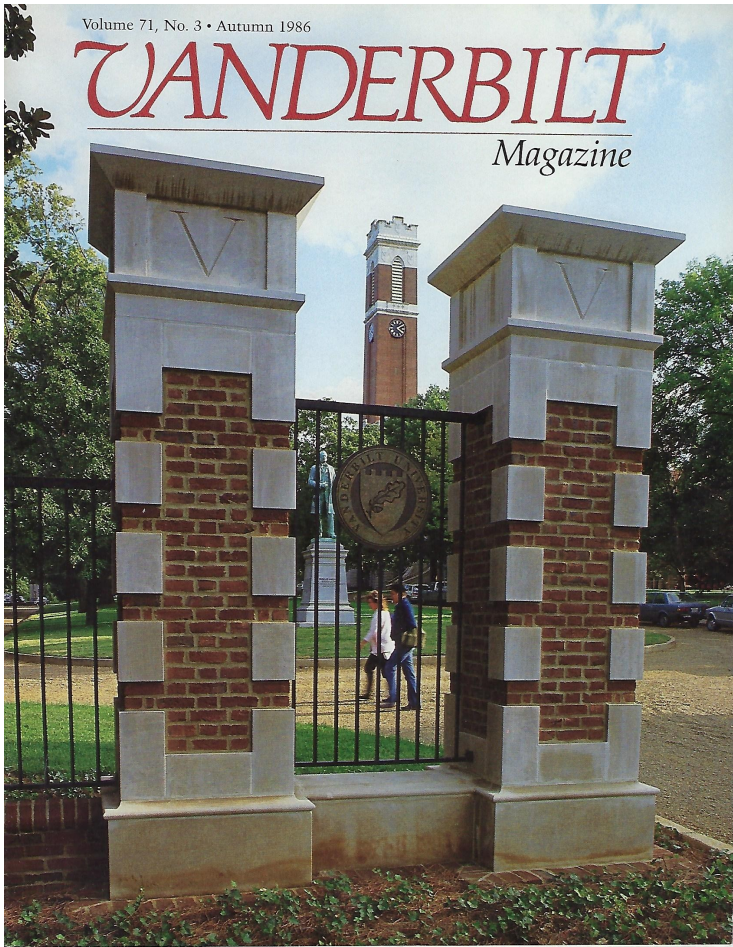


VANDERBILT

Magazine



Books

William Shakespeare

His World, His Work, His Influence, Editor, John F. Andrews, PhD '70, three volumes and bibliographies, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$180

John F. Andrews, editor of this marvelously comprehensive study, has organized the material so that every aspect of the Bard's life and work is covered. The sixty essays divided among the books are written by authorities in the field, preeminent scholars, critics, actors, directors, and authors.

The caliber of the scholarship ensures enjoyment to the reader. Whether the volumes are read in sequence or essays are read at random, the handsomely bound set of books is a resource for any library, an investment that should repay its cost through many years.

Volume One explores Shakespeare's world. The society of Renaissance England is the subject of twenty essays which examine every aspect of daily living—the arts, education, and politics of the period. "They are intended as an introduction to the world conditioned by and in some degree mirrored in the poems and plays," according to Andrews. The more we know about Shakespeare's world, he points out, the more sensitive the reader will be to the nuances in his work.

For example, in a chapter entitled, "The Literate Culture of Shakespeare's Audience," S. K. Heninger, Jr., writes that during the Elizabethan Age the road to advancement in an increasingly centralized and urbanized society was paved by literacy. Sounds familiar. He claims that Shakespeare's audience was reared in a literate culture, a culture in which the use of language was assigned a place of prime importance.

Ann Jennalie Cook also writes of the Renaissance audience. Professor Cook is on the faculty of the English department at Vanderbilt and her subject is Shakespeare. She is executive secretary of the Shakespeare Society, an international organization which has its headquarters at the University.

Her article, "Shakespeare and His Audience," is more specific. She maintains that "any hypothesis about those vanished spectators must rest on inference, fragmentary information, and a good deal of imagination, all refracted through a world view varying radically from that of the Renaissance."

Nevertheless, Professor Cook paints a picture of the Elizabethan audience that brings it cogently to life. Although, she contends, theatre attendance was a privilege of the elite in London, there were enough paying customers of all economic levels to support several theatrical companies and theatres. It was the place to entertain royalty from abroad, a list of regular patrons was impressive, including the literary world, members of the court, and wealthy gentry who could command special rooms for viewing as well as the most desirable seating arrangements in the theatre. The *Globe* might accommodate an audience of three thousand, many of whom stood or payed pennies to attend.

Contributors to this volume respond to other aspects of the Renaissance, widening our horizons and making some of the puzzles surrounding Shakespeare and his time more understandable.

The second volume deals with the Bard's work. The essays admit to the difficulty of reconstructing much of Shakespeare's moral stance or his standards of behavior because so little is known about the man, but the essays present insights into his treatment of human motivation and theological and ethical questions in ways that are convincing and refreshing. They provide a new understanding of the reasons for the impact his work continues to have on audiences and readers.

Typical is an essay by I. Leeds Barroll, formerly on the faculty at Vanderbilt, and founder of the *Shakespearean Quarterly*. He suggests that *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's other tragedies are difficult because they force us to confront a complex seventeenth-century artistic mind accustomed to approaching ethical matters in a way that was familiar to his contemporary poets and dramatists but that is no longer familiar to us. Poets in Shakespeare's time, in his opinion, did not expect simple answers to ethical questions. He cites *Macbeth*. In *Macbeth*, "it seems clear that we are not simply being told that crime does not pay." The following analysis is more plausible: "*Macbeth*, insofar as it is concerned with ethics, argues that a man accustomed to professional killing is naive if his devotion to some burning sense of ambition leads him to pretend that civil murder will leave him as emotionally untouched as does killing enemy warriors. And such ambition is particularly perilous if its naive goal is some shallowly con-

ceived notion of kingship that ignores monarchy as a profound social contract." Macbeth's ethical posture, Barroll proposes, cannot be summed up in a moral one-liner.

While the names of the Shakespearean scholars who have contributed to the first two volumes may be known only to other Shakespearean scholars, those whose articles appear in the third volume are well known to the lay reader. Peter Ustinov writes of the Bard's "huge, cool shadow over the history of the theatre." Jacques Barzun speculates on Shakespeare's influence on the humanities in general. Sir John Gielgud writes from a performer's point of view. "He sent his manuscript written in a meticulous, elegant hand, apologizing that he had never learned to type," Andrews recalls.

Other articles by director Jonathan Miller, author Anthony Burgess, and critic John Simon argue the pros and cons of modernizing the plays and of Shakespeare's influence on modern art.

Andrews brings outstanding credentials to this work. For ten years he was director of academic programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library. In that capacity he edited and redesigned *Shakespeare Quarterly*, was in charge of the library's book publishing program and headed the expansion of the Folger Institute, a collaborative center for advanced studies that includes twenty-two major universities as cosponsors. The institute holds seminars and workshops for scholars, as well as a monthly lecture series. Since 1984 he has been deputy director of the division of education programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

GHZ

Linda's Adventures in Television Land

And So It Goes, Adventures in Television, by Linda Ellerbee A'66, 255 pp. Putnam, \$16.95

Judging by its reception, it seems that the reading public was just waiting for an acerbic, funny "inside story" about television. Those familiar with Ellerbee's shows on TV, the last of which was "TGIF" on the *Today Show* will hardly be surprised that she tells all with a devilish glee.

The book has been hailed for its honesty as well as humor. Her career includes