

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Anonymous Discredits Shakespeare

Lizzie Wood, Staff Writer

A new film will intrigue only those who feel Shakespeare is not wholly responsible for producing his body of work. Anonymous, directed by self-proclaimed doubter of Shakespeare, Roland Emmerich, explores the theory that Edward de Vere, an Elizabethan aristocrat, is the real genius behind the works of Shakespeare. De Vere, said to be a literary genius at a young age, was the 17th Earl of Oxford and is portrayed in the film as Queen Elizabeth I's illegitimate child. Elizabeth, influenced by De Vere's beautiful writing, begins an incestuous love affair with her son. De Vere's works are never published because of his position in court. Years later, De Vere wants to support Essex, a successor of the queen, so he decides to stage his plays. Amid his scheming, De Vere begins a relationship with Shakespeare, portrayed as a poor, low-life peasant. Edward de Vere is played by Rhys Ifans,

"Was Shakespeare a Fraud?"

who was also in Elizabeth: the Golden Age, and Queen Elizabeth is played by Vanessa Redgrave.

The film may make some Shakespeare scholars cringe. According to Meredith's resident Shakespeare expert, Dr. Garry Walton, the film

explores a provocative topic. Walton explains that early in

his studies and in his career, he never questioned the validity of Shakespeare's work, but after he came to Meredith, some of his students brought questions to him, leading him to research the theories: "In the early 1990s I learned that a descendant of the 17th Earl of Oxford, the most recent claimant to have written the plays, was touring in the area to promote his own ancestor as the author of the plays. So we invited Charles Beauclerk (then Lord Burford) to campus, and we had a kind of point-counterpoint debate in Joyner."

Other theories explore the possibility that Christopher Marlowe,



Charles Beauclerk "Lord Burford," de Vere's descendant visiting campus in 1992. Image via Meredith Marketing Dept.

Francis Bacon, or even Queen Elizabeth had a hand in Shakespeare's writing: "The hardest thing for any of us to explain is the extraordinary, and clearly Shakespeare's plays are that. Our best explanation is genius,

Walton explains Shakespeare is certainly a man and author who seemed to have an remarkable grasp of human emotion: "One could argue that no male could

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present females so well (Cleopatra), or that no female could create such compelling male characters (Hamlet). So perhaps the author was neither male nor female, or both. He must have been a lover (Romeo),

but also a warrior (King Henry 5), and a murderer (Macbeth), and a crazed suicide (Ophelia, Lady Macbeth), and a bad king (Richard 3), and an old man (King Lear), and a young woman (Juliet). How is that possible? My only answer is that he had the most profound imagination of any writer I have studied — he had what Keats called a 'negative capability' to imagine himself as someone or in fact as multiple someones that were not his real-life self," Walton adds.

The film will certainly stir up new questions among the public about Shakespeare's honor—the movie poster reads, "Was Shakespeare a Fraud?" Audiences will be able to decide for themselves if Shakespeare was a fraud . . . or the literary genius we know him to be.

What's Up In Raleigh: 11/2 - 12/2

Collected by Ashleigh Phillips

- Nov. 2 - Dec. 2: Rembrant in America @ NCMA
- Nov. 2 - 6: Tennessee Williams's Garden District @ NC State's Kennedy Studio Theater
- Nov. 11 - 12: NC Symphony: Liszt and Rachmaninoff @ Meymandi Concert Hall
- Nov. 18 - 20: Stomp @ Memorial Auditorium
- Nov. 24- 27: NC Symphony: Grieg's Piano Concerto with Carolina Ballet's Cinderella @ Memorial Auditorium
- Nov. 25 - 26: NC Symphony: Holiday Pops: A Carolina Christmas @ Meymandi Concert Hall
- Nov. 29 - Dec. 2: A Christmas Story: the Musical @ Memorial Auditorium
- Nov. 4: NC Symphony Presents Espana! @ Meymandi Concert Hall
- Bakin' With the Boss Tour with Buddy Valastro @ Memorial Auditorium
- Fall Film Series: City of Lost Children @ NCMA
- First Friday @ Participating Downtown Venues
- Robin Miller, Food Network Star @ Quail Ridge Books
- Canes vs. Capitals @ RBC Center
- 5: Celebrate NC History Festival @ NC Museum of History
- NC State vs. Carolina @ Carter Finley Stadium
- 6: Canes vs. Stars @ RBC Center
- 10: Brian McKnight @ Meymandi Concert Hall
- 11: Mandolin Orange @ Berkeley Café
- 12: Canes vs. Penguins @ RBC Center
- 14: All Time Low @ Lincoln Theater
- Canes vs. Flyers @ RBC Center
- 15: Parachute and Kate Voegelé @ Lincoln Theater
- 17: Taylor Swift @ RBC Center
- Fall Film Series: Spellbound @ NCMA
- 19: 16th Annual American Indian Heritage Celebration @ NC Museum of History
- State vs. Clemson @ Carter Finley Stadium
- Breakfast Club @ Lincoln Theater
- 20: Canes vs. Maple Leafs @ RBC Center

which is another way of saying 'we don't know how he did it.' Part of the argument against Shakespeare as the author is that no one who was not an aristocrat and not university-educated could have known enough to write the plays. In some ways that is a classist argument — no common person could be that good. Perhaps the opposite argument could be made — no aristocrat could so accurately and sympathetically depict common people as they are presented in the plays," says Dr. Walton.