



## The Shakespeare Authorship Question: A Case Study in Bourdieuan Class Maintenance

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Dozens of papers and books have been written on the subject of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Calling into question the probability or even the possibility of the man named Shakespeare being the true author, 'anti-stratfordians' have made the case for such authorship candidates as Christopher Marlowe, Sir Francis Bacon, Queen Elizabeth I, and Edward de Vere the Earl of Oxford. The body of evidence supporting Shakespeare's authorship is convincing but not conclusive and the question continues to produce passionate responses from both pro- and anti-Shakespearean supporters. The doubter's motives within the ongoing debate have only been explored incidentally as a function of discrediting the argument against Shakespeare. If the answer to the question is unprovable, why has it continued to be asked? The Shakespeare Authorship Question has been motivated by elitist sensibilities, personal ambition, academic insecurity, and a form of worship called bardolatry.

These symptoms reflect the social and ideological effects of what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "cultural capital." In his influential book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that, under the conditions of capitalism "[t]here is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic" (Bourdieu 1809) in which the appreciation or production of cultural goods in the category of ostensibly 'high art' endows the subject with a "cultural capital" that works to legitimize class distinctions. According to Vincent Leitch, "Bourdieu challenges Kant's claim

that our judgements about art are disinterested, arguing instead that cultivated sensibilities both arise from and produce a 'cultural capital' that is tied to economic and social advantages" (Leitch et al on Bourdieu 1806). For Bourdieu, a "taste" for high-art is culturally acquired by an elite class educated to understand the analytical codes to identify it as such. Efforts are then made to naturalize and legitimize the cultural authority of those privileged enough to have been educated to do so by claiming for these judgements a "disinterested" objectivity in "good" taste that attempts to subvert a more hedonistic measure of pleasure. Ostensibly "low" art becomes the scapegoat in this construction. 'Cultured' taste has little to do with pure pleasure and more to do with the pleasure derived from recognizing oneself as a member of the elite class that is 'in the know' (Leitch 1807, Bourdieu 1814). In this way, Bourdieu insists that "[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (Bourdieu 1813). We are classified by our classifications and classify others by theirs. From this perspective, it is easy to understand how members of a bourgeois class, or those who aspire to it, might be uncomfortable with the idea of a working-class Shakespeare.

In her lectures at the University of Victoria, Dr. Jennifer Wise insists that the Shakespeare that we understand as the working-class son of a sheep herder wrote the texts. Yet, she concedes that "[m]any scholarly scandals have emerged out of a lack of due diligence in determining authentic external criteria" (Wise). In Nina Baym's 1996 article in

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the New England Quarterly, entitled *History's Odd Woman Out*, Baym had already agreed with Wise regarding Delia Bacon, the first author to become infamous for her anti-stratfordian text. Baym finds fault with Delia Bacon's naive belief that good interpretation could substitute for historical research and reveals a pattern of personal ambition couched in political beliefs she felt she could foster under the banner of Shakespeare's plays. In his preface to Delia Bacon's book, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspeare Unfolded*, Nathaniel Hawthorne states that "External evidence, of course, will not be wanting; there will be enough and to spare, if the demonstration here be correct" (The Philosophy 7). Hawthorne's conditional uncertainty regarding the correctness of the demonstration was well founded. Baym points out that Delia Bacon's 'research' was actually significantly lacking in external evidence, and was based almost exclusively on a political interpretation of Shakespeare's original texts. Baym quotes Nathaniel Hawthorne's description of Delia Bacon's "magnum opus" as a text which "fell with a dead thump at the feet of the public and [which] has never been picked up" (Baym 223). Sadly, for Delia Bacon, Hawthorne's contention proved untrue. The text was picked up by many critics as a paradigm example of the ulterior motives and poor scholarship which they found characteristic of the Shakespeare Authorship Question.

Baym's article is effused with the ulterior motives ascribed to a somewhat troubled mind. Nevertheless, Baym tries to paint a picture of Delia Bacon not so heavily coloured by her later insanity and her attempts to posit Francis Bacon as the candidate for Shakespearean authorship. In the essay, Baym depicts a woman afflicted by a string of publication failures and with a deep need to prove herself academically in order to acquire "the approval of the people whose applause she coveted" (Baym 224). "These dreams were significantly underwritten by her conviction that she was a genius" (Baym 226) and "an ambition to excel in literature that it was bound to frustrate and an eventual belief in her own divine mission" (Baym 224). Unfortunately, she failed utterly. "Delia Bacon's [. . .] repeated attempts to forge a literary career were just as

repeatedly rebuffed during her lifetime" (Baym 223).

It is easy to ascribe questionable ulterior motives to Delia Bacon. Her family was suffering from social and financial slippage. They "had slid far down the social scale" (Baym 225). "Restoring Francis Bacon to his imagined place at the forefront of historical progress, Delia Bacon laid claim to a similar place for herself in her own time" (Baym 248). One might be inclined to interpret a personal ambition to elevate her family name by appropriating the glory of Shakespeare on to her descendants. In his essay, *Freud and the Controversy Over Shakespearean Authorship*, H. Trosman quotes "'Jones" - in the theory of Delia Bacon, [who] "suspected a vested interest" based on the coincidence of her name with Francis Bacon's (Trosman 475). If Baym is to be taken at her word, then Delia Bacon sought the most likely candidate for a popular response as a topic for her "opus" to fulfill her dream of critical acclaim.

Hawthorne also says that Bacon "chose her readings over her religion - indeed, she made her readings into her religion. Shakespeare's plays as she read them were nothing less than a new gospel which she had been appointed to make known" (Baym 225). In her article, *Print Culture as an Archive of Dissent: Or, Delia Bacon and the Case of the Missing Hamlet*, Nancy Glazener commends Bacon's rhetorical attack of Shakespeare worship. "Bacon's debunking of Shakespearian hagiography was astute" (Glazener 3). Bacon sarcastically takes on the voice of those loyal to Shakespeare who had come to fully identify their British culture with him. "If you dissolve him do you not dissolve us with him? If you take him to pieces, do you not undo us also?" (*An Inquiry* 5). What Glazener fails to recognize is that Bacon was equally guilty. Baym indicates that in Bacon's mind, Shakespeare's plays functioned perfectly which "implied the perfection of the deity, who was the cause of it all" (Baym 236). Baym is unclear whether she ascribes Shakespeare or God as the cause inspiration but clearly, Baym locates Delia Bacon squarely in the arena of religious worship of Shakespeare's texts.

In Bacon's own 1856 article in Putnam's Magazine, *William Shakespeare and his Plays*:

*An Inquiry Concerning Them*, she deploys a religious language to describe the author and his texts. She calls the author “superhuman genius” (*An Inquiry* 3), “enthroned king of thought” (*An Inquiry* 4), and “master spirit” (*An Inquiry* 5). She refers to his texts as “miraculous inspiration” (*An Inquiry* 5) and “the monuments of a genius” (*An Inquiry* 1). She even suggests a similarity between the mysterious life of Jesus and the bard. Bacon notes that Shakespeare, like Jesus, left us with only a text for our greatest critics (she names Pope and Johnson) “to waste their golden hours, year after year, in groping after and guessing out his hidden meanings” (*An Inquiry* 7). Her language becomes increasingly biblical. “He, at whose feet all men else are proud to sit” (*An Inquiry* 8), “whose name is, of mortal names, the most awe-inspiring” and who has “the blood of a new Adam bubbling in his veins” (*An Inquiry* 9). Bacon was suggesting that Shakespeare worship had been the cause of unquestioning loyalty to the myth of the man as it stood. However, the language she uses is one of complicity and in so doing she reveals her own worship of the texts and a deeper need to reconcile their worship with a worthy author-god.

In her need to reconcile the author-god with the texts she worshipped, Delia Bacon was guilty of severe elitism. Glazener claims that Bacon “got the authorship wrong partly because of her elitist prejudices” (Glazener 3). Bacon boldly refers to the man from Stratford as “that wretched player” (*An Inquiry* 14) and “a stupid, ignorant, illiterate, third-rate play-actor” (*An Inquiry* 19). Bacon suggests that it would be impossible to fully appreciate the glory of his text if we are confined in our thinking to define the author as this “vulgar, illiterate man” (*An Inquiry* 13). “[H]ow could any one dare to see what is really in [the texts]?” (*An Inquiry* 13). To mitigate these claims, she attempts to soothe readers with words obviously intended to garner complicity. She states that “we all know that to the last hour of his life, this fellow cared never a farthing for [the plays], but only for his gains at their hands” (*An Inquiry* 4). What “we all know” is not indisputable. In her book, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time*, Roslyn Knutson describes commercial motives in the Elizabethan era and

claims that “the exigencies of making a living” fostered “company affiliation” rather than the popular notion of quarrelling theatre companies (Knutson 39). These exigencies may well have been the primary motivation of Shakespeare’s muse, as unappealing and unpoetic as that seems. Delia Bacon requires Shakespeare to be more poetically god-like. She assumes Shakespeare’s behavior based on knowledge he could not have had. Considering Hamlet’s speech to the players advising them on their performing, Bacon claims that Shakespeare “would, at least, know enough of the value of his own works to avail himself of the printing press, for their preservation” (*An Inquiry* 6). In order for this statement to be true, Shakespeare would have had to anticipate the date of his own death, the canonized status his texts would attain, and the increased stock placed in printed copies of plays that had barely emerged in his own time.

In her elitism, Bacon attempts to gain the complicity of her reader. Calling on a sense of civic pride, she refers to Shakespeare as “our” poet and his loss as a loss to “us” (*An Inquiry* 5). She uses the genitive “her” to describe the British Isle’s ownership of the poet (*An Inquiry* 12). She was setting the stage for her imminent book release and attempting to establish a sensibility that the man from Stratford is a ridiculous candidate that is both anti-critical and anti-British to accept. But she doesn’t stop there. She goes on to claim that “there were men in England, in the age of Elizabeth, who had mastered the Greek and Roman history” (*An Inquiry* 16). Although she never submits a candidate in this article, her book, which came out the following year focuses exclusively on Francis Bacon as her champion.

Delia Bacon suffered from a need to reconcile her religious worship of the texts with a candidate that satisfied her sensibilities. She reiterates a need to discover, on behalf of Shakespeare’s texts, their “sources, beginning and end – for the modern critic, that is surely now the question” (*An Inquiry* 1). But her fanatical 582-page volume is almost entirely void of any verifiable research. Her endless poetic musings emulate Shakespeare more than debunk him. Much to Bacon’s chagrin, Hawthorne rationalizes the inconclusive nature of Bacon’s

book in its preface. He states that “the author of the discovery was not willing to rob the world of this great question; but wished rather to share with it the benefit which the true solution of the Problem offers-the solution prescribed by those who propounded it to the future” (*An Inquiry* 7). Inherent to his statements is both the admission that the “solution” provided by Delia Bacon requires further research, and that the entire value of Bacon’s book is to continue the life of the question.

Bacon was also strongly motivated by a need to make a critical name for herself, and to demonstrate her genius, which required her to maintain some mystery about her answer to the question: “here in this daylight of our modern criticism, in its noontide glare, has he not contrived to hide himself in the profoundest depths of that stuff that myths are made of?” (*An Inquiry* 4). Baym suggests that “Bacon became quite secretive about her ideas - not because she doubted them but because she was afraid of being scooped” (Baym 238). Her fear of losing her claim to Shakespeare was an ulterior motive she shared with Mr. J. Thomas Looney.

John Thomas Looney wrote a 536-page volume entitled *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere*. Admittedly, a man with such a moniker is truly dedicated to take a position that has resulted in his name being identified as both “unfortunate” and “significant” (McRea, Lester, Hurst). As with Delia Bacon’s book, the sheer volume of the text indicates a fanatical obsession with proving Edward de Vere was the man responsible for the plays that we ascribe to Shakespeare. Almost every scholar that mentions the case for Edward de Vere since the publication of Looney’s book identifies it as the definitive text on the subject. Criticism has taken aim at Looney’s arguments and evidence. However, it appears that no-one has bothered to examine the text specifically in an effort to justify his dedicated motivation.

In the preface of the book, there are subtle indications of his personal ambition that are similar to Delia Bacon’s ‘scoop’. He eagerly states that “steps had to be taken to ensure that the results achieved should not be lost, and also to safeguard what I believed to be my priority of

discovery”. The “results” he refers to represent the investment of research he had made and dedicated to producing his lengthy text. Even more obvious is his self-protectionism. Like a school-boy with a precious secret or a competing inventor rushing to the patent office with some new idea, he is evidently eager to reveal his “discovery” as quickly as possible in order to protect his “priority” before it is credited to someone else. Like Delia Bacon’s argument for Francis Bacon, Looney’s desire to posit Edward de Vere as the real author comes two hundred years after his death. Looney’s motives can only be ascribed to personal ambition and not some noble quest to champion the poor unaccredited Earl of Oxford.

Looney also demonstrates a Freudian insecurity in his attempts at self-validation. He begins his book with a short ‘dedication’ which is actually a list of people whom he has convinced, complete with their inscrutable academic accreditation, against an active admission that many might not be. He posits the “complete acceptance of my solution” by his “brother-in-law, Mr. M. Gompertz, B. A., Head Master of the County High School, Leystone” and to one “Mr. W. T. Thorn” (Looney 5). He lists the publisher, a “Mr. Cecil Palmer” as having “adopted its conclusions with enthusiasm” (Looney 5-6). Looney then states that he has “not the slightest doubt” as to the success of his plans to prove Oxford the author. His voice, however, reads as not much but self-assurance against an insecurity about which he notes it will be “another matter” to “present the case as to establish an equally strong conviction in the minds of others” (Looney 17).

Looney’s new candidate represents a recurrence of elitist thinking so evident with Delia Bacon. The entire argument is imbued with a strong desire for Shakespeare to be more than a mere peasant. The only reasonable basis for this desire is that it is uncomfortable that a low-bred candidate be the locus of worship and genius. Unfortunately, as with all the arguments founded on this discomfort, Looney’s book relies heavily on conjecture and evidence of what is not there as ‘proof’. The lack of evidence regarding Shakespeare is tantamount to the lacking evidence for all Elizabethan writers,

with the exception of Ben Jonson who was a man “much concerned with his historical reputation and took efforts to make his memory known” (Trosman 487). What is left, then, are the fantastical desires to make a normal life of reasonable explanation legendary to align with the worship his texts have projected on to the man.

In Roland Barthes’ text *The Death of the Author*, he refers to the misconception of the “Author-God” (Leitch 1468). Theories posited by Barthes and Michel Foucault were amongst several in the critical discourse of the twentieth century that threatened to marginalize the importance of the author. The fanatical backlash was inevitable. When generations had come to worship the idea of the author Shakespeare, the threat to his divine position called for nothing shy of open revolt. Ironically, by taking part in this very discourse to try and discredit Shakespeare, the anti-Stratfordians achieved two results against the death of the author. First, they demonstrated the very problem Barthes was observing, that the importance of the author is not central. Anti-Stratfordians were simply displacing authorship into another candidate. Secondly, that by questioning Shakespeare, they ensured his continued relevance within the new critical framework. So much for the *death* of the author.

The name of the author thus works to confuse the texts with the person. Roland Barthes notes that “The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man. [. . .] The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it” (Leitch 1466). Foucault expands the discourse and states that “a number of texts were attached to a single name [which] implies that relationships of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentication, or of common utilization were established amongst them. Finally, the author’s name characterizes a particular manner of existence of discourse” (Leitch 1627). Al Pacino, in his movie, *Looking for Richard* (1996), demonstrates this use of the name of the author. He states, “It has always

been a dream of mine to share with others how I feel about Shakespeare” (Pacino 11:39). However, there is nothing in the movie to even hint that Pacino has any knowledge of *the man* named Shakespeare at all. The movie focuses on the thrilling process surrounding the decoding of Shakespeare’s text *Richard III* in anticipation of staging it. Clearly, Pacino uses the word Shakespeare to refer to the works ascribed to that man. The name ‘Shakespeare’ is therefore an idea which ostensibly refers to a man but effectively refers to a specific canon of texts in a specific era in a specific cultural setting ascribed to the genius of one man.

Looney conveniently overlooks the impossibility of his own claim and the agency given to the idea of authorship. The name Shakespeare, whether accurate or not, cannot simply be erased from a worshipped canon of texts. Foucault quite accurately hypothesizes that “[d]iscourse that possesses an author’s name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten” (Leitch 1627). Even in the event that Looney’s ‘proof’ were conclusive to the point of being undisputable, it would ultimately result in the name of Oxford being transferred into the idea of Shakespeare and not the name of Shakespeare being universally replaced with that of Oxford. Prince became the-artist-formerly-known-as-Prince as would Edward de Vere become the Earl formerly known as Shakespeare. Looney attempts to address this problem with modesty. “[I]t will be impossible ever totally to dissociate from the work and personality of the great one, the figure and name of his helper” (Trosman 486). His modesty, however, is only overshadowed by the obvious fact that his ‘definitive volume’ has done little to prove anything, but has successfully injected his own name into the history of the Shakespeare myth for all time.

One need not even read his exhaustively detailed academic arguments on Oxford’s behalf to discover hidden motive in his publication. In his introduction he self-aggrandizes and fantasizes about a legendary contribution to the literary canon of critical works. “The transference of honour of writing the immortal Shakespeare dramas from one man to another, if definitely effected, becomes not merely a

national or contemporary event, but a world event of permanent importance, destined to leave a mark as enduring as human literature and the human race itself" (Looney 13). At some point, Looney seems to have confused the act of ascribing Shakespeare's work to another man with the discovery of fire. The remainder of the introduction reads like the false-modest musings of a man who has volunteered to take on the most momentous self-sacrificing literary excursion that has ever been undertaken. He proposes that the "greater responsibility had to be incurred" (Looney 14) and that if he can see the "truth prevail", he "shall be content" (Looney 6). Looney uses epic poetic language such as "judgment" and "imperial" as he fully envisions himself being sacrificed to the critical gods and that "he is bound to implicate himself so deeply as to stake publicly his reputation for sane and sober judgment, and thus to imperil the credit of his opinion on every other subject" (Looney 13). At least he got that right.

Thomas Looney and Delia Bacon are both easy targets out of which critics could make 'straw-men'. The coincidence of her actual insanity with his unfortunate name is rhetorically and emphatically repeated within the discourse. Each of the major candidates for alternate authorship, Bacon and Oxford, now had singular identifiable champions in Delia Bacon and Looney respectively. The ensuing criticism focused on weaknesses in their arguments, rather than original document proof and the question of Shakespeare's authorship moved even farther away from the source. The expected result is that the discourse would lose momentum, which is exactly what it did until Sigmund Freud's loyalty to Looney's thesis caused a disruption in psychoanalytical theory that brought the question back to the discursive foreground.

In the newspaper article entitled, *We're Not a Lot of Mad People*, Lynda Hurst quotes Freud as echoing both Looney and Bacon. "The man of Stratford seems to have nothing at all to justify his claim, whereas Oxford has almost everything" (Freud in Hurst). Trosman quotes Freud's 1930 Goethe Prize acceptance speech. Freud reports doubts that "the untutored son

of a provincial citizen of Stratford" was the true author "or whether it was, rather, the nobly-born and highly cultivated, passionately wayward, to some extent declassé aristocrat, Edward de Vere, hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England" (Trosman 477). Three things are immediately obvious in the statement. First, that Freud had doubts. Second, that he considered de Vere as the only other acceptable candidate. Third, and most important, is the language which demonstrates a pre-occupation with Shakespeare's low-breeding and Edward de Vere's aristocracy, with particular mention of their father's stations in both cases. Freud becomes his own example of the oedipal complex. He is pre-occupied with the fathers of long-dead icons to the point of personal anxiety which he appears to need to resolve conclusively.

Freud is a problematic Pandora's Box. He had partly used the life of William Shakespeare, specifically the death of his father and of his son Hamnet, to explain oedipal phenomena in Hamlet. In *An Autobiographical Study*, Trosman quotes Freud as having written that "Shakespeare wrote Hamlet very soon after his father's death" (Trosman 478). Hamlet is the pivotal textual example that Freud employs in his Oedipal Theory. "The issue of the Shakespearean authorship controversy appears to be a long-standing unresolved preoccupation with doubts concerning rightful paternity" (Trosman 495). The 'fatherhood' of the texts, so to speak, was a locus of anxiety for Freud. "He responded to the poor historical documentation as a challenge to his psychological skill" (Trosman 479). As such, he seems guilty of a sort of oedipal bardolatry. Now, having convinced himself of another candidate, he needed to make the life of de Vere fit into his oedipal model, or abandon his life's work as evidentially flawed. Trosman reports that Freud transferred biographical evidence from de Vere's life in to the model to replace the Shakespeare example. In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, "he related Hamlet's Oedipus complex to the fact that the Earl of Oxford's father died when the presumed author was a boy and shortly thereafter his mother whom he repudiated remarried" (Trosman 479). Although this biographical coincidence is more similar to

the story in the text of *Hamlet*, it is actually a less convincing argument for the Oedipal Theory as Freud presents it in the Oedipus Complex section of his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Leitch 922-3). The coincidence of greater relevance, however, is Freud's actions of fatherly pre-occupation, especially projected into the lives of long-dead icons, and his transference of their biographies into his theory.

The interpretation of text as a sort of psychological mystery to be solved was a method that must have appealed to Sigmund Freud (Trosman 493). Looney uses Shakespeare's texts as a point of departure and in them makes efforts to provide evidence that what can be read as necessary biographical knowledge on the part of the author coincides most specifically with the life of Edward de Vere. This interpretation coincides with the methodology of psychoanalysis that Freud writes about in many of his texts, and its use of interpretation of text is highly reminiscent of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. "Jones observes of Freud that two of the great mysteries that had 'always perplexed him to distraction' were telepathy & the Shakespeare authorship controversy" (Lester 4 - footnotes). "Freud did not settle on any one claimant until 1923, when he was sixty-seven years old" (Trosman 475). In *The Author in Shakespeare*, Paul Lester claims that in Looney's book, Freud had found a relief to his own longstanding oedipal anxiety, and a published practitioner of his methodology to soothe his ego further (Lester 5 - column 2).

I find Lester's interpretation to be a little too convenient. But in his vein of thinking, I discovered that Freud's language sounds much like the rhetoric of a person trying to convince themselves of a convenient solution to an irksome problem, which they know to be otherwise untrue. In his Goethe prize speech, he demonstrates an awkward uncertainty. He uses the phrase "whether it was in fact" and "or whether it was rather" (Trosman 477). He follows both of these phrases with descriptions of the candidates aimed at questioning the one and propagating for the other. He includes the phrase "It is undeniably painful to all of us" in an attempt to gain complicity. Trosman quotes a 1930 letter to a German translator regarding

the sonnets in which Freud says, "I am indeed almost convinced that none but this aristocrat was our Shakespeare" (Trosman 478). The phrase "almost convinced" resounds with uncertainty. In the 1935 second edition of *An Autobiographical Study*, he adds a footnote that repeats the phrase "almost convinced" of his belief in Edward de Vere. It all sounds like a man seeking to gain external support to alleviate the anxiety of his own doubt.

There is a clear pattern of anxiety amongst the anti-Stratfordians pertaining to evidence that is not there. Early in his book, *Bacon and Shakespeare: An Inquiry Touching Players, Playhouses, and Play-Writers in the Days of Elizabeth*, William Smith presents a one-page second chapter that insists "William Shakespeare is indeed a negative history" followed by three sentences about Shakespeare. Each begins with, "We do not know. . ." (Smith 2). Specifically Smith targets a suspicious lack of knowledge pertaining to Shakespeare's birth, death, education, marriage, and dates of textual production. Delia Bacon and Thomas Looney are both guilty of academic anxiety based on what we do not know and what feels as though it is missing. They chose to reveal what they deemed 'proof of identity' based on their own interpretations of Shakespeare's texts. Freud needed to relieve an oedipal anxiety that stemmed from a lack of information regarding the father-author-god.

Lester argues that "Realism" is the movement that has caused the question to remain. "There was as a consequence a quest - which was a prominent motive in the Shakespearean author-as-source debate - to re-write history & re-read literature in realist, & essentially 'consumerist' terms" (Lester 1 - column 1). "[W]ith it was enshrined a particular conception of 'the author' & his properties" (Lester 1 - column 1). Lester suggests that in examining the texts, many academics had a "need to apply to a concrete situation before their meaning can be securely determined" (Lester 2 - column 2). The concrete situation could be found in "the author whose genius lies behind [the text]" (Lester 2 - column 2). "References to knowledge or events or places or people [are] picked out from throughout the text & then the chosen candidate

is shown to have known about or been at these things, known or been with these people” (Lester 2 – column 2). “This reductive criticism & detective quest that services it needs not only a source, the fixed author or fixity of authors, but a reason for the text” (Lester 4 - column 2). The texts are then a mere source for the detectives to construct a more plausible picture of the author as source” (Lester 3 - column 1). A pattern emerges in which, it appears, that many academic writers attempt to pin down a definitive identity for Shakespeare from which their academic integrity and authority on the subject is impervious to future re-evaluation. “Everything is locked into a safe place - the mystique of authorship, the consumerisation of readership, and language itself” (Lester 4 - column 2). Once the author is stable, the meaning of the texts could be “securely determined” and presented to students with confidence.

Lester also suggests that academics were aware that the “discourse of the Shakespeare authorship debate [was] regularly fortified by the multiplication of possible authorship candidates” (Lester 1 - column 1). He states that new candidates, enigmas, and interpretations were regularly emerging. The inability to locate the authorship definitively had a twofold effect on the academic community. Not only did it fortify the academic insecurity caused by a lack of authoritative Shakespearian evidence, it also ensured the ongoing production of academic text around a self-perpetuating question. “From the Freudian perspective it may be postulated that the literary detectives - most frustrated authors themselves - are trying to [. . . ] atone for orthodoxy’s literary parricide” (Lester 2 - column 2). Never in history has a single author garnered the passionate debate and published comment that Shakespeare has. Never before have texts been revered so wholly as to merit the debate.

Lester introduces “bardolatry” as both a source and a result of the ongoing debate. He sees amongst academics an “unquestioning, unproblematical worship of the accredited ‘source’ that has [. . . ] helped provoke the excesses of the self-styled literary detectives” (Lester 1 - column 2). Lester draws a specific bridge between worshipping an author and the

enigma that it inevitably creates. “We have what little we know of the supposed ‘great author’ - a gnawing & irritating enigma” (Lester 1 - column 2). In order to fill the void and satisfy the itching of the enigma, the “literary detectives [. . . ] marshal all the biographic evidence for their particular candidate to the exclusion of all evidence to the contrary” (Lester 2 - column 1). Lester reiterates what he deems to be the fundamental rationale for the authorship debate. “The author cannot be the Stratford man because he could not have been literate enough” (Lester 2 - column 1). “The author of Shakespeare’s works could not just be a country yokel or litigious bumkin or a ham actor from Stratford; he must, as it were, justify his consummate literary genius by his royalty or nobility” (Lester 2 - column 1 & 2). The words of academic writers are replete with comments regarding the desire to mould Shakespeare into the myth we would like him to be. Cyril Connolly states that “[e]verything we know about William Shakespeare contributes little or nothing to the image we should like to form of Europe’s greatest writer” (McManaway 1). For anti-stratfordians, the perceived disparity between the Stratford man and the literary legend creates a problem already seen in the elitism of Bacon, Looney and Freud.

This Bourdieuan maintenance of class distinctions in the arena of historical narrative is perhaps best exemplified in the ideological implications underpinning two post-modern films concerned with Shakespeare’s life and times. *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) uses Shakespeare as a vehicle to demonstrate contemporary sensibilities that valorize the working class hero while *Anonymous* (2011) responds with a propagandistic attempt to relocate Shakespeare amongst an aristocratic elite. In *Teoria e Storia della Storiografia*, Benedetto Croce suggests that “every true history is contemporary history” as it is enacted in the historian’s mind and retold through that filter – a filter that is laden with its own cultural sensibilities, language, beliefs, and fantasies (Croce 12). In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, John Storey agrees that “it does not really matter whether Hollywood’s representations are ‘true’ or ‘false’ (historically accurate or not); what matters is the ‘regime of truth’ (Michel Foucault ...) they put into

circulation" (Storey 173). Thus, film auteurs have written the ideology of the day over the scant historical record in order to appropriate the cultural capital that Shakespeare represents. A film narrative of Shakespeare's life and works is a perfect vehicle to put contemporary ideologies in to circulation for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a major icon of the Western literary canon, Shakespeare and his works represent substantial cultural capital. Secondly, Shakespeare's life is a sort of cultural tabula rasa onto which contemporary ideologies are easily written. Thirdly, the indoctrinating power of feature film in Western culture is immeasurable. In concert these reasons provide substantial impetus for filmmakers to use Shakespeare as a vehicle with which to reflect, establish, or valorize cultural ideologies.

As a major icon of the Western literary canon, Shakespeare and his works represent substantial cultural capital. In her book *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* Marjorie Garber describes Western culture as one in which "Shakespeare makes modern culture and modern culture makes Shakespeare" (xiii). Using Shakespeare as a specific example, Garber seems to reiterate Croce's contention that all history is contemporary. She describes the ways in which Shakespeare's revered works have been appropriated by cultural forces throughout history since they were received and "almost always seemed to coincide with the times in which they are read, published, produced, and discussed" (xiii). Garber also highlights how modern cultural factions from advertisers to academics have tried to appropriate the "cultural 'Q' value" Shakespeare has come to represent (xviii). Surely such a fundamental cultural icon can be used as a powerful indoctrinating weapon in an arsenal of contemporary ideologies.

Shakespeare's life is a sort of cultural tabula rasa onto which contemporary ideologies are easily written. Academic research has failed to produce any substantial objective historical record upon which to base a definitive narrative of Shakespeare's life. Early in his book, *Bacon and Shakespeare: An Inquiry Touching Players, Playhouses, and Play-Writers in the Days of Elizabeth*, William Smith presents a one-page

second chapter that insists "William Shakespeare is indeed a negative history" followed by three sentences about Shakespeare. Each begins with, "We do not know . . ." (Smith 2). Specifically Smith targets a lack of knowledge pertaining to Shakespeare's birth, death, education, marriage, and dates of textual production. With this blank slate of history surrounding such an important icon, authors are able to construct narratives regarding Shakespeare based on their interpretations of his work that are commensurate with contemporary ideologies. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard claims that what is simulated in artistic representations, which certainly includes film, has no cultural referent in the real world. He states that simulation is "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1). In this light, a filmic simulation of Shakespeare's life might readily generate a 'reality' or 'truth' even in the absence of any historical record with which to substantiate such claims.

The lacking historical record might also elucidate the reasons such narratives appear in fictitious rather than documentary formats. In his essay "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age," Robert A. Rosenstone outlines what he deems the "Varieties of Historical Film" (Rosenstone 52). He lists 1. ) "history as drama" (52): a. ) "film based on documentable persons or events or movements" (53), b. ) "those whose central plot and characters are fictional, but whose historical setting is intrinsic to the story and meaning of the work" (53); 2. ) "History as document" (53) which Rosenstone suggests participates with the "social problem documentary of the thirties" (53). Both *Shakespeare in Love* and *Anonymous* fall somewhere between 1a and 1b. The narratives are "based on documentable persons" but their "events or movements" are entirely fictional. Rosenstone claims that historians put more stock in "History as document" films but the objective voice they try to establish is encumbered with "nostalgia" (53). Moreover, with a lacking historical record, the documentary claim to truth lacks integrity. There are few facts upon which to rely. In the case of Shakespeare's life, only an entirely constructed,

fictitious narrative could fill the time-space of a feature film. Additionally, fictitious feature film may be a more efficacious indoctrinating tool with recourse to both a clearly articulated narrative causality and the voice of characters within the narrative. The fictitious feature film carries other inherent advantages as well, such as wider distribution, more universal audience appeal, and an appeal to emotion and nostalgia as an indoctrinating tool rather than logic and fact.

The indoctrinating power of feature film in Western culture is immeasurable. Many critics have gone so far as to suggest that popular film actually creates a false truth of history for millions of viewers. Echoing Baudrillard's assertion, Rey Chow states that in film "the illusion of presence generated is such that a new kind of realism, one that vies with life itself, aggressively asserts itself" (Chow 169). Cultural theory pioneers Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer identify "The old experience of the movie-goer, who sees the world as an extension of the film he has just left (because the latter is intent on reproducing the world of everyday perceptions)" (Horkheimer 126). Allardye Nicoll articulates this thesis most clearly when she states, "What we have witnessed on the screen becomes the real for us" (Nicoll 38). Such a powerful tool of indoctrination might be considered the near perfect vehicle with which to propagate contemporary ideologies.

As a powerful indoctrinating tool, the history fiction is fundamentally dubious to the academic historian because it cannot be challenged in its own medium (without recourse to big budget film production). For example, few who saw the movie *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982) as a popular cultural product are likely to have read the two essays by Natalie Zemon Davis ("On the Lame") and Robert Finlay ("The Refashioning of Martin Guerre") which explain and challenge the film's purpose and methodology respectively. In "The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age," Robert A. Rosentone discusses the source of the discomfort that historians have with historical films.

Film is out of control of historians. Film shows we do not own the past. Film creates a historical world with which books cannot compete, at least for popularity. Film is a disturbing symbol of an increasingly postliterate world (in which people can read but won't) (Rosenstone 50).

Moreover, film has no negative. "Arguments call for a logic that words are better able to convey than are images. Images lack tense and negative form, for example" (Nichols 30). What is lacking in movies like *Shakespeare in Love* and *Anonymous* is the negative. Who is to say it didn't happen that way? This seems to be amongst the grievances of historians to historical dramas in general. The voice of argument is erased and the indoctrinating illusion of reality outlined above replaces historical interrogation. A new history (that fits the times) overwrites known facts and ongoing critical analysis. A "truth" about Shakespeare can become fixed in the ideological hegemony of the day.

In the absence of fact, supposition defines the trajectory of the narratives of both *Shakespeare in Love* and *Anonymous*. In her essay "On the Lame," and referring to her historical advisory on the film *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*, Natalie Zemon Davis defends a new historicism that depends on supposition and conjecture. "I worked as a detective, assessing my sources and the rules for their composition, putting together clues from many places, establishing a conjectural argument that made the best sense" (Davis 575). She defends her method thus: "In the absence of the full depositions and testimony from the trials and of rural diaries and letters, this is the best one can do in the study of a primarily illiterate, sixteenth-century peasant society" (Davis 575). The use of conjecture is required by the lacking historical record and fosters the writing of history to align with contemporary agendas that make "the best sense." Supposition deployed in the context of a culturally loaded contemporary language cannot help but reflect contemporary ideologies. *Shakespeare in Love* uses the power of romantic melodrama to overwrite history with working class sentimentality. That is not to say that

*Shakespeare in Love* as a piece of popular entertainment necessarily has a political agenda, but as Bill Nichols points out in his *Introduction to Documentary*, “Even the most whimsical of fictions gives evidence of the culture that produced it” (Nichols 1). The film opens with expository captions that clearly identify capitalist competition as the context in which the narrative will unfold. “In the glory days of the Elizabethan theatre, two playhouses were fighting it out for writers and audiences” (*Shakespeare in Love*). Capitalist exigencies problematise the binary competition. “Across the river was the competition, built by Philip Henslowe, a businessman with a cash flow problem” (*Shakespeare in Love*). In this capitalist context, William Shakespeare is depicted as a modern stereotype of the working class hero trying to live out the ‘American dream’. The character of Shakespeare is introduced in the throes of his literary labours. With ink-stained fingers, he vigilantly writes countless iterations of his own signature, apparently lost in the fantasy that it will one day be revered. The room is littered with crumpled balls of his own discarded parchment. Shortly thereafter, Shakespeare’s working class romantic and capitalist desires are clearly articulated. He is unable to complete the play demanded by Henslowe until he finds his “muse” (*Shakespeare in Love*). Shakespeare follows-up by stating his second desire – a thinly veiled allusion to the ‘American dream’ in which he wishes to invest his way out of his working class status. He asks Henslowe, “Will you lend me fifty pounds? ... Burbage offers me a partnership in the Chamberlain’s men. For fifty pounds my days as a hired player are over” (*Shakespeare in Love*). Shakespeare’s working class status is further emphasized in his romantic aspirations regarding Viola. During the ballroom scene when Shakespeare becomes enamoured of Viola, he voices his attraction. A musician friend laughs at such a lofty romantic pursuit. “Viola de Lesseps? Dream on, Will” (*Shakespeare in Love*). During the balcony scene with Viola, Shakespeare laments his status. “Alas, . . . I am a lowly player” (*Shakespeare in Love*). Nevertheless, Shakespeare and Viola manage to realize their forbidden love. The historical record indicates that Shakespeare

did become a member of the Chamberlain’s Men, but there is little concrete evidence to support a characterization of Shakespeare as a romanticized working class hero with either economic or romantic aspirations of grandeur.

In order to maximize the impact of this narrative, Shakespeare’s life is depicted in the polarized language of modern melodrama. The romantic working class hero and his helpless heroine are pitted against an irrationally evil villain. With no historical record to fall back on, the narrative simply appropriates one of Shakespeare’s texts, modifies it to melodrama, and writes it over his life. *Shakespeare in Love* is a boldly modern reimagining of *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare takes the place of Romeo and Viola de Lesseps takes the place of Juliet. The villainous Tybalt who thwarts their love in *Romeo and Juliet* is replaced by Lord Wessex. He threatens Shakespeare for the transgression of “coveting” Viola. “I cannot spill blood in her house, but I will cut your throat anon” (*Shakespeare in Love*). The romance the hero so desires, which is conflated with his ability to write based on romantic inspiration, and therefore his economic prosperity, is set in direct opposition to the blocking agent of an aristocratic villain. In the end, Wessex’s villainy is fossilized in the romantic aspect of the narrative. He whisks Juliet/Viola away from Romeo/Shakespeare with marriage and a sea voyage. Romeo/Shakespeare is allowed to live, and wins from the villainous aristocrat the financial capital necessary to fulfill his professional dreams, but only at the tragic expense of his romantic fulfillment. The emotional impact of this recognizable romantic tale is unquestionable. However, in this version, the villain is distinctly aristocratic, and the hero is all too working class. As such, the aristocracy is firmly coded as a villainous force against the working class hero, and as the power that must be duped in order for Shakespeare to achieve financial freedom.

*Anonymous* can be read as a response to *Shakespeare in Love* in its effort to remove Shakespeare from the working class and relocate him squarely amongst the aristocratic elite. *Anonymous* is not subtle in this regard. In *Anonymous*, the man who wrote the plays, Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, holds

land and title. By the end of the convoluted narrative, it is revealed that he is closely related to Elizabeth I, her bastard son. Shakespeare is portrayed as an illiterate charlatan opportunist. The mise-en-scene depicts the lower classes as a mob of cattle who are easily convinced to storm Buckingham Palace in an effort to depose Robert Cecil having been incited to revolution by the play *Richard III*. The dialogue is just as obvious. At one point the otherwise charming and soft-spoken de Vere condescends to a young Ben Jonson based on his working class status as a poet. "I am Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, . . . People like me do not write plays. People like you do" (*Anonymous*). The narrative continues to suggest a common sense that the author must have been aristocratic. For example, when Kit Marlowe interrogates Jonson, he posits the aristocratic status of the playwright as a given. "So who did write them? A nobleman, yes, but who?" At another point in the narrative, the assumed aristocratic value of the plays is again set in opposition to the fare of the lower-classed rabble. "Jonson is good for the every day scalliwags, but Shakespeare . . ." (*Anonymous*). Towards the end of the film, once de Vere has been clearly identified as the author and safely located as the hero with whom the audience is supposed to sympathise, the message is articulated most clearly. "Did you know, Jonson, that my family can trace its peerage back further than any family in the kingdom?" (*Anonymous*). These statements are all part of a construction of an ideological common sense that reserves artistic and intellectual genius exclusively for the aristocracy.

In an effort to garner complicity with the film audience, like *Shakespeare in Love*, *Anonymous* also deploys melodramatic characterization to amplify sympathy for its chosen hero. Edward de Vere's most immediate nemesis is Robert Cecil, against whom de Vere is placed in direct political opposition. Robert Cecil is a stereo typified melodramatic villain; he is hideous and evil. At one point William Cecil instructs Robert: "You must compensate for your malformation with . . . cunning and ruthlessness" (Jacobi). In *Shakespeare in Love* it is an aristocratic villain (Wessex) who is set in opposition to the working class hero of William

Shakespeare. In *Anonymous* both the hero and the villain are aristocratic, but the film intimates that the working class charlatan William Shakespeare might just as well fill the position of villain. It suggested that it is Shakespeare who murders Kit Marlowe for the threat he poses in exposing Shakespeare as a fraud. Later, de Vere informs Jonson that Shakespeare's opportunism and grandstanding is his "burden" (*Anonymous*). In any event, it is clearly with the elegantly aristocratic Edward de Vere that audience sympathies are expected to align.

Just as *Shakespeare in Love* writes *Romeo and Juliet* over Shakespeare's life, *Anonymous* unabashedly writes conjecture over the historical record and bases its fictitious refashioning of Shakespeare as an aristocrat on material in the texts that ostensibly only de Vere could have known. For example, at one point in the narrative a young and impetuous de Vere murders a spy (who had been tampering with his precious manuscripts) hiding behind an arras with a thrust of his sword. The film suggests that this must be the inspiration for the identical scene in *Hamlet* that results in the death of Polonius. In several places, the film cuts from moments of the staged plays to episodes of de Vere's life with an audio match that extends the romantic musical underscoring of the play drama into de Vere's life and intrinsically ties the two together. Furthermore, the use of flashback to de Vere's life as a young man highlights a false causality that attempts to lend even more credibility to the interpretation of events offered by the film. The framing exposition in *Anonymous* offers an appeal to emotion veiled as an objective report of historical fact. At the beginning of the film, Sir Derek Jacobi attempts to mitigate the propagandistic agenda of *Anonymous* with an admission of the fictional nature of the narrative. During his opening monologue, the stage upon which he stands is alive with theatre practitioners preparing to perform their part in the drama that follows. The staged scene blends seamlessly into the classical Hollywood realism that characterizes the narrative proper. However, this technique is not much more than false humility – a technique to lower the cynical viewer's guard. More importantly, the framing exposition acts to lend a documentary

credibility to the fiction. Bill Nichols points out that “Fiction may be content to suspend *disbelief* (to accept its world as plausible), but non-fiction wants to install belief (to accept its world as actual)” (Nichols 2). At the end of the film, as the closing scene of the historical tale fades from the screen, Jacobi’s expository voice overlaps with the image of a disgusted Robert Cecil and blurs the distinction between the fiction of the narrative proper and Jacobi’s exposition. In this closing exposition, following the emotional impact of the melodramatic narrative, Jacobi eliminates all modalising language that identifies the preceding ‘history’ as fiction. Instead of mitigating the propagandistic agenda, the closing exposition covertly attempts to legitimize it. Jacobi lists specious historical facts that blur into the fiction just observed. In so doing he intimates that the fiction is factual.

Robert Cecil remained the most powerful man in the court of King James, though he couldn’t prevent the public theatres from becoming ever more popular. William Shakespeare, however, spent the remainder of his days not in the playhouses of London, but in the small town of his birth, Stratford-upon-Avon, as a businessman and grain merchant (*Anonymous*).

In this last sentence, Jacobi suggests that the working class financial exigencies of a “businessman and grain merchant” are inconceivably congruent with anyone associated with the plays. Jacobi concludes with more speciously relevant historical facts and with a continued bias against the man from Stratford.

Ben Jonson succeeded in his desire to be the most celebrated playwright of his time, becoming England’s first poet laureate, and in 1623 he wrote the dedication to the collected works of the man we call William Shakespeare. And so, though our story is finished, our poet’s is not. For his monument is ever-living, made not of stone, but of verse, and it shall be remembered as long as words are made of breath and breath life (*Anonymous*).

In these closing two sentences, Jacobi attempts to locate *Anonymous*’ interpretation of Shakespeare’s “verse” as an objective historical “monument.” Throughout Jacobi’s speech, the violin underscoring is a lament of pathos that keeps the viewer emotionally involved in the tragedy of the narrative while Jacobi outlines his ‘evidence’. At the end of the film, there is no applause as the on-screen curtain closes and the on-screen audience files out of the theatre – a filmic metaphor of the applause never garnered by the unappreciated de Vere in the narrative *Anonymous* offers. By framing the narrative with Jacobi’s exposition, the film follows the structure of an academic essay. It humbly posits a thesis, offers ‘evidence’, and then firmly states its position at the end. However, this essay is heavily laden with appeals to emotion rather than fact. *Anonymous* would probably offend Robert Finlay. Finlay is clear in his position that “speculation, whether founded on intuition or on concepts drawn from anthropology and literary criticism, is supposed to give way before the sovereignty of the sources, the tribunal of the documents” (Finlay 571). Both *Shakespeare in Love* and *Anonymous* attempt to interpret the most reliable documents available, the plays. However, in so doing, the films cannot avoid interpretations that are inextricably informed by contemporary sentiments and ideological agendas. Both movies write contrasting contemporary sentiments over the absent historical record around cultural icons. *Shakespeare in Love* leisurely champions the working class hero. *Anonymous* aggressively responds with a tale that champions the aristocratic genius. These contradictory ideologies will probably remain unresolved competing factions within modern capitalist culture. What these movies have resolved, however, is that Shakespeare, the man or the texts, can be easily appropriated for a variety of competing political agendas, and that the cinematic historical drama, on a thematic level, is more about the ideology of the era in which the film is constructed, than the ostensible ‘history’ it contains. When one is seeking to establish a pattern of idolatry towards a literary ‘god’ it is difficult to overlook very obvious similarities with deeply entrenched religious myths. The similarities between the myth and

enigma of Shakespeare and those of Jesus are too strong to ignore. Whereas Jesus was the character in the book associated with him (i. e. the New Testament), Shakespeare was the author of his texts. Nevertheless, those whom I accuse of bardolatry have been nothing if not guilty of attempting to locate Shakespeare in his texts. Looney himself states "The personality which seems to run through the pages of the drama I felt altogether out of relationship with what was taught of the reputed author and the ascertained facts of his career" (Looney 14). Finding the messiah within the text, or failing to, relegates the interpreter to one of two camps. With Jesus you either have faith or you are an atheist. Likewise, with Shakespeare you are either a 'Stratfordian' or an 'anti-Stratfordian'. The heresy of those in the latter category becomes a matter of risible folly to those in the former and/or vice versa. Strong atheists find it necessary to disprove Jesus and have 'identified' a disparity between the man of Nazareth who was a mere carpenter and a deity who was crucified and resurrected. Similarly, anti-Stratfordians are loyal to an idea that the likely uneducated lower-class man from Stratford could not possibly be responsible for the literary genius that manifests itself in the Shakespearean texts. Ironically, atheists seem to take the route of requiring verifiable evidence before they will have faith whereas the Stratfordians need it to lose theirs. Nevertheless, I daresay that to atheists who feel it necessary to disprove Jesus as a messiah, Jesus has become as important to them as to those who believe. As such, they are guilty of a certain type of Jesus-worship themselves. Similarly, the identity of Shakespeare has become a locus of anxiety to both Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians alike and so I categorize them together under the same worship umbrella known as bardolatry.

Historically, bardolatry has been evident. Delia Bacon tipped her hand by using biblical, or at least religious, language. The magnitude of Looney's research in order to locate the life of Oxford within the canon of Shakespeare's work must have been immense. Looney openly calls the texts "the immortal Shakespeare dramas" (Looney 13). Like Delia Bacon, he deems his exposure to Shakespeare's texts as adequate to empower him to authoritatively question their

provenance. "This continued familiarity with the contents of one play induced a peculiar sense of intimacy with the mind and disposition of its author and his outlook upon life" (Looney 13). Another obvious bardolator who has not questioned Shakespeare's authorship is George Bernard Shaw. For a man who claimed to have despised Shakespeare, Shaw wrote exhaustively about the man and his works, almost to the exclusion of all other playwrights. Shaw proudly made personal comparisons to Shakespeare and even went so far as to stage a festival called Shak vs. Shav. The unsaid reverence inherent in such exclusionary attention is textbook psychoanalytical repressed hero worship.

Presently, bardolatry is as pervasive as ever. In his documentary, *Looking for Richard*, filmed in the early 1990's, Pacino makes several excursions to the streets to ask the 'average' person about their exposure to 'Shakespeare'. He laments at one point that "no-one does!" (i. e. knows Shakespeare). The worship of the idea appears to have lost momentum in popular culture as 'Shakespeare' became more and more academically and artistically stigmatized. It appears that a fear of Shakespeare becoming less revered manifests itself in apparent bardolators. They seem to believe that if the texts are deemed too inaccessible for worship, refocusing on the man, via controversial questioning, will suffice. The texts and the man are confused under the idea of authorship posed by Foucault. Therefore, using either one as a focus of popular worship meets the needs of the bardolator.

Derek JacobimakesuseoftheShakespeare Authorship Question in an attempt to rejuvenate bardolatry for personal gain, and perhaps out of the fear of Shakespeare losing popularity. Sir Derek Jacobi has appeared in many film and stage productions of Shakespeare's plays. His career is typically Shakespearean and he has associations with such famous Shakespeareans as Ian McKellan and Kenneth Branagh. His professional career was built on Shakespeare's back so to speak. Recently Jacobi "unveiled a Declaration of Reasonable Doubt" as to the authorship of Shakespeare's works (Thespians). Again, preoccupied with evidence that is not there, the "document says that there are no

records that any William Shakespeare received payment or secured patronage for a writing” (Thespians). Mark Rylance, who is the former artistic director of the new Globe theatre in London, unveiled with Jacobi. The article quotes him as saying, “You get more of a rise if you say Shakespeare didn’t write the work than if you say there isn’t a God” (Hurst). The word ‘unveiled’ suggests intent for a public audience. The article intimates that “the attackers [who are] saying the dramatist was Somebody Else entirely or a Front Man for a group of writers, [are] all trying to make a living in the frantic world of Elizabethan theatre” (Hurst). Jacobi’s public unveiling suspiciously followed “the final matinee of “I am Shakespeare,” a play investigating the bard’s identity” (Thespians). Whether or not Jacobi cashes in on a remounting of the production remains to be seen. Either way, his ‘coming out’ on the authorship question was clearly part of the overall marketing for his production: an attempt to capitalize on the authorship question and the bardolatrous emotional reactions it creates.

Trosman refers to bardolatry as the “unqualified supremacy attached to the work” (Trosman 490). While Shakespeare’s works are arguably superior, ultimately that is a matter of critical opinion and cultural perspective. But “Looney’s reference to the dramatic work as the best in the English language is typical for the anti-Stratfordian point of view” (Trosman 490). Having been indoctrinated to revere his works, like atheists who find Jesus important, there falls out a need to reconcile the god with his miracles. Ultimately, all doubters appear guilty of this bardolatry in a Freudian style. The religious belief in the supremacy of the work is transferred to the author-god as its source and reconciliation must be made with the miracle of the text and the man-who-would-be-god who created them. The truth, however, is that the author-god responsible for their worship is only a projection from the minds of those who have become psychologically dependent on the legendary status ascribed to the man and a fanatical loyalty to the supremacy of the texts. However, the incredible quality of Shakespeare’s works is only miraculous to those who have chosen to worship. To the factual historian, they

are acceptably attached to a mere man from Stratford.

What is not absolutely certain is that the man named William Shakespeare from Stratford wrote the plays. What is nearly conclusive is that the man who wrote the plays was named William Shakespeare. What is highly likely is that they are the same man. Arguments against this likelihood are all based on what is not known and what can be interpreted as biographical evidence within the texts. The little evidence we do have strongly favours the one man named Shakespeare and any position to the contrary is a losing argument. “William Leahy, [...] is shortly to risk academic scorn, if not suicide, by convening the first-ever graduate course on the subject at London’s Brunel University” (Hurst). In surveying the most influential doubters of Shakespeare’s authorship, three distinct patterns emerge: personal ambition, academic insecurity, and the leviathan phenomenon of bardolatry in which stratfordians and anti-stratfordians alike have come to worship the text and choose to continue the debate so that Shakespeare never becomes stationary; to proliferate a state of perpetual controversy about which to continue the Shakespearian discourse.

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## The Shakespeare Authorship Question: A Case Study in Bourdieuan Class Maintenance

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