

SECRET CODES AND SMALL REWRITES: FLUID AUTHORSHIP,
INTERTEXTUAL GAMES AND THE POWER OF WORDS IN
DOCTOR WHO—“THE SHAKESPEARE CODE”
AND OTHER REVISITATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to analyse one of the most recent recontextualizations of Shakespeare’s life and work in a 2007 *Doctor Who* episode in an attempt to establish the extent to which such popular culture endeavours can contribute to a better understanding of canonical literature, particularly by placing the words of the past in a vast intertextual web and providing new insights into phenomena such as authorship and reception. Far from being confined to “The Shakespeare Code,” the analysis will also explore the use of similar strategies in British literature (Anthony Burgess – “The Muse”), popular theatre (“Hamlet: A Small Re-write”) and television comedy (*Blackadder Back & Forth*), as well as mainstream cinema (*Shakespeare in Love*), with an emphasis on issues such as collaborative writing and literary appropriation and on the alternative accounts of the genesis of Shakespearean texts featured in some of these narratives.

KEYWORDS: authorship, canon, intertextuality, originality, popular culture, reception