

Shakespeare by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare

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The debate over the true author of Shakespeare's body of work (some of which was published under the name "Shake-speare") began not long after the death of William Shakespeare, the obscure actor and entrepreneur from Stratford-upon-Avon who was conventionally assumed to be the author. There were natural doubts that an uneducated son of a glover who never left England and apparently owned no books could have produced some of the greatest works of Western literature. Early investigators into the mystery argued for such eminent figures as Christopher Marlowe or Francis Bacon as possible authors, but recent scholarship has turned to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the true Shakespeare.

"Shakespeare" by Another Name is the first complete literary biography of Edward de Vere that tells the story of his action-packed life—as student, soldier, courtier, lawyer, political intriguer, sophisticate, traveler, and, above all, writer—finding in it the background material for all of Shakespeare's plays. Anderson brings to bear a wealth of new evidence, most notably de Vere's personal copy of the Bible (recently analyzed to show the correlation between his underlinings and the biblical allusions in Shakespeare's work) and has employed it all to at last give a complete portrait and background to the man who was "Shakespeare."

BACKCOVER: "Makes a compelling case. . . . Anderson's demonstration of how de Vere's real life matches the characters and circumstances found in the plays attributed to Shakespeare is especially impressive."

—*THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION*

"Deserves serious attention. . . . Mr. Anderson shows there are myriad Shakespeare authorship connections for de Vere."

—*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"Tantalizing parallels between the plays and Oxford's life certainly exist. . . . Anderson has a knack for finding fishy aspects of the traditional view that Shakespeare was Shakespeare."

—*NEW YORK SUN*

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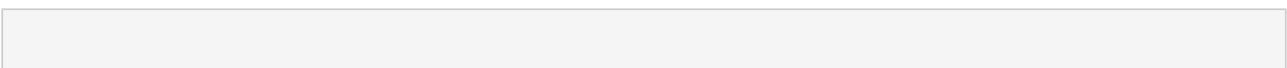
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From Reader Review Shakespeare by Another Name: The Life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Man Who Was Shakespeare for online ebook

K.D. Absolutely says

This book is **anti-Stratfordian**. This is that term that is normally used to claim that **William Shakespeare** (1564-1616), also known as "The Bard" of **Stratford-upon-Avon** was not the primary author of the plays and poems traditionally attributed to him. This includes his works like *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc. The reason: Shakespeare lacks the education, aristocratic sensibility, or familiarity with the royal court which they say is apparent in his works.

I have not read any of his works and I have not read any biographies written about him. Shame on me but I graduated from a provincial high school with teachers who probably believed that studying Shakespeare was not important at all. Even my college professor in my World Lit only asked us to choose and explain one of his sonnets. Maybe because my first college degree was on para-medical field so reading his more lengthy work was not part of the curriculum. However, at this point in my life, I would like to read some of his popular works because of the same reason why I am currently reading The Holy Bible: there is no point reading so many books if I am not familiar with even one of Shakespeare's popular works. Ignoring his works is like refusing to acknowledge his iconic stature. In my opinion, anybody who does not know William Shakespeare and a few of his works cannot be considered as well-read. Afterall, he is considered as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist.

Greatest, huh? What if it is really true that WS was not the author of those works?

This book, *'Shakespeare' by Another Name* is about the life of one of the candidates (the other being Francis Bacon, Earl of Oxford and Christopher Marlowe, Earl of Derby) of the anti-Stratfordian theory: **Edward de Vere** (1550-1604), 17th Earl of Oxford. Compared to WS, De Vere, being an Elizabethan courtier was also a playwright, lyric poet, sportsman, and patron of arts. Among the 3 candidates, he was the most popular alternative candidate supported by anti-Stratfordian proponents. The height of this controversy happened in the 1920's when Sigmund Freud publicly declared that he no longer believed that WS was the author of those works attributed to him. In fact, even if he was an actor and poet, there were no published works during his lifetime so the public did not know that he was a writer and a playwright.

Which was not the case for De Vere. He published his works but the public did not patronize most of those works primarily because he had a bad name. However, he had a broad education, knew how to speak several languages and extensively travelled in other European countries, e.g., Italy for example which was the setting for *Merchant of Venice*. As a courtier of Queen Elizabeth, critics say that she is depicted in his works like in *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, etc. Anderson presented the life of De Vere elaborating those parts where certain parts of WS works could have been based or drew inspiration from. Those parts which somebody like WS, who did not publish any literary work during his lifetime or even showed any interest in writing, could have even thought of. Anderson's thorough research can easily make a person who has no Shakespeare background like me to believe that those works are not really Shakespeare's.

But who cares really? I mean, like The Holy Bible, we don't really know who actually wrote all those books, right? Yet, if counted as a single book, The Holy Bible is the best-selling book in history with approximate sales estimates ranging in the billions. We read the Bible. We talk about it. We reflect on it. We believe that

it has the words that will lead to the salvation of our souls.

Bottomline, be it William Shakespeare or Edward de Vere, since those works are worth reading, then who cares? Just read and enjoy.

Beth says

I was skeptical at first, I will admit. Was it possible that the mysterious man from Stratford, who has been called the greatest writer and dramatist of all time for centuries, didn't actually create the works that have immortalized him? After reading this book. I believe the answer is yes. I am an Oxfordian believer, and I'm not afraid to admit it, even if it's not a popular opinion.

This book is so well-researched, and the parallels between not only de Vere's personal life but the political and social goings-on in Elizabeth I's court (which a poor, uneducated individual would have been largely ignorant of) are just too much to be coincidence. I'm not saying that Will Shakspeare of Stratford (author's spelling) couldn't have possibly been an untutored genius, but when you look at what little we do know about him, the argument doesn't hold up. Shake-speare (the author's name for whoever wrote the famous works) had to have very specific knowledge in many specialized fields (law, languages, and psychology, among others) as well as having very specific knowledge of the customs and geography of foreign countries that could only be gained by extensive travels abroad. We have no records of Shakspeare ever leaving England - but we know de Vere travelled to many countries in his life. We know de Vere's educational credentials as a nobleman of the realm. We don't even know if Shakspeare had any formal education, and in an era where printed books were rare and hoarded in private libraries of the aristocracy, I have to ask where the man from Avon learned everything he had to know to write the intricate works that bear his name. In my humble opinion, it takes a lot more blind faith to believe in the circumstantial Stratfordian evidence than it takes to believe in the concrete evidence of the Oxfordian theory.

Anyway, that's just my opinion. I'm not an expert and I don't pretend to be. I guess all I mean to say in the end about this book is that it puts forth a very compelling argument in a well-researched, orderly fashion. I was convinced - maybe you will be, maybe you won't. Read for yourself - and yes, do extra homework on the Stratfordian theory as well if you want to have a balanced view. I know I will be - because more than wanting to be right, I love the thrill of the search for truth.

Martin Lutonsky says

Zajímavý pohled na to hry od Williama Shakespeara. Autor velmi vřehodně popisuje život Edwarda de Vere, s tím že on je tím kdo napsal všechny díla WS. Vycházel přitom z toho co zažil, z toho co procestoval a z toho co prožíval. Autorův pohled je velmi ucelený. Škoda jen, že neznám obsah děl WS, o kterých tu mluví. Navíc je celá kniha velmi dobrým cvičením v AJ. Škoda jen, že ne všemu v její středověké době rozumím... Pak bych přidala hvězdičku i do hodnocení...

Monica says

The greatest literary mystery of all time! What do Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Sigmund Freud, and Charlie Chaplin have in common? None of them thought the man from Stratford wrote the works of Shakespeare. I completely subscribe to the theory that Edward de Vere was the true author of the works of Shakespeare. This book is a comprehensive and amazingly researched biography of EDV which draws very convincing parallels between his life and the Shakespeare canon. Before you delve into this one, though, I highly recommend some other reading:

General overview: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxfordia...>

Alias Shakespeare by Joseph Sobran <http://www.amazon.com/Alias-Shakespea...>

Ron says

The author sets out to prove that Edward de Vere was, indeed, the author of the works attributed to William Shakespeare. That he accomplishes far beyond any doubt. Taking de Vere's life virtually year by year, he shows that the literary works are a virtual autobiography of the earl's life. His education, his travels, his travails are all in the canon. Anderson has me a complete believer! From Amazon: The debate over the true author of the Shakespeare canon has raged for centuries. Astonishingly little evidence supports the traditional belief that Will Shakespeare, the actor and businessman from Stratford-upon-Avon, was the author. Legendary figures such as Mark Twain, Walt Whitman and Sigmund Freud have all expressed grave doubts that an uneducated man who apparently owned no books and never left England wrote plays and poems that consistently reflect a learned and well-traveled insider's perspective on royal courts and the ancient feudal nobility. Recent scholarship has turned to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford—an Elizabethan court playwright known to have written in secret and who had ample means, motive and opportunity to in fact have assumed the "Shakespeare" disguise.

"Shakespeare" by Another Name is the literary biography of Edward de Vere as "Shakespeare." This groundbreaking book tells the story of de Vere's action-packed life—as Renaissance man, spendthrift, courtier, wit, student, scoundrel, patron, military adventurer, and, above all, prolific ghostwriter—finding in it the background material for all of The Bard's works. Biographer Mark Anderson incorporates a wealth of new evidence, including de Vere's personal copy of the Bible (in which de Vere underlines scores of passages that are also prominent Shakespearean biblical references).

Bruce says

I challenge you to read this book and retain a dismissive attitude towards its thesis -- that Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, wrote the works of Shakespeare. No one or two or three telling facts or coincidences can carry much weight in an argument like this but in this book they keep accumulating through 380 pages, with 4 appendices and 157 pages of footnotes, with heavy use of details in the plays themselves as well as other sources. Well-written and reasonable in tone, it's a pleasurable detective story as well as a convincing argument.

Jason says

Anderson presents a very well-researched argument that the true author of Shakespeare's works was the Earl of Oxford, Edward De Vere. While the depth of the examination can at times be tedious I appreciated the secondary literary sources from that era which lent some credence to this investigation as others also questioned his authorship, even in his own day and age! That being said, some examples used by Anderson felt like a stretch, as we often see what we want to see unless we've set up a peer-reviewed study and have controls in place to eliminate research bias. Had these controls been in place while Anderson was conducting his research, his claims would be much easier to swallow. Nevertheless, the journey while reading this book was all the while engaging.

Skylar Burris says

This was fun to read if you like literary conspiracy theories, and, if you don't know the arguments on the other side, it's quite convincing. If you do, however, know the arguments on the other side, it's a bit laughable. Is it really that painful for people to believe that a man without a university education could have been the greatest writer of the English language? If you really must have evidence to believe the obvious-- that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare-- well, then go here: <http://shakespeareauthorship.com/>

T.K. Kenyon says

This life-changing book is a must-read for anyone who has not delved into the Authorship Question.

This is the best book that I've read in years. It was fascinating. I left it on the passenger seat of my car, open, so I could read it at red lights. The designation of "Red Light Book" is my highest honor for a book.

More to the point: I like Shakespeare's works. I took two Shakespeare classes in undergrad. When I watch a play, I tote along my big, red Bevington (dog-eared, written-on, and wrinkled with coffee, wine, and tears,) to read along.

During one undergrad class, one professor noted in passing that some people didn't think the guy from Stratford on Avon (the town) wrote the plays, but it didn't matter, really, who wrote them. The play's the thing that matters.

I didn't realize that the authorship issue was so hotly debated. (Read some of these other reviews, not to mention the websites and books and forums and conferences dedicated to debating this issue. Wheesh!) I just assumed that there was ample evidence that William Shakspeare (no typo, that's how the guy from SOA spelled his name,) went to London, became an actor, and wrote the plays. It was only 400 years ago. The year 1600 (a round number within the Shakespearean era) isn't the Iron Age. We have many records and books from the era of Elizabeth I. It's just not that long ago.

A few years ago, I saw a special on PBS about the Shakespeare authorship question. I've been hooked ever since.

'Shakespeare' by Another Name by Mark Anderson is a convincing compilation of the Oxfordian side of the argument. At almost 600 pages long, it is indeed quite complete. As I stated above, I read every word avidly. I read the appendices.

Anderson does indeed write a biography of Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, and parallel events, characters, and situations from de Vere's life with WS's works. It's exhaustive but hardly exhausting. With each new tidbit, I became more convinced that de Vere indeed adopted a pen name and stuck to his story. Even his heirs stuck to his story.

While there is, ultimately, no smoking gun, Anderson presents a convincing case. Let's go with the classic structure of a murder case: means, motive, and opportunity.

While Anderson does not stoop to such a crass outline, he nevertheless explains in deep detail *how* de Vere pulled off the Shakespeare hoax, *why* he used a pen name at all and why that one, and *when* the hoax was first perpetrated and then canonized.

Anderson's writing is amusing, lucid, and strong. There are laugh-out-loud lines and paragraphs that made me gasp, astonished.

Here's a little preview: as a young lad, de Vere lived with a guardian after his father died, received a world-class education, and had access to a phenomenal library. This library included, at the time, the only extant copy of Beowulf. Beowulf, though well-known today and hated by most high school juniors, was almost lost to the ages, but for *that one copy*. De Vere's tutor, an old English scholar, signed his name in the copy (a common thing, back then, kind of like a check-out slip.) Consider, if you will, the obvious plot and character parallels between Hamlet and Beowulf. The author of Hamlet clearly had read Beowulf and understood deeply. (Any other explanation is like denying the literary relationship between "Heart of Darkness" and *Apocalypse Now*.) De Vere was one of very few people in England or elsewhere with access to Beowulf, let alone that his tutor signed it at the time he tutored de Vere.

That's one small example. There are hundreds. Maybe thousands. De Vere signed his ancestral home over to his three daughters while he was still living (like King Lear.) Hamlet appears to be very thinly veiled autobiography.

I also really liked the statistical analysis of the Biblical quotes in Shakespeare's works vs. the underlined passages in de Vere's Bible. While this sounds dry, Anderson keeps this short and pithy. Just enough math to support the conclusions.

Anderson is so convincing that from now on, when I watch Shakespeare, I plan to tote not only the big, red Bevington, but also Anderson. De Vere's life informs the plays and makes them more poignant and brilliant.

I'm an Oxfordian convert. With conversion, as anyone who knows an ex-smoker is aware, comes zealotry. If de Vere wasn't Shakespeare, he should have been.

You have to read this book. It's a literary mystery wrapped in reimagining of history. Even if you're a die-hard Stratfordian, you should read Anderson's book.

TK Kenyon

Author of Rabid: A Novel and Callous

Jeff Raymond says

Shakespeare authorship conspiracies have always interested me ever since sophomore year of high school, where my teacher at the time pointed out a Shakespearean sonnet that could be a veiled reference to homosexuality, "not that such a bright and intelligent man like Shakespeare would ever succumb to that!" (oh, Catholic education). Anyhow, this book mostly addresses the Oxfordian theory, which believes that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, was really Shakespeare. The book does so with over 200 pages of footnotes, and ends up being a massive biography of de Vere using source material, and making a lot of assumptions based on his life and education as to how he came to writing some of his plays. The historian in me has to admit that it's a pretty compelling, if completely currently unprovable, argument. The dramatist in me really hopes that he's wrong, though, and the realist simply knows better than to give this any more credence than that. Still, if you like fun conspiracy theories, this book is worth the read. Be wary, though, it's very dry at times.

Elliott says

[I am editing my review to the review that I posted on Amazon.com of this book, where I have noted a textual problem with Mark Anderson's book. Mark Anderson refused to answer the discrepancy, and so here it stands. I apologize for the length.]

Anderson devotes Appendix C towards general questions as to new plays supposedly appearing after 1604. The *Tempest* is very often cited, he states as evidence against de Vere's candidacy, and quite rightly so. De Vere could not have written the plays of Shakespeare, it is indeed "the silver bullet" that Anderson mocks. Since there is no reason to suppose that *The Tempest* was written by anyone other than the individual who also wrote the other works of Shakespeare, that means that if Oxford did not write *The Tempest*, then he did not write the other works of Shakespeare, regardless of the supposed "autobiographical" details of the text. For this review then I will concentrate wholly on this portion of Appendix C and *The Tempest* under the assumption that Oxford did indeed write the poems and plays of Shakespeare. In doing this I will operate as a Stratfordian who contests that the Earl of Oxford could ever have written the plays ascribed to him. I own the updated paperback edition of *Shakespeare by Another Name*. In Appendix C beginning on my page 402 Anderson states that the references to "the still vex'd Bermooths" is a reminiscence of de Vere purchasing distilled liquor in a neighborhood near Charing Cross nicknamed "The Bermudas." Anderson's notes on the pages cite only the lines from the play proper, and a reference to a name on a map within a 1989 biography on Ben Jonson. I do not own the book, but I searched through several maps of the 16th century and mid-18th century and found no such area in the "east" marked as "The Bermudas." I searched through Google for any references to an area east of Charing Cross being called "The Bermudas" and still found nothing. It could be an inside joke as Anderson suggests-but then that's a very well hidden inside joke that we're very fortunate for Anderson uncovering using nothing more than an Oxfordian reading of that one line and a book from the late 20th century, 385 years too late to be considered much of a corroborating source. [update 10-20-15, I found a copy of the Jonson biography of Riggs, and sure enough there is the map Anderson mentions, but right above this modern map is a copy of a map of London from 1575. There is NO area named the Bermudas on this map, which-no surprise- is also not mentioned by Anderson] It would have been helpful if Anderson had included "the brief bibliography" that he cites from a book by Richard Whalen (*Shakespeare: Who Was He?*), but that is not to be. [Update 8-24-15: I tracked down Whalen's book that Anderson quotes from and the portion that covers *The Tempest* cites the SAME biography on Jonson. This means that Anderson quotes from the biography himself and then quotes Whalen knowing that Whalen is

just simply looking at the same map. Two citations for one source!] I cannot then discount the fact that "The Bermudas" may be a contemporary (as in the past 100 years) name for the area-if it is indeed called that at all. If, it was indeed known as "The Bermudas" during this time period, and it is an autobiographical element of the trek for distilled liquor, then there is no reason that a man named William Shakespeare who also spent much of his working life in London could not have included the same reminiscence. The argument Anderson makes is that Oxford alone was responsible for the plays, not Oxford was the only man who ever went to grab some liquor in the neighborhood. There's also no reason to necessarily suppose that it is autobiographical. It could just be a fantastic element in a fantastic play. [Update: the Bermudas area of London only became known as such after an ex-governor of the Island resided there. Bermuda was uninhabited until after 1609. There would be no governor of an uninhabited island, which means that this reference is unequivocally NOT to the area of London. The Tempest is also the first poetical use of Bermuda, hence it refers to the island].

Another problem with this is that Anderson immediately afterward cites a book by Kenneth Muir called *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*. Anderson quotes at length Muir's doubts as to how much of the Strachey manuscript on a shipwreck in Bermuda actually played a role in *The Tempest*. What Anderson does not include is the sentence immediately before this quotation where Muir states that Shakespeare was undoubtedly familiar with Strachey's manuscript.

Going off of this the addendum that Anderson adds from my updated edition states that he has learned from two researchers that Strachey's manuscript would nonetheless have been unavailable to Shakespeare in any fashion whatsoever. He bases this on Strachey's statement in another work describing an "unfinished" manuscript on the Bermudas in 1612 and that a subsequent perusal of the finished work shows that a dozen books were needed to finish it. These books Anderson says, he would not have had access to in Jamestown, Virginia. This is likely true. But, in another omission Anderson fails to mention that the manuscript whilst containing a lengthy description of the shipwreck (which is for what it is most well known) is not all that it is about. Its full title is the lengthy: "A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir THOMAS GATES Knight; vpon, and from the Ilands of the Bermudas: his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then, and after, vnder the gouernment of the Lord LA WARRE, Iuly 15. 1610." If Strachey needed more books to finish the manuscript they were probably on the other portions of the text: Sir Thomas Gates, the state of the Virginia colony, and the colonial governorship of Virginia-these would have been the events he would likely have been unfamiliar on. He lived through the shipwreck after all, and in writing an autobiographical account Strachey would not have needed outside sources to write on an event that no one but himself had written about anyway. Anderson also doesn't mention that Strachey also crafted a smaller account just of this shipwreck itself that made its way to England before the rest of the manuscript was finished. It seems that this letter formed the basis of Strachey's account of the shipwreck in the finished work. Anderson seems to believe that Strachey's manuscript was the only text that Stratfordians claim William Shakespeare could have drawn upon if he was the author of the play. 1609 saw the publication of Sylvestar Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Barmudas*, which is also another possible influence, though this explanation it has fallen in favor of Strachey's account in more recent years. Anderson does not mention it at all. He does mention two other texts by Erasmus and Richard Eden respectively that were available before Oxford's death in 1604. Anderson tantalizingly suggests that Oxford may have had access to them in their manuscript form through Sir Thomas Smith-his tutor-and from his father-in-law Lord Burghley who employed Richard Eden as a secretary. The `when' however is what I question. Smith died in 1577, which is 25 years before Anderson has Oxford writing *The Tempest*. Meanwhile, Oxford and Lord Burghley were together in close company from 1566 to 1572 when Oxford was relinquished from Burghley's authority. This adds at most another decade for Oxford to have read two works in manuscript form, which he then compartmentalized the intricate descriptions of the New World somewhere in his brain to never use them in any of the other works he had allegedly written, and all the texts needed to finish those while only drawing these two out sometime just before he died. The other possibility is that he simply owned them in book form independently of Burghley and Smith. This possibility then warrants an answer as to how Shakespeare would

have been barred from these, if he like Oxford was reliant on the printed text rather than any special original manuscript. Just as there are many ways for Oxford to conceivably read a text, the same is true of William Shakespeare. This second point is troubling for Anderson's reputation since either he knew of the sentence that he left out from Muir's work, or never actually looked at it himself despite giving an accurate page number for where to find it; he neglected to give the whole story on William Strachey's manuscript which no doubt he knew the title of since he quotes another research team's findings on it; he conceals the dates where Oxford could have conceivably read those manuscripts that he considers essential for *The Tempest's* composition and he neglects to mention the fact that they later appeared in book form and would have likely been available to William Shakespeare in this form.

Finally Anderson closes the appendix with a discussion on how while it is commonly thought *The Tempest* also borrowed heavily from the plays *Eastward Ho!* (1605), *Darius* (1603), and the German play *Die Schoene Sidea* there is no reason to suppose that they in fact did not borrow from Oxford instead. There is a HUGE problem with this reasoning contained in fact within the book proper. Anderson mentions on page 362 that 1607 is the start of Oxford's posthumous career with the release of *Lear*, apparently as a result of his second wife cleaning house, and settling the finances of the estate for Henry 18th Earl of Oxford and son of Edward. Earlier he mentions an unfortunate "leak" with the release of *Richard III* that had been written to skewer Robert Cecil (like the eponymous Richard he was also a hunchbacked control freak). Oxford is shown as being very controlling with the release of his plays and the release of this play was most definitely a mistake-and an almost ruinous one at that. Back to the problem: if Oxford released no plays from his death until 1607 when there was a whole slew of "new" plays, and Anderson states unequivocally that *The Tempest* was Shakespeare's last written play composed just before Oxford's death, how could these plays have borrowed from *The Tempest*?

Anderson's explanation of this claim is that Jacob Ayer-author of the German *Die Schoene Sidea* frequently lifted plots from British plays that he purchased from traveling bands of actors. To fit this to the theory Oxford's *The Tempest* must have been procured just after it was written, and before Ayer died in 1605. Since *The Tempest's* first English performance was in 1611, which Anderson does not contest, that means that barely had the ink even dried before it was removed from Oxford's proximity, performed by traveling actors in Germany and then returned to England to make its debut there in 1611, or someone surreptitiously copied the manuscript, distributed it, making its way to the aforementioned traveling actors' bands where Ayer pirated it just barely pre-mortem. *The Tempest* was then dropped from said actors' performances, and forgotten whereupon six years later the second, original, copy from Oxford's manuscripts was released during Oxford's wife's "cleaning house period" to theaters in England. Pending these two unlikely occurrences, an even less plausible possibility is that *The Tempest* was not actually first performed in 1611, but was performed sometime between when Oxford wrote it and his death in 1604, pirated and or stolen, shipped to Germany where Jacob Ayer pirated it a further time, whilst in England it was dropped from performance, forgotten about and resurrected in 1611 as a new play. The only logical possibility in attributing *The Tempest* to Oxford is that the plays were begun separately and only resemble each other through coincidence. But, this in itself poses problems for the Oxfordian case: if Oxford had no influences and influenced no one and ultimately conceived his text purely within a vacuum of the mind there's nothing to suppose that it wasn't written at any time and ultimately anyone. It would be just as logical to suppose that the text birthed itself from nothingness than that Oxford had written it.

Considering the importance of *The Tempest* to the rest of the plays Anderson should have devoted far more time in making the case for Oxford as author of it. As it is, outside of a few "autobiographical" elements that Anderson claims represent Oxford, these three points in the Appendix are all there are to ascribe Oxford's authorship to it. These three points, as I have shown are all incredibly weak. The first I could not substantiate outside of two books one of which is this one. The second point shows that Anderson most likely deliberately excised pertinent information that would have enlightened the reader's understanding at the expense of his thesis. This is unethical for any scholar, especially as scholars are concerned only with fact and ostensibly above this sort of behavior. The third point is the weakest. It was also Anderson's best and

really only opportunity to show how *The Tempest* could have been written before 1604 and thus could be ascribed to Oxford. He instead skirted around the logical inconsistencies that it entailed and what is more he did not corroborate this claim with what he had previously written in the same book! This is proverbial sloppiness.

My verdict is that Oxford not only did not write *The Tempest*, he could not have written *The Tempest*. The timing between his supposed composition of the work and subsequent death, and Jacob Ayers' composition of *Die Schone Sidea* and subsequent death are too close together. Anderson's best guess is that *The Tempest* was written by an Oxford near death and while he offers no conceivable way for the play to have gotten to Germany nonetheless hypothesizes that this must have been the case. Meanwhile Ayer obviously could not have influenced Oxford, since his work appears after Oxford's death. At best Oxford is Very Highly Unlikely to have written *The Tempest*, and thus the rest of the works attributed to William Shakespeare. Meanwhile the same William Shakespeare had all the necessary qualifications to write *The Tempest*: he was alive; in being alive he would have had some kind of access to the texts that seem to bear most closely upon the texts through sponsors of his own, printers whom he was acquainted with since boyhood (a fact generally not spoken of), and possibly some type of private ownership.

Since Mark Anderson is either unaware of his sources, or is guilty of having concealed and excised pertinent information that would have raised doubts against his own thesis as to Oxford's authorship of the plays of William Shakespeare he deserves one star for this book. I will give him a free pass however for ignoring his own previously cited information, and failure to logically question his own analyses.

Rogier says

Well now. Of course I was slightly biased when I started to read this book, since I'm inclined to take the indication in Gary R. Renard's *The Disappearance of the Universe (DU)* seriously, that Edward de Vere was in fact Shakespeare.

This book would have been deeply convincing without that, but it would be a joy to read for anyone interested in the seeming inner contradictions of the mythical William Shakespeare, and the unlikelihood that his identity is the one that is supported by the Stratford establishment.

I found this book completely devastating regarding the mythical Shakespeare identity, simply because of the near impossibility for a simple actor in those times to have the level of inside knowledge, but also the profound insight and wide education that is displayed in Shakespeares works, not to mention the strong sense that Shakespeare had lived through much of what he wrote and is writing of it from a level of an enlightened soul who sees through the whole show, and can understand that indeed All the world's a stage.

The aspect of the real Shakespeare being enlightened is not covered in this book, but it is a sense I've long had from Shakespeare's writings, which was underscored again in Gary Renard's comments in *DU*.

Ok, and now (April 2009) the other shoe dropped. Justice John Paul Stevens supports the notion of Edward de Vere as Shakespeare, and so do another few Supreme Court justices. So the high priests of Stratford, serving the status quo are having conniptions, but mere denial or ridicule will no longer carry the day. Substantive arguments are now needed, and that's exactly what's lacking.

Stephen Gallup says

My reading these days is mostly light enough to page through for a few minutes before going to sleep, and the more serious books are fairly short. *Shakespeare by Another Name* is an exception. It requires focus, and because it's also lengthy, that focus must be sustained.

On the other hand, what a delight it is for me to learn this stuff!

For years I'd been aware that some scholars doubted whether Shakespeare's plays and poems could have been written by the uneducated actor named William Shakespeare. But aside from a bawdy limerick on the subject, I knew nothing about the controversy. Nor did I think the matter terribly important. The quality of those stupendous creations would not be affected if it turned out that they'd been authored by somebody else.

Shakespeare by Another Name settles the question of authorship, to my satisfaction at least, in the introduction. If that were the book's only purpose, it succeeds before even getting to Arabic-numbered pages. The balance of the book is then given to a biography of Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford and a member of Elizabeth's inner circle, who almost certainly was the one who penned all those immortal lines.

At first, I found the level of detail given to this long-dead man's life impressive but daunting. But then, as his story took shape, the similarities became remarkable. Like Hamlet, de Vere suffered the early loss of an illustrious father and a partial loss of his rightful inheritance. Like Othello, he suspected his wife of infidelity, and was encouraged in that line of thinking by an Iago-like servant. Like Romeo, he engaged in swordplay in the streets with a sweetheart's irate kinsmen. Multiple connections like this are brought forth to tie de Vere with each of the Shakespearean plays, and to explain the reasons various obscure words and expressions are used at various points.

To really appreciate this book, one needs to be reasonably familiar with all the plays. I studied many of them intensively earlier in life, and even acted in two humble productions (*Twelfth Night* and *The Taming of the Shrew*), so I was up for the challenge. Still, there are a few (*Cymbeline*, *Merry Wives*, ...) about which I know very little. The good news is that basic situations and characters recur in several plays. For example, Desdemona is by no means the only woman wrongly suspected by her husband -- an indication that de Vere must have regretted the way he'd treated his wife.

This book appeals to me for the same reasons that I used to enjoy getting the back story behind challenging works like *Ulysses*. It clarifies so much that is otherwise confusing. To pick another example, many scholars have wondered at the unnecessarily cruel treatment given Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. Sure, the guy is a pompous killjoy, but it's hard to see why he deserves what the other characters do to him. *Shakespeare by Another Name* explains that, in Elizabeth's court, Malvolio would have been recognized as Sir Christopher Hatton, a rival of de Vere, and depending on their sympathies, audiences would have enjoyed this depiction of him.

This is an extraordinary work of scholarship, the more impressive in that the author looks very young in his his photo. What an accomplishment for him!

Dana says

Anyone who knows me knows that I am a hardcore Shakespeare fan. One of my bosses at work knows this and let me borrow her copy of this book thinking that it would interest me. Unfortunately, it fell a little flat.

I do not agree with the main argument of this biography: that William Shakespeare was, in fact, only a pen name for Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford. No. I do not agree with this claim, like so many other Shakespeare scholars and lovers because the "facts" put forth are just very thinly stretched ideas and concepts that cannot be proven.

This book, instead of pushing me to think about how this fact could even possibly be true, is more about the life of Edward de Vere and how some of the circumstances in his life would be able to loosely connect to the plays Shakespeare had written. In tying in the plays, Anderson thinks he is making a stronger claim for his argument, but is honestly just trying to connect things that are unlike to "prove" what he is thinking. As an English major, I don't really like that way of thinking much.

Most of what he was trying to argue could have been left out and, instead, just have the appendices left in there. In the approximately sixty pages of the four appendices, he stated what over three hundred pages could not. No, I do not agree with the argument he is making, but it seems like it is stronger and more coherent in the appendix.

I want to point out a specific quotation from the Appendix A on page 381 to make a point about this book. It states: The thesis of this book, the "Oxfordian" proposition that Edward de Vere was Shake-speare, is a theory built on circumstantial evidence. There is no single "smoking gun" document that leads one inexorably to the conclusion that de Vere wrote Hamlet, King Lear, the Sonnets, etc." I understand that it is difficult to try to prove a theory that many argue against (myself included), but basing your argument solely on circumstantial evidence is not the way to go. It makes the argument, at least to me, seem less realistic and, in all honesty, difficult to agree with. If you cannot prove someone is guilty solely based on circumstantial evidence, you should not try to prove a complex argument that a famous playwright was not a real person, but, in fact, a pseudonym for another historical figure around the same time.

The "facts" that de Vere's life has similar qualities to the plays written by Shakespeare leading to the thought that de Vere, himself, is Shakespeare is a stretch, and not a convincing one at that.

Overall, I did not enjoy this book and I did not find it convincing at all. It felt more like a history lesson about the background of Edward de Vere rather than any kind of argument towards the idea that he could have been Shakespeare.

In my heart of hearts, I will always believe that William Shakespeare was, in fact, a real man by the name of William Shakespeare, not some made up name for a man who wanted to keep his private life separate from the public.

Keith Mukai says

This research further convinced my UCLA Shakespeare prof that Edward de Vere was the man who wrote the Shakespeare plays. From everything she's said and what I've read of this book so far, I gotta say I'm pretty convinced.

The argument for the man from Stratford is pretty weak with many unexplainable conflicts and

contradictions whereas the "Oxford" theory (de Vere was Earl of Oxford and is referred to by his named title) has countless intriguing anecdotes and evidence that account for much more of the broad and specific knowledge found in the Shakespeare plays.

I think it's only a matter of time before the Oxfordists overcome the undereducated, uncultured man from Stratford.
