



DELVING INTO THE BARD OF AVON: EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE AND UNRAVELING THE ENIGMA

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ABSTRACT

This article is about Shakespeare and his works, especially speculations and heated debate regarding the authorship of Shakespeare's works which is well-known area of controversy among scholars and literary enthusiasts.

Before going into the main topic it will be more appropriate to look back on Shakespeare's early life. William Shakespeare was born during the Renaissance period in England, and his career as a playwright and poet flourished during the height of the Renaissance in Elizabethan era. There is not much information about his early life and education. It is believed that Shakespeare didn't get any formal education or schooling after finishing the grammar school. However, we have enough data which we can imagine the life style at the time of Shakespesre. There was no running water, refrigerators, freezers or electricity. Most people bathed maybe once a month. Interestingly, there were some who thought it was a sin to bath.

Shakespeare was third of 8 kids in his family, and he was the oldest son. In his boyhood, he probably attended Stratford Grammar School.

Almost everyone all over the world knows about Shakespeare and the fame of his works, but do all people know that why his plays are so famous, and why they are still watched and studied? His works will never loose their importance because of the richness of his literary devices, the compelling drama of his plots, the penetrating nature of his characterizations, the delightful sense of humor... Because, his works tell us about human nature, they reveal to us so much about our own natures. While investigating his works several debates arise. One of these debates is the authorship theory of Shakespeare's works. Some scholars argue that Shakespeare didn't write his works himself, rather his works belong to another author. They think they have enough reasons for their decisions which are related to Shakespeare's life and education. According to them, it isn't possible to write such perfect and multifaceted plays without any education at university and without being able to write even his own name correctly. Looking at Shakespeare's actual background, his father was illiterate, and his two daughters were also illiterate, and his signature itself looks somewhat suspect. For these and

other reasons together, it is assumed that it was impossible for Shakespeare to create such high-level, complexly structured works.

Turning to who is the real author Shakespeare's works, different scholars have different approaches. Among them, the most famous ones are Baconian theory and Oxfordian theory. Each of these theories will be explored in the next sections.

Mark Twain, famous American author and humorist, wrote a book under the title "Is Shakespeare Dead?", in which he expressed skepticism that Sir Francis Bacon was the true author of the works. Twain's arguments include the following points:

- Little was known about Shakespeare's life, and the bulk of his biographies were based on conjecture
- Several prominent British barristers and judges found Shakespeare's plays saturated with precise legal thought, and the author could only have been a veteran legal professional
- That in contrast, Shakespeare had never held a legal position or office, and Twain cited a number of points like these

Unlike Shakespeare, his contemporary Sir Francis Bacon did work at the court during his career and he was a prominent figure in the court of Elizabeth I. He was also a skillful writer. He introduced the new form essay to English literature. He is most famous for his essays. The arguments and reasons like those above make F.Bacon possible candidate of Shakespeare's works.

Another well-known theory is Oxfordian theory, in which Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, is argued that he is actual author of Shakespeare's works. Almost all writers and poets try to reflect their own lives and practical knowledge in their works. At least their works are based on brief episodes of their lives or there are small hints of them. With regard to Edward de Vere some scholars see parallels between Oxford's life experiences and themes in the Shakespeare's plays. Some argue that the themes in the plays completely suit to the Oxford's life experiences. For instance, some of the plots of Shakespeare's plays such as, "Romeo and Juliet", "Othello", "The two Gentlemen of Verona" are set in Italy. There is no evidence that Shakespeare was ever connected to Italy. In the contrary, Edward de Vere is known to have traveled to Italy and other European countries. De Vere spent time in Italy from 1575 to 1576, where he likely encountered Italian culture, art and literature. Besides, his aristocratic background, education, literary talent and his connections to the court and potential access to royal secrets make strong argument. Let's analyse another possible connection to Edward de Vere. There are lots of hidden messages in the plays which we cannot see. "Richard III" is a historical play by W. Shakespeare and in it Richard III (King of England from 1483 until his death 1485) was depicted as a hunchback. However, Richard III wasn't a hunchback in real life. Then did Shakespeare have any bases to portray Richard III as a hunchback? Oxford, Edward de Vere, had such a basis. The attitude between Edward de Vere and Robert Cecil can be characterized by rivalry and mutual distrust. Robert Cecil was a main advisor of Queen Elizabeth I, and his position was highly influential over Queen Elizabeth I in English court, which was widely criticized by local people at that time. Because, Cecil's policies were not always well received by the general public, and he was viewed as a self-serving figure who prioritized his own interests over the nation. Absorbingly, Robert Cecil was a hunchback. In the play "Richard III" Richard was portrayed as more evil than he

really was , and Robert Cecil was also shown through the role of Richard III. Edward de Vere was well aware of such complexity of the policies at the court since he was also a prominent figure at Elizabethan official administration. Edward de Vere himself had connections to the theatre and a keen interest in arts and literature. He was a patron of several acting companies and playwrights during his lifetime. But he had a reputation to protect. Therefore, he couldn't publish works such as those about love, rather he preferred to print their works under the other's name. Furthermore, there were some figures, especially at the court like William and Robert Cecils, who believed such activities (art, plays) to be the worship of false idols, and therefore a sin before the eyes of God.

“ Anonymous “ is a 2011 historical drama film directed by Roland Emmerich and, the film explores the Oxfordian theory that Edward de Vere, the Earl Oxford, was the true author of Shakespeare's works. Although the theory presented in it is not widely accepted, it is an captivating and thought-provoking film.

Edward de Vere's connections to the theatre world and his literary taste and interests make him an intriguing candidate for the authorship of Shakespeare's works.

After all, it is important to remember that both theories explored above are not universally accepted by scholars and experts because of lack of evidence and some historical nonconformities.

Ultimately, the authorship question remains a theme of debate in literary circles for further study and exploration.

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