Will in the World Study Guide

Will in the World by Stephen Greenblatt

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2004) is a biography of William Shakespeare. In it, Greenblatt proposes to answer the question of how a man with only a secondary school education, the son of a small town glove maker, became the most renowned playwright of all time. As with other persons in Elizabethan England—England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, 1558–1603—there are records of Shakespeare's life. Some of these correspond to the usual signposts: birth, marriage, and death. Scattered records of other moments, especially of transactions in which he was involved, also exist. In all, however, they form only a sketchy trail with considerable gaps. Greenblatt builds entire scenarios around the limited evidence. He connects what is known about key moments in Shakespeare's life to what historians have learned about what was going on at those moments in England. He then relates both the personal history and the larger social history to Shakespeare's plays and poetry.

Will in the World is only one of several books by major scholars of Shakespeare to come out at around the same time. These books, the fruits of a generation of scholarship, sum up insights and appreciation that have developed over decades of teaching and research. Some, like *Shakespeare* (2002), by David Bevington, and *The Age of Shakespeare* (2004), by Frank Kermode, are similar to *Will in the World* in that they draw connections between Shakespeare's art and his life and times. But no scholar has been more influential in promoting this approach to the study of literature in general and Shakespeare in particular than Greenblatt. His *Will in the World* has attracted more readers than any other contemporary book on Shakespeare. It is therefore having a major impact on our understanding of Shakespeare today.

Author Biography

Stephen Greenblatt is widely recognized as a leading academic scholar and public intellectual. That is, he has risen to the top of academia, or the professional world of university teaching and research. He has also reached beyond academia to address his writings and lectures to less specialized audiences. In 2002, he was named John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, one of the most prestigious faculty appointments at one of the world's leading universities.

Greenblatt was born on November 7, 1943, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the son of Harry J. Greenblatt, a lawyer, and Mollie Greenblatt. As a youth, he attended Newtown High School, where a favorite English teacher, John Harris, helped to influence him in his choice of career. He went on to study at Yale University, from which he earned a bachelor's degree in 1964 and a doctorate in 1969, and at Cambridge University in England, from which he earned a master of philosophy degree in 1966. His principal mentor at Yale was Alvin Kernan, the author of *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (1959).

Greenblatt began his distinguished teaching career in the English Department of the University of California at Berkeley in 1969; he remained on the faculty there until 1997, when he moved to Harvard. The National Endowment for the Humanities recognized him with their young humanist award in 1971–1972. At Berkeley, Greenblatt's work was influenced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who began teaching there in 1975. This influence was an important factor in Greenblatt's development of New Historicism.

New Historicism, sometimes known as Cultural Studies, is a practice of interpreting texts in their historical context, or in relation to the time and place in which they were written. It is also a set of theories about how texts are shaped by large social and historical forces—not simply the individual creativity of their authors. In "Pretending to Be Real: Stephen Greenblatt and the Legacy of Popular Existentialism," Paul Stevens writes that Greenblatt's first major New Historicist book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (1980), "marked a major change in the direction of English studies." Greenblatt went on to publish many other influential books on the literature and culture of the Renaissance, or early modern period. These include *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (1988), *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990), *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991), and *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001). He is also the editor of the Norton Shakespeare, and of several collections of essays by other scholars. All of these publications are published by academic presses, and they have been read mainly by university students and faculty. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2004), is the first of his major books to be addressed to a broader audience of interested readers, both inside and outside of academia. It was nominated for numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize.

As of 2005, Greenblatt is the John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University in Boston. He is married to Ramie Targoff and has three sons.

Plot Summary

This book takes two sources of information, biographical documentation and the writings of William Shakespeare, and proposes theories about the relationship between the two, asking the question what in Shakespeare's life caused him to write what he did in the way he did. It takes a roughly chronological approach, chronicling events in the playwright's childhood through to his death a little more than fifty years later. The book's core thematic exploration relates to the question of what goes into the making of art, not just Shakespeare's plays and poems, but art in general.

Following an introduction, in which the author defines his central question (how did Shakespeare's life inform his art) and the reasons why that question is so intriguing (see "Quotes, pp.12 and 13), the book proper begins with an examination of the circumstances of Shakespeare's childhood. The author explores, in some detail, the rural community in which Shakespeare grew to adulthood and also the forces within that community, including his family, which shaped his character. Thorough analysis draws parallels between specific experiences and equally specific moments in several of Shakespeare's plays, although the author carefully and repeatedly indicates that many of his theories are precisely that - theories.

This pattern of analysis and speculation continues throughout the remaining eleven chapters of the book, each of which corresponds to a particular period in Shakespeare's life. These periods include his late adolescence, his marriage (to a woman almost ten years older), and his journey to London, where he becomes an increasingly influential, not to mention popular, member of the burgeoning theatre community there. In these chapters, his professional relationship with his fellow playwrights, including the radical Christopher Marlowe, is discussed in some detail. Other important relationships include the (possibly homosexual) relationship with the young man who became Shakespeare's patron, the wealthy and self-indulgent Earl of Southampton, and the distant but necessarily positive relationship Shakespeare had with the formidable Elizabeth I. Once again, through-out these chapters the author carefully, and sometimes with an over-abundance of detail, draws connections between incidents in Shakespeare's life (some of which are hypothetical) and moments of often surprising insight in his plays.

In several instances throughout this section of the book, chapters contain references to many plays. The third quarter of the book, however, contains detailed analyses of one of his most controversial plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as two of his most frequently performed, critically acclaimed, and popularly successful plays, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The author proposes that in these three works, Shakespeare draws more heavily than ever before not only on his constantly evolving theatrical technique but also on events in his life.

The book's final chapter develops parallels between Shakespeare's early, and perhaps surprising, retirement and his later plays, a number of which are centered around aging old men and their daughters, as in *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *Pericles*. The book concludes with a description of Shakespeare's death, and a possible explanation for the

the long-mysterious inscription on his tomb, which pleads for his bones to be left in peace.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

This book takes two sources of information, biographical documentation and the writings of William Shakespeare, and proposes theories about the relationship between the two, asking the question what in Shakespeare's life caused him to write what he did in the way he did. It takes a roughly chronological approach, chronicling events in the playwright's childhood through to his death a little more than fifty years later. The book's core thematic exploration relates to the question of what goes into the making of art, not just Shakespeare's plays and poems, but art in general.

"Primal Scenes" This chapter explores several aspects of Shakespeare's early life in his home town of Stratford-upon-Avon, and offers possibilities for how they appeared in his later works. The first aspect is his education, which the author describes as probably taking place in a school attended only by the upper middle class, and where the teaching was entirely in Latin and about Latin. The author cites evidence suggesting that at the time, one of the popular and more effective ways of teaching Latin in such schools was to have the boys enact classical Roman plays written in Latin, many of which were farces. The author gives three reasons as to the possible significance of this part of Shakespeare's life. First, it encourages and develops his apparent love of language. Second, acting in these Roman plays gives him his first taste of acting, the profession by which he first enters into the professional theatre. Third, one of the plays in which he might have acted in school, the text of which still exists, was the source of the plot for one of his earliest plays, the farcical *Comedy of Errors.*

The author proposes that another important aspect of Shakespeare's childhood was the fact that his father, John Shakespeare, was Stratford's mayor, and as such would have been the guest of honor at performances of the many touring acting companies that played in Stratford over the years. Again, a specific source is referenced to support this idea - the records of a young man, a contemporary of Shakespeare whose father was in a similar social position, and who himself attended plays, enjoyed plays, and was at times quite moved by them. These plays were almost always "morality" plays, narratives in which characters with names like Youth and Mankind were drawn into a less than upright life by characters named Vice or Greed or Riot, but were redeemed by characters named Charity, Study, and Science. The author describes how surviving texts of those plays contain devices, character types, and themes that later make their way, in more evolved and sophisticated form, into Shakespeare's plays. Among the most important of these influences were the villainous, so-called "negative" characters, who the author suggests were the models for manipulative, devious characters like Iago in *Othello*, Falstaff in *Henry IV,* and/or Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. The author also describes, however, how Shakespeare transformed the pure evil and indulgence of the characters in the morality plays into the complex, multi-faceted, and endlessly intriguing characters in his plays.

A third important theatre-related aspect of Shakespeare's childhood was the various festivals, celebrations and performances played out at seasonal festivals (May Day, Harvest Home, etc) and commemorations of local, historically important events. The author describes how elements of these festivities appear in rustic, rural scenarios in his plays, like the characters and performances of the Mechanicals (Bottom, etc) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and of Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*. There is a lengthy description of how an extensive program of such performances, along with a number of specially designed theatrical events, is put together for a visit of Queen Elizabeth I to the home of her fading favorite, the Earl of Leicester. The author theorizes that it is possible that John Shakespeare takes young Will to see what he can of the festivities, and that Will incorporates what glimpses he has of both the Queen and the festivities honoring her into later plays - in particular, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. There is also a discussion about Will Shakespeare's ongoing attention to, some might say obsession with, royalty (see "Quotes", p. 46).

The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of how Shakespeare is never patronizing or condemning of his rural, some might say unsophisticated, roots. The author refers to the dignity of his rustic characters, such as Bottom and the other mechanicals in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and to the way high-born characters like Hippolyta (also in *Dream*) are moved not only by that dignity but by the truth of the emotions contained in, and conveyed by, their performances (see "Quotes", p. 53).

Analysis of a book of this sort, which is itself an analysis, must concern itself primarily with the quality of that analysis. In the case of *Will in the World*, the analysis is in fact a testing and proving of a thesis - that Shakespeare built his dramatic and poetic creations of upon his foundational life experiences. It is an undeniably valid thesis - examination of almost every creative art form - the composition of music, the writing of novels and/or poetry and/or plays, the painting or sculpting of visual art - has proved time and again that an artist's personal experiences, lived or felt, have varying effects on the work created. However, such an examination of Shakespeare's life and work is difficult because, as the author himself admits, there is a significant scarcity of actual documentation of Shakespeare's life.

When he dies, William Shakespeare leaves behind no diaries, no journals, no letters - very few personal writings of any kind. Therefore, much of the evidence cited in support of *Will in the World's* thesis comes from sources other than those directly connected with Shakespeare himself. A vivid example of this occurs in this first chapter, in which the writings of a young contemporary of Shakespeare's are presented as evidence that Shakespeare probably had a similar experience. This evidence, because of its lack of direct relationship to Shakespeare's life, must be regarded with a degree of skepticism. This is not to say that the author doesn't draw a logical conclusion - he certainly does. But the fact remains that the evidence on this particular point, as it is on various points throughout the book, is circumstantial at best.

In fact, most of the evidence presented in this chapter in support of the author's theories falls into this category - for example, the relationship between the Latin play Shakespeare might have studied in school and *The Comedy of Errors*. The play in

question still exists and there are similarities. But this does not prove that Will read it, or acted in a school performance of it. The same point could be made about the author's contention that Shakespeare bases his manipulative characters at least in part on characters he sees in morality plays. Again, there are similarities, and it is logical to conclude that Shakespeare might have seen such plays and might have used these characters as a basis for his own work. There is, however, nothing certain about the connection. The thesis of relationship between particular aspects of Shakespeare's life and work is a possibility, and perhaps a probability, but certainly not a fact.

What is a fact, however, is that in his writings, particularly the plays, Shakespeare does treat his rural, under-educated characters with affection and respect. The author cites writings containing portrayals of lower class life that are both accurate and warm. Later in the book, observations on other kinds of lower class life, that of prostitutes, beggars, small business owners and money lenders in London, find their way into other plays - observations equally accurate, but much less warm. In this instance, an important aspect of the author's thesis is undeniably accurate - Shakespeare's gifts of observation and documentation were remarkable. What is more remarkable, however, is the way he integrated what he observed into his work, and made the truths of all his characters equally valid and dramatically compelling.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

"The Dream of Restoration" The first part of the chapter focuses on Will's father, John Shakespeare. Early in life, John marries Mary Arden, the favorite daughter of an aristocratic, wealthy landowner. He also begins a career as a glove-maker. In this context, the author notes references to gloves and the various leathers from which they were/ are made. These can be found in several plays, including *Henry VIII, Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. John Shakespeare also undertakes a second career in illicit wool-dealing, but nevertheless grows into a person of influence and importance. However, at some point and for undocumented reasons, John Shakespeare begins a slow, painful downfall into relative poverty and ill-repute. This aspect of his life, which develops within the context of economic downturn in the English midlands, is contrasted with the lives of other middle-class businessmen who, despite financial hardships, still manage to send their sons to university. John Shakespeare is unable to do that for any of his sons, including Will. The author makes clear that there are no documented reasons for the downfall, but theorizes that John Shakespeare is punished for his involvement in the illicit wool trade. The author also suggests that John Shakespeare develops problems with alcohol, citing several drunken, father-like characters in Shakespeare's plays (particularly Falstaff in *Henry IV* but also Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*) as evidence (see "Quotes", p. 70-71).

The second part of the chapter begins with a brief exploration of how Will Shakespeare finds his way from the provincial, middle-class existence of Stratford into the more sophisticated but, nonetheless, looked-down-upon world of the actor in London. The author notes the lack of concrete evidence of the years between Shakespeare's time at the grammar school and his first recorded appearance as an actor, and proposed theories about this time period. One of these theories is based upon the extensive legal references in many of the plays, and suggests that Shakespeare becomes a lawyer's clerk. But the author points out that because there are so many other, equally knowledgeable references to other professions, particularly ministers and soldiers, the theory can't be taken all that seriously. The author does suggest, however, that to be an actor Shakespeare has to be able to dance, speak well, play musical instruments, and use swords effectively. Therefore, the author suggests, Shakespeare spends the relatively undocumented years in Stratford acquiring those skills.

The third part of the chapter focuses on what the author believes are Shakespeare's attempts to regain the social standing lost by his father. The Elizabethan Era was dominated by questions of status, recognition of status, manipulation of status, and attempts to improve status. The author records how, in an effort to improve his status, John Shakespeare attempts to buy himself a coat of arms, in those days only granted to those who born to high status. This attempt meets with failure, but is mysteriously renewed several years later under circumstances which the author claims could only have been created by Will, at that point a wealthy and successful actor/playwright. The

author describes how Shakespeare must have been mocked and teased by his contemporaries because of his attempts to transcend his relatively low birth, but was determined to not only restore the status his father lost but improve it. The author then cites several examples from the plays to support the idea that questions of loss of status and its restoration were of deep importance to Will. Key examples here are the plots of *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night,* in which characters lose their status as the result of storms at sea, the manipulations of other people, or both and then spend the rest of their respective plays struggling to regain that status. The author then observes, however, that for many characters struggling to regain their status, when they finally reclaim what has been lost the victory is bittersweet (see "Quotes", p. 84). He then theorizes that however bittersweet Shakespeare's final receipt of his family's coat of arms was, he nevertheless must have experienced a significant sense of pride and accomplishment at what his mother's aristocratic heritage, his father's hard work in the community, and his own artistic and financial success earned.

The title of this chapter, "The Dream of Restoration" refers to the hopes, alive in both Will Shakespeare and his father John through much of their lives, of improving the status of the Shakespeare family. Actions they both take to realize that dream are, in the case of John Shakespeare, well documented, but in the case of Will Shakespeare and his supposed attempts at accomplishing what his father could not, completely undocumented. Here again, as he often does throughout the book, the author constructs a logical, plausible argument out of circumstantial evidence. It's ironic, therefore, that the author calls into question the validity of a long standing theory about Shakespeare's past - the idea that Shakespeare had been a lawyer's clerk, a theory based entirely on circumstantial evidence - when the author freely constructs theories out of evidence of a similar sort. Another example is the author's theory of when and how Shakespeare learns his various actors' skills. Yes, he acquires them at some point, but there is no evidence to suggest that he learns them during his adolescence. The author offers no indication of who, at this point in his life, Shakespeare could have learned them from. It would seem to make just as much sense to suggest that Shakespeare learned the tricks of his trade when he moved to London and actually became part of the trade, but this possibility, for whatever reason, isn't mentioned.

Once again, however, there are occasions when the facts and the writings coincide and create a powerful sense that the author's core thesis (that there is a definite relationship between the facts and the writings) is accurate. In this chapter, there are two such occasions. The first is his notation of the frequent references to leather and glove-making throughout the plays, undeniably present, and also of the frequency with which plots of Shakespeare's plays are built around the reestablishment of what has been lost and the gaining, or regaining, of status. Many of the comedies and several of the dramas follow this pattern.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

"The Great Fear" This chapter begins with a brief description of the danger of traveling the roads of England in Shakespeare's time - beggars, musicians, actors, salespeople, everyone needed a license or a letter from a rich patron granting them passage. Otherwise, they were subject to arrest and/or imprisonment. The author offers this as explanation for why Will Shakespeare does not just make his way straight from Stratford to London - he was unlicensed for anything, and would have been in great danger.

The author then offers evidence of where Will Shakespeare spends at least part of the undocumented time between his school days in Stratford and his marriage (see Chapter 4, "Wooing, Wedding and Repenting"). This evidence is a passing comment by one of Shakespeare's earliest biographers, who refers to Will as "a schoolmaster in the country..." The author proposes that "the country" referred to is in fact the county of Lancashire. He then goes into extensive detail about what life in that particular part of England, an area home to the largest population of Roman Catholics in England, meant in an era when Roman Catholics were persecuted, tortured, and executed.

The author develops a complex theory that John Shakespeare was, at the very least, sympathetic to both the persecuted Catholics and the militant Protestants led by Queen Elizabeth I herself. Among the components of this theory are the fact that Mary Shakespeare, nee Arden, comes from a Catholic family, and that John Shakespeare, while still a respectable businessman, enables the hiring of Catholic sympathizers in Will's school. At the same time, as mayor John Shakespeare pays the salaries of workmen assigned to remove all traces of Catholic theology - crucifixes, paintings of saints - from the local churches. The author then extends his theory to suggest that due to his father's situation and Catholic influences in his education, Will himself develops sympathy with the Catholic faith, which leads to his becoming a private teacher in Lancashire.

The author also presents circumstantial evidence that suggests that at the same time Will is supposedly in Lancashire, there is also a company of actors there, several of whom play important roles in Will's theatrical career in London. The author suggests that Will becomes involved with this company, involvement that sows the seeds of his later career. Finally, and in great depth, the author develops the idea that while Will was in Lancashire, he meets and perhaps studies with Edmund Campion, one of the most prominent, and therefore the most hunted, Catholic religious leaders of the day (see "Quotes", p.110). The author suggests the possibility that during this time Will realizes two important things. The first is that Catholicism, with its ritual, hierarchy and political devotion to the Pope, is in fact an empty faith. In support of this assertion, the author cites the particular example of the King in *King John*, who speaks at angry length against papal control of everyday life. He notes how ostensibly Catholic characters like Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* are sympathetic not because they are Catholic, but

because their humanity transcends Catholicism. He then notes how in *Romeo and Juliet*, references to saints and to faith transcend Catholic principles and teaching and affirm the value of what Shakespeare professes is the ultimate religion - romantic love. The second important thing Shakespeare discovers through his association with Campion, according to the author, is that continuing the relationship might hinder Shakespeare from pursuing a career in the theatre - which, the author suggests, appeals to him immensely. This, the author suggests, is why Shakespeare does not remain long in Lancashire.

The final section of the chapter is taken up with the author's account of how Campion is ultimately caught, imprisoned, tortured and executed in a series of events that Will Shakespeare, now back in Stratford, undoubtedly hears about. The author suggests that Shakespeare's sympathy with Campion's plight as a fugitive echoes the similar situation of Edgar in *King Lear*, also a fugitive. He adds that this sympathy does not seem to extend to Campion as a Catholic, but does suggest that Shakespeare feels enough sympathy for Catholics in general to undertake a mission as a courier of certain catholic artifacts between the Lancashire family with whom he taught and a family in nearby Shottery. The suggestion is made, the author says, because there is no doubt that shortly after returning home, Will is in Shottery, where he meets his future wife Anne Hathaway. "By November they were married, and six months later their daughter Susanna was born."

As compelling as the theory presented in this chapter is, it is developed out of circumstantial evidence. The initial piece of proof the author presents, the comment about Will's having been a teacher in the country, has slightly more factual weight to it than, say, the "evidence" for Will's having seen theatre as a child (Chapter 1). The author notes that the source of information for the biographer making the comment was the son of one of Shakespeare's fellow actors. In other words, the information comes from someone who knew Shakespeare personally. Other than that, however, there is no hard evidence that Shakespeare was in Lancashire, that he en-countered a troupe of actors, or that he had any connection with Edmund Campion. Evidence from the writings (carefully cited by the author) clearly and vividly suggests that there is an anti-Catholic, and indeed anti-religion perspective informing Shakespeare's work. There is absolutely no hard evidence , however, that this perspective is anything other than the prevailing, politically wise perspective of Shakespeare's day. The country was shakily Protestant, after an intense period of religious upheaval. Shakespeare could not win the success he did without sympathizing with the prevailing religious, socio-political climate.

On the other hand, there is a component to his theory that the author does not explore. As previously, Shakespeare displays a surprising quality and depth of knowledge about several professions and belief systems. Among these are ministry and theology. If the author's theory is expanded slightly, Shakespeare might have absorbed these during his time with Campion. Perhaps there were occasions when the two admittedly great minds crossed intellectual and theological swords with each other, debating religion and ritual into the small hours of the Lancashire morning. However, like the rest of the complex theory in this chapter, this situation is purely hypothetical, imagined out of circumstantial evidence. Another theoretical possibility lies in Shakespeare's supposed relationship

with the touring theater company. If, as the author suggests in Chapter 2, Shakespeare had many skills to learn in order to achieve his dream as an actor, there's every possibility that he at least begins to acquire them through his contact with the company mentioned here - the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company with which he becomes affiliated when he first moves to London.

What's most interesting about this chapter is the author's contention that Shakespeare places the ideal of spiritually ordained romantic love above other religious ideals. There is certainly strong evidence in the writings for this - characters are, for the most part, far more devoted to the ideas of passion and romance, and to the living and enjoying of both, than they are to the principles of religious devotion. This focus on courtly, romantic, poetic love is, perhaps, a manifestation of the apparent lack of such love in Shakespeare's own life, and also of his longing for it. The reasons for, and implications of, this lack of love is the focus of the author's examinations and theorizations in the following chapter.

This chapter's focus on the possibility that Shakespeare was affiliated, however indirectly, with England's Catholic population, foreshadows the author's reference in Chapter 6 to the possibility that Shakespeare's Catholicism played a role in his departure from Stratford.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

"Wooing, Wedding and Repenting" This chapter begins with a brief description of the circumstances of Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway. Hathaway is likely a Protestant, relatively well off, and in her late twenties. Shakespeare, on the other hand, is likely Catholic, not well off and in his late teens. The observation is made that there seems to be at least an initial sexual and romantic connection, not to mention urgency, between the two of them, since there is clear evidence that Anne was pregnant at the time of their marriage. This urgency, the author suggests, is hinted at in the urgency of the two young lovers in *Romeo and Juliet.* On the other side of the coin, the author suggests, is the commentary in *Henry VI* that "...wedlock forced [is] a hell, an age of discord and continual strife." The author proposes that Shakespeare repents early of his hasty marriage, and perhaps leaves for London relatively soon after the birth of his children not only to pursue his dream of being in the theatre but also to escape his marriage.

The chapter then discusses at length the nature of the various romantic and/or marital relationships in Shakespeare's plays, and examines them for clues of what Shakespeare's marriage might have been like. Among the author's observations is the fact that in so many of the plays, paternal figures are unaccompanied by spouses - there is no Mrs. King Lear, no Mrs. Baptista (Kate's father in *Taming of the Shrew*), no Mrs. Leonato (the hero's father in *Much Ado about Nothing),* and no Mrs. Brabanzio (Desdemona's father in *Othello*). The suggestion here is that the male carries all the parental responsibilities - is there also a suggestion, the author wonders, of a particular aspect of Shakespeare's marriage?

Also in this chapter, many of the relationships in the various plays are divided into sub-categories. The first of these includes relationships in which the characters involved are of unequal mental and/or spiritual status - for example, the clever, warm-hearted Rosalind and the well-meaning but rather stupid Orlando in *As You Like It*, and the enchanting Viola and the vain Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. Second, there are relationships in which marriages result from an unequal obsession of one character for another. These include Helena for Bertram in *All's Well that Ends Well*, another Helena for Demetrius in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Duke for Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. Third, there are relationships in which husbands neglect their wives, including Brutus and Portia in *Julius Caesar* and Hotspur and Kate in *Henry IV Part I.* Fifth, there are relationships in which characters experience great joy and attraction and difficulty in coming together, but either end unhappily or give no hint that their joy will continue - *Romeo and Juliet*, the quartet of young lovers in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Petruchio and Kate in *Taming of the Shrew,* Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing*. There are hints, the author suggests, that Beatrice and Benedick, also in *Much Ado About Nothing*, end up living happily ever after, but there are no clear, definite indications that this is the case.

The author suggests there are three relationships in Shakespeare's plays that offer glimpses into more positive aspects of marriage and relationships, but adds that these glimpses are colored darkly by the circumstances in which those relationships develop. The first of these is the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, a deep connection and understanding between spouses, but one which reaches its profoundest heights (depths?) as the result of murder, thereby calling its value into question. The second relationship with positive aspects which the author comments on is also grounded in murder. This is the relationship between Gertrude and Claudius in *Hamlet*, in which the physical and emotional passion the two feel for each other is allowed to flourish because of the murder of Hamlet's father (Gertrude's first husband and Claudius' brother) and which is the only honest, self-less emotion either of those two characters experiences. Finally, there is the relationship between the two title characters in *Antony and Cleopatra*, which the author suggests contains all the hallmarks of intimacy, passion, and long history, but which takes place within the context of adultery - Antony, throughout their relationship, is married to other women.

There is also a passing reference in this chapter to Shakespeare's sonnets, in which he writes of his passionate involvement with two people, a beautiful young man and a mysterious dark woman. Nowhere in any of these writings, the author suggests, does there seem to be any reference to Anne Hathaway. Indeed, nowhere else in any of the writings associated with Shakespeare, those he wrote and those written about him (legal documents, etc.) is there any particular reference to her - other than in the re-write of his will. The first draft contained no reference to her at all, but in a codicil (or rewrite) he leaves her his "second best bed" and all its furnishings. There has, according to the author, been centuries of speculation as to what this particular, peculiar legacy means, with various authors attempting to put both positive and negative connotations to it. The fact remains, however, that for much of his adult life Shakespeare leaves his wife and young children to manage on their own in Stratford while he makes his career and living in London. Granted, his success does enable him to purchase New Place, a large, comfortable home for his family, but there is little or no indication of how much time he himself spends there. In short, the chapter suggests that throughout Shakespeare's plays, love is defined as an ideal, but that marriage brings with it dark associations, risk of self-denial, and ultimately suffering. The implication, the author says, is clear - that Shakespeare's own marriage is not an aspect of his life with which he was happy or in which he felt fulfilled.

The title for this chapter is a quote from *Much Ado about Nothing*, in which the cynical Beatrice describes the stages of the marital relationship as "wooing, wedding and repenting." The title is a terse summation of the author's beliefs about Shakespeare's own marriage - that he wooed in sexual haste, he wed because he had to, and then repented because he soon realized what a mistake he'd made. Of all the many theories in the book, the author's theories about Shakespeare's marital unhappiness are the ones most supported by direct evidence. Perhaps the more correct term would be lack of evidence, since aside from the will there is no documentation suggesting how Shakespeare felt about his wife - or for that matter, how she felt about him. The will, however, is compelling evidence that something was not right in the marriage, most notably the fact that Shakespeare left Stratford when he did and stayed away as long as

he did. A potentially interesting question that the author doesn't ask in this context is whether Shakespeare left at least in part out of selfish motivations - specifically, he wanted to be in the theatre so badly that he turned his back on his family and his obligations and went to London to pursue his goal. This is not to say that he left his responsibilities completely behind him. There are records of his having visited and of having taken at least some care of his family financially - he did, after all, buy them New Place. But the fact remains that he left, and just how much of that leaving was due to Anne, to Will, and/or to Anne and Will together is a matter of speculation.

The author is on more secure ground in his considerations of the types of marriages and relationships that dominate the plays. His comments here are perceptive, accurate and thought provoking - why are there so few mother/wife figures in Shakespeare? And why, of those who do exist, are there so few positive examples of the maternal and/or marital perspective? Would the tragic, foolish, sometimes evil men (Lear, Leonato, Baptista, Egeus - Hermia's dictatorial father in *Midsummer Night's Dream*) have acted differently if they'd had wives around to leaven their judgments? Perhaps if they had, the plays and their stories would have been very different.

For years critics of the romance/romantic comedy genres have argued that real stories don't end with a wedding, they begin with one. Such post-marriage stories might arguably be stories in which true humanity is tested and challenged. The absence of such stories in the canon of plays by arguably the most humanity-oriented playwright in history does seem a glaring omission. Perhaps, as the author argues, the subject of marriage was just too painful for Shakespeare to consider and/or explore. On the other hand, perhaps he just wasn't interested in marriage on any level, either in his life or in his work. He certainly had other interests on which he lavished his time and attention as the following chapters make clear.

References to Shakespeare's will in this chapter foreshadow more detailed discussions of the will, and the circumstances of its writing, in Chapter 12. Meanwhile, the complex examination of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth foreshadows the discussion of the play *Macbeth* in Chapter 11.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

"Crossing the Bridge" The first part of this chapter examines other reasons why Shakespeare might have felt compelled to leave. The author refers to a long-believed story that Shakespeare engaged in deer poaching, a test of manhood, skill and cleverness for many young men of the time, on the estate of Sir Thomas Lucy. The story is that Shakespeare was caught and threatened with severe punishment by Lucy, but left for London before that punishment could be enacted (see "Quotes", p. 152). However, the author puts forward evidence to suggest that Lucy had other reasons for threatening punishment - he was among the most prominent and powerful of the Protestant nobility, involved in government planning and plotting to rid England of the Catholic influence. If, as has been previously discussed (Chapter 3, "The Great Fear") Shakespeare and his family had Catholic leanings and/or ties, Lucy's ruthless efforts at rooting out any- and everything Catholic might have played a significant role in Will Shakespeare's flight from Stratford. The author also presents evidence suggesting a means for that flight - according to historical records, a troupe of actors called The Queen's Men was playing in the area at approximately the time Shakespeare is believed to have fled Stratford. Also according to records, a member of the troupe had been killed, and an immediate replacement was necessary. The author proposes that Shakespeare, relatively inexperienced but eager to learn, was that replacement, and traveled with the Queen's Men in June of 1587 down the southeast coast of England towards London (see "Quotes", p, 163)

The second part of the chapter explores, at length, the London that Shakespeare encountered as he entered it for the first time. The layout of the city, the character of its inhabitants, its importance as a center of trade and commerce as well as of politics and power - all are discussed in some detail. Several references are made to instances in the plays where large, bustling cities and their lower and/or working classes, as well as their uneducated, narrow minded masses, are mentioned. Particular mention is made of characters and situations in *Henry VI,* which contains scenes of a lower class rebellion led by a character named Jack Cade which, the author contends, are drawn from Shakespeare's experiences of the anger, frustration and poverty of the lower classes.

The chapter concludes with the asking of a rhetorical question - essentially, why did Shakespeare leave behind no letters, no personal documents, no books inscribed with his name? This latter is particularly intriguing, given the obvious breadth of his knowledge as revealed in the plays. "Why," the author asks, "in the huge, glorious body of his writing, is there no direct access to his thoughts about politics or religion or art? Why is everything he wrote - even in the sonnets - couched in a way that enables him to hide his face and innermost thoughts?" The author suggests that the answer to this question lies in an aspect of London that Shakespeare couldn't help noticing as he entered - the heads of well-born men executed for treason, impaled upon spears on London Bridge. The heads were placed there, in a location where everyone coming into

and/or leaving the city could see them, as a warning against traitorous activity. The author suggests that Shakespeare, coming into London in 1587, would have been able to recognize the heads of at least two people he knew - Catholics from Stratford caught by Sir Thomas Lucy. The author then hypothesizes that Shakespeare, unwilling to share their fate, made certain that he left no possibly incriminating documents of any sort where they could be found. In other words, he saw the heads on the pikes - "and he may well have heeded their warning."

The title for this chapter is a literal and metaphoric comment on Shakespeare's experience of entering London - a literal crossing of London Bridge into the city and a metaphoric crossing of a bridge from his old life in Stratford (as a husband, father and small-businessman) into his new life in London (as an actor, playwright, and producer). He crossed the bridge several times, both coming and going, as he traveled back and forth between his two very different homes and lives - with the vivid warnings of the speared heads serving, every time, as a warning of what he was going back to and leaving behind. The author's suggestion that these warnings were the reason Shakespeare left so few personal papers is, as many of the author's suggestions are, sensible and logical - but it is still just a suggestion. That being said, this chapter is essentially expositional or descriptive, with the author paying relatively little attention to the relationship between Shakespeare's life and works. The author is establishing context, defining what Shakespeare's new life and world were like. The extensive discussion of Jack Cade and his rebellion in *Henry VI* is the only real point of comparison here, with the author making his point again with powerful but mostly circumstantial evidence. That point is that Shakespeare drew heavily on his initial reaction to, and deepening understanding of, London crowds to create a realistic sense of public attitudes in *Henry VI* and, indeed, in many other plays.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

"Life in the Suburbs" The beginning of this chapter describes two different ways of life in London when Shakespeare first arrived. The first is life within the ancient Roman wall surrounding the city, a life of crowding, noise, bad smells, and bad health. The second is life outside the walls, which in some directions led directly to the open, fresh, healthy air of the countryside but in other directions led to recreation areas. Included in these areas were brothels, bear-baiting pits, and places of public execution and/or punishment. It was in these last, presumably, that theatre in general and Shakespeare in particular learned of the public's lust for blood and violence, an attitude that could explain Shakespeare's gruesome treatment of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, having her hands cut off and her tongue cut out. There were also several theatres in this part of London, many serving, at times, as bear-baiting pits. Many also had rooms opening off their courtyards in which prostitutes could do business. The author describes at length the intense competition between these theatres, which created an ongoing, constant need for new plays.

The author theorizes that one of the first plays Shakespeare saw when he arrived in London was *Tamburlaine the Great*, by Christopher Marlowe. This, the theory runs, would have had a profound affect on Shakespeare's life, work and career for several reasons. Firstly, it would have made clear that Marlowe was better read and educated than Shakespeare. Consequently Shakespeare's Stratford-based friendship with a printer's assistant, Richard Field, would become intensely important - Field could get him access to both the books he was associated with printing and those put together by other printers. In this relationship, the author implies, can be found the beginnings and/or deepening of Shakespeare's knowledge about the many subjects highlighted in his plays.

The author also suggests that in *Tamburlaine,* Shakespeare saw theatre far removed from the relatively small morality plays he saw in Stratford. To begin with, *Tamburlaine* contains many massive spectacles - battles, horse drawn chariots, processions, etc. Nothing along those lines was ever presented in morality plays. More importantly, the central character of *Tamburlaine,* Tamburlaine himself, is a humble peasant possessed of enormous ambition and ego, as well as a powerful ruthlessness serving his ambition. Tamburlaine, the author suggests, is a far different character from any character Shakespeare had previously seen. There are similarities between Tamburlaine and the evil characters of the morality plays, but one key difference - Tamburlaine is never punished. *Tamburlaine the Great* is simply a play about ambition that is only brought to an end by the ultimate, inevitable end of every man - death.

Finally, the author suggests that Shakespeare was influenced as much by the blank-verse style in which *Tamburlaine* was written as he was by its subject matter. The author then offers evidence that Shakespeare's earliest history plays, the three parts of *Henry*

VI, owe a great deal to the influence of Marlowe - the use of language, the portrayal of ambition, and the politics of power (see "Quotes, p. 195). There are also suggestions in these plays of the powerful influences of *Tamburlaine* audiences, and those who populated the part of London in which Tamburlaine was performed - the angry, poverty-stricken, rebellious lower classes embodied in the character of Cade. The author comments that Shakespeare's poetic skills were not yet equal to Marlowe's, but his understanding of human nature transcended Marlowe's, so that the ambitious, power-hungry, Tamburlaine-like characters in *Henry VI* all have weaknesses and frailties that Marlowe's character lacks. Finally, the author cites evidence suggesting that the *Henry* plays were a great success, and that as the result of that success, Shakespeare's career as a playwright was launched.

This chapter is the first to draw parallels between the life and works of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Such parallels are examined throughout the book, but are considered most deeply here and in Chapter 9 ("Laugher at the Scaffold"). The two playwrights were, as the author mentions several times, almost exactly the same age but of very different familial and economic backgrounds, temperaments, and skill sets. The following chapter discusses their personal relationship, as well as their professional rivalry, in greater detail.

Some of the author's conclusions make more sense than others. The connection he makes between the treatment of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* is a more successful example. Elizabethan society was exposed almost constantly, in varying ways and to varying degrees, to bloody violence. Executions were well attended, public spectacles, petty thieves like pickpockets were still punished by having their hands cut off, and murders and public brawls were common occurrences. Theatre audiences were, the author suggests, not very different from the audiences who attended bear-baitings, executions, or public maimings - they would have been used to, perhaps even eager for, such spectacles. It's interesting to note, however, that after *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare incorporates much less "blood and guts", into his plays. There are a great many sword fights, and there are a couple of occasions, most notably in *Macbeth*, when the heads of those executed are displayed. As a writer, however, Shakespeare was far more interested in conversation and confrontation than he was in mutilation and/or execution.

On the other hand, the author's conclusions relating to Shakespeare's experience of, and being affected by, Christopher Marlowe and *Tamburlaine* are, again, based on circum-stantial evidence. There can be little doubt that Shake-speare and Marlowe were at least aware of each other and probably did know each other, but in terms of how they were each affected by the relationship, everything is speculation.

Finally, the author's comparison of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's poetic skills comes across as weakly reasoned. Since the breadth and depth of Shakespeare's perspectives on humanity transcend Marlowe's, as the author himself points out, doesn't that give Shakespeare's poeticism an equal degree of transcendence? There may be a greater sense of imagistic vitality and drive in Marlowe's work, but isn't the point of poetry to bring depth and perspective to the human experience? In other words,

Marlowe seems, in the author's perspective, to create powerful but shallow emotions and images. Shakespeare's images, on the other hand, are less powerful but deeper. Who, then, is the better poet? The point is arguable. In any case, the references to Marlowe here foreshadow other references to him in other chapters - most importantly the following chapter, in which Marlowe is on the periphery of the tense relationship between Shakespeare and another playwright, and also in Chapter 9, which compares plays by Shakespeare and Marlowe, and also discusses the circumstances of Marlowe's death.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

"Shakescene" The author begins with a brief explanation of why the poetic sensibilities, length and intensity of both *Tamburlaine* and Shakespeare's *Henry* plays were not only tolerable but appealing to Elizabethan audiences (see "Quotes," p. 200). He then describes at length the group of writers who, at the time Shakespeare begins his career, are both the most prominent playwrights and the most dissolute revelers within the theatre community. All are university educated, outcasts to some degree from their families or from their professional associations, and intent upon making their mark on the theatre. The foremost of these are Christopher Marlowe (the author of *Tamburlaine)* and Robert Greene, a liar, braggart and user who is the leader of this group of intellectuals without necessarily producing a great deal of work to justify his position.

The author describes how Shakespeare would have, at first, fit in with this crowd, but would eventually fallen out of favor. This would have been for several reasons - his lack of university education, his lower/working class family, his continued ties to his background, and his reluctance to participate in the drinking and partying that other members of the group spent so much time and money on. Evidence suggests that Greene was not only the most intense and most self indulgent reveler, but also the most resentful of Shakespeare's growing popularity - the author quotes a document published by Greene that speaks with aggressive negativity about a "player" (actor, such as Shakespeare was) pretending to be a poet. The author takes pains to point out that nowhere in any recorded writing of the time does Shakespeare respond Greene's criticisms.

Shortly after the success of *Henry VI* and Shakespeare's early comedies (*The Comedy of Errors, Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Taming of the Shrew*), the group of wits led by Greene began dying off. Marlowe was killed in an argument over a bar bill (see Chapter 9 for an alternative theory), while Greene suddenly became ill and would have died on the street if he had not been found and taken in by a charitable shoemaker and his wife. One by one other members of the small group followed suite, until only Shakespeare was left. The author presents evidence that Shakespeare, over the course of *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, pokes gentle fun at the works of members of that group. The author also suggests that Shakespeare re-invented his most pointed, and some would say poignant, experiences with Greene and Marlowe for the creation his greatest creation as a character - Sir John Falstaff in *Henry IV, Parts I and II.*

The beginnings of the character are found in a now-lost anonymous play about the young Prince Henry, the hero of *Henry IV.* That play contained a character, based on a historical person, who was a soldierly tutor to the young prince. Forced by the reluctance of this person's family to have their ancestor placed onstage again, Shakespeare gave him a different name and grafted aspects of Greene onto him. The

author offers clear evidence of the parallels between Falstaff and Greene - they're both braggarts and liars, self-indulgent and self-deluding, manipulators and users. Also, Falstaff plays many of the verbal and theatrical games played by Greene and other members of the so-called "university wits." Finally, both Greene and Falstaff are high-born and well connected, but get most of their pleasures and experiences in the company of the low born, whores, foot-soldiers and thieves. But Falstaff, according to the author, was as much a product of Shakespeare's talent and genius as he was a reflection of Greene's life. In Shakespeare's hands, Greene's appetites are transmuted into Falstaff's embodiment of the life force itself, with all its appetites, failings, and strengths. The author also suggests that though Falstaff proved Shakespeare's most appealing creation to date, Shakespeare realized that Falstaff had gotten out of control. He had transcended anything Shakespeare could do with him, so Shakespeare decided to go back on a promise to include him in *Henry V* and instead wrote a scene in which the character dies - offstage. All this, the author suggests, helps understand Shakespeare as a person and as a writer (see "Quotes, p. 224/5).

This chapter's title, "Shakescene", is a quote from the negative document about Shakespeare written and published by Robert Greene shortly before his death. The reference foreshadows an additional reference in the following chapter. Within the context of this book as a whole, the word could be used to refer to a particular kind of Shakespearean scene, character or story, in which life and inspiration are inextricably, and powerfully, woven.

Not for the first time in the book, the author refers to several of Shakespeare's plays in passing - *Two Gentleme nof Verona, Comedy of Errors,* and *Taming of the Shrew.* The latter two plays are discussed elsewhere in the book (*Comedy* in Chapter 1, *Taming* in Chapter 4) with some detail, but *Two Gentlemen* is barely discussed anywhere. Why? Was there nothing in it that related to Shakespeare's life? This omission becomes even more interesting when placed against the extensive, almost exhaustive way in which other plays and characters are examined. Falstaff in this chapter is one example, while later in the book *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* each get chapters of their own. On the other hand, his equally popular and successful comedies - *Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It,* and *Twelfth Night* - get no such treatment. Why do so many of the plays get such short shrift? Is it because the author had to be selective about which plays he examined, and chose only the ones with evidence to support his theory? Does he have a personal bias about which are his favorite plays, or plays worth examining? Does the author believe that Hamlet and Macbeth, as characters and as plays, contain more psychological insight and/or dramatic craft than the comedies? At least two of the plays, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, contain not only Shakespeare's most enchantingly wise female characters but some of the most evocative writing in the entire canon of Shakespeare's work. The book itself provides no answers to this intriguing, troubling, question.

That being said, the author's examination of Falstaff is by far the most detailed examination of character development in the book. The only other in-depth examinations are those of Shylock in Chapter 9 and Hamlet in Chapter 10, but neither is explored with much detail or affection as Falstaff. Falstaff is traditionally held to be one

of Shakespeare's most transcendent characterizations, and his treatment here fits with that traqdition. The same can be said of Hamlet and Shylock. However, the remains - where is the equally penetrating analysis of Rosalind, whom tradition grants equal admiration?

Once again, the reference to Marlowe's death in this chapter foreshadows the detailed discussion of its circumstances in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

"Master-Mistress" This chapter focuses almost exclusively on Shakespeare's poetry, his many sonnets and his epic poem *Venus and Adonis*. His second epic poem, *The Rape of Lucrece,* is mentioned in passing. The author picks up the narrative of Shakespeare's life and career at the moment of the publication of Robert Greene's anti-Shakespeare tract. Another popular poet of the time, Thomas Nashe, published a desperate attempt to deny any connection with Greene or his tract, and the author suggests that pressure for him to do so came, probably through the intervention of a servant, from the Earl of Southampton, the young aristocrat who eventually became Shakespeare's patron.

The Earl was self-indulgent, very rich, very attractive in an almost effeminate way, and determined not to marry. The author theorizes that Shakespeare was one of several poets hired by the Earl's guardian, one of Queen Elizabeth's most highly placed advisors, to write poetry that would convince the Earl of his responsibility to marry. The author suggests that this opportunity for income came at an opportune time for Shakespeare - the theatres had been closed because of the plague, and he still had his family in Stratford to support. The author suggests that the first seventeen of Shakespeare's sonnets were written to convince the Earl to marry and father children, but that they expressed this sentiment in an unorthodox way - making the suggestion that the Earl perpetuate his beauty through passing it on to a child. The Earl is never specifically named as the subject/focus of the sonnets, and Shakespeare never explicitly identifies himself or his feelings with those of the speaker of the sonnets. This, the author suggests, is typical of the sort of love poetry that most Elizabethan readers favored (see "Quotes, pp. 234 and 249).

Venus and Adonis is described by the author as a "tangle" of romantic and sexual expression. Its subject is the unrequited love the goddess Venus feels for a beautiful, uninterested mortal named Adonis. The poem's composition may or may not have been affected by Shakespeare's own "tangle" of feelings about the Earl, but what's clear from Shakespeare's own preface is that it was written in an effort to gain the Earl's favor (favor in those days generally referring to financial support, social advancement, and legal protection). There is evidence that favor was granted, for as the author indicates, the preface to *The Rape of Lucrece* is much less formal and more intimate. This provides support for the author's theory that Shakespeare had developed romantic, perhaps even sexual, feelings for the Earl. Evidence of this, the author contends, can be found in further sonnets, which seem to leave behind the idea that the addressee, or the Earl, must reproduce and focus on the various relationships the speaker has with the him, a mysterious "dark lady", and other individuals. Again, the actual identities of any of these people are never explicitly defined, but the author presents several possibilities - another patron that Shakespeare had later in life, mysteriously alluring women of Elizabeth's court, etc. There is no evidence that any of the love poetry was ever addressed to Anne Hathaway, or written about her (see "Quotes", p. 254).

The author examines, in some detail, several excerpts from the sonnets and from *Venus and Adonis*, explaining in each case how they can be interpreted as reflections of Shake-speare's feelings and his relationship with the Earl. After a brief commentary on how homosexual affection (if not the actual sexual act) between men was not only tolerated in Elizabethan England but expected, the author tells how the Earl of Southampton eventually married one of Queen Elizabeth's maids, and enjoyed a long and relatively happy marriage. Shakespeare, the author suggests, remained tied by duty to his family in Stratford and by love to the beautiful young man who seems to have awakened new depths in his soul. In conclusion, he suggests that "...it is to his beautiful male friend that [Shakespeare] writes his most celebrated words about love: 'let me not to the marriage of true minds/admit impediments'" (Sonnet 116, lines 1-2).

The title for this chapter is a quote from Sonnet 20, in which Shakespeare refers to the "master-mistress" of his passion. The term, both in the sonnet and as the heading of this chapter, sums up the sexual and romantic ambiguity at the heart of most of the sonnets, as well as at the (theoretical) heart of the relationship between Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton. It's interesting to note that while the author proposes a very definite link between the young man who figures so prominently in the sonnets and a particular individual (the Earl), he doesn't do so for an equally prominent figure in the sonnets - the mysterious dark lady. Is this the result of a lack of evidence, or a lack of interest, or a lack of space? Meanwhile, references to the Earl here foreshadow his passing appearance in Chapter 10, as a supporter of a brief, rapidly subdued rebellion against the power and authority of Queen Elizabeth.

Another aspect of this ambiguity is the role gender confusion plays in both the action and thematic development of plays. This is particularly true of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, which have clever, beautiful young women disguised as men indirectly courting the men they love, who themselves think they're dealing only with beautiful young men. This technique was first developed in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, a much less sophisticated play, and is also used in *Cymbeline*, although the cross-dressing heroine in that play remains mostly clear of the romantic entanglements of the other plays. In any case, the lines of male/female love and sexual expression are blurred throughout Shakespeare's work, not just in the sonnets. It seems that, for Shakespeare, intimate relationships for men and women were not as straightforward as many would have them be.

The evidence linking Shakespeare to the Earl is perhaps less circumstantial than the evidence for many of the author's other theories in this book. The dedication of *The Rape of Lucrec*e is unquestionably tied to the Earl. Again, however, evidence of any other kind of relationship is circumstantial, leading to logical but not iron-clad deductions. The author stops just short of suggesting that the poems, and the references to love in the plays, are almost the only indications of Shakespeare's capacity for and feelings about love that exist. This does appear to be the case, although it doesn't necessarily follow that Shakespeare was being anything but a professional poet and playwright when he wrote what he did. This suggests another way of looking at the question the book is - is it inevitable that such an artist's work can, and will, be affected by his/her life?

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

"Laughter at the Scaffold" This chapter takes a step back in time, beginning at a point in Shakespeare's life and career when Christopher Marlowe was still alive. The author describes the likelihood of a friendly personal relationship but intense professional rivalry between the two men, suggesting that the circle of playwrights and theatre professionals in which they both moved was small enough that they had to have known each other. He describes their similarities - love of language and learning, intense attraction to the theatre - and indicates they were the same age, born within weeks of each other. There were, however, substantial differences between the two writers. Marlowe was socially and politically outspoken, homosexually oriented and sexually liberated, a drinker and a brawler. Shakespeare, on the other hand (as indicated by his discretion in the sonnets - see "Chapter 8), was socially and politically reticent, sexually careful, tied by both emotion and financial commitment to his family, and generally not a reveler. Finally, the author suggests that professionally they respected and competed with each other, with both publishing epic poems, historical dramas, and - the main focus of this chapter - plays with Jews as central characters.

According to historical records, the Jewish people were deported from England hundreds of years before the time of Shakespeare, but they left behind an increasingly darkening and fantastical reputation (see "Quotes, p. 258-259). That being said, at the time Shakespeare was living and working in London there were many Jews who had, at least superficially, converted to Christianity - Elizabeth I turned a blind eye to non-Protestant, Catholic and/or Jewish religious practices as long as people attended the government-mandated church services every week. One of these people was Elizabeth's personal physician, Dr. Lopez, who was tried on suspicion of both heresy and treason and executed in a gruesome, bloody public display at which Shakespeare, the author suggests, might have been present. Whether he was or not, Lopez protested in his last moments of life that he was a true subject of both Elizabeth and of Jesus Christ. But the crowds gath-ered to witness his execution laughed cruelly - and it was this laughter, the author sug-gests, that played at least some part in the creation of Shylock, the Jewish money lender who plays a central role in the otherwise comic *The Merchant of Venice*.

Marlowe's play about a Jew was *The Jew of Malta*, in which the central character, Barabas, is such a thorough, despicable, melodramatic villain that, the author suggests, he cannot have been taken seriously - that he is, in fact, an attempt to satirize the attitudes of the English towards Jews. According to the author, unlike Shakespeare's Shylock, Marlowe's Barabas has no humanizing qualities, no speech protesting that he too is a human being. He (Barabas) is a pure villain, through and through. Shylock does behave villainously, insisting that a debt of "a pound of flesh" owed to him be paid. But the author suggests that because Shylock has also made a plea for his own humanity, the taunts of those who belittle him and the triumph of those who legally defeat him are

painful and uncomfortable to watch - perhaps as painful, the author suggests, as the humiliation of Lopez in the moments before his execution. Is the laughter of the crowd on that occasion, the author asks, the same kind of laughter as the obviously bigoted and cruel taunters of Shylock?

Also in this chapter, the author includes a description of the death of Christopher Marlowe. He was, according to the inquest into his death, killed by accident in an argument over a bar bill. But according to later investigations, the bar in which he was killed and the persons by whom he was killed were both involved in Queen Elizabeth's secret spy network. There has, for centuries, been speculation that Marlowe was deliberately murdered because of involvement with Elizabeth's spies. This theory, the author suggests, is not likely ever to be conclusively proven.

This relatively short and tightly focused chapter repeats a technique to the analysis of Falstaff in Chapter 7 - a detailed but theoretical consideration of a character's development. The depth with which the author examines Shylock and Falstaff is unique. One possible reason for this is indicated by the author himself - that Shylock, like Falstaff, grew out of control, becoming a larger, more powerful and dramatically effective creation than the author either predicted or planned. In other words, , these characters transcend both life and art, becoming archetypal and universal, larger than life and emblematic of life itself - Falstaff in the living of it, Shylock in the suffering in it.

The author suggests for the second time in this book a close relationship between the work of Christopher Marlowe and the work of Shakespeare. Ultimately, the comparisons make similar points - that Marlowe's writing was dramatically effective and poetically powerful, but lacked the humanity and transcendent depths of Shakespeare's. There is the hint, in fact, that in his writing Shakespeare paid much more attention to the realities of the world and the people in it than Marlowe did - this is perhaps the reason why Shakespeare's plays are much more thematically expansive, poetically varied, emotionally dynamic and ultimately dramatically effective than Marlowe's. In this context, Marlowe's death can be seen as emblematic of both his life and his work - violent, sudden, and impulsive. The contrast with Shakespeare's relatively quiet death, described in Chapter 12 as taking place in relative peace, at home, in the company of his family, is both significant and telling, as evocative of the man's humanistic perspective as Marlowe's death is of his more intense point of view and experience.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

"Speaking with the Dead" This chapter begins with a brief reference to the illness and death of Shakespeare's son Hamnet, and then discusses in depth the circumstances Shakespeare would have left behind in London when he went to Stratford to his son's funeral. One of these was the state of the particular theater in which Shakespeare's company performed and in which his plays were produced. The author recounts how financial and legal disputes between the businessmen and playwrights who ran the theatre led to an act of what some would call vandalism and others would call entrepreneurship. Under the cover of night, Shakespeare and other members of his company dismantled the theatre, took it to another location, and began to rebuild it. Legal attempts by the owner to get either the theatre back or a substantial financial settlement failed, because of the terms of the previous owner's lease. The new theatre was called the Globe, and Shakespeare was a key investor, an important actor, and its principal playwright.

At the same time, political intrigue in the court of Elizabeth I was at a high. Her current favorite, the Earl of Essex, staged a rebellion against her authority (a rebellion which had the support of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton - see Chapter 8). Essex was executed for his crimes and the Earl was imprisoned, but later set free. At the same time Shakespeare's play *Richard II*, which tells the story of a feeble monarch being deposed, was being performed. Elizabeth reacted badly, seeing the desires of Essex and others in the actions of the play's deposers, and believed that Shakespeare and other members of his company supported Essex's rebellion. Intense efforts by members of Shakespeare's company prevented the troupe's being disbanded and their members being arrested. The author suggests that Shakespeare realized his company needed a success to regain their financial stability and public reputation, and so returned to a practice he and other playwrights of the time had frequently, and successfully followed in the past - the rewriting of an earlier play. The play he wrote was, for reasons the author goes into in significant depth, *Hamlet*.

The author then begins his examination of what makes *Hamlet* such a remarkable achievement by describing how Shakespeare, over the course of his career, developed a technique of revealing human introspection - the soliloquy. He traces the development of sophistication in this technique through its early appearances in *Richard III, Richard II* and *Julius Caesar*, in particular the development of the way in which Shakespeare uses it to define and manifest the thought process of his characters. The author then lists and describes the several sources from which Shakespeare took his story, including the original Danish tale of a murdered king and his vengeful son and also previous plays written on the subject. One of these might have been written by Shakespeare's contemporary, Christopher Marlowe's roommate, Thomas Kyd. The author offers evidence that buried within Hamlet's plots are references to the overwhelming power of kings and to the desirability of change, both references to the incident involving Essex

and Southampton. Finally, the author delves deeply into Shakespeare's psychological and spiritual circumstances at the time he was composing *Hamlet* - the death of his son, the impending death of his father, and a persistent belief of English people in ghosts. Most importantly, the author suggests, is the enforced absence of Catholic faith and ritual - in particular, the freedom to pray (and to pay for prayer) for the soul of the dead (see "Quotes, p. 321). "He responded not with prayers but with the deepest expression of his being: *Hamlet*."

It would be extremely difficult to avoid seeing the connections between the death of Shakespeare's son and the creation of what many would suggest is not just his greatest play, but the greatest play of all time. The author's exploration of those connections comes across as one of the most plausible of the many similar explorations that occur throughout the book. The connection goes beyond the similarity between the two. The overwhelming impression given by this chapter is that in the author's opinion, Hamlet's sense of grief, loss and confusion over the death of his father is firmly and thoroughly grounded in Shakespeare's similar feelings over the death of his son. This argument makes more emotional sense than many of the book's other arguments, which rely almost exclusively on circumstantial evidence. This is not to say that there is no circumstantial evidence at work here. The references to the Essex rebellion, for example, and to the consequent financial reasons for creating *Hamlet* are, as usual, documented incidents that quite possibly could have effected Shakespeare and his work, but weren't necessarily as direct an influence as the author seems to believe.

The technique of the soliloquy discussed in this chapter is now common and used, as the author himself explains, to explore the "inwardness" of an individual. An actor, alone on stage, speaks his/her thoughts aloud, either as a manifestation of intense feeling, as a means of working through a dilemma, or a revelation of previously unrevealed truth. *Hamlet* contains several soliloquies, some of Shakespeare's most famous made up of and evocative, writing. This is particularly true of the soliloquy beginning with "To be or not to be," which poeticizes the the contemplation of suicide. Soliloquies in later plays, particularly those found in *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, dig even more deeply into the emotional and technical ground Shakespeare mined throughout his career but explored most effectively in *Hamlet*.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

"Bewitching the King" This chapter begins with a brief continuation of the author's analysis of *Hamlet*, in which the author suggests that Shakespeare's most significant innovation with this play was not the soliloquy, but the removal of motivation - the explanation of why characters do what they do. By removing motivation in *Hamlet*, and later in *King Lear* and *Othello*, Shakespeare took plays out of the realm of staged storytelling and further into the realm of psychological and spiritual study. The author further suggests that Shakespeare thereby created characters that were, in fact, more accurate representations of the individual psyche.

At this point the author recounts how, as the result of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's position as the pre-eminent playwright of his day was assured. His plays were constantly produced and he was making enough money to buy a large, well furnished home for his family in Stratford. The author reports that over successive years Shakespeare acquired more and more land in Stratford, enough to make him a gentleman by property if not by birth. His position was reinforced even further after the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession to the throne of King James I, who enjoyed theatre even more than the Queen had. It was during his reign that Shakespeare's company became "The King's Men", officially endorsed and supported by James himself. It was also during James' reign that the second of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies was written - *Macbeth.*

The author goes into extensive detail about *Macbeth's* origins - how one of its central characters, the upstanding and noble Banquo, was a re-invention of one of James' ancestors, and how the play played upon the King's well known superstition and fear of witchcraft. James himself, in fact, published a book about witches - their abilities, their manifestations, and ways they could be spotted. The author cites evidence in both James' book and *Macbeth* to suggest that Shakespeare used the book as a direct source for the incantations of the Witches and the visions Macbeth experiences.

The author then suggests that another important source for *Macbeth*, albeit an indirect one, was what has become known as the Gunpowder Plot - a plan formulated by Catholic radicals to blow up both Parliament and the King. James himself, thanks to the clever intervention of one of his courtiers, played an important role in the breaking up of the Plot. The author proposes that Shakespeare, aware of this and eager, as always, to improve his position at court, incorporated the story, albeit obliquely, into the plot for *Macbeth*. Macbeth succeeds in his plot to kill the rightful king, but he is ultimately punished for it. The author suggests that in having Macbeth meet a similar end to those who perpetrated the Gunpowder Plot, Shakespeare suggests that any and all who plot against their rightful ruler will suffer the consequences.

The author concludes this chapter with a another to Shakespeare's excision of motivation from his characters. The author points out that Macbeth clearly does have a

motive for doing what he does, but nevertheless faces an opaqueness of understanding similar to the opaqueness in *Hamlet*. Macbeth knows what he's doing, and why, but doesn't understand either the intensity of his ambition, it's source, or the increasing horrors in his conscience. It's significant to note that at the end of *Macbeth*, the witches who triggered these horrors remain unpunished. As such, the author suggests Shakespeare is saying, they represent "a monstrous threat to the fabric of civilized life" - powerful examples of the mystery and opaqueness Shakespeare discovered in *Hamlet*, developed further in *Macbeth*, and found in every living being (see "Quotes, p. 355).

The continued analysis of *Hamlet* that begins this chapter, its discussions of "opaqueness", comes across as the most obscure and difficult to follow of all the author's arguments. The conclusion of this chapter, in which the author again refers to "opaqueness" but this time in relation to the witches, is no less obscure. Essentially, he proposes that Hamlet and the witches, and characters such as Lear in *King Lear*, Iago in *Othello* and, to a degree, Prospero in *The Tempest*, act without an obvious or discernible motive, or reason. They do what they do, and it's up to the audience to figure out why, since the playwright offers no explanation. There are undoubtedly those working, either as academics or professionals, in contemporary theatre who would see this as a flaw - for the most part, contemporary theatre is all about exploring, and defining motivations and explanations. The author here suggests that Shakespeare's understanding of humanity, and skill at dramatizing that understanding, is so transcendent that no explanations are needed. Human beings simply are what they are, and they do what they do - in life how many people, the theory goes, truly know why? These so-called "opaque" characters might, in fact, be seen as elements and/or forces of nature, aspects of humanity in its deepest form - Hamlet, is pure doubt and indecision, the Witches pure evil, Lear pure confusion, Iago pure jealousy, Prospero pure power.

Macbeth, and its central characters, are first discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. There the focus is on the relationship, marital and emotional, between Macbeth and his wife. In this chapter, the focus is on Macbeth's inner being, and the author is quite careful to portray Macbeth as a completely different character from Hamlet, particularly in terms of the clarity of his motivation. He is quite successful in this, as he is in presenting the case that many of *Macbeth's* references to evil and magic were inspired by James' interest in the subject. He in fact shows several instances in which actual words and phrases were taken from James' book and inserted into the play. This, of course, can be seen as flattery - and likely a writer taking advantage of somebody else having done his research for him. All that that being said, the author's exploration of the possible relationship between the socio-political environment of the time (the Gunpowder Plot) comes across as one of his weaker arguments.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

"The Triumph of the Everyday" The author begins this chapter, which focuses on the final days of Shakespeare's life and career, with an examination of *King Lear*, one of the playwright's greater tragedies. First, the author documents the similarities between the situation at the beginning of the play, in which the aged, almost demented king demands to know which of his three daughters loves him best, and a sensational court case in which two greedy daughters attempt to get their wealthy father declared insane in order to inherit his property. He also finds parallels in earlier stage versions of the story, which were in fact based upon a legendary character, the pre-Christian British King Leir. Finally, the author contrasts the attitudes in both the legal case and the legend with those of the time, in which elders were respected and honored and taken care of by their children, albeit at times as the result of legal or royal command.

The author then develops parallels between Lear's situation and Shakespeare's own. Having saved enough money to buy New Place, his expansive new home in Stratford), Shakespeare makes strenuous efforts in his will to ensure that most of his property goes to the one person he knows loves him - his daughter Susanna. It's this relationship, the author suggests - between father and daughter - that forms the basis of central relationships in several of the last major plays. These include *King Lear*, in which the king finally realizes the devotion of his youngest daughter, Cordelia, as well as *The Tempest*, in which the aged magician Prospero has a close, if volatile, relationship with his daughter Miranda. There is also a relationship between father and daughter in *Pericles*, in which the long-separated Pericles and Marina are finally reunited in the same way that Shakespeare, at the end of his career, was reunited with his beloved Susanna. This reunion, the author suggests, is perhaps the principal reason behind Shakespeare's decision to leave the excitement, income, and creative possibilities of London at a time when they were all at their peak and return to the quiet life of a country gentleman in Stratford - he wanted to be a father and grandfather.

The author proposes that there were other factors involved in Shakespeare's decision to retire to Stratford. Because he was one of its principle shareholders, reconstruction of the Globe Theatre, which had burned down during a performance of his play *Henry VIII*, would have cost Shakespeare a great deal of time, money and energy that he wasn't prepared to expend - not at the cost of being away from his family. The author also suggests, based on evidence gleaned from *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, that Shakespeare feared old age and its accompanying physical deterioration. He wanted, the author suggests, to leave his chosen profession while he was still at the peak of his powers - a situation that has distinct parallels to that of Prospero, the central character of *The Tempest*, who himself resolves to turn his back on his magical powers at the exact moment when they are at their peak. The author suggests, like many other scholars, that Prospero is a kind of playwright (see "Quotes", p. 375). In his famous

farewell to his powers and gifts, Prospero gives voice to the transformation at the heart of Shakespeare's return to Stratford.

There is no indication, according to the author, of the precise date of that return. The move wasn't absolute - in the last few years of his life, Shakespeare collaborated on at least three plays, possibly more, with playwrights still in London. Nevertheless, his focus increasingly returned to life at home - the marital troubles of his daughter Judith and her ne'er do well husband, his own illness, local land disputes. There have always, according to the author, been questions about why Shakespeare chose to live his life the way he did in its last months. One last time, the author looks to the writings for an answer, and suggests that aside from the desire to live near his daughter and grandchildren, Shakespeare had never completely renounced the simple, rural, community-oriented life in which he grew up. In his plays, rustics, farmers, tradespeople, the illiterate, the natural - all had received respect equal to that which he afforded kings, lords, and the rich. From the mechanicals in *Midsummer Night's Dream* early in his career to the merry peasants in *The Winter's Tale* at its close, the simple honest values of country people never left him. The author suggests that after all the excitement of life in London, those values held undeniable appeal for a genius who "loved to reveal the presence of ordinariness in the midst of the extraordinary."

Shakespeare died in 1916, and was buried in the Stratford parish church under an inscription urging anyone and everyone to leave his bones untouched. The author suggests that Shakespeare wrote the inscription himself with the express intention of preventing Anne Hathaway from being interred with him.

The author explores this stage of Shakespeare's development as the best documented of his life. This is not only because of the infamous will, but also a great many legal documents recording his activities. That being said, when one considers what was going on in Shakespeare's heart and soul, ultimately there is little difference one's ability to judge between this stage and any other stage of his life. The legal documentation proves where he was, it does nothing to prove who he was or why he was that way. The evidence defining the origins of *King Lear*, however, is relatively convincing - the legal documents still exist, as do documentations of the legend of King Leir.

In all the author's references to Shakespearean plays of this period containing stories of fathers and daughters, one play is conspicuous by its absence. *Cymbeline*, which as previously discussed (see "Chapter 7 Analysis") is generally regarded as one of his less successful plays, has as its central character a daughter, Imogen, estranged from her father, Cymbeline, but reunited with him again at the play's conclusion. The play and its central character, like *King Lear*, is based on actual, historically documented characters, and while not a particularly effective play, nevertheless displays several of the characteristics of other plays of this period.

The parallels between the characters and experiences of Shakespeare and Prospero have, as the author points out, been commented upon several times throughout history. Both are older men, both are able to work a kind of "magic" - Shakespeare through his words, Prospero through sorcery - and both remove themselves from the worlds in

which their "magic" is most powerful. The parallel perhaps goes even further than the author suggests - at the end of *The Tempest,* Prospero says he's going to put away his magic, but is never actually seen doing it. In fact in his epilogue he refers, albeit obliquely, to using it again. Is there a parallel here between Shakespeare saying he's going to leave theatre behind him, but still writing three or four more plays?

The book, and indeed Shakespeare's life, ends where it begins - in the relative peace and quiet of Stratford-upon-Avon, far away from the hustling, dream-enabling world of London. Did Shakespeare in fact have the kind of life the author suggests he had? How much did he miss the life he left behind in Stratford? The book offers no real answers, but the fact that he did return to Stratford suggests that, in spite of having been so successful in the London, there was something unsatisfying about life there, and something more satisfying about life in Stratford. What exactly those somethings were will probably remain a mystery. The author of *Will in the World* makes a very good effort at offering some answers to these and many of the other mysteries associated with Shakespeare and his life and his work. But ultimately the question is this - how important is it to know the answers? Is it not enough for the work to merely exist, for it to have been created at all? It's tempting to imagine Shakespeare looking at this book and smiling mysteriously to himself, knowing that only he, like any artist, knows the truth of how his work came to be.

Characters

William Shakespeare

John Shakespeare

Mary Arden

Elizabeth I

Edmund Campion

Anne Hathaway

Susanna, Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare

Sir Thomas Lucy

Robert Greene

Christopher Marlowe

The Earl of Southampton

King James I

Objects/Places

Stratford upon Avon

This is the small town in rural England in which Shakespeare was born and grew up, to which he returned at the end of his life, and where he is buried. It is a small agricultural community built along the banks of the Avon River, and is now home to an expansive theatre festival that presents, almost exclusively, Shakespeare's works.

The Forest of Arden

This is a large expanse of forest to the north and west of Stratford which, for many years, belonged to the family of Shakespeare's mother, the Ardens. The name is used in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, in which several characters take refuge from the various and numerous dangers of the world - and, at the same time, learn important truths about themselves and about life.

Lancashire

This English county was the likely destination for the late adolescent Shakespeare who, according to the author's research, spent time as a schoolteacher there in a community some distance from Stratford. At the time, this county was extensively populated by secretive Roman Catholics, who kept their faith secret from the violent pro-Protestant English government. The author presents evidence that it was in Lancashire that Shakespeare encountered several important religious figures and was forced to confront his personal faith - or lack thereof.

Gloves

Shakespeare's father was a designer and maker of gloves, which in Elizabethan times could be functional or extraordinarily decorative. John Shakespeare specialized in the latter sort, gloves made of expensive, well tanned leathers and expansively decorated. Will Shakespeare presumably worked in his father's shop and apprenticed in the trade - references to tanning, various leathers, and to the layers of protection and masking offered by gloves abound in his writing.

The Coat of Arms

In Elizabethan times, formal coats of arms could only be owned or presented by the aristocracy. Shakespeare's father attempted to purchase a coat of arms for his family, but failed. The attempt was later revived by Will, who in later life became a wealthy

landowner as well as a successful playwright. His attempt was successful, but he was frequently mocked for having ambitions above his station.

London

England's capital city, at the time a center of political, royal, and debauched activity. It was divided into two sections - within the ancient Roman walls, where the wealthy and notable and noble lived, and outside the walls, where the less wealthy, less notable and less noble scrabbled to make their living. The theatres in which Shakespeare's plays were produced were located outside the walls.

The Theater, the Curtain, the Rose, the Hope

These four theatres were the largest and most successful of the many theatres open in London's suburbs at the time Shakespeare began his career. There is no documentation of which theatre hosted the first performances of his plays, or his own first performances as an actor. The likelihood is, however, that it was one of these four. All were capable of holding hundreds of spectators, all at times hosted other entertainment events such as bear-baiting or wrestling, and all were open to the sky and climate, with only wealthy attendees being able to afford the roofed shelter of the upper stories.

The Globe Theatre and the New Globe Theater

The Globe Theater was home to many of the productions of Shakespeare's later plays. It was built out of the de-constructed Theater, which was dismantled in the middle of the night and removed to another location, where it became the basis of the Globe. It burned down a few years later, but was rapidly rebuilt as the New Globe. Like other theatres of the time it was open to the sky and to the weather, but was capable of holding hundreds more people and, therefore, making more money for Shakespeare and his co-owners.

New Place

As the result of his successes in the London theatre, Shakespeare was able to purchase The New Place as a home for his family - his wife Anne, his children Hamnet, Judith and Susanna, and his father and mother. It had a large main building as well as an expansive land base and several barns. As his success and wealth increased, he was able to purchase more property surrounding New Place, and eventually died one of the largest landowners in Stratford.

Shakespeare's Will and the Second-Best Bed

Shakespeare's will, written a few months before he died and revised a few weeks later, is significant for what it doesn't include as much as for what it does. Specifically, in the original will his wife Anne is left absolutely nothing - all Shakespeare's wealth and property is left to his daughter, Susanna. In the revision, however, Shakespeare leaves Anne his "second best bed", one of the most famous legacies of all time. The exact reasons for this very specific legacy have never been absolutely defined, but the author of *Will in the World* makes several plausible suggestions. It certainly has the air of an insult, but one never knows - particularly where Shakespeare is concerned.

Themes

The Relationship between Life and Art

The core theme of the book, which is also at the core of its thesis, is that there is a clear and provable relationship between events in Shakespeare's life and his writings. The author suggests that all art, to one degree or another, is composed of this kind of transmutation, but also suggests that Shakespeare, because of his extraordinary genius as a poet and transmuter of human nature, had greater success at it than almost any other artist in history - certainly greater than any other dramatist. The author takes great pains to present evidence in support of both the theme and the thesis, everything from Shakespeare's christening records to financial records to documentations of his appearances as a witness in lawsuits to his last will and testament. The author discusses each piece of evidence within the context of a particular piece of writing, thus simultaneously developing the theme and proving the thesis. What's important to note is that in each chapter, both theme and thesis are sub-divided into a secondary theme and thesis. For example, Chapter 4 ("Wooing, Wedding and Repenting") explores the central theme in terms of Shakespeare's experiences of, and writings about, marriage and relationships. What was it about Shakespeare's marriage and his feelings about love that colors the writing in his plays and poems? Another clear example can be found in Chapter 7 ("Laughter at the Scaffold"), which suggests and explores a direct link between Shakespeare's feelings about Jews and the creation of *The Merchant of Venice*. In short, each chapter develops its own, secondary theme, but always within the context of the larger, over-reaching theme - that Shakespeare's art drew heavily on personal experience for its transcendent, timeless sense of human truth.

Sub-Themes

Aside from the previously discussed sub-themes in Chapters 4 and 7, there are several other sub-themes in this book. These include explorations of Shakespeare's childhood experiences of theatre and performance (Chapters 1 and 2), his experiences of cultural, religious and societal tensions, (Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 11), his experiences with family, (Chapters 4, 10 and 12), and his experiences with friends, colleagues and supporters (Chapters 7 and 8). All these themes are explored within the context of how the experiences of his life affected his work. It must be noted that while each sub-theme is extensively developed within its own chapter, references to them are not limited to their respective chapters. In other words, there is a degree of cross-pollination - experiences of family are related to experiences with religion, which are in turn related to experiences in theatre, and so on and so forth. This supports the author's principal theme and thesis, that experiences in Shakespeare's life are inextricably woven with the theatrical transcendence of his work. Of all these sub-themes, those involving Shakespeare's relationships with his family seem, according to the author and the evidence he presents, to have affected him most - in particular, his relationships with his father, daughter and son. Interestingly, his relationship with his wife seems to have

affected him with relatively less impact. Whatever the relationship, however, and whatever the sub-theme, the core theme remains the same - that Shakespeare took his reality, whether dull or devastating or day-to-day, and transformed it into some of the most powerful theatre the world has ever seen.

Family and Family Life

Family relationships are a major theme in Shakespeare's plays and a major theme in *Will in the World*. Especially important are marriage and fatherhood. According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare's marriage to Anne Hathaway was an unhappy one. He chose to live apart from her for most of their married life, and on dying he left her only his "second best bed." In the plays, although the comedies end in marriages and some of the tragedies involve married couples, Shakespeare expresses a sour view of the prospects for happiness in marriage. Shakespeare may have had complicated emotions about his father, John, who was prominent and prosperous during Will's early childhood but lost status and money during his young adulthood. One of the recurring themes in the plays is the "dream of restoration," in which characters are restored to their former happiness. Shakespeare's own son, Hamnet, died at age eleven, a loss that possibly inspired Shakespeare's masterpiece, *Hamlet*. Later plays, such as *King Lear* and *The Tempest* show his interest in father-daughter relationships. He had two daughters, Susannah and Judith, and he clearly favored Susannah, the first born. Greenblatt concludes that Shakespeare retired to Stratford to live with Susannah and her family.

Religion

Shakespeare's England was troubled by extreme religious conflict, with the Protestant Queen Elizabeth attempting to root out Catholicism from the land. As a youth, Shakespeare might have experienced a household that was divided by this conflict; his mother came from a prominent Catholic family, and his father, as a town official, had to enforce the anti-Catholic policies. Before he began his career as an actor and playwright, Shakespeare may have worked as a school teacher in Lancashire, a northern province that was a stronghold of recusants, or people who refused to adopt Protestantism. Greenblatt argues that the play that many consider to be Shakespeare's greatest, *Hamlet*, is shaped by this conflict. He contends that the play grew out of the anxiety created by the abolition of Catholic rituals and beliefs concerning the dead, especially the belief that the deceased were held up to suffer in purgatory before they could move on to Heaven. The Protestants pronounced Purgatory to be a falsehood. Just as Hamlet is troubled by the unsettled state of his father, who returns as a ghost, Shakespeare may have been troubled about the soul of his dead son, Hamnet, and the approaching death of his father.

Success and Social Status

In Shakespeare's youth, his father, John, was successful in a number of business enterprises and enjoyed considerable status as a local government official. However, whether because of alcoholism, religious conflict, or a combination of factors, he fell on hard times financially and lost his status. Greenblatt depicts Shakespeare as quite industrious and concerned with status. As a playwright, he worked diligently, turning out an average of two plays a year; he also had a major financial stake in his theater company. Although, unlike his rivals, the University Wits, he only had a grammar school education, he became London's leading playwright. He renewed his father's application to be officially recognized as a gentleman with a coat of arms, and he retired to the second largest house in Stratford having fulfilled his "dream of restoration."

Types of Shakespearean Plays

A number of literary genres are important to *Will in the World*. As a child, Shakespeare would have been exposed to late medieval forms, such as morality plays and mystery cycles. Morality plays were allegories performed by traveling players, in which the characters stood for abstract principles, such as Virtue or Pride, and the plays taught clear lessons. Mystery cycles were part of folk festivals and belonged to the Catholic culture that the Protestant government was trying to eliminate. They involved re-enactments of Bible stories, such as the Crucifixion. This folk culture was a clear influence on Shakespeare's adult work as a playwright.

Shakespeare excelled and innovated in the three forms of plays he worked in: histories, comedies, and tragedies. His history plays, such as the *Henry VI* trilogy that helped to establish him as a leading playwright in London, are based on chronicles of earlier times in England or on classical materials, as with *Julius Caesar* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. These feature some of his most memorable characters, such as the evil hunchback Richard III, in the play of that name, and Falstaff, the lighthearted, irresponsible companion to young Henry V in *1 Henry IV*.

Shakespeare's comedies have conventional plots through which the lovers overcome adversity and misunderstanding in order to be joined in marriage. At the same time, Shakespeare manages to have complex explorations of theme. The comedies that Greenblatt discusses most are *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the villain, the Jew Shylock, becomes the focal point of the play, and *The Tempest*, the last play Shakespeare wrote as the sole playwright, in which the character Prospero acts as a playwright within the play, controlling the circumstances and deciding the fates of the other characters.

At perhaps the zenith of his career, Shakespeare wrote four tragedies that are among his most studied and performed works: *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Like all tragedies, these end with the downfall of the title characters. According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare's great innovation is the "excision of motive." That is, rather than making it clear why his characters behave as they do, essentially dooming themselves and others

through their behavior, Shakespeare leaves out this information, making their motives into fascinating mysteries.

Like other Elizabethan playwrights, Shakespeare did not write in ordinary language but, principally, in blank verse. Blank verse is a poetic form that employs non-rhyming lines of iambic pentameter: ten syllables per line, with the accent on the even syllables. In addition to his plays, he was an accomplished poet. His poetic works include 154 sonnets. He was an innovator of the sonnet form, which consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. His version, known as the Shakespearean Sonnet, includes three quatrains, or stanzas of four lines with alternating rhymes, and ends with a rhyming couplet. His sonnets deal principally with themes of love, addressed to still unidentified persons, especially an aristocratic young man and a "dark lady." Shakespeare's longer neoclassical poems, which re-tell the classical myths of "Venus and Adonis" and the "Rape of Lucrece," were enormously popular in his day.

Style

Perspectives

In general terms, the point of view of this book is that of a scientist testing and proving a particular thesis. In this case, the thesis is that the work of William Shakespeare deeply connected to the playwrights' experiences of life. The book appears to have been written from a singular, some might say obsessive, point of view - that of an academic yet imaginative researcher with a sometimes critical, more often adoring, passion for Shakespeare's work. There is definite enthusiasm in this point of view, not to mention evidence of painstaking research and deep thought - this "scientist" has definitely done his homework. There is also the very strong sense that the author has both written and researched from an insistent conviction that his theory is correct, that in spite of offering frequent reminders that what is being presented is hypothetical, he firmly believes that the course of events he describes must have been the way things were. This is not to suggest an over-compensation for implausible theories - on the contrary, his theories are presented with such compelling evidence that they do in fact seem quite likely to be actual fact. But there is the sense that in his enthusiasm to draw connections between the actual and the created, a degree of diminishment of Shakespeare's imaginative accomplishment begins to creep in. The author is far too much of an enthusiast for Shakespeare's work for it to be allowed to creep in too far - in fact, he takes pains to point out that the accomplishment of transmuting the everyday into theatrical magic is even greater than the accomplishment of merely creating. But the fact remains that magic, once explained, becomes just a little less magical. It could be argued that the author's argument is that Shakespeare's illusions are all the more powerful because they're grounded in reality. Perhaps this is true - but the magic of Shakespeare lies ultimately in the wonder, transcendence and universality of what, and who, he created. Explanations of why and how he created become, in some ways, a disservice to a great writer.

Tone

There are three important elements of tone in this book. The first is based in its general use of language, in that it's written in an academic but relatively casual style. This gives the book the tone of being both easy to understand and accessible, in that complexity of many of the theories and connections the author proposes is made more comprehensible by the relative simplicity of his language. The second element of tone is the sense of certainty with which the author presents his theories. Even a not-too-close analysis of the book reveals that the evidence the author presents to support his theories is, for the most part, circumstantial - rarely, however, if ever, does present this as being the case. In other words, he presents his theories in a style both confident and exacting, lending the book a tone of accomplishment and certainty. This combines with the first quality of tone to create the sense that the author is sure the reader will buy into his theories - that they are undoubtedly viable. A critical reader, however, might find this

sense of confidence off-putting, and perhaps even arrogant. In other words, the author is a far from fully objective writer - he seems, in fact, to be quite subjective, interested in developing and presenting his own perspective rather than placing it fully within a more broadly defined context. Yes he refers to other writers and other analyses of the relationship between Shakespeare's life and work - however, these other points of view seem to receive, for the most part, little more than glancing attention. On the other hand there is the third quality of tone, found in passages where the author technique includes precisely excised quotes of Shakespeare's plays to illustrate the relationship between Shakespeare's life and work. These excerpts are, for the most part, quite short but nevertheless come across as specific and incisive. They not only give the reader a vivid sense of the imaginative denseness and poetic power of Shakespeare's writing - they also reinforce the likelihood of relationship between art and life in a way that the more historical, and therefore more circumstantial, evidence does not. The author's intent in writing the book and developing his theories is, as the result of these three elements of tone, very clear, even if the historical sources of theories occasionally come across as being far-fetched and even incredible.

Structure

The book begins with a Preface, in which the author lays out the book's central problem and the means by which he intends to explore it - from what aspects of his life did Shakespeare's transcendent work emerge, and where can information about that life be found (see "Quotes", p.13-14). The Preface is followed by Acknowledgements and then by a Note to the Reader in which the author explains that if it hadn't been for the actions of two of Shakespeare's more enterprising friends who published the first collection of his plays, many of the greatest ones (including *Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest)* would have been lost. Following the Preface, the author begins the book proper, with the first of twelve relatively lengthy chapters, each exploring a particular aspect of Shakespeare's life and experience and relating it, at times in theoretical terms and at times drawing actual connections, to one or more of Shakespeare's writings. The order of these chapters is essentially chronological, weaving together threads of actual evidence of Shakespeare's activities of the time, quotations from the plays and poems, and theories about the relationship between the two. On occasion, however, the chapters move back and forth in time, because of the area of relationship the author is exploring. An example of this can be found in Chapter 7, in which the death of Shakespeare's contemporary and rival Christopher Marlowe is briefly described, and Chapter 9, which begins at a time when Marlowe is still alive and later contains a more detailed description of his death. The book draws to a close as Shakespeare's career and then his life come to an end.

Speculative Biography

Will in the World is a biography of William Shakespeare. Biography is a word derived from Greek, meaning life (bio) writing (graphy). Traditional biographies rely on source materials to reconstruct the life of their subject, or the person the biography is about.

These can include legal records, letters, diaries, and contemporary accounts by people who knew the subject. Unfortunately, there is not enough source material to provide a detailed picture of the man who wrote such masterpieces as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*. What Greenblatt does, then, is to reach beyond the traditional bounds of the genre of biography by speculating, or making educated guesses about how Shakespeare might have lived. He combines an understanding of the historical time and place in which Shakespeare lived with the available information about Shakespeare's life and interpretations of Shakespeare's works. For example, in Chapter 1, he knows that Shakespeare was in Stratford in 1575, when Queen Elizabeth visited nearby Kenilworth; he speculates that Shakespeare might have attended the Queen's entertainments, or at least read about them, and he traces a connection between these entertainments and the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Greenblatt's speculations stray from the known into the realm of the supposed, and have caused controversy and even dismissal by several critics and academics.

Historical Context

Elizabethan and Jacobean Ages

Shakespeare was born near the beginning of the Elizabethan Age, during which the ruler of Britain was Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603), and he worked and lived into the Jacobean Age, under James I (1603–1625). Despite the long reigns of these monarchs, the period from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries was one of great social change within England, accompanied by political unrest. The religious conflicts that were set in motion when Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father, left the Roman Catholic Church were a constant source of fear and violence. Both Elizabeth and James were in constant fear of assassination. Greenblatt describes a time that was heavily legalistic, with constant petty lawsuits and criminal prosecutions. "London was a nonstop theater of punishments" where offenders were tortured and sometimes executed in public. Daily life was strictly regulated, but this was also a time when someone like Shakespeare could leave his hometown and his father's profession, and rise up in the world. Finally, this period was a heyday for literature and especially drama: Shakespeare was the foremost of many playwrights and poets to flourish during the Elizabethan and Jacobean Ages.

Contemporary Culture

The context for *Will in the World* is our own—a world in which William Shakespeare is very much alive as the most influential and popular literary artist in the English language, and maybe all languages. His influence goes well beyond literature: he permeates our culture. His plays *Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* are among the most commonly taught works in high school English. Students of those plays might recognize such lines as:

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" (*Romeo and Juliet* act 1, scene 2)

"Et tu, Brute!" (*Julius Caesar* act 3, scene 1)

"To be or not to be, that is the question" (*Hamlet* act 3, scene 1)

"Out, damned spot! out, I say!" (*Macbeth* act 5, scene 1)

More significantly, those lines would be familiar to many people who have not read the plays. They have been absorbed into our popular culture. Similarly, Shakespeare's plays are regularly performed; many have been adapted as films, and many have been reinterpreted in modern forms. For example, the adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* include an opera by Charles Gounod, a ballet with music by Sergei Prokofiev, the musical *West Side Story* by Stephen Sondheim, and several films, including one directed by Baz Luhrmann with Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in the lead roles.

Similarly, the comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted as a musical, *Kiss Me Kate*, and a movie, *Ten Things I Hate About You*, set in a modern high school. Shakespeare is such a lasting and pervasive presence in our culture that it is difficult to imagine what it would be like if he had never existed.

Accordingly, there is a great deal of interest in the man as well as the works, such that a biography of Shakespeare—nearly four hundred years after his death—could well be a popular and commercial success. In his review of *Will in the World* for the *London Review of Books*, Colin Burrow complains that Greenblatt's biography is selling much more briskly than, for example, *King Lear*: "People are a lot more likely to buy books about Shakespeare's life than they are to buy books by Shakespeare." Yet it is natural to be curious about the Elizabethan man whose imagination has had such a role in shaping today's world. In his "Preface," Greenblatt himself asks, "How is an achievement of this magnitude to be explained? How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare?"

Academia

There is another relevant context to *Will in the World*: academia, or the professional world of higher education. This is the context that Greenblatt emerges from, as an English professor at Harvard University. Most academics write books and articles that are read only by other academics. A few, like the historian Simon Schama, Greenblatt's Harvard colleague Louis Menand, the literary critic Harold Bloom, and Greenblatt himself, achieve such pre-eminence within their fields that they are able to cross over and write for a general educated audience. Greenblatt has achieved so much influence and stature within academia that, even before *Will in the World*, he has become known outside of it. He is perhaps the best-known scholarly literary critic of the early twenty-first century. As Christina Nehring writes in her review of *Will in the World* for the *Atlantic Monthly*, the project represents a meeting of "the biggest literary genius of all time and the biggest literary scholar of our own time." Some scholarly readers, however, are suspicious of books like *Will in the World* that are written for non-specialized audiences. They consider them simplistic, watered-down, and insufficiently documented. It is not coincidental that some of the book's harshest critics, like Colin Burrow in the *London Review*, are also professors of English who specialize in Shakespeare.

At the same time, it may be useful for general readers to recognize the traces of more specialized writing in *Will in the World*. Instead of closely documenting his sources with footnotes, Greenblatt provides "Bibliographical Notes" for each chapter near the end of the book. At moments, such as when Greenblatt writes, "London was a nonstop theater of punishments," the reader can hear an echo of the French social philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault. Foucault, the author of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, is very influential in academia, and particularly in Greenblatt's critical method, New Historicism. Finally, near the end of the book, one finds a version of an argument that Greenblatt presented in an earlier, more scholarly book, *Hamlet in Purgatory*.

Critical Overview

One of the noteworthy aspects to the criticism of *Will in the World* is that there is so much of it. The book has drawn an enormous amount of notice for a book by a literary critic and about a literary topic. Within months of its publication, it had been featured in most book review sections of newspapers and magazines in the United States and England. Overall, this criticism has been favorable. That is, it has received far more positive reviews than negative ones. For some critics, Greenblatt has written the best of the Shakespeare biographies, surpassing his predecessors through his insightful connections between Shakespeare's life and his works. Typical of these is Adam Gopnik, who reviewed *Will in the World* for the *New Yorker*:

Greenblatt's book is startlingly good—the most complexly intelligent and sophisticated, and yet the most keenly enthusiastic, study of the life and work taken together that I have ever read. Greenblatt knows the life and period deeply, has no hobbyhorses to ride, and makes, one after another, exquisitely sensitive and persuasive connections between what the eloquent poetry says and what the fragmentary life suggests.

Other reviewers agree in praising Greenblatt's insightfulness, and they also commend his literary style as elegant and eloquent, without calling attention to itself. Yet they are less persuaded than Gopnik by Greenblatt's articles. Colm Toibin, writing for the *New York Times*, sums up the view of several critics that Greenblatt is too willing to engage in guesswork, or to base claims on insufficient evidence: "Almost every step forward in reconstructing his life involves a step backward into conjecture and a further step sometimes into pure foolishness."

Christina Nehring, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, is less concerned with Greenblatt's conclusions than with his critical method. She deems Greenblatt's New Historicism, the practice of placing literature in its historical context to show how texts are shaped by cultural forces, to be inadequate as a way of explaining Shakespeare. The power of *Hamlet*, she argues, cannot be explained through reference to Elizabethan religious conflicts. Shakespeare's art is timeless—it evokes themes and emotions that transcend any particular historical period.

Nehring's response, however, is somewhat unusual. Most of the critics address their comments to Greenblatt's speculations about Shakespeare's life and its connection to his works. Many, like Gopnik, consider these speculations to be convincing. They praise *Will in the World* as a spectacular achievement. Others, like Toibin, are less persuaded, and their reviews are mixed or negative.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Newman teaches in the English Department of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In this essay, Newman examines Greenblatt's process of inference, or educated guesswork, in Will in the World.

At the beginning of his "Preface" to *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt summarizes William Shakespeare's rise from obscurity to become a playwright of almost supernatural range and ability, whose work has the power to transport all kinds of audiences, not only of his generation but of every generation that followed. "How is an achievement of this magnitude to be explained? How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare?" The first Shakespeare in Greenblatt's question is the man born into anonymity, the son of a glove maker in a provincial town. The second Shakespeare is less a person than a larger-than-life entity, whose mention automatically brings to mind the idea of great literature. How does Greenblatt connect the two?

"How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare?" is a variant of the usual question underlying literary biographies. One looks at the artistic achievement and wonder: how did he, or she, accomplish that? How can the art be explained by the life? Generally, in answering this question, the biographer puts three types of information into relationship with one another: information about the writer's life, information about the time in which the writer lived (the historical context), and the literary works themselves. These works—their composition, publication, and reception—represent not only significant events in the life of the author, but also sources of information about the mind that created them. Such is the basic recipe for literary biography, but the proportions of the ingredients will vary according to the perspective of the biographer and, more significantly, according to the availability of those ingredients. This essay will examine how Greenblatt uses these ingredients to fashion his biography of Shakespeare.

In evaluating Greenblatt's literary biography, one might look at Nathaniel Hawthorne's American masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and ask the same question: How did Hawthorne become Hawthorne? In answering this question, Hawthorne's biographers have been able to draw upon a wealth of material that was unpublished during his lifetime. They have been able to trace passages in his novels to passages in his journals, to get glimpses of his actual creative process at work. Much is known not only about him, but also about the people whom he knew and the times in which he lived.

By contrast, almost nothing is known about the author of the epic poems *The Odyssey* and *Iliad*. "How did Homer become Homer?" is an unanswerable question. Homer is a name that rivals Shakespeare for its eminence in literary history, but there can be no biography. If there were, it would be almost pure guesswork. Scholars know a good deal about the general historical context, and an author might be able to construct a believable portrait of a Greek man who lived around 700 b.c., but there would be no basis upon which to persuade the reader of a connection between that man and *The Odyssey*.

On the spectrum between Hawthorne, about whom scholars know a great deal, and Homer, about whom scholars know next to nothing, Shakespeare lies somewhere in between. Elizabethan England was a record-keeping society, but the records of Shakespeare's life do little more than to locate him at certain places and times, with varying degrees of precision and reliability. For example, it is known that he was baptized on April 26, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon. In combination with knowledge of Elizabethan custom, this baptismal record has helped biographers to infer a birth date of April 23. But there are no recorded reflections about his craft, except those that are found within the plays. There is little evidence, outside his art, of his personality: any conclusions that biographers draw must be the result of inference, or the logical process of shaping conclusions on the basis of limited information.

From the records of his business transactions, Greenblatt infers that Shakespeare was actively concerned about making and saving money. From the provision in his will that his wife should receive his "second best bed"—a meager bequest from a wealthy man to his spouse—and from his choice to spend most of his adult life living apart from her, Greenblatt infers that William held little love for Anne Hathaway Shakespeare. However, there is no parallel to Hawthorne's written declarations about his feelings about his wife, which biographers and literary critics have then related to his characterizations of the heroines in his novels. In other words, to get from what is known about Hawthorne to what one reads in the *The Scarlet Letter* requires only a small step. To get from what is known about Shakespeare to what one reads in his plays and poetry requires more of a leap.

Greenblatt is as likely to make this leap in one direction as in the other—that is, he jumps back and forth between the works and the biographical facts, developing his inferences in the process. For instance, he devotes a large part of the chapter on marriage to a discussion of the plays. He notes that the many couples in the comedies do not seem to enjoy the prospect of happy marriages. Shakespeare's portrayals of intimate marriages, as between Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet* or Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, are frightening. Greenblatt writes:

Shakespeare's plays then combine, on the one hand, an overall diffidence in depicting marriages and, on the other hand, the image of a kind of nightmare in the two marriages they do depict with some care. It is difficult *not* to read his works in the context of his decision to live for most of a long marriage away from his wife.

Here, Greenblatt's description of his practice is in line with the conventions of literary biography—the works are read in the context of the author's life. But the proportions are different—he has much more information about the works than about the life. In effect, the sources on Shakespeare's life are read as much in the context of his plays as vice-versa. The two readings are mutually affirming. That is, from the will and Shakespeare's living arrangements, Greenblatt infers that Shakespeare bore little love for his wife; Shakespeare's negative attitude about marriage in his plays, supports this inference. From the plays, Greenblatt infers that Shakespeare was sour on marriage in general; this inference is supported by the known facts about Shakespeare's marriage. The great leap, however, is in the connection between the two sources, the idea that

Shakespeare's negativity about marriage in his plays was the result of his disappointment in his own. The idea of this connection is open to critique. As Colm Toibin points out, "unhappy marriages are by their very nature more dramatic, so the creation of exciting drama may have impelled [Shakespeare] more than the obvious display of his conscious experience." That is, Shakespeare may have simply been trying to tell a compelling story. Toibin's critique illustrates the difficulty of using literary art as biographical sources, but with Shakespeare there is often little else to turn to.

Except, that is, for history. Greenblatt compensates for the thinness of the information about Shakespeare's life with the thickness of the information about Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The records that mention Shakespeare by name put him in a certain time and place; Greenblatt then creates a detailed description of what was going on there and then in order to construct an inference about Shakespeare's experiences. In at least one important instance, the first step in this process is itself a matter of inference: the understanding that William Shakeshafte, the man mentioned in the will of the Lancashire gentleman Alexander Hoghton, is actually William Shakespeare is a matter of controversy among Shakespeare scholars. However, Greenblatt builds a large part of the argument of Chapter 3: "The Great Fear" on the possibility that Shakespeare and Shakeshafte are one and the same, which would place Shakespeare in the midst of the dangerous Catholic intrigues that were afoot in Lancashire in the early 1580s. If Shakespeare were there, then, Greenblatt infers that he might have met the famous Catholic missionary and martyr Edmund Campion. Greenblatt then makes further inferences about how Shakespeare would have responded to this meeting based on the evidence of Shakespeare's plays and of the life he went on to lead. Colin Burrow, in his negative review of Greenblatt's book in the *London Review of Books*, criticizes what he sees as Greenblatt's process:

In a will there is found a name, which is not Shakespeare's but is close enough possibly to be his. From this it is assumed that Shakespeare was a member of a Catholic household. From this in turn it is inferred that he was committed, and perhaps passionately committed, to Catholicism. From this it is a small step to suppose that he met and had a deep affinity with a Catholic martyr.

Greenblatt's inferences are actually a good deal more nuanced, or distinctive, than Burrow gives him credit for. According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare would have had a complicated relationship to Catholicism; he was too practical and ambitious to be devoted to the cause of an outlawed religion. His response to Campion would have been one of fascination, but also of repulsion:

if he actually saw Campion in 1581 Shakespeare would even then probably have shuddered and recoiled inwardly, pulling away from the invitation, whether implicit in the saint's presence or directly and passionately urged, to shoulder the cross and join in a pious struggle for the Catholic faith.

Nevertheless, and although he focuses on the most extreme example, Burrow's criticism that Greenblatt builds his arguments through an unstable structure of inferences is accurate.

Yet what his critics consider, in Toibin's phrase, to be "pure foolishness," more sympathetic readers may consider to be daring. As Laura Miller writes in *Salon.com*, Greenblatt's book "is such a graceful effort to spin a life out of a few scraps of paper that only a churl would be unpersuaded by it." In other words, to appreciate *Will in the World* the reader needs to be willing to follow Greenblatt as he leaps from the known to the unknown to the plausible to the merely possible. If one stays behind with the known, then one is left with only a very limited picture of Shakespeare. The portrait that Greenblatt constructs, through his weaving of biographical, historical, and literary sources, is much richer. The accuracy of this portrait is not verifiable. Certainly, some of Greenblatt's conjectures might be off base, but others might be right on target, and unless Shakespeare rises up to speak from the dead, the reader can never know which is which. The premise of *Will in the World* is that a hazy and incomplete view of who Shakespeare actually was is less rewarding than a relatively full understanding of who Shakespeare might well have been.

Source: Andrew Newman, Critical Essay on *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Critical Essay #2

In the following interview for National Public Radio, Greenblatt discusses his effort to create a plausible view of Shakespeare's life from the few facts that exist regarding the author.

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Source: Renee Montage, "Interview with Stephen Greenblatt," in *National Public Radio (NPR)*. November 17, 2004, p. 1.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Shakespeare scholar and biographer Duncan-Jones separates fact from theory in Greenblatt's biography.

Literary biographies almost always disappoint. Instinctively, we want to learn all we can about individuals whose creations have moved us, and with and through which we have lived. Time and again a writer's own behaviour proves not only to have been not only much less admirable than that of his persona or characters but also much less interesting. In this sense, Greenblatt's decision to conclude his study with the statement that Shakespeare was 'determined to end his days … within the boundaries of the everyday' serves as a preemptive strike. If the records show a Shakespeare who was somewhat commonplace, even a bit of a bore, let him at least have desired strongly to become such a man.

Earlier in the book Greenblatt attributes some inner musings to his hero of staggering banality: 'He must have said to himself something like "You are not in Stratford anymore" or "Whatever else I am … I am not Marlowe."' Despite Shakespeare's exceptional brilliance in articulating emotions of great complexity—or, as Greenblatt has it, 'opacity'—his biographers have to face a deficit of extra-literary expressions of tender feeling.

The last major document, the will, is notable both for negative emotions, such as bequests to old friends struck out, and a lack of endearments. Even his elder daughter fails to rate a 'dear' or a 'loving'. Famously, his wife nearly got left out altogether. Yet we do know from Thomas Heywood in 1612 that Shakespeare was very angry with a printer who had pirated some of his poems, and from his 'cousin' Thomas Greene in 1613 that he refused to worry about the plight of the Stratford poor should more common land be enclosed for pasture. As all biographers must to some extent do, Greenblatt copes with the absence of personal documents by means of quasi-novelistic speculation. For instance, we know nothing whatsoever about Shakespeare's reaction to the death of his 11-year-old son Hamnet in August 1596. On p. 289 Greenblatt remarks that 'the father presumably saw his son buried'. Actually, he may not have done, for it could have taken three or four days for the news to reach him in London, and a further three or four days to travel to Stratford, by which time the burial had probably taken place. However, on p. 312 Greenblatt tells us that 'Shakespeare undoubtedly returned to Stratford … for his son's funeral'. An extended meditation ensues on the father's complexly opaque emotions as he 'stood in the churchyard watching the dirt fall on the body of his son'.

Though Greenblatt's Shakespeare decides to end his days among the 'everday', his early years are crowded with incident. Rather than choosing between different theories about the early years Greenblatt generously embraces many of them. Will is recruited as a pious Catholic youth to work for Alexander Hoghton in Lancashire; back in the Midlands, he has a brief but life-changing encounter with Edmund Campion, S.J. Immediately afterwards he woos the daughter of a 'staunchly Protestant farmer, and

early on in his theatrical career includes a 'coarsely explicit piece of Protestant pope-bashing' in *King John*, (Why, incidentally, does 'Protestant' rate a big P and the pontiff not?). There are passages of dizzying confusion in the early chapters as Greenblatt attempts to steer Will into the stream of his well-documented literary career after dallying too long on the wilder shores of speculation. Trying valiantly to make meaningful connexions, he suggests that Will made love to Anne 'as if to mark his decisive distance from Campion'. They don't work. The evidence for his wooing is sound —marriage license, baptismal record. The evidence that he met Campion is non-existent.

Like much of Greenblatt's recent work, *Will in the World* combines a good deal of insight and sensitivity with a strangely uncritical mish-mash of *ideés fixes* and nonsense. His obsession with the pervasive sadism of Shakespeare's England (but really the Continent was no better) often leads him astray, and impels him to lead readers astray. For instance, he describes Queen Elizabeth's special pleasure in the spectacle of 'the ancient massacre' of Danes by Englishmen, performed for her by Coventry artisans at Kenilworth in 1575. Yet, whatever the historical battle may have been in 1012, the artisans' play was certainly no 'massacre'. The Danes were powerfully armed *landsknechts*, and 'twice had the better'; finally, however, they were defeated, and many 'Danes' were 'led captive for triumph by our English women'. This rumbustious mock-battle was well calculated to please Elizabeth as a spectacle of an English victory succeeded by mercy and brought to completion by women. No such scenario suits Greenblatt's Will, a decent, everyday man in a cruelly complex world. He is no more believable than any of the versions of Shakespeare summoned up in recent biographies, including, no doubt, my own.

Source: Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Will-'o-the-wisp for ever," in *Spectator*, October 9, 2004, p. 54.

Quotes

"Apart from the poems and plays themselves, the surviving traces of Shakespeare's life are abundant but thin ... property transactions, a marriage license ... christening records, cast lists [of plays] in which he is named as a performer, tax bills, petty legal affidavits, payments for services, and an interesting last will and testament, but no immediately obvious clues to unravel the great mystery of such immense creative power." Preface, p.12.

"The work is so astonishing, so luminous, that it seems to have come from a god and not a mortal, let alone a mortal of provincial origins and modest education." Preface, p. 13.

"At least as much as the books he read, the central problems he grappled with as a young man - what should I do with my life? In what can I have faith? Whom do I love? - served throughout his career to shape his art." Preface, p.13

"To understand who Shakespeare was, it is important to follow the verbal traces he left behind [in the plays] back into the life he lived and into the world to which he was so open. And to understand how Shakespeare used his imagination to transform his life into his art, it is important to use our own imagination." Preface, p.14.

"[Shakespeare's] writing builds upon two crucial expectations the morality plays instilled in their audiences: first, the expectation that drama worth seeing would get at something central to human destiny and, second, that it should reach not only a coterie of the

educated elite but also the great mass of ordinary people." Chapter 1, p. 33.

"...the excitement [royalty's presence] awakened in crowds, the trembling in otherwise strong men, the sense of awesome greatness. Long after he had come to understand the dark sides of this power ; long after he had taken in the pride, cruelty, and ambition that it aroused, the dangerous plots that it bred, the greed and violence that it fostered and fed upon, Shakespeare remained in touch with the intoxicating pleasure and excitement royalty aroused." Chapter 1, p. 46.

"He understood, and he wanted the audience to understand, that the theatre had to have both, both the visionary flight and the solid, ordinary earthiness." Chapter 1, p. 53.

"...a gentleman sinking into mire ... a debauched genius; a fathomlessly cynical, almost irresistible confidence man; a diseased, cowardly, seductive lovable monster; a father who cannot be trusted ... the drunkenness that ... seems liked to gaiety, improvisational wit, and noble recklessness is unnervingly disclosed at the same time to be part of a strategy of cunning, calculation, and ruthless exploitation of others ... the grand schemes, the imagined riches, the fantasies about the limitless future - all come to nothing, withering away in an adult son's contempt for the symbolic father who has failed him." Chapter 2, p. 70-71.

"The emotion of restoration is powerfully present - the sense that what was seemingly irrevocably lost has been reclaimed against all hope and expectation - but the recovery is never quite what it seems: the past that is recovered turns out to be an invention or a delusion or, in the worst case, an intensification of loss." Chapter 2, p.84.

"[Campion] was a committed soldier in a religious order organized for battle, and when his general [the Pope] commanded him to throw his body into the fight, against wildly uneven odds, he marched off serenely... he was a fanatic or, more accurately, a saint. And saints, Shakespeare understood all his life, were dangerous people ... perhaps it would be better to say that Shakespeare did not entirely understand saints, and that what he did understand, he did not entirely like." Chapter 3, p. 110.

"Between his wedding license and his last will and testament, Shakespeare left no direct, personal trace of his relationship with his wife - or none, in any case, that survives. From this supremely eloquent man, there have been found no love letters to Anne, no signs of shared joy or grief, no words, of advice, not even any financial transactions." Chapter 4, p. 125.

"... in the great succession of comedies that Shakespeare wrote in the latter half of the 1590's, romantic masterpieces with their marvelous depictions of desire and their cheerfully relentless drive toward marriage, there is scarcely a single pair of lovers who seem deeply, inwardly suited for one another. There is no end of longing, flirtation, and pursuit, but strikingly little long term promise of mutual understanding." Chapter 4, p. 136.

"[Shakespeare] had a complex attitude toward authority, at once sly, genially submissive, and subtly challenging. He was capable of devastating criticism, he saw through lies, hypocrisies, and distortions; he undermined virtually all the claims that those in power made for themselves. And yet he was easygoing, humorous, pleasantly indirect, almost apologetic." Chapter 5, p. 152.

"[Shakespeare's] work suggests that he had an almost unique gift for plunging into unfamiliar worlds, mastering their complexities, and making himself almost immediately at home." Chapter 5, p. 163.

"Shakespeare had determined to write a historical epic, like Marlowe's, but to make it an English epic, an account of the bloody time of troubles that preceded the order brought by the Tudors. He wanted to resurrect a whole world, as Marlowe had done, bringing forth astonishing larger-than-life figures engaged in struggles to the death ... it was ... England's own past [that would be brought to the stage]..." Chapter 6, p. 195.

"...those circumstances [contributing to the popular appeal of theatre] included the phenomenal growth of the urban population, the emergence of the public theatres, and the existence of a competitive market for new plays. They included too an impressive widespread growth in literacy; an educational system that trained its students to be highly sensitive to rhetorical effects; a social and political taste for elaborate display; a

religious culture that compelled parishioners to listen to long, complex sermons; and a vibrant, restless intellectual culture." Chapter 7, p. 200.

"...if Shakespeare took what he could from Greene - if, as an artist, he took what he could from everyone he encountered - he also performed a miraculous act of imaginative generosity, utterly unsentimental and, if the truth be told, not entirely human. Human generosity would have involved actually giving money to the desperate Greene ... Shakespeare's generosity was aesthetic ... he conferred upon Greene an incalculable gift, the gift of transforming him into Falstaff." Chapter 7, p. 224-225.

"Sonnet writing was, in its most prestigious and defining form, the sophisticated game of courtiers ... the challenge ... was to sound as intimate, self-revealing, and emotionally vulnerable as possible, without actually disclosing anything compromising to anyone outside the innermost circle ... sonnets that were too cautious were insipid and would only show the poet to be a bore; sonnets that were too transparent could give mortal offense." Chapter 7, p. 234.

"To be a very public man - an actor onstage, a successful playwright, a celebrated poet; and at the same time to be a very private man - a man who can be trusted with secrets, a writer who keeps his intimate affairs to himself and subtly encodes all references to others: this was the double life Shakespeare had chosen for himself." Chapter 7, p. 249.

"...if there is one thing that the sonnets, taken as biographical documents, strongly suggest, it is that [Shakespeare] could not find what he craved, emotionally or sexually, within his marriage ... that no single person could ever have satisfied Shakespeare's longings or made him happy ... the [speaker of the sonnets] adores a man whom he cannot possess and desires a woman whom he cannot admire ..." Chapter 7, p.254.

"...there were Jewish fables and Jewish jokes and Jewish nightmares: Jews lured little children into their clutches, murdered them, and took their blood to make bread for Passover. Jews were immensely wealthy - even when they looked like paupers - and covertly pulled the strings of an enormous international network of capital and goods. Jews poisoned wells and were responsible for spreading the bubonic plague. Jews secretly plotted an apocalyptic war against the Christians. Jews had a peculiar stink. Jewish men menstruated." Chapter 8, pp. 258-259.

"Everything [Shakespeare] encountered, even tangentially and in passing, seems to have stayed with him and remained available to him years later. Scraps of conversation, official proclamations, long-winded sermons, remarks overheard in the tavern or on the street, insults exchanged by carters and fishwives, a few pages that he could only have glanced at idly in a bookseller's shop - all was somehow stored away in his brain, in files that his imagination could open up at will." Chapter 9, p.295.

"All funerals invite those who stand by the grave to think about what, if anything, they believe in. But the funeral of one's own child does more than this: it compels parents to ask questions of God and to interrogate their own faith ... Shakespeare grasped that crucial death rituals in his [Catholic] culture had been gutted ... but he also believed that

the theater - and his theatrical art in particular - could tap into the great reservoir of passionate feelings that, for him and for thousands of his contemporaries, no longer had a satisfactory outlet." Chapter 10, p. 321.

"The excision of motive [from Shakespeare's plays] ... expressed Shakespeare's root perception of existence, his understanding of what could be said and what should remain unspoken, his preference for things untidy, damaged and unresolved over things neatly arranged, well made, and settled. The opacity was shaped by his experience of the world and of his own inner life: his skepticism, his pain, his sense of broken rituals, his refusal of easy consolation." Chapter 11, p. 324.

"If you are worried about losing your manhood and ... the power of women ... look to your wife. If you are worried about temptation, fear your own dreams. If you are anxious about your future, scrutinize your best friends. And if you fear spiritual desolation, turn your eyes on the contents not of the hideous [witches'] cauldron but of your skull." Chapter 11, p. 355.

"Creating and destroying worlds. Bringing men and women into an experimental space and arousing their passions. Awakening intense anxiety in all the creatures he encounters and forcing them to confront what is hidden within them. Bending people to serve them." Chapter 12, p. 375.

Adaptations

- *Will in the World* was released as an audio CD by Recorded Books in 2004. It is narrated by Peter J. Fernandez.
- *In Search of Shakespeare* (2004) is a four-part documentary, directed by David Wallace II and hosted by Michael Wood. The DVD is available from PBS.
- *Shakespeare in Love* is a 1998 film by John Madden, starring Joseph Fiennes as the young playwright, Gwyneth Paltrow as his love-object, and Geoffrey Rush as the theatre owner. It was written by Marc Norman and the playwright Tom Stoppard, and Stephen Greenblatt served as a consultant. The DVD is available from Miramax Home Entertainment.

What Do I Read Next?

- Shakespeare's plays and poetry are available in many editions, both print and online. Some of the plays that Stephen Greenblatt discusses at length are *Hamlet, Henry IV Part One, King Lear, Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, The Winter's Tale*, and the sonnets.
- Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001) is a more extended discussion of the themes in "Speaking with the Dead," Chapter 10 of *Will in the World*.
- *The Greenblatt Reader* (2005), edited by Michael Paine, collects scholarly and journalistic essays by Greenblatt, the founder of the school of literary criticism known as New Historicism or cultural studies.
- In her essay *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf imagines what might have happened if Shakespeare had a sister that was as gifted as he was. Would she have become a great playwright, too? The essay is available in various editions, including one by Harvest Books, 1989.
- *Nothing Like the Sun: A Story of Shakespeare's Love-Life* (1964) is a historical fiction novel by Anthony Burgess, the author of *A Clockwork Orange*.
- In his short story "Shakespeare's Memory," the celebrated Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges imagines the consequences when an aging Shakespearean scholar inherits Shakespeare's memory. The story is available in English in his collection *The Book of Sand* (1977).
- *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (1995), by Charles Nicholl, is a lively historical novel about the life and violent death of Shakespeare's most famous rival. Marlowe's plays, including *Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta*, are available in many editions, both print and online.

Topics for Discussion

Discuss whether life experience, a broad education, or training is more important when it comes to the creation of art - not just theatrical art, but art in general. What is the relative importance of each? On which should an artist place the most emphasis? Would the emphasis be different in young artists than it is for mid-life and/or mature artists? Which played the most important role in the development of Shakespeare's writing?

Discuss the idea (suggested in Chapter 7) that a character (such as Falstaff) can get "out of control" - that he can become larger, more well-defined, more insistently alive, than his author perhaps intended. How is this possible? Is it possible it all? What does a character "getting out of control" actually mean?

Consider the various theories for why Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London. Was there one over-riding reason? Did he leave because of a combination of factors? If so, which was the more compelling for him?

Consider the various manifestations of love and relationship in Shakespeare's life. Which had the most important effect on his work? Conversely, which aspects of the various representations of love and relationships in his work was the most personal expression of how he himself felt about love? About relationships?

Sexual ambiguity plays an important role in many of Shakespeare's writings - are men men, are women women, what defines a man, what defines a woman, what happens when one behaves like the other, etc. Consider Shakespeare's works in general - which female characters fill traditional male roles (aggressor, provider) or display "traditional" male characteristics (assertiveness, sexual eagerness, leadership)? Also consider which male characters fill traditional female roles (nurturer, home-maker) or display "traditional" female characteristics (indecisiveness, emotional vulnerability, weakness, submissive-ness). Also consider Shakespeare himself - how "male" is he? How "female?"

Which character examined and/or referred to in this book was the most like Shakespeare? Which was the least?

Based on evidence discussed in this book, and on knowledge of the plays referred to, discuss reasons why Shakespeare's plays continue to be performed in contemporary theatre when those of so many of his contemporaries are not.

Contemporary society has been irrevocably altered by the science and study of psychology. Would Shakespeare have written *Hamlet*, or any of his psychologically and emotionally compelling plays, if psychology had existed at the time he was creating them?

- How did you become you? Greenblatt introduces his study of Shakespeare's life by asking: "How did Shakespeare become Shakespeare?" This is a more complicated question than it appears to be. It is not a question of how Shakespeare became the person that he did, but rather how he came to express himself through such an amazing body of literature. Similarly, one can wonder about the influences that add up to any creative expression. How about yours? Whether you are a poet, an actor, a future doctor, or someone who prefers to keep quiet, write a two-page essay explaining how you became you, as you express yourself to the outside world.
- Write a Shakespearean Sonnet. It should be in iambic pentameter, with Shakespeare's signature rhyme scheme: a b a b c d c d e f e f g g. That is, each of the fourteen lines should have ten syllables, with the accent on the even syllables. The first and third lines rhyme; the second and fourth lines rhyme, and so on through the twelfth line. The thirteenth and fourteenth lines rhyme, forming what is called a heroic couplet. Use one of his sonnets as a model. As important as the form is the content. Greenblatt suggests that any conclusions one might draw about Shakespeare from his sonnets must be the result of inference. With this in mind, you should write your sonnet in such a way that some of the references can only be fully understood by your close friends or family.
- Watch a film version of a Shakespeare play, either a direct adaptation, such as Kenneth Branagh's 1993 *Much Ado About Nothing*, a modernization, such as *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), directed by Baz Luhrmann, or a "based on" adaptation such as Fred M. Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* (1956), based on *The Tempest*. Write a one-page essay in which you discuss how the movie interprets the play for a modern audience.
- Greenblatt only discusses a handful of Shakespeare's plays at length. Choose one that is not listed on many pages, if at all, in the index for *Will in the World*, and write a two-page book report about some aspect of the play in relation to what you can learn about the period in which it was written.

Further Study

Bevington, David, *Shakespeare*, Blackwell, 2002.

Bevington is a major Shakespeare scholar and editor of his plays. Shakespeare examines major themes that Shakespeare uses throughout his plays, such as love, jealously, hate, and family ties, and how these universal themes allow twenty-first century readers to enjoy and understand these plays written over four hundred years ago.

Bloom, Harold, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Riverhead Trade, 1999.

Bloom, one of the most renowned literary critics of contemporary times, makes the controversial assertion that Shakespeare taught humanity how to be human.

Garber, Marjorie, B., *Shakespeare After All*, Pantheon, 2004.

Shakespeare After All is a readable and comprehensive critical study of Shakespeare's plays.

Kermode, Frank, *The Age of Shakespeare*, Modern Library, 2004.

Kermode provides an authoritative account of the history and culture of Elizabethan England in relation to the plays.

Schoenbaum, Samuel S., *Shakespeare's Lives*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

Shakespeare's Lives is the definitive history of the biographies of William Shakespeare.

————————, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*, Oxford University Press, 1971.

In this volume, Schoenbaum collects the primary documents related to Shakespeare's life.

Wood, Michael, *Shakespeare*, Basic Books, 2003.

Shakespeare is the companion volume to In Search of Shakespeare, a 2003 documentary hosted by Michael Wood for the BBC.

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Burrow, Colin, "Who Wouldn't Buy It?" in *London Review of Books*, www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n02/burr01_.html (January 20, 2005)

Gopnik, Adam, "Will Power: Why Shakespeare Remains the Necessary Poet," in the *New Yorker*, September 13, 2004, p. 90.

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, W.W. Norton, 2004.

Miller, Laura, "The Genius Next Door," in *Salon.com*, www.salon.com (September 27, 2004).

Nehring, Christina "Shakespeare in Love, Or in Context," in *Atlantic Monthly*, December 2004, pp. 129-34.

Stevens, Paul, "Pretending to be Real: Stephen Greenblatt and the Legacy of Popular Existentialism," in *New Literary History* Vol. 33, Issue 3, 2002, pp. 491, 501, 505.

Toibin, Colm, "Reinventing Shakespeare," in the *New York Times*, October 3, 2004, Sec. 7, Col. 1, p. 22.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

"Night." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the "Criticism" subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition," Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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