

Who was he?

Business



“ The pen is the tongue of the mind.” ? Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra.

This statement would hold true to the works of Shakespeare, if there were not so much doubt surrounded by his name and this doubt is comes from the question “ Whose mind really did the Shakespearean plays come from? Was it Shakespaere of someone else?” William Shakespeare or “ The Bard of Avon” is claimed to be one of the greatest poets and playwrights in all of western literature. Laurence Olivier described Shakespeare as “ The nearest thing in incarnation to the eye of God.” and Horace Walpole said he was “ One of the greatest geniuses that ever existed”. His plays have inspired movies such as The Lion King, She’s the Man, and Forbidden Planet. Shakespeare’s plays have also been translated into every major living language. Not only had a writer, Shakespeare taken part in the pastime of acting.

He was an actor in the acting troupe Lord Chamberlain’s Men, who would later become the King’s Men, and also a part owner. Although most believe that the plays and sonnets that bear the name “ William Shakespeare” are written by the bard himself, there are some who doubt if Shakespeare was who he says he was. There were others who were believed to write the Shakespearean plays, and Shakespeare too credit for his work. The doubt that surrounds Shakespeare’s name started in the 19th century, back when Shakespeare was considered to be one of the greatest writers in English literature. Some English scholars at the time pointed out that his humble beginnings do not match with his poetic genius. This small seed of doubt has now sprouted into a tree of controversy, with around eighty potential candidates being proposed.

Some examples of candidates being Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere the 17th Earl of Oxford, Christopher Marlowe, and William Stanley, the 6th Earl of Derby. The two most prominent of these candidates that are said to have the most potential is Bacon and de Vere. Bacon is a prime candidate because of his many philosophical works, and de Vere is a candidate because of his education would enable to write plays as intricate as Shakespeare. The support of the Anti-Stratfordian theories when Shakespearean scholars were not able to uncover much of Shakespeare's life and history, romantic writers idolizing him and making it seem as though a humble man couldn't write something this great. Also most of the Anti-Stratfordian theorists believe that proving that Shakespeare did not write the First Folio will denounce the authorship of Shakespeare. As Thomas L.

Hubeart said one can easily research and realize that Shakespeare is Shakespeare because Bacon would most likely not dabble in a career seen below him, the different life and literary styles of De Vere, and the little evidence behind the " Many Author's Theory" Francis Bacon was born in London to Sir Nicholas Bacon, who was the keeper of the seal at the time. Bacon in his early years attended Trinity College. He then left Trinity College to follow in his father's footsteps at Gray's Inn. Following this career path, Bacon served as the Attorney General and Lord Chancellor of England in his lifetime. He was knighted in 1603 and died of pneumonia on April 9, 1626.

During his life Bacon wrote many works of pertaining to philosophy, science, and government. Some of these works include New Atlantis, Maxim of the Law, Notes on the State of Christendom, and Elements of the Common Law. It was because of the subjects Bacon wrote about that support of the Anti-
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Stratfordian theory that Francis Bacon is said to be Shakespeare. Francis Bacon wrote many works on law, government, philosophy, and science, and because of this the supporters of the Anti-Stratfordian theory see that there is no way that Shakespeare could have written what he has written because he did not possess the education to do so. Shakespeare's plays are filled with ideas from the Elizabethan era, but Shakespeare only possessed a grammar school education meanwhile Francis Bacon had very adept knowledge of the interworking of the English government.

Too add on to this another flaw the Bacon supporters have found is that is that in Shakespeare's First Folio, which was published after his death, there are certain plays that were very popular in Shakespeare's time that do not make an appearance in the folio. What connects the plays that were not published in the folio is that they were published in Shakespeare's lifetime, because the plays that many know were written by Shakespeare do not appear in the folio many doubters think that Shakespeare did not write his folio. Also, the folio seems heavily edited, but the question is that who could have edited it? Shakespeare was dead but Bacon was alive. Supporters of Shakespeare ask why Francis Bacon would use a pen name on plays he had written, the Anti-Stratfordian supporters response is that he did it because of the social stigma of plays at the time. At the time it was not socially acceptable for an aristocrat to write plays, Anti-Stratfordian scholars also reference a few lines in Shakespeare plays, "Thought is free." (The Tempest III.

ii. 119). which appears in The Tempest also makes an appearance in Bacon's Promus, which is a collection of proverbs, metaphors, and aphorisms

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handwritten by Bacon. Another line that appears in both Bacon and Shakespeare's works is "Seldom cometh the better" (Richard III. II. iii).

5) This line appears once again in Bacon's Promus and also appears in Shakespeare's Richard III. Another piece of evidence that supports the Baconian Theory is that apparently during the destruction of a house in London a few of Shakespeare plays were recovered which cites Francis Bacon as the author of Shakespeare, but there is not facts found to confirm this. Though the Baconian Theory does have its fault another theory of who wrote Shakespeare is the Oxfordian Authorship Theory. The Oxfordian Authorship Theory states that Shakespeare was Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. Vere was a lyric poet and a known theatre patron, he was born in 1550 and assumed the earldom at the age of twelve in 1562.

He was cared for by William Cecil who would later be known as Lord Burghley. In the winter of 1571, Vere married Burghley's daughter named Anne Cecil. By the 1580s Vere was in a thigh financial situation and Lord Burghley had to provide for his children. It was around this time that Queen Elizabeth granted the Earl of Oxford an annuity of one thousand British pounds. It is theorized that this annuity was used to maintain a group of actors, most likely Oxford's Men. Scholars of the Oxfordian Theory have a handful of facts of evidence to support their claim, although they may be just pure chance.

One point the Oxfordian Theorists use to support their claim is that the later part of Vere's life is clouded in obscurity. The Oxfordians say that during this time the Earl started to pursue literature, this is supported by the fact that

many books are dedicated to the Earl and would make sense for him to start to pursue a career in writing as well. Supporters of the Oxfordian Theory also claim that Oxford's poems are similar to Shakespeare's earlier works. J. Thomas Looney also included this theory in his book, "Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

In his book Looney expands on this idea and points to the apparent fact that when Vere's poems stopped, Shakespeare's work began. Looney continues to add on to this and states that the Earl's poems were a precursor to his more mature work which he says began with Venus and Adonis. Looney also says that the reason that Edward de Vere didn't take credit and used an alias was the same reason the Baconian Theorist say why Bacon didn't take credit, because of the social stigma against any nobleman writing. Though the Anti-Stratfordian scholars offer evidence on why Shakespeare is not Shakespeare the Stratfordian supporters are also able to offer information and evidence on why Shakespeare is Shakespeare. The Stratfordian supporters are able to address most of the claims the Anti-Stratfordian scholars make with fake and common sense. Starting with Bacon, the Stratfordian scholars state that even though some lines of Shakespeare and Bacon are the same, the styles Bacon and Shakespeare are vastly different.

They also continue to say that Bacon's work was so immense that he wouldn't have time to work on anything else. Words written by Ben Jonson, his thoughts on Bacon's work is "this is a positive outlook on Bacon's work, but Johnson says the completely opposite when addressing Shakespeare's work. "He is a poet-ape, an upstart, a hypocrite and a thief. His works are

but the frippery of a wit.” those who support the Stratfordian claim, point to this contrast to help back their claim.

The strange thing is that Jonson wrote the introduction to Shakespeare’s First Folio and praised Shakespeare’s work, so Jonson’s writing on Bacon and Shakespeare is inconclusive on the matter. The claims made in favor of the idea that the Earl of Oxford wrote Shakespeare and actually very slipshod and can easily be debunked. Vere indeed write and he did write comedies and poems, but he was a sad man and lacked the intelligence to write like Shakespeare. He also lacked the financial abilities Shakespeare was known to carry. This brings another point that invalidates all theories that someone else was Shakespeare and it is that scholars known that there was a Shakespeare. Three of Shakespeare’s signatures have been collected and his last will and testament.

Another theory that is now sprouting up is the “ Many Author’s Theory” which states that because most of the accounts scholars have of Shakespeare are of him dealing with business and such, that Shakespeare acted more as a producer and put his name on plays of playwrights. This theory is new though and has not been expanded upon. Though there are many facts that support the idea that Shakespeare was not who we think he is, there is an equal amount or more facts that support the claim that Shakespeare did write all the plays that bear his name. Though because there is no end of sight in the Shakespearean debate, one can infer that we as a people may never know who Shakespeare really was. Though the authorship is clouded in mystery one can make intellectual deductions of who really was Shakespeare.

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Many of the few candidates mentioned have many things going for them, such as educational background, family ground, and more. All of these variables will be the deciding factors in question of who Shakespeare really was. And for once and for all maybe finally decide who Shakespeare is. There are many aspects of Francis Bacon that would make him the ideal candidate as Shakespeare. One being that he possess more than a grammar school education, Shakespeare and Bacon's writing contain many similarities. The reason Bacon is most definitely not Shakespeare is because Bacon most likely did not have time to dabble in a profession that was considered below him.

A common saying that attest to the intelligence of Bacon is “ No other author can be compared with him” which means that Shakespeare and Bacon were in two different leagues of their own and cannot be compared. The other candidate that could also be Shakespeare is Edward de Vere, who like Bacon received a great education for the time, and also participated in the literary arts. Also some say that his life parallels some character's lives that are in Shakespeare's many plays. De Vere most definitely could not be Shakespeare because De Vere was financially irresponsible while is the opposite of what current surviving records suggest about Shakespeare. He also could not be Shakespeare because the plays that he did write were mostly comedies, he was even cited in Francis Meres' novel *Palladis Tamia* as the “ best for comedy” even though Shakespeare did write some of the greatest comedies, de Vere was also known to have a flamboyant personality which would not allow him to create such tragic stories such as *Hamlet*, *MacBeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

The name of Shakespeare withstands all the scrutiny and doubt one can throw at it. This is because no author can match his intelligence and the global savvy to write the plays, and his personality overall. Shakespeare once said “ All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages.” which means that every man and women or “ player” is different and cannot be compared to one another. So comparing and contrasting similarities between author’s lives to see who the real Shakespeare was is pointless. All someone can really know is that by his will he was Shakespeare.