

**Tyler Moss**

21 hrs

How do the various answers to the 'authorship question' change how we view the plays?

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**Will Monox** <http://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/mark-rylance.../>



Mark Rylance Speaks Out! Why It Matters To Him Who Wrote The Works of Shakespeare — ...

SHAKESPEAREOXFORDFELLOWSHIP.ORG

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**Tyler Moss** But what do you think?

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**Will Monox** I'm currently studying the authorship question at Uni via the History and English departments, and it's interesting to see the 2 different angles they approach it from. One requires looking at the writings of the time from the perspective of a totalitarian government where there was no freedom of speech and heavy censorship on what you could write, while the other changes my perspective on 'genius' from someone who relies primarily on imagination to one who relies on a mixture of imagination, life experience, education and drawing from deep personal suffering.

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**Roger Stritmatter** **Will Monox** What a great answer. Can I serve on a thesis or dissertation committee?

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**Roger Stritmatter** That's a good and a huge question, Tyler. Thank you for raising it. Where should we begin?

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**Thami Moscovici** I have teacher who said before you do Tennessee Williams you must know the history of the South and his life and the same for Chekhov or any other playwright. In this case I guess

if we say there is a question we could cover ourselves by researching what life was like for the lower classes ,the aristocracy and women. Yes women just in case Ann Hathaway wrote them



But I am not even close to being an authority on the Bard

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**Reesa Graham** I've heard that before, what your teacher said, and I strongly disagree. I think if the play is well done enough, you shouldn't need to know those stories about the author bc the story they are telling is what matters.

For instance, the reason I think *The Crucible* is so universal is bc its a story everyone knows. When it was done in the 60s in Shanghai, it was being done in a time and place that didn't understand the author's life or what was happening in America when it was written. (Ironically I know this bc Miller wrote about its reception a lot).

My point being, in good story telling (and Miller, Chekhov, Williams, and Shakespeare \*are\* good story tellers), the author's life may be interesting, but not vital to the understanding of the plays.

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**Doug Walker** Background info is not necessarily vital. But for me, as a Shakespeare fan (with no education to speak of) it does enhance my enjoyment and understanding. That said, i do recall being in a trance-state of wonder and excitement when exiting the first performance i ever saw. ('*Twelfth Night*'). I needed no prior knowledge to come away with feelings i had not experienced. Magic happened! Over time, I've learned through reading, listening and watching that there are many levels to the work; one can go as deep as one wishes. All the lectures, footnotes and essays broaden my view. But again, a truly great story can stand alone, as a pleasure for any audience member. (And that first performance, with Jeff Goldblum as Malvolio, was quite a hoot!)

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**Thami Moscovici** As I said my teacher said that ,  
For me I love the idea that Shakespeare wrote them but if he didn't it doesn't matter to me, either way they are brilliant and clearly written by someone who understood humans and their behavior. And they speak to people , whoever wrote them . But I do understand Mark Rylance's pov

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**Reesa Graham** I assumed you were ness that train or you wouldn't have clarified that your teacher said it.

It's just an old argument I really hate.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 hrs



**Thami Moscovici** Yes I just figured I'd add how I felt on the subject .

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 2 · 17 hrs



**Philip Buchan** It's an interesting point -- but in the case of William Shakespeare, there just isn't much that's known about his life. Like most people of his social status, when a band of players were considered vagabonds unless their troupe was under the protection of a nobleman, there is little documentation that has survived the centuries.

Though his authorship is well-attested by the historical record, the details of how he wrote, who he knew and how he lived really ends up being little more than speculation.

The impulse to "find" Shakespeare led to the development of Shakespeare denial. The man from Stratford's life was a mystery, but here was a nobleman, Francis Bacon, who seems like exactly the kind of person who might write works like this! -- and for whom there were plenty of details that the Stratford man's life lacked.

From the perspective of performing Shakespeare's works, the life of the actual writer being a mystery just frees the production from being tied to a particular biography. If you want to imagine Shakespeare as a nobleman, or a royalist, or an anti-semitic, or a glove-maker's son, there's nothing stopping you. But imagining that Shakespeare wove his autobiography into his works is just wishful thinking.

Like · Reply · 2 · 11 hrs



**Doug Walker** Thami Yeah, what i feel now, late in life, is only gratitude that the works exist and are still here to inspire. Let others argue over 'who' exactly is or is not the author

Like · Reply · 2 · 8 hrs



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**Everett Goldner** Has no real bearing, as there's no solid answer.

Like · Reply · 19 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Yet theories abound.

Like · Reply · 18 hrs



**Everett Goldner** and always will. That Pandora's box can't ever be closed. But given that none of us can Jedi flow-walk back to 1599 and learn the truth for ourselves, the only answers are those that satisfy some people for reasons that are ultimately personal, academic or political. No SAQ theory will ever make much impact on how the plays are produced and performed at large. And in my experience leaning on Authorship Theory in the theater makes for crap theater, so there's that.

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**Shelly Maycock** I think it opens up new possibilities of totally understanding what the works actually say about the political and social realities for all strata of society, and whence they come. It is a fascinating time with the renaissance coming into full flower as well as a time of dangerous challenges. There is so much there to explore. [And it is great to get more of the jokes if you have a better idea what they might actually be about]. Of course it is all or mostly theoretical, but it can bring the plays more to life for inquisitive people because there are a million puzzles that have never been quite explained. Any inquiry about Shakespeare can be fruitful or he would not be such a cultural magnet. And anything that brings more audiences to the theaters cannot be a bad thing.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Unfortunately, Shelly, it seems that many people are comfortable with a kind of surface understand of the plays.

Like · Reply · 18 hrs



**Tyler Moss** I don't think that's unfortunate. We like art that resonates with us. Sometimes people are so inspired that they learn all they can about the source of the art they love and sometimes people are inspired to create new art from it. I can go to see art and recognize that I don't like it and still appreciate that it exists. I wouldn't minimize someone's art because they hadn't done the research that I would've.

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**Tyler Moss** In some ways, Shakespeare's plays are continually retold because people continue to make it theirs as opposed to the Elizabethan's.

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**Tim Eliot** To go on a tangent (sorry, Tyler: if it gets out of hand maybe a new thread?) -- I've always been more fascinated by the sociopolitical elements of the sources that Shakespeare drew from. For instance, Much Ado comes right out of the aftermath of the War of the Sicilian

Vespers. And that really matters!

Like · Reply · 3 · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** I agree Tim, those things do matter. And in fact the particular point you are making about influences ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War\\_of\\_the\\_Sicilian\\_Vespers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Sicilian_Vespers) as a historical source of Much Ado), although it doesn't surprise me, \*is\* new to me. Can you elaborate?



War of the Sicilian Vespers - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

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**Tyler Moss** I love source material. The popularity of Holinshed, etc.

I liken it to seeing 'Harry Potter' or 'A Song of Ice and Fire' adapted from the page to the screen.

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**Tim Eliot** Roger, Tyler, we should get coffee! Messina was the eastern-most major city in Sicily and was one of the only places not to rise up in the Vespers (IIRC). Peter III (Don Pedro) helped to liberate them from the Angevins, fought Charles of Anjou back into the boot of Italy and (in Shakespeare) now returns on his way back to Spain. How best to solidify and ensure loyalty from the local government? How about installing a member of your inner circle as governor? Best way this happened at the time: marriage. Also, everybody has just been through a war.

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**Shelly Maycock** Sicily was one of the formative sources of renaissance thought from even earlier. (more ltr when i am on my mac instead of my dumb phone)

Like · Reply · 10 hrs · Edited



**Jessica Levesque** The history of when it was written and the history of each play really does inform the work. If you go on just the history of each play, you can make the connection to Elizabethan era and then to our time. "Know you not, I am Richard"

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**Jessica Levesque** For me, No it does not. It seems the only thing it changes is the current Oxfords bank account, (book sales and Tours) there is the estate to look after.

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**Tyler Moss** People speculate about Shakespeare's relationship to his daughters often by referencing how his male characters' relate to their daughters fairly often. The evolution from the early plays to the late is a marked difference.

Like · Reply · 1 · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss The best scholarship I know on this topic is Shirlee Nelson Garner's "The Myth of Female Deception in Shakespeare" (That's not quite the right article).

She argues that Sh. was a male artist who had been deeply wounded by women,

probably a young age, who matured through his art to have a much more nuanced and balanced view of male female relations. I think you might even say, although she does not, that Shakespeare's art was therapeutic for the author. He came to understand that "sweet are the uses of adversity," as the formula from As You Like It puts it.

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**Jessica Levesque** Tyler Yes they do. The evolution between the early play and the later plays are different. That may speak to a writer development and that may speak more to the human condition and less to do with where and who and why someone may have or may not have written something.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque "may speak more to the human condition and less to do with where and who and why someone may have or may not have written something."

Why should we pit one against the other? Of course Shakespeare is the greatest explorer of the human condition in theatre, at least that is my opinion. But that doesn't mean he also didn't have a life, or that learning about that life should not be one goal of studying him.

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**Jessica Levesque** People do study him.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque Right. I wrote my PhD dissertation on him.

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**Jessica Levesque** And?

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**Roger Stritmatter** I am afraid that if I post a link, this thread will be deleted.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Jessica Levesque** Did it change the plays in anyway? Or just your und standing of him.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 1 · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque Totally changed my conception of the plays. But then I was not studying the traditional biography.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Jessica Levesque** There is no need to post the link I get what you are saying .

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque I am saying that if you only have one theory it is bound to be the correct one because you've never been exposed to an alternative. And if that is so, how can one ever know if understanding the author effects one's understanding of the works?

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**Jessica Levesque** Your conception. The play live and breath beyond a persons conception or perception.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque I agree. But that is no justification for someone to comment on another's perception by calling that person names. The author knew this would be true, by the way, and speaks of it in the Sonnets.

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**Jessica Levesque** When did I call you a name?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Jessica Levesque - It was an old thread in the group. That I deleted.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque Not you. I am speaking of recent history on this forum. Sorry if that was not clear.

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**Jessica Levesque** Well we are here and now if you want to talk in this thread continue but drop the past issues

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**Roger Stritmatter** Jessica Levesque Jessica, let me explain something. Twenty five years ago, when I began studying the Shakespearean question, my advisor at the time, Marc Shell, now at Harvard after winning a McCarthur award, advised me to become a historian of the question. I am a historian of the question. The history matters. So I will continue to respect you as a person as long as I experience respect from you, but, no I will not promise not to bring up the past.

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**Jessica Levesque** Back to this conversation. There is no need to assume that because someone does not think who wrote the plays matters, that they have not studied him or the alternatives

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Jessica Levesque** You can bring up the past. I ask you drop the issues with the previous thread. I was not on that thread. It is gone I get you are upset about that but my understanding is as long as we are respectful this thread will not be deleted.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Fair enough.

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**Roger Stritmatter** No longer mourn for me when I am dead

Then you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
 Give warning to the world that I am fled  
 From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:  
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not  
 The hand that writ it; for I love you so  
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot  
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.  
 O, if, I say, you look upon this verse  
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,  
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse.  
 But let your love even with my life decay,  
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan  
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

In what ways do you think identity mattered to the author of sonnet 71? Please read it carefully.

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**Roger Stritmatter** I don't know about anyone else, but by the time I get to the 14th line

of this, I am thinking that I understand what the father of the great Variorum Shakespeare editor Henry Howard Furness, William H. Furness, meant when he said: "I am one of the many who has never been able to bring the life of William Shakespeare and the plays of Shakespeare within planetary space of one another. Are there any two things in the world more incongruous?"

In this case, it is a sonnet and not a play, which makes the problem greater in my estimation. In order to argue their way out of this, Shakespeare traditionalists almost have to insist that the author of the sonnets was writing from behind a persona.

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**Tyler Moss** Roger Stritmatter - I look at the words without an indication of royalty of Oxford's story. I look at it as a man with a complicated life and love. People read an incredible amount into his sonnets.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Did you read the reviews for Hanya Yanagihara's "A Little Life"? Did you read the book? It's a brilliant piece of writing that had little to do with the author's personal experience. So much so that people didn't think the author should've written it.

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**Tyler Moss** I clock the reactions people have to things like this.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss "I look at the words without an indication of royalty of Oxford's story."

I read a poet who explicitly says "do not say my name." I don't see any "royal" implication in the sonnet at all, although there is plenty of dynastic language through the 150 poem sequence.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss No I haven't read it or the reviews.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 17 hrs



**Everett Goldner** Arguing personal experience as motivation for great writing is the weakest possible arbiter for such writing. Great writing does not come out of literal "I experienced this, and wrote about it" mentality. A vast amount of poor writing comes out of that. Great writing is not the sum of an equation, because as Tom Hanks told us, if it was that easy, everyone would do it. Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens are inarguably 2 of the greatest poets of the modern age and they led utterly, astoundingly boring lives. Nothing happened to them - externally. Their inner lives were vivid. Great writing does not follow tidy rules and it does not move in predictable ways. Anyone who's written a good play or a good novel knows this or senses it. So I see no issue with calling the Stratfordian the author, and I see a fundamental issue with calling Oxford the author.

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**Jessica Levesque** I see a Sonnet written by a person that felt something, could no longer be silent and looked to put it in to words. To be understood. To connect. This is neither a rich or poor attribute but human nature.

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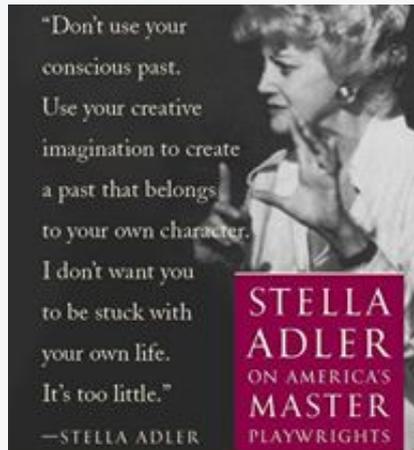
**Jessica Levesque** How we feel or react to that is why we still talk and perform Shakespeare. That being said, to think that because Shakespeare uses lofty or dynastic language, or had knowledge of the court, or knew of foreign lands, or history, that some how he had to be an Earl or a member of the court is to me elitist. History is littered

with examples of people of no means excelling in spite of and because of that adversity i.e. poverty. That we should have no problem looking at Shakespeare, the glove makers son, and believing he wrote it, it's his work. Either way maybe what matters more than who wrote it, is that the words left connect us with each other.

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**Everett Goldner**



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**Jessica Levesque** Yes! (imagination does play a big part). For me the Oxford theory at its base comes back to the Shakespeare could never because he was just a "commoner". Almost a how could he know, kind of thing. That may not be how it is stated but it seems to be the subtext.

(I know that it has not explicitly been stated in this thread. However, an assumption of Royalty because of use of language or sentiment does, for me, intimate that.)

At times I play a game with the theory....you could switch out Oxford and make a viable case for Elizabeth.

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**Roger Stritmatter** I wonder if those who have answered "no" extend that conclusion to other writers, or is Shakespeare special in that regard?

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**Tyler Moss** Shakespeare's plays have, fortunately, spread around the world and people seem to identify with the stories without knowing much about the writer. So there's a great many people who love the plays because they see their stories, or stories they relate to.

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**Tyler Moss** It also doesn't hurt that one doesn't pay royalties to put up a production of one of Shakespeare's plays.

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**Roger Stritmatter** And this is a wonderful thing. But I don't agree that readers, actors or directors, or professors for that matter, don't have some moral obligation to try to understand the life out of which these stories came. Yes, I know he used sources. But sources are not neutral. An artist picks which sources and which stories to use, and Shakespeare always not only picks his sources but inflects them in a demonstrably autobiographical way.

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**Tyler Moss** Roger Stritmatter - That's fair. When I take a Shakespeare's plays into the middle and high schools of East Harlem I ask them what they think and feel about them. They tell their stories to their communities using the fantastic words that we've been left.

I remind my students that these are just words, and it is only through our voices that we give these words life.

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**Tyler Moss** Theatre, in my opinion, originated as a means for a community to tell its stories to future generations. We should endeavor to know how those stories came to pass but we should also continue to ask our future generations what these stories mean to them.

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**Tyler Moss** Jessica Levesque - I'm not following what you're saying...or asking.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Jessica Levesque** I have put those comments in the incorrect spot I am going to delete and move them.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Jessica Levesque k.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 18 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss I could not agree more about the open-ended nature of the plays and their constant need for reinterpretation in their new contexts.

But when the search for contemporary context is built on the rejection of the past, and depends upon a well-cultivated and contradictory claim that the life of the author and those around him \*do not matter\*, then I think this is a kind of "relevance" that disinterests me.

We should respect this man for what brought us, and what he suffered and went through to do it. Saying "there's no story there," as Greenblatt did in his last Folger lecture, is not acceptable. Its just running away from the problem.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival does some of the most gloriously current productions of Shakespeare anywhere in the world, and that did not stop their Artistic Director from signing the "declaration of reasonable doubt" about the authorship question. Knowing more about the author's life limits the contemporary meanings we attach to the plays only if those meanings are already superficial or false.

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**Tyler Moss** Roger Stritmatter - I can only tell you that children in neighborhoods in Los Angeles, New York City, Atlanta, Syracuse, Shreveport, New Orleans, in towns in Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Maine and New Hampshire don't care about why Shakespeare's plays were written. They become motivated and moved by what the words do to them. They take the words and move them in new directions. They realize how THEY can use words to be leaders, to express their thoughts and feelings and how many words they have mastery over.

I see Shakespeare's words brought to leadership councils and we discuss how we can motivate those around us. What about our words and bodies affect others. This has nothing to do with who wrote them.

So, what does the question of 'authorship' bring to us? For me, it brings the realization that it's an incredible privilege to be able to ask the question. We have time and space and money to research, things that many people don't. We have colleagues that we can discuss and argue with, which is fantastic.

Hmm....my twins interrupted me and I lost my train of thought...apologies..

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**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss Those children are right not to care if the biography they could be given is the fairy story that is promoted by Greenblatt, Shapiro et al. But we are having an adult conversation, aren't we? - and assuming a wider frame of reference in which writing Shakespeare biographies is a multi-million dollar a year industry. If we want an honest public dialogue such material factors require consideration.

As for privilege, yes, you are right. It is a privilege. My best friend from High school died today on his birthday. So every breath we breath is a privilege.

The greatest post-Stratfordian of the 19th century was also the great populist poet Whitman:

<http://shake-speares-bible.com/.../walt-whitman-on.../>

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**Tyler Moss** Roger Stritmatter - I'm saying that to these students that I teach it doesn't matter either way.

The fact that so many biographies come out on the subject speaks more to the power of the plays than it does to the mystery of the author.

If I'm writing a PhD on the subject, I want to dig up new information. I want to theorize. It's like being a scientist.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Tyler Moss My best friend Lynne Kositsky, with whom I recently wrote and published a book on the Tempest, stopped believing in the official bardography when she had to teach it to college students. As a talented writer herself, and winner of many awards for her novels, she realized the whole Stratford story was bogus. Something about having to actually teach something makes you more aware of how it doesn't add up.

"The fact that so many biographies come out on the subject speaks more to the power of the plays than it does to the mystery of the author."

We disagree fundamentally. This another false dichotomy.

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**Everett Goldner** 4 hours and we're right back to bias, repugnant condescension and mudslinging.

Tyler - no fly zone. Seriously.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 1 · 17 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Everett Goldner - Truly miss you in our lives, dude.

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Everett Goldner Can you please explain where I slung any mud?

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Was it the part about "was bogus" or the fact that I politely disagreed with Taylor that got you upset? Please clarify so that I can avoid future offense.

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Roger Stritmatter - Everett isn't upset, if I may speak for him. He doesn't see the use of the conversation because, like, others, he sees it inevitably circling back to who wrote the plays to begin with. Hence 'no-fly zone'.

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Tyler Moss** Well then let's skip this stop on the flight and move on. I hear you when you say that you feel the history is important for people to learn...what happens when it isn't their history?

Or

Is it as important to teach this history to other cultures?

OR

What does teaching it as art vs literature have to do with it...if anything?

Like · Reply · 16 hrs



**Everett Goldner** Roger Stritmatter - "she realized that the Stratford story was bogus..." you're stating an opinion and implying fact or truth to it. "Children are right not to care but we're adults..." for when I was a child I spoke as a child, but lo, as an adult I put away "fairy stories" and saw the truth of Oxford. #ImmaStateTheObviousAllDayNow

Like · Reply · 16 hrs



Write a reply...



**Tyler Moss** Mark - I apologize for deleting your comment. It was the kind of comment, however, that I asked for people to refrain from. Not a problem, just wanted to let you know.

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs · Edited



**Frank Dominguez** I think we "know" the plays, but we dont really "know" Shakespeare, except through them. We have very little info independant of them. So, I think it wouldnt effect the plays. I think it could more impact how we percieve talent and a kind of ideal of genius "Shakespeare" embodies. Of the person wout money or title, or lineage of any remarkable kind, but just Genius. In his day, I think this would have been a more remarkable idea than it is to us, though. But if it was the Earl of Oxford, for example, talent being its own, may lose a symbol.

Like · Reply · 3 · 17 hrs



**Tyler Moss** That's interesting. You feel it would be less remarkable if a person with means was the author?

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Frank Dominguez** It wouldn't effect the plays themselves and their remarkableness. Its an idea of their remarkablness representing talent as not being grounded in means or lineage. This is a kind of given today, but it wasnt always. Shakespeare was always a kind of shining example of talent as its own thing that grew wildly and not just among those of means. But this is a given now, so maybe it wouldnt effect very much.

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**Roger Stritmatter** Frank Dominguez Frank, do you mind taking a look at the Sonnet I posted above and offering your comments?

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



**Frank Dominguez** Roger Stritmatter sure

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Frank Dominguez Thanks. Sometimes having a shared text can break down barriers to comprehension or at least promote shared understanding.

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



**Frank Dominguez** Do you mean what is quoted in the Whitman article?

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Frank Dominguez No, the Sonnet 71. Sorry, it is confusing. The thread is getting long!!!

Like · Reply · 17 hrs · Edited



**Frank Dominguez** In the end the truth is truth and has an importance and value of its own. But in my heart, I have to confess, I like Shakespeare growing wild outside the walls of an estate and privileged bloodline. But maybe this does a disservice now. Making it a comfortable thought so we can ignore those cut off from the best in terms of education and privilege in our society because talent will conquer all in the end.

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Frank Dominguez** I will Roger Stritmatter , but I have to run right now. Will think and comment later.

Like · Reply · 1 · 17 hrs



**Roger Stritmatter** Frank Dominguez Your candor is much appreciated, and I look forward to your future comments.

The emphasis on privilege is, I believe, misplaced. The Stratford author was quite privileged in many ways. New Place in Stratford, which he eventually purchased, was the largest house in town, and he died a wealthy bourgeois.

Many persons, including some of them on this forum, fail to understand that the objection to the traditional author has NOTHING to do with the alleged class snobbery of the skeptics. I went to public schools my whole life, grew up educated but lower middle class, and teach at an African American Urban University. I care as much about my students as Tyler does about the kids he does workshops for.

That doesn't mean I have to pretend that Shakespeare was some sort of working class hero. That theory fails regardless of who you think the author was.

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**Tyler Moss** This is all with the understanding that a number of his plays were not solely his work, as was the custom of the time.

Like · Reply · 2 · 17 hrs



**Reesa Graham** Incoming wall of txt:

I really hate this authorship question for reasons I stated in the above thread.

I think there is a huge difference in understanding the culture/laws/morals of the community that produced a work, and understanding the author. I think one is important, the other is not.

For me, knowing that William's sister had a lobotomy (forced) makes the female leads in his play that much more intriguing  
however, Williams is so amazing bc you don't HAVE to know that to ALREADY find his females intriguing – and for many years I didn't know. And I have always loved his works.

Among other reasons I really hate this question bc I feel like it makes theatre a lesser art form, and I don't think it is.

My fav piece of art in the world is The Winged Victory at the Louvre. I first saw it when I was in 8th grade, and my parent took me to see the Mona Lisa. We turned the corner and there she was – so beautiful she made me cry. The next time I saw her I was in 10th grade, on a school tour. The class was going to see the Mona Lisa – I got special permission to sit and look at TWV. Which I did. For over an hour until they were done. I've seen her again since then, and it has always been the same. I can stare at her quite happily for hours at a time. And, as people who know me can tell you, the idea of me sitting quietly and still-ly for more than 3 mins is mind blowing. But she literally takes my breath away. Every. Time. And I know zero about her, her artist, or really even the time she was created. I am not an art historian. I look at art. I like art. But I don't study or even understand it. And yet. Every. Time.

There are stories and moments that, for me, that do the same. Fences – Troy telling Rose – I'm going to be a Daddy. BAM! Gut punch. Always. Blanche du Buis and Stanley: We've had this date coming a long time. BAM! Gut punch. Hamlet: He was a man, take him for all and all, I shall not look upon his like again. BAM! Gut punch (How did Shakespeare know the people in my life that I think of when I hear this line?) Kin Lear: Nothing. Nothing shall come of nothing, speak again. BAM! Gut punch. Hermione: The bug you wish to scare me with, I seek. BAM! Gut Punch.

My point is this, great art doesn't require more information – that's what makes it great art. The information is \*in\* the art. Art lives because of this. As someone who enjoys Shakespeare, or Williams, or Wilson, I may choose to expand my information on the author. But I don't think it's necessary, I think it's interesting. Art lives on because it is the ultimate expression of what it means to be human, and good art touches on truth in a way that nothing else does. And I think theatre is a part of that larger art conversation.

And if authorship is important, what are we to do with the plays with authors we don't know? Do we stop reading the Greeks? Do we never read an anonymous play again? Because I don't think so. I think that's throwing the baby out with the bath water.

For me, this argument is ultimately related back to the question – is art in the eye of the artist or the viewer? Is a piece of art “wrong” if the viewer doesn't get the same story the artist intended?

As for the other author question – can you tell anything about the author from his works – I hate that question even more. Partially bc of all the points above. But mostly bc we are artists. We create. It's what we do. I do not assume that Michael Hall is a serial killer to be so good at his art – I assume he has that good of an imagination. In the same way I do not imagine Nabokov to be a child molester in writing Lolita, nor Albee into animals for The Goat.

I met Margret Atwood many moons ago, and she sums up what I think about this question. We had read a short story of hers in class, and the professor had said it meant X and thought it

meant Y. So I asked her. I finished X and she said "well, that's what it means then" And I said, but I think it means Y. And she said "Well, that's what it means then." To me, this is why I don't think you can pull from an author's work and "know" the author. I think good art allows you to know yourself through the work, not the other way around.

Also, tangentially related question – what makes Shakespeare so universal? It can't just be the language bc it has been translated so many times into so many languages. And yet, he remains one of the most widely produced and watched playwrights ever. How come?

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**Everett Goldner** Re: universality - it's a bit of "right place, right time." He wrote at the dawn of modern theater. He wrote in a city that was in many ways powered by this new art form (not least of which, economically). He had his own company and worked with them daily for many years. You could apply Malcolm Gladwell's whole "Outliers" rubric and come up with Shakespeare the same way he comes up with Bill Gates in the book.

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**Jon Ciccarelli** How we view the plays by who wrote them is of great interest to actors and theater practitioners not just from an artistic angle but from an angle of professional pride as well. Anyone who has ever written a play for a festival, written a screenplay, acted in play, directed a play, produced a play, choreographed dance numbers, acted as a musical director, choreographed fight scenes, costumed a show, had to cast a show, book rehearsal studios, book a theater, buy and run concessions, do the box office, run the lights and sound, essentially see a project from beginning to end with all the lows and highs knows full well the actual work that goes into doing theater. What we do is a profession that requires years of training as well as talent, skills in project management as well as skills on stage. No play that is either just written or fully produced is created by a single person in a vacuum. Its the culmination of a series of blood, sweat and tears that anyone who is a "civilian" can never truly understand nor appreciate. When viewed through the traditional model (i.e. Shakespeare wrote the plays) as actors we are inheritors of a great legacy. All the plays didn't just magically appear from on high, they were created and fostered to the world not just through the pen of its author or authors but through the blood, sweat and tears of people like us. Some of those people appear in stage directions in the plays, like Will Kemp in "Romeo and Juliet". Some of those people were recorded in these plays not by their character names but their actual names like Curtis in "Taming of the Shrew". As theater professionals, these people along with the author are our cultural ancestors. Its because of their shoulders that we can stand so high. When viewed through the "anti" lens (i.e. Shakespeare didn't write them) we as actors lose. Our profession is cheapened and ridiculed. Our work, the real work that few will ever know to produce theater becomes a joke, The real work done by those who came before us is passed off to the undeserving whoever. Actors are too stupid to write the greatest works in literature is the message that is sent. The plays are the work of theater professionals like ourselves and we should recognize that and celebrate it. Any theater professional who denies the works were written by Shakespeare is spitting on our profession, regards his peers with disdain and thinks our efforts cheap and unworthy. To the theater professionals on this board I ask you this. Are you a professional and your time, vision and efforts worthwhile or can anyone just do what we do? If you believe that Shakespeare wrote these plays you recognize theater as a continuum, a profession, and recognize it as a worthwhile endeavor. To believe Shakespeare didn't write the plays is to think theater is dirt and its people less than that. Which side do you want to be on?

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**Tyler Moss** Hmmm....I need to come back to this later as I'm on my way to a show but I wonder how you reconcile what you've written if you found that performers you admired believed that someone other than Shakespeare wrote the plays.

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**Philip Buchan** Jon, I agree with you that the plays show a familiarity not just with story and character, but the requirements of performance and theater. I'm afraid that people who think of Shakespeare as literature are missing the critical point: these works were written to be performed, not read.

You run through a list of the many skills and talents that go into a great theatrical experience. For each of them, we can identify instances where Shakespeare's works betray that the writer was a professional who knew theater from the inside out. In the famous phrase of Robert Greene, Shakespeare was "an absolute Johannes Factotum," a jack-of-all trades.

The point, though, is that the arguments about how viewing the plays through the looking glass of the Stratford man, or the funhouse mirror of other candidates have no value. There's no evidence that anyone other than Shakespeare wrote the plays. And the evidence for Shakespeare as the author is plentiful.

As for Tyler's point -- we have to reconcile ourselves constantly to the reality that entertainers don't necessarily share our ideology or beliefs. I enjoy watching John Wayne movies but I disagreed with his politics; I like John Travolta's performances but I'm not going to join his religion. And though I think Jacobi is wrong on authorship, he's a brilliant actor. Why should we care whether he's a good historian?

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**Jon Ciccarelli** If I found out that a performer or theater professional that I admired did not believe that Shakespeare wrote the works than I no longer would appreciate them as a theater professional. I've seen Jacobi on stage in Uncle Vanya and enjoyed it and at the time I was much more tolerant but I've grown very weary of the subject and find there's no point in arguing when the issue is patently ridiculous with no evidence and nothing but character assassination of Shakespeare. So I view personal attacks on his character as attacks on the theater profession. He was one of our own and it's disgusting that his blood, sweat and tears are pawned off on ivory tower muggles.

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**Jon Ciccarelli** Philip the fact that Shakespeare is referred to as a johannes factotum should speak volumes to any theater professional who know very well the amount of hats we have to wear and it in and of itself (beyond the mountain of evidence) should prove his authorship. No one else but a theater person could have written the plays.

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**Mike Leadbetter** Willy Russell, one of the writers in residence at The Liverpool Everyman once said "scripts are an ambition, plays are made in theatres - by companies". Everyone who works in theatre companies knows that Shakespeare did too. With the same bag of tools. The idea that there plays were written in an aristocrat's ivory tower doesn't fit with the author's gift for stagecraft.

And you're right about something else. Seeking to deprive him of credit for his peerless work, especially this year, is contemptible.

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**Rebecca Johnson** We don't celebrate these plays because of the storyline, we celebrate and recognize the genius of the writing. LANGUAGE IS CHARACTER in his plays and THAT

makes these plays genius. I don't think knowledge of the author cannot add or take away from the brilliance of the writing.

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**Mike Gordon Jon**, as I read your comments with appreciation, they brought to mind annotations made in the First Folio held by Glasgow University. Specifically, the changes someone made in Hamlet.

I can't tell whether they were critically made based on personal knowledge of performance, and correcting a typesetting error. Or whether they were made as a personal preference in reading?

As a newbie to the Forum, and seeing you and [Tyler](#) are actors, I'd appreciate your thoughts: Does giving the edited line (Index is replaced by Indies) to Hamlet, not Gertrude as in the text, make more sense in performance?

