be treated to private tours of the Mark Twain House.

Mark your calendars now for October 17-20, 2019. We look forward to an exciting and unusual conference in Hartford. See you there!

See also Tom Regnier's [article on the Mark Twain House](#) on the SOF website, and Professor James Norwood's article, "Mark Twain and 'Shake-Speare': Soul Mates," published in *Brief Chronicles*, Volume 6. For more information on the Mark Twain House & Museum, visit their [website](#). Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?* is [freely available online](#) or may be purchased in paperback from [Amazon](#).

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