

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Sixty-two

Elizabethan Dramatists

Edited by Fredson Bowers University of Virginia

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William Shakespeare

(on or about 23 April 1564-23 April 1616)

John F. Andrews National Endowment for the Hum

PLAY PRODUCTIONS: Henry VI, part 1, London, unknown theater (perhaps by a branch of the Queen's Men), circa 1589-1592;
Henry VI, part 2, London, unknown theater (perhaps by a branch of the Queen's Men), circa 1590-1592;
Henry VI, part 3, London, unknown theater (perhaps by a branch of the Queen's Men), circa 1590-1592;
Richard III, London, unknown theater (perhaps by a branch of the Queen's Men), circa 1590-1592;
The Comedy of Errors, London, unknown theater (probably by Lord Strange's Men), circa 1591-1592;
The Comedy of Errors, London, unknown theater (probably by Lord Strange's Men), circa 1592-1594; London, Gray's Imn, 28 December 1594.
Titus Andromicus, London, Rose or Newington Butts theater, 24 January 1594;
The Taming of the Shrew, London, Newington Butts theater, 11 June 1594;
The Two Gentlemen of Verond, London, Newington Butts theater or the Theatre, 1594;
Love's Labo's Lost, perhaps at the country house of a great lord, such as the Earl of Southampton, circa 1594-1595; London, at Court, Christmas 1597;
Sir Thomas More, probably by Anthony Munday, revised by Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle, Shakespeare, and possibly Thomas Heywood, evidently never produced, circa 1594-1595;
King John, London, the Theatre, circa 1595-1596;
Romeo and Juliet, London, the Theatre, circa 1595-1596;
A Midummer Night's Dream, London, the Theatre, circa 1595-1596;

1595-1596;
A Missummer Night's Dream, London, the Theatre, circa 1595-1596;
The Merchant of Venice, London, the Theatre, circa 1596-1597;
Henry IV, part 1, London, the Theatre, circa 1596-1597;
Henry IV, part 2, London, the Theatre, circa 1597;
The Merry Wines of Windsor, Windsor, Windsor Castle, 23 April 1597;



The Flower Portrait of Shake-peare, which came into the possession of Mrs. Charles Flower in 1899 (Royal Shake-pear Thear, Statifford-shown-Kwen, Fletter Gollery; by permission of the Governors). When the previous owner, H. C. Clements, acquired the portaint in 1840, he said he had seen it exhibited seventy years earlier, but his claim is unsubstantiated. Once thought to have been the original from which the engraving on the title page of the 1623 First Folio of Shake-pear's plays was copied, this portrait in nou generally believed to have been based on that engraving.

Much Ado About Nothing, London, the Theatre, circa 1598-1599;

Henry V, London, Globe theater(?), between March and September 1599(?);

- Julius Caesar, London, Globe theater, 21 September 1599;
- As You Like It, London, Globe theater, circa 1599-1600:
- Hamlet, London, Globe theater, circa 1600-1601; Hamlet, London, Globe theater, circa 1600-1601; Twelfth Night, London, at Court(?), no earlier than 6 January 1601(?): London, Globe the-ater(?), circa 1601-1602(?): London, Middle Temple, 2 February 1602; Troilus and Cressida, London, Globe theater(?), circa 1601-16002;
- circa 1601-1602(?):
- All's Well That Ends Well, London, Globe theater,
- circa 1602-1603; weil, London, Globe theater, circa 1602-1603; wre for Measure, London, Globe theater(?), 1604(?); London, at Court, 26 December
- Othello, London, Globe theater(?), 1604(?); West-

- Othello, London, Globe theater(?), 1604(?); West-minster, Whitehall, I November 1604; King Lear, London, Globe theater(?), by late 1605 or early 1606; London, at Court, 26 Decem-ber 1606; Timon of Athens (possibly unperformed during Shakespeare's lifetime); possibly London, Globe theater, circa 1605-1608; Macbeth, London, Globe theater(?), 1606(?); Lon-don, at Court, probably 7 August 1606; Antony and Cleopatra, London, Globe theater, circa 1606-1607; Pericles, possibly by Shakespeare and George Wil-kins, London, at Court, between January 1606 and November 1608; London, Globe
- 1606 and November 1608; London, Globe theater, probably circa 1607-1608; Coriolanus, London, Globe theater, circa 1607-
- 1608 Cymbeline, London, Blackfriars theater or Globe theater, 1609;
- The Winter's Tale, London, Globe theater, 15 May
- 1611: The Tempest, London, at Court, 1 November 1611;
- Cardenio, probably by Shakespeare and Fletcher, London, Globe theater(?), circa 1612-1613;
- Henry VIII, possibly by Shakespeare and John Fletcher, London, Globe theater, 29 June 1613; 1013; Two Noble Kinsmen, by Shakespeare and Fletcher, London, probably Blackfriars the-ater (possibly Globe theater), 1613.
- BOOKS: Venus and Adonis (London: Printed by Richard Field, sold by J. Harrison I, 1593); The First Part of the Contention betwict the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster [abridged and corrupt text of Henry VI, part 2] (London:

- Printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas
- Printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas Millington, 1594); **eee (London: Printed by Richard Field for John Harrison, 1594); republished as The Rape of Lucree. Newly Revised (London: Printed by T. Snodham for R. Jackson, 1516). 1616);
- Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus (London: Printed by John Dan-ter, sold by Edward White & Thomas Middleton, 1594);
- asant Conceited Historie, Called The Taming of a
- A Pleasant Conceited Historie, Called The Taming of a Shrew [corrupt text] (London: Printed by Peter Short, sold by Cuthbert Burbie, [594); The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Six [abridged and corrupt text of Henry VI, part 3] (London: Printed by Peter Short for Thomas Millington, 1595); The Tragedy of King Richard the Third (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes & Peter Short for Andrew Wise, 1597); The Tragedie of King Richard the second (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise, 1597); An Excellent Conceided Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet Received Control of Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise, 1597); An Excellent conceided Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet

- Wise, 1597);

 Excellent conecited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet
 [corrupt text] (London: Printed by John
 Danter [& E. Allder], 1597); The Most Excellent and lamentable Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet. Newly Corrected, Augmented, and Amended
 (London: Printed by Thomas Creede for
 Cuthbert Burby, 1599);
 Pleasant Conceited Comedie Called, Loues Labors
 Lost (London: Printed by William White for
 Cuthbert Burby, 1599).
- Cuthbert Burby, 1598);

 The History of Henrie the Fourth [part 1] (London: Printed by Peter Short for Andrew Wise, 1598):
- 1598); ididommer nights dreame (London: Printed by R. Bradock for Thomas Fisher, 1600); most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice (London: Printed by James Roberts for Thomas Heyes, 1600);
- Thomas Heyes, 1600);

 The Second part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death, and coronation of Henrie the fift (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise & William Aspley, 1600);

 Much adoe about Nothing (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise & William Aspley, 1600);

 The Cronicle History of Henry the fift (corrupt text) (London: Printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas Mullington & John Busby, 1600);

 The Phoenix and Turtle, appended to Love Martyr:



Page from the baptismal register of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, recording Shakespeare's christening on 26 April 1564 (Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust Re-ord) Office, Statiford-upon-Avon; by permission of the Trustees and Guardians of Shakespeare's Birthplace)

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William Shakespeare

or, Rosalins Complaint, by Robert Chester (London: Printed by Richard Field for E.

- Blount, 1601);

 A Most pleasaunt and excellent conceited Comedie, of
- BIOUN, 1601);

 A Most pleasuant and excellent conceited Comedie, of Syr John Falstaffe, and the merrie Wives of Windsor [corrupt test] (London: Printed by Thomas Creede for Arthur Johnson, 1602);
 The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmark [abridged and corrupt text] (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Nicholas Ling & John Trundell, 1603); The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke. Newly Imprinted and Enlarged to Almost as Much Againe as It Was, According to the True and Perfect Coppie (London: Printed by James Roberts for Nicholas Ling, 1604);
 M. William Shak-speare: His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three daughters (London: Printed by N. Okes for Nathaniel Butter, 1608);
 The Historie of Troylus and Cresseida (London: Printed by G. Eld for R. Bonian & H. Walley, 1609);

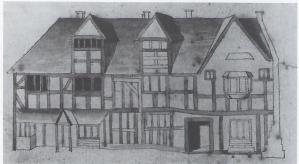
- Walley, 1609); e-speares Sonnets (London: Printed by G. Eld for Thomas Thorpe, sold by W. Aspley, 1609);
- The Late, and Much Admired Play, Called Pericles, Prince of Tyre (London: Printed by W. White for Henry Gosson, 1609);

The Tragædy of Othello, The Moore of Venice (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes for Thomas

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- Walkley, 1622); Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Trag-edies. Published according to the True Originall Copies (London: Printed by Isaac Jaggard & Copies (London: Printed by Isaac, Jaggard & Edward Blount, 1623)–comprises The Tempest, The Two Gentlemen of Verona; The Merry Wives of Windsor; Measure for Measure; The Comedy of Erners; Much Ao About Nothing; Love's Labor's Lost; A Midsummer Night's Dream; The Merchant of Venice; As You Like It; The Taming of the Shreva; Alls: Well That Ends Well; Twelfth Night; The Winter's Tale; King John; Richard II; Henry IV, parts 1-3; Richard III; Henry VIII; Troilus and Cressida; Coriodanus; This Andrainess: Romoea and Islie; Timon of Titus Andronicus; Romeo and Juliet; Timon of Athens; Julius Caesar; Macbeth; Hamlet; King Lear; Othello; Antony and Cleopatra; Cymbeline; Two Noble Kinsmen, by Shakespeare and John
- Fletcher (London: Printed by Thomas Cotes
- for John Waterson, 1634).

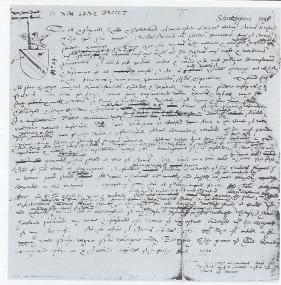
 ions: A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare,
 29 volumes to date, volumes 1-15, 18,
 edited by Horace Howard Furness; volumes 16-17, 19-20, edited by Horace Howard Fur-ness, Jr. (Philadelphia & London: Lip-pincott, 1871-1928); volumes 1-25, general



of the nouse where Shakespeare spent his childhood, a watercolor painted by Richard Greene circa 1762 (by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library; Art Vol. d 75, no. 27c) The earliest depiction of the house where Shakespeare spent his childhood, a

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William Shakespeare



Grant of Arms to John Shakespeare, the first of two rough drafts prepared by William Dethick, Garter King-of-Arms (College of Arms, MS Vincent. 157, art. 23; by permission of the Chapter)

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editor Joseph Quincey Adams; volumes 26-27, general editor Hyder Edward Rollins (Philadelphia & London: Lippincott for the Modern Language Association of America, 1936-1955); volumes 28- 1956-1955); volumes 28- 1956-1955); volumes 28- 1956-1955); volumes 28- 1956-1956-1956, volumes 28- 1956-1956, volumes 28- 1956-1956,

- The Complete Works of Shakespeare, edited by
- George Lyman Kittredge (Boston: Ginn, 1936); revised by Irving Ribner (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn, 1971);
- Mass.: Gimn, 1971);
 Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles, edited by W. W.
 Greg and Charlton Himman, 14 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939-1966);
 William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, edited by
 Peter Alexander (London & Glasgow:
 Collins, 1951; New York: Random House,
 1959).
- Collins, 1951; New Tolk: Ratholm House, 1952);

 The Arden Shakespeare, general editors Harold F. Brooks and Harold Jenkins, 38 volumes to date (London: Methuen, 1951-);

 The Complete Works of Shakespeare, edited by

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Hardin Craig (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1961); revised by Craig and David Bevington (Clenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1973); revised again by Bevington (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1980);

view, Ill.: Scott Foresman, 1980);

The New Penguin Shakespeare, general editor
T. J. B. Spencer, 33 volumes to date
(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967-);

RNOTON Fascimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare,
cedited by Charlton Hinman (New York: Norton, 1968);

William Shakespeare: The Complete Works, The Complete Pelican Shakespeare, general editor Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969);

The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare, general editor Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt
Brace Jovanovich, 1972);

The Riverside Shakespeare, general editor G.
Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton
Mifflin, 1974);

Shakespeare's Somnes, edited, with analytic commen-

Shakespeare's Sonnets, edited, with analytic commen-

Statespeare's Somnets, edited, with analytic commen-tary, by Stephen Booth (New Haven & Lon-don: Yale University Press, 1977);
Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto: A Facsimit Edition of Copies Primarily from the Henry E. Huntington Libray, edited by Michael J. B. Allen and Kenneth Muir (Berkeley: University of Cali-fornia) Press. 1989).

fornia Press, 1982);

The Complete Works, general editors Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

ant Galy Laylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986);

The Complete Works: Original-Spelling Edition, gen-eral editors Wells and Taylor (Oxford: Clar-endon Press, 1986).

endon Press, 1986).

"He was not of an age, but for all time." So wrote Ben Jonson in his dedicatory verses to the memory of William Shakespeare in 1623, and so we continue to affirm today. No other writer, in English or in any other language, can rival the appeal that Shakespeare has enjoyed. And no one else in any artisic endeavor has projected a cultural influence as broad or as deep.

Shakespeare's words and phrases have become so familiar to us that it is sometimes with a start that we realize we have been speaking Shakespeare when we utter a chiché such as "one fell swoop" or "not a mouse stirring." Never mind that many of the expressions we hear most often—"to the manner born," or (from the same speech in Hamlet) "more honored in the breach than the observance"—are misapplied at least as frequently as they are employed with any awareness of their original context and implication. The fact re-

mains that Shakespeare's vocabulary and Shake-

mains that Shakespeare's vocabulary and Shakespeare's cadences are even more pervasive in our ordinary discourse today than the idiom of the King James Bible, which Bartlett lists as only the second most plentiful source of Familiar Quotations.

And much the same could be said of those mirrors of our nature, Shakespeare's characters. From small delights like Julier's Nurse, or Bottom the Weaver, or the Gravedigger, to such incomparable creations as Falstaff, King Lear, and Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare has enlarged our world by imitating it. It should not surprise us, therefore, that personalities as vivid as these have gone on, as it were, to lives of their own outside the dramatic settings in which they first thought and spoke and moved. In opera alone there are enough different renderings of characters and scenes from Shakespeare's plays to assure that the devotee of Charles-François Gounod or Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Wagner or Benjamin Britten, could attend a different performance every evening for six months and never see the same work twice. Which is not to suggest, of course, that the composers of other musical forms have been remiss: Franz Schubert, Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, Pyotr Tchakovsky, Claude Debussy, Jean Sibelius, Sergey Prokofiev, and Aaron Copland are but a few of the major figures who have given us songs, tone poems, ballets, symphonic scores, or other compositions based on Shakespeare. Cole Porter might well have been addressing his fellow composers when he punctuated Kiss Me Kade with the advice to 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare.'

Certainly the painters have never needed such reminders. Artists of the stature of George Romney, William Blake, Henry Fusel; Eugene Delacroix, John Constable, J. M. W. Turner, and Dante Gabriel Rossett have drawn inspiration from Shakespeare's dramatis personae; and, thanks to such impressarios as the eighteenth-century dealer John Boydell, the rendering of scenes from Shakespeare has long been a significant subgenre of pictorial a

Shakespeare editions have often been notable fig-ures in their own right: George Cruikshank, Ar-thur Rackham, Rockwell Kent, and Salvador Dali. Meanwhile, the decorative arts have had their Wedgwood platters with pictures from the plays, their Shakespeare portraits carved on scrim-shaw, their Anne Hathaway's Cottage tea cozics, their mulberry-wood jewelry boxes, and their Superbard T-shirts.



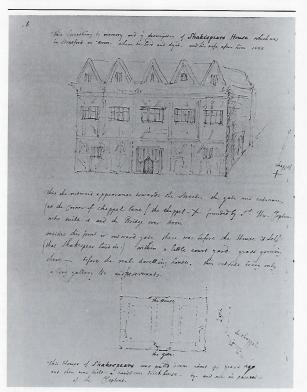


The Guild Chapel and the Guild Hall with the sc the schoolroom of the King's New School on the second floor (top) and the interior of records for the period survive, Shakespeare may have attended this grammar school.

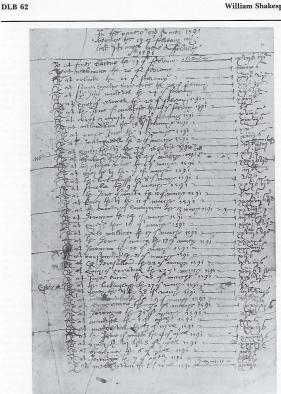
William Shakespeare

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William Shakespeare



George Vertue's sketches and description of New Place, the house Shakespeare bought in 1597. The house was torn down in 1702, and Vertue, who visited Stratford-upon-Avon in autumn 1737, based his notes and drawings on the reminiscences of a local inhabitant, perhaps a descendant of Shakespear's sixter poan Hard (fishib library, MS Portland Loan 29/246, p. 18; by permission of the British Library Board). 274



The first mention of a Shakepeare play in the diary of Philip Henilouse came on 3 March 1592 (1591 according to the calendar them in use) when the receipts for a performance of Henry VI ("harry the vy") by the Lord Strangs's Men were recorded. Now considered a forgos, the pages shown above also recent by performances of the play on 7, 1, 1, 16, and 28 March and 35 April. It was staged fourteen times between 3 March and 20 June of that year earning large receipts (MSS VII, k. 7; by permission of Dulusch College, London).

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Every nation that has a theatrical tradition is indebted to Shakespeare, and in language after language Shakespeare remains the greatest living playwright. Not merely in terms of the hundreds of productions of Shakespeare's own plays to be blazoned on the marquees in any given year, either: no, one must also bear in mind the dozens of film and television versions of the plays, and the countless adaptations, parodies, and spinoffs that accent the repertory–from musicals such as The Boys from Syracuse (based on The Comedy of Errors) and West Side Story (Leonard Bernstein's New York ghetto version of the gang wars in Romeo and Julied), to political lampoons like Macbird (contra LBJ) and Dick Deterred (the doubly punning anti-Nixon polemic), not to mention more reflecand dramatist Wole Soyinka quips that "Sheikh Zpeir" must have had some Arabic blood in him, so faithfully did he capture the local color of Egypt in Antony and Clopatra.

Implicit in all of these manifestations of Shakespeare worship is a perception best summed up, perhaps, in James Joyce's rendering of the charismatic name: "Shapesphere." For in showing "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (as Hamlet would put if), Shakespeare proved himself to be both the "soul of the age" his works reflected and adorned and the consummate symbol of the artist whose po of the age" his works reflected and adorned and the consummate symbol of the artist whose poetic visions transcend their local habitation and become, in some mysterious way, contemporaneous with "all time" (to return once more to Jonson's culogy). If Jan Kott, a twentieth-century existentialist from eastern Europe, can marved that Shakespeare is "our contemporary," then, his testimony is but one more instance of the tendency of every age to claim Shakespeare as its own. Whatever else we say about Shakespeare, in other words, we are impelled to acknowledge the incontrovertible fact that, preeminent above all others, he has long stood and will no doubt long remain atop a pedestal (to recall a recent New Yorker cartoon) as "a very very very very very very important writer."

So important, indeed, that some of his most tra LBJ) and Dick Deterred (the doubly punning anti-Nixon polemic), not to mention more reflective dramatic treatments such as Edward Bond's Bingo (a "biographical drama" about Shakespeare the man) and Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (an absurdist re-enactment of Hamlet from the perspective of two innocents as bewildered by the court of Renaissance Elsinore as their twentieth-century counterparts would be in a play such as Samuel Beckett's Waii-ing for Goldot. ing for Godot). When we broaden our survey to include the hundreds of novels, short stories, poems, critical appreciations, and other works of serious literature that derive in one way or another from Shakespeare, we partake of an even grander view of the playwright's literary and cultural primacy. Here in America, for example, we can recall Ralph Waldo Emerson's awestruck response to the Stratford seer, his exclamation that Shakespeare was "inconcievably wise," all other great writers only "conceivably," On the other side of the coin, we can indulge in the speculation that Shakespeare may have constituted an aspect of the behemoth that obsessed Herman Metivlle's imagination, thus accounting for some of the echoes of Shakespeare may that ragedy in the form and rhetoric of Moby-Dick. In a lighter vein, we can chuckle at the frontier Bardolatry so hilariously exploited by the Duke and the King in Mark Twain's Huckberry Finn. Or, moving to our own century, we can contemplate William Faulkner's The Sound and the Funy as an extended allusion to Macbeth's "tomorrow and tomorrow" soilloquy. Should we be disposed to look elsewhere, we can puzzle over "the riddle of Shakespeare" in the meditations of the Argentine When we broaden our survey to include the

tant writer."

So important, indeed, that some of his most zealous admirers have paid him the backhand compliment of doubting that works of such surpassing genius could have been written by the same William Shakespeare who lies buried and memorialized in Stratford-upon-Avon. Plays such as the English histories would suggest in the writer an easy familiarity with the ways of kings, queens, and courtiers; hence their author must have been a member of the nobility, someone like Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. Plays such as Julius Gesara, with their impressive display of classical learning, would indicate an author with more than the "small Latin and less Greek" that Ben Jonson attributes to Shakespeare; hence the need to seek for their true begetier in the form of a university-trained scholar such as Francis Bacon. Or so would urge those skeptics (whose numbers have included such redoubtable personages as Henry James and Sigmund Freudy who find themselves in sympathy with the "anti-Stratfordians." Their ranks have never been particularly numerous or disciplined, since they have often quarreled among themselves about which of the various "Calimants"—the Earl of Derby, Christopher Marlowe, even Queen So important, indeed, that some of his most where, we can puzzle over "the riddle of Shakespeare" in the meditations of the Argentine Snakespeare in the mediators of the Argentine movelist and essayist Jorge Luis Borges. Or smile (with perhaps but an incomplete suspension of disbelief) as the Nobel Prize-winning African poet Earl of Derby, Christopher Marlowe, even Queen

Greenes

Greenes:

Simeet bop, might J double ther, he admilde, and got not many ententies by bitter we loses: inusing against date men, he though a faither the crepton and a well: though all albertie to reproduce all, and name none; he not man he will it though all albertie to reproduce all, and name none; he not man is minter. Sety of he allow mater fill tumning, the will rage, of tread on a worms and it will turne; then idant one Schollers been with have them; fither reproduct he not made is minter. Sety of he so the set in the other two, in formethings rarer, in nothing interiour; pointed, as my file? In extreme lifting, a little have J to day to there and there is made at lookacrous orly, Mouth Incare by Invest. Schollers been all there are the set an industrous orly, Mouth Incare by Invest. Schollers, then are the house of point of the mene all appeared on he means all app. Safe minded unen all three of point by my miletel you be not burnen for mounty, those strong, thou are butter from the mene for the first point of the firs

Robert Greene's attack on "Shake-seene" in Greene's Groatsworth of Wit (1992) British Library). In saying that Shakespeare is "ar Tygers hart warph in a Players Holge," Greene was alluding to a line in Henry VI, part 3, where the Dube of York calls Queen Margaret "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide."

Elizabeth herself-should be upheld as the "true Shakespeare." And because many of their arguments are methodologically unsophisticated, they have never attracted adherents from scholar with academic credentials in the study of English Renaissance history and dramatic literature. But, whatever their limitations, the anti-Stratfordians have at least helped keep us mindful of how

frustratingly little we can say for certain about the life of the man whose works have so enriched the lives of succeeding generations.

One thing we do know is that if Shakespeare was a man for all time, he was also very much a man of his own age. Christened at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on 26 April 1564, he grew up as the eldest of five chil-

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Greenes

Greenes.

Sweet boy, might A outile thee, be adulide, and get normany enemies by butter wolves: investig against value men, for thou cand do it, no man better, no man to well: thou bas a libertie to repoone all, and name none; for one being sluned no man is minter. Setop disalow mater still running, it will rage, of tread on a worme and it will turner then iname not sepolates were build warpelines, if they reprout the too much liberty of replace.

And thou no less defending than the other two, in some things rater, in nothing interiour, distinct by men feller two, in some things rater, in nothing interiour, distinct by sueed mere it man at wolarmous ords, I would finare by suees. Seconge, thou art distinct by the two periods on to meane alay. Take minden men all three of you, they my militer you be not warnished when men for you, they men militer you be not warnished when men for you, they men militer you be not warnished when all three of you, they men militer you be not warnished when one so you (like mee) sough these bourses to cleave: those supports of meane that spake from our months, shole samples and the supports of meane that spake from our months, shole samples are the pour to whom they all have been belooding; so into the that you, to whom they all buse been belooding; so in the that you, to whome they all buse been belooding, the time for laken't year such as a fame to the them for its of there is an up-that Crow, beautified with our feathers, the with his Tygers hare wrapt in a Players hyde, suppose be is as buell able to bombest our a blanke berte as the best for our a no best one concert the one'the balake-frem in a countery. pout : and beeing an absolute so hammes factorum, us in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a country. D that I might intreat your rare with to be implosed in more profitable courtes: Flet those Apes imitate pour past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. Thuows the best hulband of

Robert Greene's attack on "Shake-seene" in Greene's Groatsworth of Wit (1992; British Library). In saying that Shakespeare is "ar Tygers hart warph in a Players Holge," Greene was alluding to a line in Henry VI, part 3, where the Duke of York calls Queen Margaret 'tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide."

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much a man of his own age. Christened at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on 26 April 1564, he grew up as the eldest of five chil-

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dren reared by John Shakespeare, a tradesman who played an increasingly active role in the town's civic affairs as his business prospered, and Mary Arden Shakespeare, the daughter of a genteman farmer from nearby Wilmotoe. Whether Shakespeare was born on 23 April, as tradition holds, is not known; but a birth date only a few days prior to the recorded baptism seems eminently probable, particularly in view of the fear his parents must have had that William, like two sisters who had preceded him and one who followed, might die in infancy. By the time young William was old enough to begin attending school, he had a younger brother (Gilbert, born in 1566) and a baby sister (Joan, born in 1569). As he attained his youth, he found himself with two more brothers to help look after (Richard, Jorn in 1574, and Edmund, born in 1580), the younger of whom eventually followed his by-then-

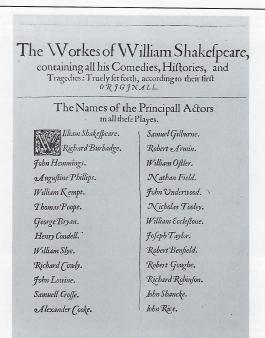
how into enformers to help look after (Richard, born in 1574, and Edmund, born in 1580), the younger of whom eventually followed his by-then-prominent eldest brother to London and the the-ater, where he had a brief career as an actor before his untimely death at twenty-seven.

The house where Shakespeare spent his childhood stood adjacent to the wool shop in which his father plied a successful trade as a glover and dealer in leather goods and other commodities. Before moving to Stratford sometime prior to 1552 (when the records show that he was fined for failing to remove a dunghill from outside his house to the location where refuse as normally to be deposited), John Shakespeare had been a farmer in the neighboring village of Snitterfield. Whether he was able to read and write is uncertain. He executed official documents, not with his name, but with a cross signifying his glover's compasses. Some scholars write is uncertain. He executed official documents, not with his name, but with a cross signifying his glover's compasses. Some scholars interpret this as a "signature" that might have been considered more "authentic" than a full autograph; others have taken it to be an indication of illiteracy. But even if John Shakespeare was not one of the "learned," he was certainly a man of what a later age would call upward mobility. By marrying Mary Arden, the daughter of his father's landlord, he acquired the benefits of a better scolal standing and a lucrative inheritance, much of which he invested in property (he bought several houses). And by involving himself in public service, he rose by sure degrees to the highest municipal positions Strafford had to offer: chamberlain (1561), alderman (1565), and bailiff (or mayor) and justice of the peace (1568). bailiff (or mayor) and justice of the peace (1568). A few years after his elevation to the office of bailiff, probably around 1576, John Shakespeare approached the College of Heralds for armorial

bearings and the right to call himself a gentle-man. Before his application was acted upon, how-ever, his fortunes took a sudden turn for the worse, and it was not until 1596, when his eldest son had attained some status and renewed the peti-tion, that a Shakespeare coat of arms was finally granted. This must have been a comfort to John Shakespeare in his declining years (he died in 1601), because by then he had borrowed money, Shakespeare in his declining years (he died in 1601), because by then he had borrowed money, disposed of property out of necessity, ceased to attend meetings of the town council, become involved in litigation and been assessed fines, and even stopped attending church services, for fear, it was said, "of process for debt." Just what happened to alter John Shakespeare's financial and so-cial position after the mid 1570s is not clear. Some have seen his nonattendance at church as a sign that he had become a recussant, unwilling to conform to the practices of the newly established Church of England (his wife's family had remained loyal to Roman Catholicism despite the fact that the old faith was under vigorous attack in Warwickshire after 1577), but the scant surviving evidence is anything but definitive.

The records we do have suggest that during young William's formative years he enjoyed the advantages that would have accrued to him as the son of one of the most influential citizens of a bustling market town in the fertile Midlands, when he was taken to services at Holy Trinity Church, he would have sat with his family in the front pew, in accordance with his father's civic rank. There would have heard and felt the words and rhythms of the Bible, the sonorous phrases of the 1559 Book of Common Praver.

tront pew, in accordance with his father's civic rank. There he would have heard and felt the words and rhythms of the Bible, the sonorous phrases of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, the exhortations of the Homilies. In all likelihood, after spending a year or two at a "petty school" to learn the rudiments of reading and writing, he would have proceeded, at the age of seven, to "grammar school." Given his father's social position, young William would have been eligible to attend the King's New School, located above the Guild Hall and adjacent to the Guild Chapel (institutions that would both have been quite familiar to a man with the elder Shake-speare's municipal duties), no more than a five-minute walk from the Shakespeare house on Henley Street. Though no records survive to tell us who attended the Strafford grammar school during this period, we do know that it had well-qualified and comparatively well-paid masters; and, through the painstaking research of such scholars as T. W. Baldwin, we now recognize that a curriculum such as the one offered at the



List, from the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's works (1623; Folger Shakespeare Library), of the members of the company that Cuthbert and Richard Burbage formed as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. in 1594. In 1603 the company came under the patronage of James I and was renamed the King's Men.

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speare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third." If the Conqueror was before Richard the Third." If we read the sonnets as in any way autobiographical, moreover, we are shown a poet with at least one other significant liaison: a "Dark Lady" to whom Will's lust impels him despite the self-disgust the affair arouses in him (and despite her infidelity with the fair "Young Man" to whom many of the poems are addressed and for whom the poet reserves his deepest feelings).

But even if there is reason to speculate that Shakespeare may not have always been faithful to 159 he purchased one of the most imposing

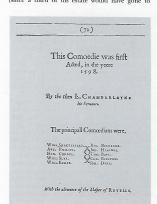
he remained attached to Anne as a husband. In 1597 he purchased one of the most imposing houses in Stratford—New Place, across the street from the Guild Chapel—presumably settling his wife and children there as soon as the tile to the property was clear. He himself retired to that Stratford home, so far as we can determine, sometime between 1611 and 1613. And of course he remembered Anne in his will, bequeathing her the notorious "second-best bed"—which most modern biographers regard as a generous afterthought (since a third of his estate would have gone to

the wife by law even if her name never occurred in the document) rather than the slight that ear-

the wife by law even if her name never occurred in the document) rather than the slight that earlier interpreters had read into the phrasing.

Naturally we would like to know more about what Shakespeare was like as a husband and family man. But most of us would give just as much to know what took place in his life between 1585 (when the parish register shows him to have become the father of twins) and 1592 (when we find the earliest surviving reference to him as a rising star in the London theater). What did he do during these so-called "dark years"? Did he study law, as some have suspected? Did he travel on the Continent? Did he become an apprentice to a butcher, as one late-seventeenth-century account had it? Or-most plausibly, in the view of many modern biographers-did he teach school for a while? All we can asy for certain is that by the time his children were making their own way to school in rural Stratford, William Shakespeare had become an actor and writer in what was already the largest city in Europe.

Shakespeare probably traveled the hundred miles to London by way of the spires of Oxford, as do most visitors returning from Stratford to





When the first volume of Ben Jonson's Works was published in 1616, Shakespeare was listed as a cast member for the first performances of Every Man in His Humour (left) and Sejanus (right) (Bodleian Library)

King's New School would have equipped its pupils with what by modern standards would be a rather formidable classical education.

During his many long school days there, young Shakespeare would have become thoroughly grounded in Latin, acquired some background in Greek, and developed enough linguistic facility to pick up whatever he may have wanted later from such modern languages as Italian and French. Along the way he would have become familiar with such authors as Aesop, Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Seneca. He would have studied logic and rhetoric as well as grammar, and he

have become familiar with such authors as Aesop, Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Seneca. He would have studied logic and rhetoric as well as grammar, and he would have been taught the principles of composition and oratory from the writings of such masters as Quintilian and Erasmus. In all probability, he would even have received some training in speech and drama through the performance of plays by Plautus and Terence. If Shakespeare's references to schooling and schoolmasters in the plays are a reliable index of how he viewed his own years as a student, we must conclude that the experience was more tedious than pleasurable. But it is difficult to imagine a more suitable mode of instruction for the formation of a Renaissance poet's intellectual and artistic sensibility. Meanwhile, of course, young Shakespeare would have learned a great deal from merely being alert to all that went on around him. He would have paid attention to the plant and animal life in the local woods that he would later immortalize, in As Vou Like It, as the Forest of Arden. He may have hunted from time to time; one legend, almost certainly apocryphal, has it that he eventually left Stratford because he had been caught poaching deer from the estate of a powerful squire, Sir Thomas Lucy, four miles upstream. He probably learned to swim as a youth, skinny-dipping in the river Avon. He may have participated in some of the athletic pursuits that were the basis of competition in the Elizabethan equivalent of the Olympics, the nearby Cotswold Games. He would undoubtedly have been adept at indoor recreations such as hazard (a popular dice game), or chess, or any of a number of card games. As he grew older, he would have game accustomed to such vocations as farming, sheepherding, talioring, and shopkeeping. He would have acquired skills such as fishing, gardening, and cooking, And he would have gathered information about the various professions: law, medicine, religion, and teaching, Judging from the astonishing range of dai cine, religion, and teaching. Judging from the astonishing range of daily life and human en-

deavor reflected in his poems and plays, we can only infer that Shakespeare was both a voracious reader and a keen observer, the sort of polymath Henry James might have been describing when he referred to a character in one of his novels as "a man on whom nothing was lost."

Once his school years ended, Shakespeare married, at eighteen, a woman who was eight years his senior. We know that Anne Hathaway was pregnant when the marriage license was issued by the Bishop of Worcester on 27 November 1582, because a daughter, Susanna, was baptized in Holy Trinity six months later on 26 May 1583. We have good reason to believe that the marriage was hastily arranged: there was only one reading of the banns (a church announcement preceding a wedding that allowed time for any legal impediments against it to be brought forward before the ceremony took place), an indication of unusual haste. But whether the marriage was in any way "forced" is impossible to determine. Some biographers (most notably Anthony Burgess) have made much of an apparent clerical error whereby the bride's name was entered as Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton in the Worester court records; these writers speculate that Shakespeare was originally planning to marry another Anne until Anne Hathaway of Shottery (a village a mile or so from Shakespeare's home in Stratford) produced her embarrassing evidence of a prior claim. To most scholars, including our foremost authority on Shakespeare's life, S. Schoenbaum, this explanation of the Anne Whateley court entry seems farfetched. Such hypotheses are inevitable, however, in the absence of fuller information about the married life of William and Anne Hathaway Shakespeare.

potheses are inevitable, however, in the absence of fuller information about the married life of William and Anne Hathaway Shakespeare.

What we do have to go on is certainly comparible with the suspicion that William and Anne were somewhat less than ardent lovers. They had only two more children—the twins, Hammet and Judith, baptized on 2 February 1585—and they lived more than a hundred miles apart, so far as we can tell, for the better part of the twenty-year period during which Shakespeare was employed in the London theater. If we can give any credence on a mausing anecdote recorded in the 1602-1603 diary of a law student named John Manningham, there was at least one occasion during those years when Shakespeare, overhearing the actor Richard Burbage make an assignation, "went before, was entertained, and at his game before Burbage came; then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shake-

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Self-portrait of Richard Burbage, who played roles such as Richard III, Othello, and King Lear (by permission of Dulwich College Picture Gallery, London)

London today. But why he went, or when, history does not tell us. It has been plausibly sug-gested that he joined an acting troupe (the Queen's Men) that was one player short when it toured Stratford in 1587. If so, he may have mitoured Stratford in 1587. If so, he may have migrated by way of one or two intermediary comparies to a position with the troupe that became the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594. The only thing we can assert with any assurance is that by 1592 Shakespeare had established himself as an actor and had written at least three plays. One of these—the third part of Henry VI—was alluded to in that year in a posthumously published testament by a once-prominent poet and playwright named Robert Greene, one of the "University Wits" who had dominated the London theater in the late 1580s. Dissipated and on his deathbed, Greene warned his fellow playwrights to beware of an "upstart crow" who, not content with being a mere player, was aspiring to a share of the livelia mere player, was aspiring to a share of the liveli-hood that had previously been the exclusive prov-

ince of professional writers such as himself. Whether Greene's Groatsworth of Wit accuses Shakespeare of plagiarism when it describes him as "beautified with our feathers" is not clear; some scholars have interpreted the phrase as a complaint that Shakespeare has borrowed freely from the scripts of others (or has merely revised existing plays, a practice price assumption to the scripts of the from the scripts of others (or has merely revised existing plays, a practice quite common in the Elizabethan theater). But there can be no doubt that Greene's anxieties signal the end of one era and the beginning of another: a golden age, spanning two full decades, during which the dominant force on the London stage would be, not Greene or Kyd or Marlowe or even (in the later years of that period) Jonson, but Shakespeare.

If we look at what Shakespeare had written by the early 1590s, we see that he had already become thoroughly familiar with the daily round of one of the great capitals of Europe. Shakespeare knew St. Paul's Cathedral, famous not only as a house of worship but also as the marketplace

where books were bought and sold. He knew the where books were bought and sold. He knew the Inns of Court, where aspiring young lawyers stud-ied for the bar. He knew the river Thames, spanned by the ever-busy, ever-fascinating Lon-don Bridge. He knew the Tower, where so many of the characters he would depict in his history plays had met their deaths, and where in his own lifetime such prominent noblemen as the Earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh would be impris-oned prior to their executions. He knew Westmin-ster, where Parliament met when summored hy ster, where Parliament met when summoned by ster, where Parliament met when summoned by the Queen, and where the Queen herself held court at Whitehall Palace. He knew the harbor, where English ships, having won control of the seas by defeating the "invincible" Spanish Ar-mada in 1588, had begun in earnest to explore the New World.

In Shakespeare's day London was a vigor-cus city of convendors, between 150,000, and

In Shakespeare's day London was a vigor-ous city of somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000 inhabitants. If in its more majestic as-pects it was dominated by the court of Queen Elizabeth, in its everyday affairs it was accented by the bustle and bustle of getting and spending. Its Royal Exchange was one of the forerunners of today's stock exchanges. Its many market-places offered a variety of goods for a variety of tastes. Its roweld streets presented a colorial pag-tastes. Its crowded streets presented a colorial pagof today's stock exchanges. Its many marketplaces offered a variety of goods for a variety of
tastes. Its crowded streets presented a colorful pagcant of Elizabethan modes of transport and
dress, ranging from countrywomen in homespun
to elegant ladies in apparel as decorative as their
husbands' wealth-and the Queen's edicts on
clothing-would allow. Its inns and taverns afforded a rich diversity of vivid personalitiescating, tippling, chatting, and enjoying games
and pleasures of all kinds. It was, in short, an imment, and we can be sure that Shakespeare took
full advantage of the opportunity it gave him to
observe humanity in all its facets. Like Prince
Hal, he must have learned "to drink with any tinker in his own language," and it was this as much
as anything he was taught at school (or might
have acquired by attendance at university) that
equipped him to create such vibrant characters as
Mistress Quickly, proud Hotspur, and the impertrabels bottom.

Not that all was always well. Like any major
city, London also had its problems. Preachers
and moralists were constantly denouncing the ex-

cuy, London also had its problems. Preachers and moralists were constantly denouncing the excessive use of cosmetics. Thus, when Hamlet speaks out against "your paintings," telling Ophelia that "God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another," he would have been sounding a note familiar to everyone in Shake-



Robert Armin, who specialized in "wise fool" parts such as Touchtsone in As You Like It, Feste in Twelfth Night, and the Fool in King Lear (woodent from the title page of the 1609 quarta edition of Armin's The Two Maids of Moreclacke; Anderson Galleries, sale number 2077, 20-21 May 1926)

speare's audience. So also with the "furred gowns" so roundly cursed by Lear: courtiers and their ladies were accustomed to lavishing as much "pride" on a single article of bejeweled finery as "pride" on a single article of bejeweled finery as a modern man or woman might pay for a very expensive automobile. But luxury was only one of the evils of the age. London's Puritan authorities, regarding the theaters as dens of iniquity, closed them down on any available pretext, particularly when the plague was rampant. Meanwhile, even without the plague or the theaters to concern them (and one gathers that some of the authorities were anything but sure about which was the greater peril), the city fathers had to contend with gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, and with gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, and other vices, especially in the Bankside district south of the Thames and in the other "liberties" outside the city walls to the west, east, and north (such as Shoreditch, where James Burbage had erected the first permanent commercial play-

house, the Theatre, when Shakespeare was only twelve, and where many of Shakespeare's plays prior to 1599 were first performed). Here most blatantly, but elsewhere as well, pickpockets, vaga-bonds, and other members of the fraternity of urban lowlife lay in wait for "conies," as they called their unsuspecting victims. Given so many "notorious vilalianies" for spokesmen like Thomas Dekker's "Belman of London" to bring to light, it is hardly survising that among the most prolific is hardly surprising that among the most prolific literary genres of the period were the scores of books and tracts that spewed forth from reform-ers incensed by the decadence of the Renaissance

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metropolis.

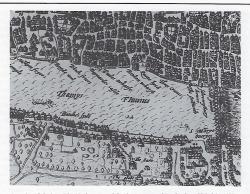
In such a setting did Shakespeare write and help perform the greatest theatrical works the world has ever experienced. And he did so in subwould regard as totally alien from the swee Swan of Avon's poetic grace. For if Shoreditch and, later, Bankside were to blossom into the finand, later, Bankside were to blossom into the Im-est theatrical centers of that or any other age, they were also, for better or worse, the seedbeds for such brutal spectator sports as bearbaiting, bullbaiting, and cockfighting. This may help ac-count for the blood and violence so frequently dis-played on the Elizabethan stage, most notably in played on the Elizabethan stage, most notably in such early Shakespearean experiments as the Henry VI trilogy and Titus Andronicus, but also in mature works such as Julius Caesar and King Lear. But of course there was a good deal more than murder and mayhem in the 'wooden O' that served as amphitheatre for most of Shakespeare's dramatic productions. On a stage largely devoid of scenery but by no means lacking in spectacle, the playwright and his actors made efficient use of language, proper-ties, and gesture to establish time, locale, situa-tion, and atmosphere. In the process, through all the resources of rhetoric, symbolism, and what Hamlet in his advice to the players calls "action,"

the resources of rhetoric, symbolism, and what Hamlet in his advice to the players calls "action," the "artificial persons" of the drama (its dramatis personae) imitated humanity in such a say as to convey whatever "matter" an author and his com-pany envisaged for a scene, an act, or a full dra-matic sequence. By twentieth-century standards, the means they used were relatively primitive—no spotlights, too few furnishings to achieve verisimil-itude through setting and dress, only the crudest of "special effects," no curains to raise and lower of "special effects," no curianis to raise and lower as a way of signaling the beginning and end of a scene or act-but by any standards, the results they achieved were brilliant. It has taken us nearly four centuries to rediscover what they

seem to have understood intuitively: that in some things theatrical, less is more. Our best estimate is that approximately 3,000 spectators could be crammed into a ninety-3,000 spectators could be crammed into a ninety-inte-foot-wide, polygonal structure such as the Theatre (which opened in 1576 and was dismantled in 1598, after the owner of the land on which it stood refused to negotiate a lease acceptable to Shakespeare's acting company) or its successor the Globe (which opened in 1599, after the company transported the lumber from the Theatre across the Thames and used it as the scaffoldatre across the Inames and used it as the scattoning for an even more handsome playhouse on the Bankside). More than half of the audience stood in the yard (which measured about fifty-five feet in diameter); the remainder sat in the three galleries that encircled the yard and rose to a thatched roof some thirty-six feet above the

The stage was probably about forty-three The stage was probably about forty-three feet wide, and it thrust some twenty-seven feet into the yard from the "tiring house" at the rear of the building. It was covered by a pillar-supported superstructure-the "heavens"—that protected the actors and their costumes from the elements and housed the equipment Elizabethan companies used for ascents, descents, and other "flying" effects. In the floor of the stage platform cleant five fiver above the surrounding yard was companies used for ascents, descents, and other "flying" effects. In the floor of the stage platform (about five feet above the surrounding yard) was a trapdoor that could be opened for visitations from below or for access into what, depending on the context, might represent a grave or a pit or even hell itself. At the back of the stage in all likelihood, concealing the tiring house where the actors effected their costume changes and awaited their cues to enter, were three doors. The two at the corners were probably used for most of the entrances and exists of the actors; the large middle one was capable of being employed as a shallow, draped "discovery space" that might be drawn open for tableaux (as when Ferdinand and Miranda are disclosed playing chess in The Tempesi) or adapted to represent small enclosures such as closets, studies, bedrooms, or shops like the Apothecary's cell in Romos and Juliat. On the level above the tiring house, probably divided into five bays, was a balcony that accommodated a select number of the theater's highest-paying customers and functioned in many of the plays as the "upper stage" where their scenes requiring a higher vantage point could be enacted. Sentinels on watch, lovers at a second-story bedroom window, seamen crying out from a ship's crow's next these and other situations called for the use of

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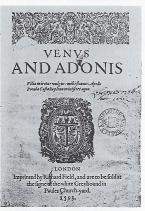
portion of the inset John Norden prepared for the panorama of London he published in 1600 as vitas Londini (Royal Library, Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm). The first Globe theater, built from he timbers of the Theatre in 1598, is shown just south of the Rose theater (here mislabeled "The Stare").

one or more of the upper-level bays (probably the central one in most instances) for characters to speak their lines and render the movements called for in the script.

Because the main playing area was sur pecause the man playing area was sur-rounded on all four sides by spectators, the poet and the performer benefited from a more inti-mate relationship with the audience than is cus-tomary in present-day theaters fitted with a curtain and a proscenium arch. For Shakespeare, this meant that he could allow a character to con-fide in a nearthy alsowner through saides as does this meant that he could allow a character to con-fide in a nearby playgoer through asides, as does Iago in Othello, or to be overheard while he medi-tates in solitude, as does Brutus in the soliloqui in which he talks himself into joining the plot to as-sassinate Caesar. Such devices may strike a mod-ern viewer as less ophisticated than, say, the cinematic voice-over, but they proved eminently acceptable to an audience that was willing to acceptane to an audience trait was willing to "piece out" a performance's "imperfections with [is] thoughts." And it says a great deal about the intelligence and sensitivity of Elizabethan theater-goers that they attended and were capable of ap-preciating dramatic works which, in many respects, were both responses to and sublima-tions of the acceptanciative that constant for attions of the coarser activities that competed for attention (and people's entertainment budgets) only a short distance away from the magic circle defined by the walls of a Theatre or a Globe.

Just who composed the audiences of these public playhouses is still a matter of debate, but re-

public playhouses is still a matter of debate, but re-cent research by Ann Jennalic Gook and Andrew Gurr suggest that they were a more affluent cross-section of Elizabethan society than earlier writ-ings by such scholars as Alfred Harbage would have led us to believe. An examination of wages and prices during the period indicates, for example, that those who attended performances example, that those who attended performances on weekday aftermoons would have had to have more leisure, and more disposable income, than seems compatible with the view that even the groundlings (who paid the lowest admission, a penny to stand in the yard and risk getting soaked in the event of rain) were predominantly working-class people and illiterate apprentices. working-class people and interate apprentices. Because their position in the yard put their eyes on a level with the feet of the players, the groundlings were sometimes derided as "understanders"; it now begins to appear that a substantial percentage of these theatergoers were "understanders" in a more favorable sense. To be sure, some of them may at times have been a bit obDLB 62 William Shakespeare





Title page and dedication page from the 1593 quarto edition of Shakespeare's first book, an erotic mythological poem based on Ovid's Metamorphoses (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

streperous, and their number may well have included an assortment of men and women (including prostitutes) preoccupied with extra-theatrical pursuits. It may be, too, that the groundlings were more susceptible than other members of the audience (if merely because of their greater proximity to the stage) to manipulation by what we now call "naughty" actors, the overweening "downs" whom Hamlet rebukes for their tendency to ply the crowd for inappropriate laughter, interrupting the flow of the action and causing spectators to miss "some necessary question of the play." But even if the groundlings were not quite as cultivated, on the average, as those members of the audience who could afford osi while they watched a play, it is difficult to reconcile the subdety and indirection of Shakespeare's plotting and characterization, not to mention the complexity of his language and the incomparable music of his verse, with the assumption that the majority of an average house at the public theaters was unable to respond to anything more elevated than the broad humor of a

Launce or a Dogberry. Even if we still find it valuable, then, to preserve something of the traditional distinction between the groundlings and uona usuncuo neween the groundings and the more "privileged" spectators who sat in the three-tiered galleries encircling the yard, we should now open our minds to the possibility that there were more of what Hamlet would call "judicious" viewers in every segment of the Elizabethan audience, including those who stood in the yard, than we have tended to assume until the progression of the properties of the progression of the prog recently in our analyses of Shakespearean

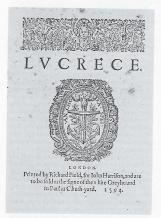
drama. Which is not to say, of course, that Shake-speare and his fellow dramatists were completely satisfied with any of their audiences (but then what writer ever is?). Hamlet bestows high praise on a play that he says "was never acted, or if it was, not above once," for "it pleased not the million, twas caviary to the general." He then exhorts the players to disregard "a whole theatre of others," if necessary, in order to please "those with judgments in such matters." Whether Hamlet's creator would himself have endorsed such extreme

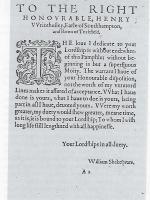
clitism is difficult to determine, but such a view is certainly consonant with the episite to the reader that prefaced the revised 1609 first quarto edition of Troilus and Cressida. Here we are assured that we have "a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical"; and we are given to believe that it is to the credit rather than the discredit of the work that it has never been "sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude." Inasmuch as this preface and the title page advertising Troilus and Cressid." as it was acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe," we are probably correct to assume that whoever wrote it had in mind the kind of vulgar "multi-ude" who would have seen the play at one of the outdoor public theaters.

All of which is to acknowledge that even if the audiences that attended the public theaters elitism is difficult to determine, but such a view is

the audiences that attended the public theaters were sophisticated enough to support the vast majority of Shakespeare's dramatic efforts, they may

nevertheless have proven deficient in their response to some of the extraordinary challenges he placed before them after he arrived at his artistic maturity. This should not surprise us, given Shakespeare's continual experimentation with inherited generic forms and his ever-more-complex approaches to traditional material. Nor should we assume that by terms such as "the million" and "the general" he and his fellow playwrights referred only to the groundlings. Writers of the period were equally acidulous in their criticism of the gallants who attended the theater to be "the observed of all observers"—the ostentatiously attired young men who sat not only in the galleries near served of all observers"—the ostentatiously attired young men who sat not only in the galleries near the stage (where the admission price was thrice as much as for the places in the yard) and in the balconies above and behind the stage (which cost six times as much as the places in the yard), but even on the stage itself at some performances in the indoor "private" theaters (where the least expensive seat cost six times the price of general admission to the Theatre or the Globe, and where





Title page and dedication page from the 1594 quarto edition of the long narrative poem that was later republished as The Rape of Lucrece (Elizabethan Club, Yale University)

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trepreneurs also helped him flourish artistically trepreneurs also helped him flourish artistically. It meant, for example, that he could envisage and write his plays with particular performers in mind: Richard Burbage for leading roles such as Richard III, Othello, and King Lear; Will Kempe for clowning parts such as Launce or Dogberry in the early years of the company, and thereafter (following Kempe's departure from the Lord Chamberlain's Men around 1599) Robert Armin, who seems to have specialized in "wise fools" such as Touchstone, Feste, and Lear's Fool; Shakespeare himself, perhaps, for "old men" such as Adam in As You Like II; "hired men" (adult actors who, not being shareholders in the company, were simply paid a sum of money for (adult actors who, not being shareholders in the company, were simply paid a sum of money for each job of work) for most of the lesser roles; and apprentice boy-actors for the youthful parts and many, if not all, of the female roles (there being no actresses on the English stage until the theaters reopened after the Restoration). Working as the resident playwright for a company in

SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS. Neuer before Imprinted. AT LONDON By G. Eld for T. T. and are to be folde by William Affer.

Title page for the 1609 quarto edition of the volume pub-lisher Thomas Thorpe dedicated to "Mr. W. H.," fueling specu-lation about the identity of the young man in the somets (Anderson Galleries, sale number 1405, 4-5 March 1919)

which he was both an actor and a business partwhich he was both an actor and a business part-ner meant that Shakespeare could revise and re-write his scripts in rehearsal prior to a given play's first performance, and that he could adapt and further revise them later as differing circum-stances required: such as performances commis-sioned at Court during holiday seasons or on sioned at Court during holiday seasons or on ceremonial occasions, or performances solicited by the great houses of the nobility, or (during sieges of plague when the London theaters were closed) performances on tour in the provinces, during which, in all likelihood, the troupe was re-duced to entertaining with fewer actors and was re-quired to make do with provisional playing areas in guild halls, inn yards, and other less-than-ideal theatrical spaces. theatrical spaces.

Because the conditions under which Shakespeare worked required him, above all, to be
pragmatic and flexible, we would probably be correct to infer that as he composed his plays he
thought of his scripts, not as fixed "literary"
texts, but as provisional production notessusceptible of lengthening or shortening or other
modes of alteration as determined by the constraints of particular venues and performance situations. He would have had to prepare each script
with an eye to the number of actors available for
speaking parts (one recent scholar has concluded
that most of Shakespeare's plays were composed
with a cast of thirteen performers in mind), and
he probably planned each scene with a view to
the possibilities for "doubling" (a principle of theatrical economy whereby a given actor would alternate among two or more roles in the same play). Because the conditions under which Shake atrical economy whereby a given actor would alternate among two or more roles in the same play). It may well be that, in the absence of anyone else in the organization designated to function in that capacity. Shakespeare was the first 'director' his plays had. If so, we can be sure that he approached the task with an awareness that the devising of a production was a collaborative process and that the playscript, though normative, was never to be revered as a monument carved in stone. Shakespeare was, after all, a playaright (that is, a "maker" rather than merely a writer of plays), and he would have been the first to recognize that the final purpose of a dramatic text was a fully realized performance rather than a piece of literature to be read in the privacy of a patron's parior or pondered in the lamplight of a scholar's study. r's study.

If in his capacity as theater professional Shakespeare conceived of himself, then, as a maker of "plays" (by definition ephemeral and "insubstantial" pageants, as Prospero observes in

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some of the seats cost a full thirty times as much). It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare much). It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare any more than Dekker (who satirized such gallants in *The Gull's Hornbook*) would have considered these foppish Osrics even slightly more "judicious" than their fellow spectators at the lower end of the economic scale. And one can easily imagine that after 1609, when his company ily imagine that after 1609, when his company began using the Blackfriars theater as its primary venue during the colder months (the London authorities having finally dropped the restric-tions that had prevented James Burbage from operating a commercial adult theater in the old monastery he had purchased and adapted in 1596), Shakespeare felt that he had simply ex-changed one-kind of less-than-perfect audience for another. for another.

One gathers, nevertheless, that, like other playwrights of the period, Shakespeare was careful not to refer too overtly to deficiencies in the well-to-do members of his audiences, espethe well-to-do members of his audiences, espe-cially when such members might include the nobil-ity or persons close to them. After all, an acting company's livelihood depended upon its securing and retaining favor at Court-not only because of the extra income and prestige that accrued from periodic Court performances commissioned by the Master of the Revels, but even more fundamentally because a company could perform in or near London only if it were licensed to do by the Crown and enjuged the prosection of a in or near London only if it were licensed to do so by the Crown and enjoyed the protection of a noble or royal patron. A prudent playwright would not wish to jeopardize his company's stand-ing with the monarch. And Shakespear and his colleagues—the other "sharers" who owned stock in the company that was known as the Lord Cham-berlain's Men from 1594 until 1603 (when Queen Elizabeth died and was succeeded by King James I) and the King's Men thereafter (having re-Queen Elizabeth died and was succeeded by King James I) and the King's Men thereafter (having re-ceived a patent as the new monarch's own players) —must have been prudent, because theirs was by far the most prosperous and the most frequently "preferred" theatrical organization in the land, from its inception in the early 1590s until the tri-umph of Puritanism finally brought about the clos-ing of the theaters half a century later in 1642. Shakespare's position with the Lord Cham-

ing of the theaters half a century later in 1642. Shakespeare's position with the Lord Chamberlain's Men was a source of professional stability that probably had a great deal to do with his growth and maturation as a writer. For one thing, it freed him from some of the uncertaines, and frustrations that must have been the lot of other playwrights, virtually all of whom operated as free-lancers selling their wares to impresa-



Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom Shake-speare dedicated his first two books (miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, 1593 or 1594; Fixzuilliam Muscum, Cambridge, by permission of the Syndics)

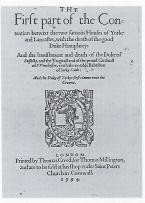
rios such as Philip Henslowe (often for as little as rios such as Philip Henslowe (often for as little as five pounds), and most of whom thus forfeited any real say about how their plays were to be pro-duced and, in time (if a given acting company so wished or if chance provided), published. From at least 1594 on Shakespeare was a stockholder of the theatrical organization for which he wrote his plays. After 1598 (when the sons of the re-cently deceased James Burbage, Cuthbert and Richard, invited four of the principal actors in the Lord Chamberlain's Men to become their part-ners and out up half the capital needed to rethe Lord Chamberlain's Men to become their part-ners and put up half the capital needed to re-build the Theatre across the Thames as the Globe), Shakespeare was also a co-owner of the playhouse in which that company performed the plays. As such, he shared in all the profits the Lord Chamberlain's Men took in at the gate, and he was undoubtedly a participant in most, if not all, of the major decisions affecting the company's welfare. We know from the surviving lead records of the playmetriety survives business. company's welfare. We know from the surviving legal records of the playwright's various business transactions that he prospered financially by this arrangement: like his father, Shakespeare invested wisely in real estate, purchasing properties in both Stratford and London. And we can infer from the evidence of his rapidly developing sophistication as a dramatist that Shakespeare's membership in a close-knit group of theatrical en-

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The Tempest) rather than as an author of literary 'works" (the term that earned Ben Jonson the de "works" (the term that earned Ben Jonson the de-rision of his Fellow playwrights when he came out with a pretentiously titled folio volume of his col-lected plays in 1616), it is hardly surprising that he appears to have had little or nothing to do with the publication of any of his own dramatic with the publication of any of in sown dramatic scripts. Nor is it surprising that several of the texts that were published in Shakespeare's life-time or shortly thereafter have come down to us in forms that vary from one printing to another. Some of these variations probably result from authorial revisions or from theatrical adapta-tions of one kind or another. Others undoub-

edly derive from the vicissitudes of textual transmission, with the extant state of a given text or passage dependent on whether it was printed from the author's own manuscript (either in draft form or in a more finished version) or from a manuscript prepared by someone else (a scribe's "fair copy" of a manuscript owned by the author or the company, for example, or a rough compilation by one or more actors relying on faulty memories to pull together an abridged script for a reduced cast touring the provinces)—quite apart from any further complications that may have occurred in the printing house itself (where one copy editor, one compositor, or one proofreader differed from another in the accuracy with which he reproduced the manuscript transmission, with the extant state of a given text proofreader differed from another in the accu-nacy with which he reproduced the manuscript before him). Whatever their origins, these varia-tions are eloquent testimony to the difficulty-if not indeed the impossibility—of our ever arriving at an absolutely "final" version of a Shake-spearean play. For if the conditions under which plays were written, performed, and preserved make it clear that a "definitive" playtext was rare, if not unknown, in Shakespeare's own time, we must recognize that any effort to produce an aumust recognize that any effort to produce an au-thoritative edition for our own time can aspire, at thoritative edition for our own time can aspire, at best, to reconstitute as accurately as possible the closest surviving approximation to a given script at some point in its compositional or theatrical history. And even this kind of edition will remain subborate, "incomplate," for the simple recon-

And even this kind of edition will remain stubbornly "incomplete," for the simple reason that a Shakespearean script was originally in-tended for the use, not of a reading audience, but of a small company of theater professionals who would employ it as a "score" from which to or-chestrate a complex, multidimensional perfor-mance. The texts that do survive are mostly dialogue, and a sensitive analysis of them can tell us a great deal about how the words were meant



Title page for the 1594 quarto edition of an abridged and cor-rupt text of Henry V1, part 2 (Folger Shakespeare Library)

to be spoken, where the emphases were to be placed, and what character motivations were to placed, and what character motivations were to be indicated at specific points in the action. But be-cause we can no longer recover the context in which these scripts were first realized—a context that would have included a good deal of oral com-munication about gesture, movement, blocking, and other stage business—we must content our-selves with editions that will always be to some de-terminate programmer. Perhaps this is just as well-it gree indeterminate. Perhaps this is just as well: it teases the critic and the director with enough inter-

teases the critic and the director with enough inter-pretive liberty to ensure that we will never be faced with a dearth of innovation in Shake-spearean commentary and production: We should bear in mind, of course, that a con-siderable investment of additional work would have been required to transform a production script into a reading text for the public-pant altonave oeen required to transform a production script into a reading text for the public—not alto-gether unlike what is required nowadays to turn a screenplay into a coherent piece of natrative fiction—and that Shakespeare may never have had the time (even if we assume that he ever had the inclination) to effect such a generic adapta-tion. Still, those of us who would not object to a lit-

more detail about some of the "matter" of the more detail about some of the "matter" of Shakespeare's plays may perhaps be pardoned for wishing that the playwright had been able to spare more thought for the morrow-for the after-life that most (though who is to say all?) of his plays were eventually to have as a consequence of publication. Our sentiments are echoed in the 1623 address "To the Great Variety of Readers"

1623 address "To the Great Variety of Readers" at the beginning of that posthumous edition of Shakespeare's works known as the First Polio: "It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings."

He did set forth and oversees some of his own writings, of course. But, significantly, these were not dramatic scripts.

In 1593 Shakespeare published an 1194-line narrative poem that appears to have been intended as his opening bid for serious attention as an author of "literary works." Based on Ovid's Metamorphoses and capitalizing on a fashion for elegant romaness that was being catered to by such Metamorphoses and capitalizing on a fashion for elegant romances that was being catered to by such writers as Thomas Lodge (whose Scilla's Metamorphoses had been published in 1589) and Christopher Marlowe (whose Hen and Leander may well have circulated in manuscript prior to his death in 1593 and certainly before it appeared in print in 1598, Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis was an eriotic mythological poem printed by fellow Stratfordian Richard Field and bearing a florid dedication to "the Right Honorable Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton." Its sis-line stanzas employed an ababec rhyming scheme whose authority had been established by such contemporary Renaissance poets as Edmund Spenser, and its ornamented, "artificial" style solicited a favorable reception from the "wiser sort" of reada favorable reception from the "wiser sort" of reada favorable reception from the "wiser sort" of read-ers to be found in the Inns of Courts, at the univer-sities, and at Court. Although Shakespeare decorously apologized for the poem as "the first heir of my invention," he must have done so in full confidence that Venus and Adonis was an achievement worthy of his talent. And it proved to be an immediate and sustained success, with nine reprints by 1616 and six more by 1640. The nine reprints by 1616 and six more by 1640. The large number of references to it during the late 1590s and early 1600s suggest that it was the work for which Shakespeare was most widely recognized during his own lifetime.

Within a year of the publication of Venus and Adonis, Shakespeare was back to press with another long narrative poem. This time he chose a seven-line stanza rhyming dabbbee (rhyme royal, a verse form whose tradition in Envisity nevery except for the publication of the publication of the stanza rhyming dabbbee (rhyme royal, a verse form whose tradition in Envisity nevery except form the publication in Envisity nevery except for the publication of the p

verse form whose tradition in English poetry ex-

tended all the way back to Chaucer), and once again he drew on Ovid for a work dedicated (this time even more warmly) to the Earl of Southamp-ton. If Venus and Adons is most apply approached as a quasi-comic treatment of love (depicting the frustrations of an insatiate goddess who falls all over herself as she fumbles to seduce an unrespon over herself as she tumbles to seduce an unrespon-sive youth), despite the fact that it ends with the death of the innocent young mortal, Lucree is more properly described as a tragic "complaint," a moving exploration of the personal and social consequences of a noble Roman's surrender to lust, against his better nature and at the cost, ulti-mortal of the his virticity life, and his count lamately, of both his victim's life and his own. In mately, of both his victim's life and his own. In his foreword to Venus and Adonis, Shakespeare had promised the dedicatee "a graver labor" if his first offering pleased its would-be patron; in all likelihood, then, Lucree was under way as a companion piece to Venus and Adonis at least a companion piece to Venus and Adonis at least a year before its eventual publication in 1594. It may be, as some have suggested, that Shakespeare's narrative of Tarquin's rape of Lucrece and her suicide was motivated by a desire to persuade anyone who might have considered the earlier work frivolous that the poet's muse was equally capable of a more serious subject. In any case it is clear that once again he struck a responsive chord: Lucrece went through eight editions prior to 1640, and it seems to have been exceeded in popularity only by Venus and Adonis.

Both poems were printed during what has been called Shakespeare's "apprenticeship"-the period preceding his emergence as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594—and they share a number of stylistic characteristics with the

share a number of stylistic characteristics with the share a number of stylistic characteristics with the plays that appear to have been completed during those same early years. As with such youthful dramatic efforts as the three parts of Henry VI, Titus Androinus, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, and The Taming of the Shrew, the writing in Venus and Adonis and Lucreee is generically imitative (closely adhering to received poetic and dramatic forms), structurally and verbally derivative (echoing the poet's sources almost slav-rivative (echoing the poet's sources almost slav-rivative (echoing the poet's sources almost slavand dramatic forms), structurally and verbally de-rivative (cehoing the poet's sources almost slav-ishly at times), and rhetorically formal (with a rigidly patterned verse containing far more rhymes, end-stopped lines, syntactic balances, and allusions to the classics than are to be ob-served in Shakespeare's writing after the mid 1590s). One feels immediately that Wruss and Adomis and Larcrea are artistically of a piece with Shakespeare's first tentative experiments as a dramatist. dramatist

The two poems were probably written dur

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Ones, Welcome to England, my louing friends of Friens, And welcome Summerfet, and Oxford 1000. Once more have welpread our falles abroad, And though our racking be almost for outmet, And Harmy, as our maine matter overhownes, yet waithe Corb raile you that further post, Thusbeares the falles to brigge with or 1000. And Nedard As willing Plots fhould. And Nedard As willing Plots fhould. The theory of the state of the falles, Tobeare to through that dangerous guid. Thathere to fee that five allowed you or friends. Primer, And fithere be, as God forbid there thould, Among it was attempted to the battels ioine, Leathen in une of need intiff a mother, And for withdraw the fouldiers hars from warry and the state of the third will be the state of the first of the state of the state

And Warniors faint, why twere perpetual! Shame? Oh braue yong Prince, thy Noble grandfather dosh live againe in thee, Long maielf thou live to beare his image, And to renew his glories.

Qs. Great Lords, wife men ne'r fit and walle their loffe, But cherectly feeke how to redeeffe their harmes. What though the Maft be now blowne ouer-board, The Cable brook, the holding Anthor loft, And halfe our Sayl yes (wallow d in the flood? Ye lines our Plot fill.) Is the neet, that he Should leave the Fielme, and like a fear-fill Lad, With teatfall Eyes adde Water to the Sea, And give more firength to they which hash too much, Whiles in his money, the Ship filts on the Rocks, Which Induffite and Course might have fauld? Ah what a famen, ah what a fault were this.

Say **Formirky* was our Anchor: what of that \$f\$

And Montages our Top-Maft: what of him?

Our flaught red friends, the Tackler: what of the fe?
Why is not Oxford here, another Anchor?
And Somerfar, another goodly Maft?
The friends of France our Shrowds and Tacklings?
And though vasskildful, why not New Jacklings?
And though vasskildful, why not New Jacklings?
And though vasskildful, who not far and expee,
Bur keepe our Courfe (though the rough Winde Syno)
From Shelass and Rocks, that thereartn we with Wrack,
As good to chide the Waues, as fpeake them faire,
And what is Edward, but a ruthleffe Sea?
What Clarene, but a Quick-fand of Deceit?
And Nechad Jour a raged fatall Rocke?
All thele, the Enemies to our poort Barke.
Say you can fourin, alsa 'its but a while:
Tread on the Sand, why there you quickly finke,
Behride the Rock, the Tyde wall waship or off.
Or elle you familh, that's a three-fold Death,
This fpeake I (Lords) to let you widerthand,
I facile one one by not oud if ye from va.
Harde them with multifel. Washes, with Sands and Rocks.
Why courage then, what cannot be anotided,
Twert childith weakeneffe to Jament, or feare,

Queen Margaret's speech at the beginning of V.iv of Henry VI, part 3, as it appears in the True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke (from the unique copy in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Arch G fI)—the 1595 octavo edition of an abridged and corrupt text of the play—and in the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays (Folger Shakespeare Library), which drew its text from the 1602 and 1622 quarto editions, evidently with some reference to the promptbook

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ing the two-year period from June 1592 to June 1594 when the London theaters were closed 1594 when the London theaters were closed owing to the plague. But whether they indicate an inclination to leave the theater altogether and essay a career as a traditional poet (as Shakespeare's quest for the patronage of the young Earl of Southampton would seem to imply), or merely demonstrate that Shakespeare was resourceful enough to turn his pen to other uses while he waited for the theaters to reopen, is more than we can say The only thing that seems. while he waited for the theaters to reopen, is more than we can say. The only thing that seems beyond doubt is that Shakespeare regarded what he was doing when he wrote Venus and Adonis and Lucree as something fundamentally different from what he was doing, prior to that and subsequent to it, in his capacity as a playwright and theater professional.

Like his fellow playwrights when they donned personae as men of letters, Shakespeare was addressing his efforts, first of all, to a noble patron and, second, to a cultivated readership. He

was addressing his efforts, first of all, to a noble patron and, second, to a cultivated readership. He was therefore concerned that his compositions be published as he had written them, and he took pains to assure that they were accompanied by a graceful appeal for the approval of an audience presumed to embody the highest standards of literary taste and judgment. It may be that during the same period when he was seeing Winss and Adomis and Lucree through the press in carefully proofeed editions he was also writing other nondramatic poetry. Many scholars believe that this was when he composed most if not all of the 154 sonnets that bear his name. And if he was in fact the author of A Lucre's Complaint (a narrative poem in rhyme royal that was attributed to Shakespeare when it was published, along with the Somets, in an unauthorized edition in 1699), he nets, in an unauthorized edition in 1609), he probably wrote that labored lyric during his years "in the workshop" too. But we have no evidence that he ever took any steps himself to publish either A Lower's Complaint or the Somutes. Apart from Venus and Adonis and Lucreee, the only other literary work that Shakespeare may have had anything to do with publishing on his own behalf was a curious poem called The Phoenix and Turtle, which appeared in 1601 as part of a collection "Shadowing the Truth of Love" and appended to Robert Chester's Love's Marty. The Phoenix and Turtle is a sixty-seven-line lyric, probably allegorical, about one bird (the phoenis) legendary for its rarity and beauty and another (the turtledove) proverbial for its constancy, Its scholastic imagery-reminiscent in some ways of the highly technical language to be found in writing of the same literin an unauthorized edition in 1609), he

ary climate by such "metaphysical" poets as John Donne-suggests that, if indeed it is by Shake-Donne-suggests that, it indeed it is by Shake-speare (which many have questioned), it was prob-ably written expressly for the Chester volume at about the time that Shakespeare was at work on such "philosophical" plays as Hamlet and Troitus and Cressida. If we except The Phoenix and Turtle, then,

and Crissida.

If we except The Phoenix and Turtle, then, and assume that the Somets and A Lover's Complaint were published without Shakespeare's active participation, we are left with the conclusion that Shakespeare's "literary career," narrowly defined, was more or less limited to the two-year interruption in his activities as a theater professional when the London playhouses were closed because of the plague. This does not require us to presume, of course, that he ceased to have literary appriations after 1594. He may have allowed his "sugared sonners" to circulate in manuscript "among his private friends" (as Francis Meres asserted in Palladais Tamie in 1598, a year prior to William Jaggard's surreptitious printing of two of the sonnets in a volume called The Passionate Pilgrim) while he continued to revise and augment them in the expectation that he would publish an anthology at a later time. And it is not inconceivable that he would have published a collected edition of his plays had he lived (Jonson having braved the critical tempest that such audacity was bound to generate when he came out with his works in 1616, the year of Shakespears death). But the fact is that Shakespeare did not himself publish any of the compositions we now value the most, and we can only infer that doing so was of less importance to him than what he did choose to devote his professional life to: the "wrighting" of plays.

If so, he must at times have had his doubts

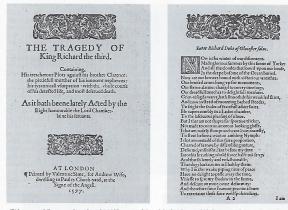
"wrighting" of plays.

If so, he must at times have had his doubts If so, he must at times have had his doubts about the choice he made. In Sonnet 110 (if we may be permitted to assume that the poet was either speaking in his own voice or echoing sentiments that he himself had feli), he allows that he has made himself "a motley to the view" and "sold cheap what is most dear." He then goes on in Sonnet 111 to lament that he "did not better for [his] life provide/Than public means which public manners breeds."

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand, And almost thence my nature is subdu'd To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

Wordsworth believed the Sonnets to be the key whereby Shakespeare "unlocked his heart," and it

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Title page and first page of text from the 1597 quarto edition of the fourth part of Shakespeare's "first tetralogy" of history plays (British Library)

may be that these intriguing poems are to some de-gree a spiritual testament-imitating, as was tradi-tional with lyric verse, the thought processes and shifts in sensibility of a person responding to the vicissitudes of private life. That granted, we may

vicissitudes of private life. That granted, we may be correct to interpret Sonnets 110 and 111 as expressions of Shakespear's own dissatisfaction with the lot of an actor and playwright.

But it is risky to inquire too curiously into the supposedly "confessional" aspects of the Sontest. Like Shakespear's other writings, they employ the artifice of "fictions," and they may have been but another form of story telling-different in kind from the plays and narrative poems, to be sure, but similar to them in being "about" something quite other than (or in addition to) the poet's own experience. If we examine them in the context of earlier sonnet sequences—Petrarch's lyrics to Laura in fifteenth-century English sequences as those by Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton-we discover that they are quite "conven-Drayton-we discover that they are quite "conven

tional" in many respects. They display the speak-er's wit and attest to his originality; they imply a deeply felt personal situation and hint at a coherent narrative, but they usually stop short of con-necting their emotional peaks and valleys into a necting their emotional peaks and valleys into a fully textured autobiographical landscape; they as-sert the immortality of verse and claim its sover-eignty over the ravages of time and change; and usually they deal with themes of truth and beauty in the context of love and friendship and all the circumstances that life arrays in opposition to such values.

mprand want toues many wanton ambling Nymph

To a far greater degree than with most son-To a far greater degree than with most son-net sequences, Shakespeare's Somnets have "the ring of truth." This is partly because, like all his works (from his earliest plays onward), they por-tray humanity so convincingly. But it is also a con-sequence of the extent to which they seem to go beyond, or even to disregard, convention. Thus, instead of praising a lady by cataloging all the attri-butes that make her lovely, Shakespeare turns Petrarchan tradition on its head by denying his Petrarchan tradition on its head by denying his "dark lady" any of the expected beauties and vir-

tues. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun," he says in Sonnet 130; and far from being ethereal and inaccessible in her idealized spirtuality, the woman described in Shakespeare's Somets is sensual, coarse, and promiscuous. Petrarch's Laura may have inspired that earlier poet to Platonic transcendence, but Shakespeare's mistress eleaves only the bitter aftertaste of "Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame," "A bliss in proof, and prov'd, a very woe" (Sonnet 129). And what is more, she alienates the affection of the fair young man to whom most of the first 127 sonnets in the sequence are addressed: the friend who occasions some of the deepest verses in English on such themes as fidelity, stewardship (Shakespeare seems to have been preoccupied with the Parable of the Talents, as rendered in Matthew 25: 14-30), and man's struggle against "inever-resting time."

with the Parable of the Talents, as rendered in Matthew 25: 14-30), and man's struggle against "never-resting time."

As one reads the sonnets directed to the young man, one detects a descent from unquestioned devotion ("This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong. To love that well, which thou must leave ere long"—Sonnet 73) to a fear that the older man's love may be unrequited or at least taken for granted by the young friend to whom he has given so much of himself ("For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds./f.lifes that fester smell far worse than weeds"—Sonnet 49) to a courageous but probably quixotic determination to remain true to his convictions despite his doubts about the young man's worthiness of such absolute faith ("love is not love/Which alters when it alteration finds/Or bends with the remover to remove"—Sonnet 116). The intensity of feeling expressed in these sonnets has led many interpreters to infer that they must have been based on a homocortic passion. But Sonnet 20 suggests that the relationship Shakespeare describes not sexual. Nature, he says, has given the young man "one thing to my purpose nothing." And "since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure."

mover to remove "Sonnet 116). The intensity of relening expressed in these sonnets has led many interpreters to infer that they must have been based on a homocrotic passion. But Sonnet 20 suggests that the relationship Shakespeare describes not sexual. Nature, he says, has given the young man "one thing to my purpose nothing." And "since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure/Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure."

Several of the sonnets addressed to the friend refer to a "rival poet" who is also bidding for his favors and affection (Sonnets 79, 80, 83, and 86, for example), and others (Sonnets 78, 82, 84, and 85) imply that the young aristocrat is the subject of praise by a great many poetic suitors. As he reflects upon his own position vis-à-vis his many competitors for the friend's love, the speaker in Shakespeare's sonnets is subject to a depth of insecurity that sometimes borders on de-

spair: "Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,/ Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope" (Sonnet 29). And many of the greatest sonnets in the sequence derive their peculiar power from what Robert Frost has termed a "sense of difficulty overcome"—the poet working through the tensions and conflicts described in the first three quatrains (linked by an abab cdcd eff rhyme scheme) to some kind of hard-won (though perhaps not completely convincing) resolution in the concluding couplet (rhymed gg): "For thy sweet love remembred such wealth brings,'That then I scorn to change my state with kings" (again Sonnet 29).

Because the other personalities who figure in the psychodrama of the Somnets seem so vivid, at least as they impinge upon the personality of the speaker, interpreters of the sequence have been inexorably drawn toward speculation about real-life identities for the Dark Lady, the Young Man, and the Rival Poet. Some commentators (such as Oxford historian A. L. Rowse) have persuaded themselves, if not everyone else, that these characters can be positively linked with such contemporaries of Shakespeare as Emilia Lamier, the Earl of Southampton (or, alternatively, the Earl of Pembroke), and Christopher Marlow (or possibly George Chapman). Unless further information should come to light, however, we are probably best advised to content ourselves with a position of agnosticism on such questions. Until we can be sure about how the Sonnets came to be published, and just what kind of debt the publisher Thomas Thorpe refers to when he dedicates the 1609 quarto to the "only begetter" of these poems "Never before Imprinted"—the mysterious "Mr. W. H."—we are unlikely to be able to pin down the "real names" of any of the persons who inhabit the world of the Sonnets. Until then, indeed, we cannot even be certain that the Sonnets have any autobiographical basis in the first place.

Turning from Shakespeare's nondramatic

Turning from Shakespeare's nondramatic poetry to the fruits of his two decades as a playwright, we should probably begin where scholars now think he himself began: as the principal practitioner, if not in many ways the originator, of a new kind of drama that sprang from native patriosism. The most immediate "source" of the English history play appears to have been the heightened sense of national destiny that came in the wake of the royal navy's seemingly providential victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. Proud of the new eminence their nation had

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Richard III as portrayed by David Garrick in the eighteenth century (top; engraving by Thomas Cook from a painting by William Hogarth), Edmund Kean in the nineteenth century (bottom left; mezzoint by Charles Turner), and Laurence Olivier in 1949 (bottom rich)

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The hall in Gray's Inn, where The Comedy of Errors was performed on 28 December 1594

achieved, and immensely relieved that the threat of invasion by a Catholic power had been averted, many of Shakespear's contemporaries were disposed to view England's deliverance as a sign of heaven's favor. As such, it seemed to be a vindication of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and a substantiation of the Tudor order's claim to divine sanction—a claim that had been asserted by a succession of Renaissance chroniclers from Polydore Vergil (circa 1470-1555) through Edward Hall (circa 1498-1547) to Raphael Holinshed (circa 1529-1580), and a claim that was implicit in such government documents as the "Exhortation concerning Good Order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates," a 1547 homily read in churches throughs treating the content of the content

ence to Ruiers and Magistrates," a 1547 homily read in churches throughout England. Given this context, it must have seemed entirely fitting that sometime in the late 1580s or early 1590s an enterprising young playwright began dramatzing a sequence of historical developments that were almost universally regarded as the "roots" of England's current greatness. Most of the material for the four history plays with which Shakespeare began his career as playwright he drew from Edward Hall's Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York (1548) and Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1587 edition). Here he found narratives of late-medieval English history that began with the reign of King Richard II (1377-1399), focused on Richard's deposition and execution by Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV), described the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) that were the eventual consequence of Bolingbroke's usurpation, and concluded with the restoration of right rule when Henry Richmond defeated the tyrannical Richard III (1483-1485) and acceded to the crown as Henry VII, inaugurating a Tudor dynasty that was to last until the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. Here he also found a theological reading of political history that treated England as a collective Everyman-falling

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into sin, undergoing a terrifyingly bloody punishment for its disobedience, and eventually finding its way back to redemption through the emergence of Henry VII.

its way back to recemption intrough the emergence of Henry VII.

The chances are that as Shakespeare matured in his craft he came to view the "Tudor myth" (as E. M. W. Tillyard has termed this official dogma) with a degree of skeptical detachment; but even so, he seems to have found in its clear, broad sweep a pattern that served quite well as a way of organizing the disparate materials he chose to dramatize. It gave him a theme of pic proportions, not altogether unlike the "matter" of Greece and Rome that had inspired such classical authors as Homer and Virgil in narrative genres and Aeschylus, Sophodes, Euripides, and Seneca in dramatig genres. It accorded with the biblical treatment of human destiny that Shakespeare's age had inherited from earlier generations, an approach to historical interpretation that had been embedded in such didactic entertainments as the Morality Play (allegorizing the sin, suffering, repentance, and salvation of a typical member of mankind) and the Mystery Play (broadening the cycle to a dramatization of the whole of human history, from man's fall in the Garden of Eden to man's redemption in the Garden of Gethesmane to man's bliss in the Paradise of the New Jerusalem). And it provided a rationale for Shakespeare's use of such powerful dramatic devices as the riddling prophecy and the curse-projecting retribution for present crimes, as the Old Testament would put it, to the third

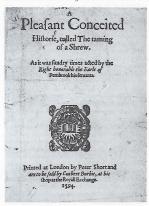
as the Old Testament would put it, to the third and fourth generations.

When we approach the four plays known as Shakespeare's "first tetralogy" (the three parts of Henry VI and Richard III, all written, so far as we can tell, by 1592) from the perspective of his "second tetralogy" (Richard II, Henry IV, parts 1 and 2, and Henry V, all of which appear to have been written between 1595 and 1597), the earlier plays seem comparatively crude. Like their sources, they place more emphasis on providential design and less on human agency. Their verse is more declamatory and less supple. And they provide less individuation of character. Still, they have their virtues, and successful recent productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the British Broadcasting Corporation have proven that they can be surprisingly effective in performance.

virtues, and successful recent productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the British Broadcasting Corporation have proven that they can be surprisingly effective in performance.

Henry VI, part 1 did not achieve print until the 1623 First Folio, but it is now generally thought to have been written prior to parts 2 and 3, which first appeared in bad texts, respectively,

in a 1594 quarto edition titled The First Part of the Contention betwirt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster and in a 1595 octave entitled The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke. Henry VI, part 1, begins with the funeral of King Henry V (which occurred in 1422), details the dissension at home and the loss of life and territory abroad that result from the accession of a new monarch too young and weak to rule, and concludes with King Henry VI's foolish decision to marry Margaret of Anjou-a step that places the saintly King in the very unsaintly hands of an ambitious woman and a lustful nobleman (the Earl of Suffolk, who plans to enjoy Margaret as his own mistress and thereby "rule both her, the King, and realm") and virtually assures the further degradation of a kingdom that has been in decline since the death of Henry VI's famous warrior-King father. Henry VI, part 2, covers a ten-year span from Margaret of Anjou's arrival in England (1445) to the Duke of York's victory over his Lancastrian enemies at St. Albans in the first major battle of the Wars of



Title page for the 1594 quarto edition of what is generally believed to be a corrupt text of The Taming of the Shrew (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery). The authoritative version of the play, first published in the 1623 First Folio, is significantly different from the text of this quarto.

the Roses (1455). The same kind of internecine strife that has left the noble Talbot exposed to the forces of the strumpet-witch Joan of Arc in Henry VI, part 1, works here to undo Henry VI's protector, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, topple protector. Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, topple two of the good Duke's enemies (Cardinal Beaufort and Suifolk), unleash the anarchic rebellion of the peasant Jack Cade, and further divide the warring factions (the Yorkits, who have chosen the red rose as their symbol in the famous Temple Garden scene, Lii.v, of part 1, and the Lancastrians, who have rallied behind the white rose) that seem hell-bent to tear the kingdom asunder. In Hemy VI, part 3, the war is at full pitch. As the feeble Henry VI withdraws into a private realm of pastoral longing, his brutal Queen and her allies exchange outrages with one Yorkist enemy after another, father killing son and son killing father in a nightmarish world that has degenerated into a spectacle of unmitigated cruelty. By the time the dust settles, Henry VI and a number of other would-be claimants to the throne are dead or on their way to the grave, and the omiber of other would-be claimants to the throne are dead or on their way to the grave, and the ominously crookbacked figure of Richard, Duke of Gloucester is slouching his rough way to the crown he will don in the blood-drenched final movement of this hitherto unprecedented cycle of historical transfer.

movement of this hitherto unprecedented cycle of historical tragedies.
Richard III was first published in a 1597 quarto edition that many scholars believe to have been reconstructed from memory by actors plagued out of London theaters between July and October of that year. The play was evidently quite popular, because it went through at least five more printings before it appeared in the 1623 First Folio edition based largely on the third and sixth quartos. And it has remained popular ever since, with a stage tradition highlighted by Richard Burbage in Shakespeare's own theater, David Garrick in the eighteenth century, Edmund Kean in the nineteenth, and Laurence Olivier in the twentieth. Nor is the reason hard Olivier in the twentieth. Nor is the reason hard to find. For despite the bold strokes with which to find. For despite the bold strokes with which he is portrayed, Richard III is a character of sufficient complexity to sustain a great deal of dramatic interest. However much we find ourselves repelled by his ruthless treachery, we cannot help admiring the eloquence, resourcefulness, and virtuosity with which he confides and then consider the second to be second. It is a second by the confider of the confider proceeds to execute his wicked intentions. His wooing of the grieving Lady Anne in the first act is a case in point: having set himself the seem-ingly impossible task of seducing a woman whose husband and father-in-law he has recently mur-



Title page for the only surviving copy of the 1594 quarto edi-tion of Shakespeare's first experiment with revenge tragedy (Folger Shakespeare Library)

(Folger Shokespear Library)

dered, Richard is just as astonished as we are by the ease with which he accomplishes it.

In many ways Richard seems, and would have seemed to Shakespeare's first audiences, a conventional, even old-fashioned stage villain: the quick-witted, clever, self-disclosing Vice of the late-medieval Morality Play, the dissimulating Devil familiar from the scriptures. In other, more important, ways he seems, and would have seemed, disturbingly modern: the Machiavellian politician who acknowledges no law, human or divine, in restraint of his foxlike cunning and leonine rapacity; the totaliarian dictator who subverts every social and religious institution in pursuit of his psychopathic grand designs; the existentialist cosmic rebel whose radical alienation is a challenge to every form of order. But if Richard seems in many ways a relentlessly twentieth-century figure, we learn by the end of the play that his 'vaulting ambition' (so proleptic of cthat his "vaulting ambition" (so proleptic of Macbeth's) is ultimately but an instrument of the same providential scheme that he scorns and seeks to circumvent. Richard may be a "dreadful minister of hell," as Lady Anne calls him, but

members of Shakespeare's audience (familia with the story through such earlier renderings of with the story through such earlier renderings of it as the portrait painted by Thomas More) would have seen him simultaneously as a "scourge of God," unleashed to punish England for her sins of the past. Prophetic Margaret re-minds us over and over that had there not been minds us over and over that had there not oestirie in the kingdom prior to the advent of Richard, there would have been no ripe occasion for this poisonous bunch-backed toad" to ascend the throne in the first instance. And as the play ends, an action that has drawn our attention again and again to the past looks optimistically to the future. "By God's fair ordinance," the "bloody dog to the state of the past looks of the state of ture. "By God's fair ordinance," the "bloody dog is dead," and Richmond and Elizabeth (the fore-bears of Shakespeare's sovereign Elizabeth) are ushering in "smooth-faced peace,/With smilling plenty, and fair prosperous days." One other English history play is now com-

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One other Engish history piay is now commonly believed to have been written during Shakespeare's apprenticeship, though scholars differ about whether to date it in the early 1590s (more probably, in the opinion of most) in the transition years 1594-1595. The earliest surviving transition years 1594-1595. The earliest surviving text of King John is the version printed in the 1623 First Polio, and it offers a drama about a king of doubtful title whose reign (1199-1216) had been viewed in widely divergent ways. Medieval Catholics, focusing on King John's presumed complicity in the death of his nephew Arthur (whose claim to the throne was stronger than John's) and on his feud with Pope Innocent III. John's) and on his feud with Pope Innocent III (which had resulted in the King's excommunication before he finally capitulated five years later and "returned" his kingdom to the Church), had seen him as a susurper, a murderer, and a heretic. Sixteenth-century Protestants, on the other hand, had rehabilitated him as a proto-Tudor martyr and champion of English nationalism. In many respects, Shakespeare's own portrayal is closer to the medieval view of King John: he does away with any ambiguity about John's role in the removal of Arthur, for example, presents the saintlike Arthur and his impassioned mother, Constance, as thoroughly engaging characters, and endows John with few if any sympathetic traits. At the same time, however, Shakespeare's King John continues to receive the Joshy of char-King John continues to receive the lovalty of char King John continues to receive the loyalty of char-acters who are portrayed sympathetically-most notably the bastard son of Richard the Lion-hearted, Philip Faulconbridge-and by the end of the play it seems evident that a higher cause, the good of England, is to take precedence over such lesser concerns as John's weak title, his execution

of a potential rival, and his inadequacies as a leader. The Bastard, a political realist who seems quite Machiavellian at first-particularly in his analysis of the all-pervasiveness of "commodity" (self-interest) in human affairs-eventually becomes a virtual emblem of patriotism. To him is given the concluding speech of King John, and it is frequently cited as Shakespeare's most eloquent sumpary of the moral implicit in all his earth history. mary of the moral implicit in all his early history

This England never did, nor never shall, Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror But when it first did help to wound itself.

Naught shall make us rue If England to itself do rest but true

If Shakespeare's earliest efforts in the dramatization of history derived from his response to the political climate of his day, his first experiments in comedy seem to have evolved from his reading in school and from his familiarity with the plays of such predecessors on the English stage as John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, and Thomas Nashe. Shakespeare's apprentice comedies are quite "inventive" in many respects, particularly in the degree to which the? 'overgo' the conventions and devices the young playright drew upon. But because they have more precedent behind them than the English history plays, they strike us now as less stumingly "original"—though arguably more successfully executed—than the tetralogy on the Wars of the Roses. If Shakespeare's earliest efforts in the drama-

Roses. Which of them came first we do not know, but most scholars incline toward *The Comedy of Errors*, a play so openly scaffolded upon Plautus's *Menaechmi and Amphirus* (two farces that shake-speare probably knew in Latin from his days in speare protoaty knew in Latin from his days in grammar school) that one modern critic has summed it up as "a kind of diploma piece." Set, ostensibly, in the Mediterranean city familiar from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, the play begins with a sentence on the life of a luckless Syracusan merchant, Aegeon, who has stumbled into Ephesus in search of his son Antipholus. After narrating a tale of woe that wins the sympathy of the rating a tale of woe that wins the sympathy of the Duke of Ephesis, Aegeon is given till five in the afternoon to come up with a seemingly impossible ransom for his breach of an arbitrary law against Syracusans. Meanwhile, unknown to Aegeon, the object of his search is in Ephesus too, having arrived only hours before him; antipholus had set out some two years earlier to find a twin brother

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A 1595(!) transcription from memory of lines from a performance of Titus Andronicus, with sketches of some of the charac-ters. At center Tamora is shown begging Titus to spare her two sons, hneeling behind her. Aaron the Moor is at far right. Henry Peacham, whose name is at lower left, now have made the transcription and perhaps the drawing (Harley Papers, vol. i, f. 159°, Longleut; by permission of the Marquess of Bath).

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by the same name who was separated from the rest of the family in a stormy shipwreck more than twenty years in the past. By happy coincidence, the other Antipholus has long since settled in Ephesus, and so (without either's knowledge) has their mother, Aegeon's long-lost wife, Aemilia, who is now an abbess. To complicate matters further, both Antipholuses have slaves named Dromio, also twins long separated, and of course both sets of twins are indistinguishably appareled. Into this mix Shakespeare throws a goldsmith, a set of merchants, a courtesan, a wife and a sister-in-law for the Ephesian Antipholus, and a conjuring schoolmaster. The result is a swirling brew of misunderstandings, accurations, and identity crises-all leading, finally, to by the same name who was separated from the sations, and identity crises-all leading, finally, to series of revelations that reunite a family,

a series of revelations that reunite a family, save Aegeon's life, and bring order to a city that had begun to seem bewitched by sorcerers. The Comedy of Errors reached print for the first time in the 1623 first Folio. We know that it was written prior to 28 December 1594, however, was written prior to 28 December 1594, however, because there is record of a performance on that date at one of the four Inns of Court. Some scholars believe that the play was written for that holiady Gray's Inn presentation, but most tend to the view that it had been performed previously, possibly as early as 1589 but more likely in the years 1592-1594. Most critics now seem agreed, moreover, that for all its farcical elements, the play is a comedy of some sophistication and depth, with a sensitivity to love that anticipates Shakespeare's great comedies later in the decade: when Luciana a sensitivity to love that anticipates Shakespeare's great comedies later in the decade: when Luciana advises her sister Adriana about how she should treat her husband Antipholus, for example, she choes Paul's exhortations on Christian marriage in Ephesians. And with its use of the devices of literary romance (the frame story of Aegeon comes from Apollonius of Tyre), The Comedy of Errors also looks forward to the wanderings, confusions of identity and migraduous reunions so fundamenof identity, and miraculous reunions so fundamen-tal to the structure of "late plays" such as Pericles

tal to the structure of "late plays" such as Pericles and The Tempest.

What may have been Shakespeare's next comedy has also been deprecated as farce, and it is frequently produced today with staging techniques that link it with the commedia del l'arte popular in Renaissance Italy. But for all its knockabout slapstick, The Taming of the Shrew is too penetrating in its psychology and too subtle in its handling of the nuances of courtship to be dismissed as a play deficient in feeling. Its main event is a battle of the sexes in which Petruchio, who has "come to wive it wealthily in Padua," takes on a

dare no other potential suitor would even con-sider: to win both dowry and docility from a sharp-tongued shrew avoided as "Katherine the curst." Apparently recognizing that Katherine's willful-ness is a product of the favoritism her father has ness is a product of the favoritism her fattern had long bestowed upon her younger sister, and hav-ing the further good sense to realize that the fiery Kate is capable of becoming a much more at-tractive wife than the much-sought-after but rather devious Bianca, Petruchio mounts a bril-liant campaign to gain Kate's love and make her his. First, he insists that Kate is fair and gentle, nothis. First, he însiste that Kate is fair and gentle, not-withstanding all her efforts to disabuse him of that notion. Second, he 'kills her in her own humour,' with a display of arbitrary behavior-tantrums, scoldings, peremptory refusals—that both wears her down and shows her how unpleas-net shrewishness can be. At the end of the play Petruchio shocks his skeptical fellow husbands by wagering that his bride will prove more obedient than theirs. When Kate not only heeds his commands but reproaches her sister and the other wives for 'sullen, sour' rebellion against their husbands, it becomes manifest that Petruchio has succeeded in his quest: Kate freely and joyfully bands, it becomes manifest that Petruchio has suc-ceeded in his quest: Kate freely and joyfully acknowledges him to be her "loving lord." If we have doubts about whether Kate's transformation can be accepted as a "happy ending" today-and al-terations of the final scene in many recent produc-tions would suggest that it may be too offensive to current sensibilities to be played straight-we should perhaps ask ourselves whether the Kate who seems to wink conspiratorially at Petruchio as she puts her hands beneath his foot to win a marital wager is any less spirited or fulfilled a

as she puts her hands beneath his foot to win a marital wager is any less spirited or fulfilled a woman than the Kate who drives all her would-be wooers away in the play's opening scene.

Whether or not The Taming of the Shrew is the mysterious Love's Labor's Wim referred to by Francis Meres in 1598, it seems to have been written in the early 1590s, because what is now generally believed to be a bad quarto of it appeared in 1594. The Taming of a Shrew differs significantly from the version of Shakespeare's play that was first published in the 1623 Folio-most notably in the fact that the drunken inher Christopher Sly, who appears only in the induction to the later printing of the play, remains on stage throughout The Taming of a Shrew, repeatedly interrupting the action of what is presented as a play loss entertainment and resolving at the end to go his entertainment and resolving at the end to go off and try Petruchio's wife-taming techniques on his own recalcitrant woman. Some directors re-tain the later Sly scenes, but no one seriously questions that the Folio text is in general the more au-

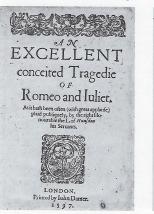
tions that the Folio text is in general the more authoritative of the two versions of the play.

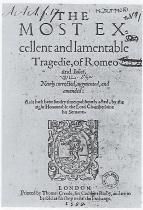
The Folio provides the only surviving text of The Two Gendlemen of Yermon, a comedy so tentative in its dramaturgy (for example, its ineptitude in the few scenes where the playwright attempts to manage more than two characters on the stage at once), and so adward in its efforts to pit the claims of love and friendship against each other, that many scholars now think it to be the first play Shakespeare ever wrote. Based largely on a 1542 chivalric romance (Diana Enamorada) by Portuguese writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gentugues writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gentugues writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gentugues writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gentucks. tuguese writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gentuguese writer Jorge de Montemayor, The Two Gen-tlemen of Verona depicts a potential rivalry between two friends-Valentine and Proteus-who fall in love with the same Milanese woman (Silvia) despite the fact that Proteus has vowed his devotion to a woman (Julia) back home in Ve-rona. Proteus engineers Valentine's banishment from Milan so that he can woo Silvia away from him. But Silvia remains faithful to Valentine, just

as Julia (who has followed her loved one dis-guised as his page) holds true to Proteus, notwith-standing the character he discloses as a man who lives up to his name. In the concluding forest scene Valentine intervenes to save Silvia from being raped by Proteus; but, when Proteus exhib-its remorse, Valentine offers him Silvia anyway, as a token of friendship served. Extraction is as a token of friendship restored. Fortunately, cir-cumstances conspire to forestall such an unhappy consummation, and the play ends with the two cou-

consummation, and the play ends with the two couples properly reunited.

Unlike The Comedy of Errors and The Taming of the Shrew, The Two Gentlemen of Verona has never been popular in the theater, even though it offers two resourceful women (whose promise will be fulfilled more amply in such later heroines as Rosalind and Viola), a pair of amusing clowns (Launce and Speed), and one of the most engaging dogs (Crab) who ever stole a stage. In its mixture of prose and verse, nevertheless, and in its suggestion that the "green world"





Title pages for the 1597 corrupt quarto edition (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery) and the 1599 "corrected, aug-mented, and amended" quarto edition (Edinburgh University) of the play for which Shakespeare drew on a didactic narrative poem of the same title by Arthus Brooke, first published in 1562. The copy of the second quarto shown here once belonged to Wil-liam Drummond of Hawthornden, who wrote his name on the title page.

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Title page for the 1598 quarto edition of a play that was per-formed before Elizabeth I during the 1597 Christmas season (British Library)

of the woods is where pretensions fall and wouldbe evildoers find their truer selves, The Two Gentlemen of Verono looks forward to the first fruits of
Shakespeare's maturity: the "romantic comedies"
of which it proves to be a prototype.

The one remaining play that most critics
now locate in the period known as Shakespeare's
apprenticeship is a Grand Guignol melodrama
hat seems to have been the young playwright's attempt to outdo Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy
(produced circa 1589) in its exploitation of the horrors of madness and revenge. The composition
of Titus Andronicus is usually dated 1599-1592,
and it seems to have been drawn from a ballad
and History of Titus Andronicus that only survives
today in an eighteenth-century reprint now deposited in the Folger Shakespeare Library. (The
Folger also holds the sole extant copy of the 1594
first quarto of Shakespeare's play, the authoritative text for all but the one scene, IlLii, that first
appeared in the 1623 Folio, If Shakespeare did
take most of his plot from the History of Titus

Andronicus, it is clear that he also went to Ovid's Metamorphoses (for the account of Tereus's rape of Philomena, to which the tongueless Lavinia points to explain what has been done to her) and to Seneca's Thyestes (for Titus's fiendish revenge on Tamora and her sons at the end of the play). Although Titus Andronicus is not a "history play," it does make an effort to evoke the social and political climate of fourth-century Rome; and in its depiction of a stern general who has just sacrificed more than twenty of his own sons to conquer the Goths, it anticipates certain characjust sacrificed more than twenty of his own sons to conquer the Goths, it anticipates certain characteristics of Shakespeare's later "Roman plays"; Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus. But it is primarily as an antecedent of Hamlet (influenced, perhaps, by the so-called lost Urhamlet) that Titus holds interest for us today. Because whatever else it is, Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's first experiment with revenge tragedy. Its primary focus is the title character, whose political misjudgments and fiery temper



Title page for the 1600 quarto edition of the Shakespeare com-edy that probably dates from 1595-1596, the same period as the tragedy Romeo and Juliet (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery)

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put him at the mercy of the Queen of the Goths, Tamora, and her two sons (Demetrius and Chiron). They ravish and mutilate Titus's daughter Lavinia, manipulate the Emperor into executing two of Titus's sons (Martius and Quintus) as perpetrators of the crime, and get Titus's third son (Lucius) banished for trying to rescue his brothers. Along the way, Tamora's Moorish lover Aaron tricks Titus into having his right hand chopped off in a futile gesture to save Martius and Lucius. After Lavinia writes the names of her assailants in the sand with her grotesque stumps, Titus works out a plan for revenge: he slits the throats of Demetrius and Chiron, invites Tamora to a banquet, and serves her the flesh of her sons baked on Demetrius and Chirton, invites I amora to a ban-quet, and serves her the flesh of her sons baked in a pie. He then kills Tamora and dies at the hands of Emperor Saturninus. At this point Lu-cius returns heading a Gothic army and takes over as the new Emperor, condemning Aaron to be half-buried and left to starve and throwing Tamora's corpse to the scavenging birds and beasts.

beasts. As Fredson Bowers has pointed out, Titus Andronicus incorporates a number of devices characteristic of other revenge tragedies: the protagonist's feigned madness, his delay in the execution of his purpose, his awareness that in seeking vengeance he is taking on a judicial function that properly rests in God's hands, and his death at the end in a bloody holocaust that leaves the throne open for seizure by the first opportunist to arrive upon the scene.

Revenge is also a significant motif in Shakespeare's other early tragedy. Romeo and blibt. Ususpeare's other early tragedy. Romeo and blibt.

to arrive upon the scene.

Revenge is also a significant motif in Shakespeare's other early tragedy, Romeo and Juliet, usually dated around 1595-1596. It is a blood feud between their two Veronan families that forces the lovers to woo and wed in secret, thereby creating the misunderstanding that leads Mercutio to defend Romeo's "honor" in act three when the just-married protagonist declines his new kinsman Tybalt's challenge to duel. And it is both to avenge Mercutio's death and to restore his own now-sullied name that Romeo then slays Tybalt and becomes "fortune's fool"-initiating a falling action that leads eventually to a pair of suicides and a belated recognition by the Capulets and the Montagues that their children have become "poor sacrifices of our enmity."

But it is not for its revenge elements that most of us remember Romeo and Juliet. No, it is for the lyricism with which Shakespeare portrays the beauty and idealism of love at first sight-all the more transcendent for the ways in which the playwright sets it off from the calculations of

Juliet's parents (intent on arranging their daughter's marriage to advance their own status) or contrasts it with the earthy bawdiness of Juliet's Nurse or the worldly-wise cynicism of Romeo's friend Mercutio. The spontaneous sonnet of Romeo and Juliet's initial meeting at Capulet's ball, their betrothal vows in the balcony scene later that evening, the ominous parting that concludes their one night together and foreshadows their final meeting in the Capulet tomb-these are the moments we carry with us from a performance or a reading of what may well be history's most famous love story.

**Romeo and Juliet may strike us as an "early" tragedy in its formal versification and in its patterned structure. It has been faulted for its dependence on coincidence and on causes external to the protagonists for the conditions that bring about the tragic outcome—an emphasis implicit in the play's repeated references to Fortune and the stars. And critics have encountered difficulty in their attempts to reconcile the purity of Romeo and Iuliet's devotion to each other ("for earth tearth to each of the critics have encountered difficulty in their attempts to reconcile the purity of Romeo and Iuliet's devotion to each other ("for earth tearth to each of the critics have encountered difficulty in their attempts to reconcile the purity of Romeo

stars. And critics have encountered difficulty in their attempts to reconcile the purity of Romeo and Juliet's devotion to each other ("for earth too dear") with the play's equal insistence that their relationship is a form of idolatry-ultimately leading both lovers to acts of desperation that audiences in Shakespeare's time would have considered far more consequential than do most modern audiences. But whatever its supposed limitations and interpretive problems, Romeo and Juliet's seems likely to hold its position as one of the classics of the dramatic repertory.

Romeo and Juliet first appeared in a 1597 quarto edition that most scholars believe to be a memorial reconstruction, though one with iso-

Romeo and Juliet first appeared in a 1597 quarto edition that most scholars believe to be a memorial reconstruction, though one with isolated passages (such as Mercutio's celebrated Queen Mab speech) printed in a form that some scholars believe superior to their rendering in the text today's editors accept as the best authority: the 1599 second quarto, "newly corrected, augmented, and amended," and apparently derived primarily from Shakespeare's own "foul papers." Two more printings appeared before the 1628 Folio, whose text-essentially a reprint of the third quarto edition (1609)—has no independent authority. The principal source for the play was a 1562 narrative. The Trageid History of Romess and Julies, by Arthur Brooke, a didactic poem urging children to be obedient to their parents. By telescoping three months into four days and by dramatizing the story in a manner more sympathetic to the young lovers, Shakespear transformed a sermon into a tragedy whose urgency must have been just as moving in the Elizabethan theater as

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A Midsummer Night's Dream: (top) Titania and Bottom, painting by Henri Fuseli, 1780-1790; and (bottom), William Blake's watercolor, Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing, circa 1785-1787 (Tale Galler), London)

we know it to be in our own.

If Romeo and Juliet is a play that has lost none of its freshness in the four centuries since its first appearance, Lowe's Labor's Lost now strikes us as so thoroughly "Elizabethan" in its rhetoric and topicality as to be nearly inaccessible to modern audiences. Evidently another product of the "transition years" when Shakespeare was working his way back into the theater after a two-year hiatus due to the plague, Lowe's Labor's Lost appears to have been written in 1594-1595 for private performance heefore the Queen during was a 1598 quarto announcing itself as "newly corrected and augmented" and probably set from Shakespeare's "foul papers." The Folio text was essentially a reprint of this first quarto, which has the distinction of being the first play to bear Shakespeare's name on its title page. Until recently no literary source had been found for the plot of Lové's Labor's Lost, but Glynne Wickham has now turned up a 1581 analogue, The Four Foster Children of Pesire, that helps account for much of the play's structure and several of its themes.

What emerges for a theatergoer or reader of the play today is a highly "artificial" concedy about a company of men whose well-intended but ill-conceived attempt to outwit nature makes them all look foolish and lands them in a pickle. No sooner have King Ferdinand of Navarre and his friends Longaville, Dumaine, and Berownenhoping to conquer the frailties of the flesh and find an antidote to "cormorant devouring time" forsworn the company of women and withdrawn to their quasi-monastic Academe than they find their fortress besieged by four beautiful adies—the Princess of France and her attendants Maria, Katherine, and Rosaline-who camp in the park outside and watch with amusement as each of the "scholars" falls in love, forsakes his vows, and gets caught by the others. Eventually the men surrender and propose marriage, but by this time it has become clear that they are so far gone in artifice that they need at least a year of penance-and ti

that requires all of the men to reevaluate their as-

that requires all of the men to recvaluate their as-pirations with a renewed awareness of the omni-presence of disease and the inevitability of death. Lové's Labor's Lost is one of Shakespeare's most self-conscious plays generically, and it is also one of his most demanding plays linguisti-cally. Much is made of the "literary" artifice of the four men's rhetoric, and it is shown to be detri-mental to genula human fealing. It is descharathe four men's rhetoric, and it is shown to be detri-mental to normal human feeling. It is also shown to be an infection that touches such lesser charac-ters as the bombastic braggart soldier Don Adriano de Armado, the pedant schoolmaster Holofernes, and the clown Costard, all of whom, like the poor curate Nathaniel in the Pageant of the Nine Worthies, prove "a little o'erparted." It is one of the ironies of the play that the four major male characters, who laugh so cruelly at the participants in the pageant, also prove "o'erparted" in the end. Such are the wages of affectation.

"o'erparted" in the end. Such are the wages of affectation.

Affectation of another kind is depicted in a delightful scene from what many regard as Shakespeare's most charming comedy, A Midsummer Night's Dream. As the Athenian courtiers are quick to observe in their critiques of the 'tragical mirth' of Pyramus and Thisby in V.i, the "mechanicals" who display their dramatic wares at the nuptial feast of Theseus and Hippolyta are even more fundamentally "o'erparted" than the hapless supernumeraries of Love's Labor's Lost. But there is something deeply affectionate about the supernumeraries of Love's Labor's Lost. But there is something deeply affectionate about shakespear's portrayal of the affectations of Bottom and his earnest company of "hempen homespuns," and the "simpleness and duty" with which they tender their devotion is the playright's way of reminding us that out of the mouths of babes and fools can sometimes issue a loving wisdom that "hath no bottom". Like "Bottom's Dream," the playlet brings a refreshingly naive perspective to issues addressed more seriously elsewhere. And, by burlesquing the struggles and conflicts through which the lovers in the woods circumvent the arbitrariness of their elders, "Pyramus and Thisby" comments not only upon the fortunes of Demetrius and Helena, Lysander and Hermia, but also upon the misfortunes of Romeon and Juliet. After all, both stories derive ultimately from the same source in Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Shakespear's parallel rendertunes of Romeo and Junet. After all, both stories derive ultimately from the same source in Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Shakespeare's parallel renderings of the "course of true love" in Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream are so closely linked in time and treatment that it is tempting to regard the two plays as companion piecestragic and comic masks, as it were, for the same

The most excellent Historic of the Merchant Historic of the Merchant The comicall History of the Merchant of Venice. Vith the extreame cruckie of Shylocke the lewe towards the fayd Merchant, in cutting a full pound of his fleth; and the obtaying of Portia bythe choyle of three chefts. Enter colonium, Salaryus, and Salamia.

*** Service of the Union on early Irangia field,
the sense is me, you day it wearies you go
the the Committee of the Co Enter Anthonio, Salarmo, and Salam As is hath beene divers times afted by the Lord Chamberlaine by Sernains, Written by William Shakespeare. 188 AT LONDON,
Printed by I. R. for Thomas Heyes,
and are to be fold in Paules Church-yard, at the
figne of the Greene Dragon.
1600.

Title page and first page of text from the 1600 quarto edition of the play that serves as a prototype for Shakespeare's later "prob-lem comedies" (British Library)

phase (1595-1596) of Shakespearean dramaturgy. Whether or not *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was commissioned for a wedding ceremony at

Whether or not A Mussummer Night's Dream was commissioned for a wedding ceremony at Whitchall, as some scholars have speculated, the play is in fact a remarkable welding of disparate materials: the fairy lore of Oberon and Titania and their impish minister Puck, the classical narrative of Theseus's conquest of the Amazons and their queen Hippolyta, the confused comings and goings of the young Athenian lovers who must flee to the woods to evade their tyrannical parents, and the rehearsals for a crude craft play by a band of well-meaning peasants. It is in some ways the most original work in the entire Shakespearean canon, and one is anything but surprised that its "something of great constancy" has inspired the best efforts of such later artists as composer Felix Mendelssohn, painters Henry Fuseli and William Blake, director Peter Brook, and filmmakers Max Reinhardt and Woody Allen.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is in many re-

spects the epitome of "festive comedy," an evocation of the folk rituals associated with such occasions as May Day and Midsummer Eve, and its final mood is one of unalloyed romantic fulfillment. Romance is also a key ingredient in the concluding arias of Shakespeare's next comedy, The Merchant of Venice, where Bassanio and Portia, Lorenzo and Jessica, and Gratiano and Nerissa celebrate the happy consummation of three love quests and contemplate the music of the spheres from a magical estate known symbolically as Belmont. But the "sweet harmony" the lovers have achieved by the end of The Merchant of Venice has been purchased very dearly, and it is hard for a modern audience to accept the serenity of Belmont without at least a twinge of guilt over what has happened in far-off Venice to bring it about. Whether The Merchant of Venice is best categorized as an anti-Semitic play (capitalizing on prejudices that contemporaries such as Marlowe had catered to in plays like The Jew of Malla) or

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When the first quarto edition of Richard II was printed in 1597, the crucial passage in which King Richard surrenders the crown to Henry Bolingbroke was cut, probably because the censors saw it as a threat to the sovereignty of Elizabeth I. On the page from IV. in this edition shown at top some 160 lines of text are omitted between the fifteenth and sixteenth lines (Trinity College, Combridge). The passage was not restored until 1608 when it appeared in the fourth quarto edition of the bay, as shown at the bard of this page and on the next (Bodleian Library).

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