



Side or Margin Notes in InDesign

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misread the motives of the man who makes a will. Such omissions have been made when no slight was intended, sometimes because of previous private settlements, sometimes because a wife is always entitled to her dower rights. The evidence is thus too slight to be of value.

Some other motive, then, than unhappiness in married life ought to be assigned for Shakespeare's departure to London. No doubt, the fact that his father was now a discredited bankrupt, against whom suits were pending, had something to do with his decision to better his family fortunes in another town. Traveling companies of players may have told him of London life. Possibly some scrape, like that preserved in the deer-stealing tradition and the resultant persecution, made the young man, now only twenty-one, restive and eager to be gone.

Early Life in London

The earliest known reference to Shakespeare in the world of London is contained in a sarcastic allusion from the pen of Robert Greene, the poet and play writer, who died in 1592. Greene was furiously jealous of the rapidly increasing fame of the newcomer. In a most extravagant style he warns his contemporaries (Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, probably) to beware of young men that seek fame by thieving from their masters. They, too, like himself, will suffer from such thieves. "Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blank verse as the best

of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countie .. but it is pittie men of such rare wit should be subject to the pleasures of such rude grooms." The reference to "Shakescene" and the "Tygers heart," which is a quotation from *III Henry VI*,³ makes it almost certain that Shakespeare and his play are referred to. Greene's attack was, however, an instance of what Shakespeare would have called "spleen," and not to be taken as a general opinion. His hint of "Johannes Factotum" (Jack-of-all-Trades) probably means that Shakespeare was willing to undertake any sort of dramatic work. Later on in the same letter (*A Groatsworth of Witte Bought with a Million of Repentance*)⁴ he calls the "upstart crow" and his like "Buckram gentlemen," and "peasants."

Henry Chettle, a friend of Greene's, either in December, 1592, or early in 1593,⁵ published an address as a preface to his *Kind-Harts Dreame*, making a public apology to Shakespeare for allowing Greene's letter to come out with this insulting attack. He says: "With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other [generally taken to be Shakespeare] whome at one time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that, as I have moderated the heate of living writers, and might have usde my owne discretion -especially in such a case,

³"O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide." This line is also in the source of Shakespeare's play.

⁴Printed first in 1596, but written shortly before Greene's death in 1592.

⁵Registered Dec. 1592, but printed without date.

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Screen Based Media

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