

Ulysses

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There is, then, testimony from two sources that by 1592 Shakespeare was an excellent actor, a graceful poet, and a writer of plays that aroused the envy of one of the best dramatists of his day. Obviously, all this could not have happened in a few months, and we are therefore justified in believing that Shakespeare came to London soon after 1585, very likely in 1586.

Later Allusions

In 1593 the title-page of *Venus and Adonis* shows that a great English earl and patron of the arts was willing to be godfather "to the first heyre" of Shakespeare's "invention," his first published poem. In 1594 Shakespeare also dedicated to Southampton his *Lucrece*, in terms of greater intimacy, though no less respect. On December 27, 1595, Edmund Spenser's *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe* contained a reference which is now generally believed to allude to Shakespeare.

> "And there, though last not least, is Aetion; A gentler shepherd may nowhere be found; Whose Muse, full of high thoughts' invention, Doth like himselfe heroically sound."

The next important reference is from *Palladis Tamia*, by Francis Meres (1598):

> "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare; witness his Venus and Adonis. his Lucrece. his suared Sonnets among his private friends

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Birth and Parentage

The record of baptism of April 26, 1564, is the only evidence we possess of the date of Shakespeare's birth. It is probable that the child was baptised when only two or three days old. The poet's tomb states that Shakespeare was in his fifty-second year when he died, April 23, 1616. Accepting this as strictly true, we cannot place the poet's birthday earlier than April 23, 1564. There is a tradition, with no authority, that the poet died upon his birthday.

**** John Shakespeare ****, the poet's father, sold the products of near-by farms to his fellow-townsmen. He is sometimes described as a glover, sometimes as a butcher; very likely he was both. A single reference, half a century later than his day, preserves for us a picture of John Shakespeare. The note reads:

>"He was a glover's son. Sir John Mennes saw once his old father in his shop, a merry-cheekt old man, that said, '_Will was a good honest fellow, but he durst have crackt a jesst with him att any time._'"^[1]

John Shakespeare's father, **** Richard Shakespeare ****, was a tenant farmer, who was in 1550 renting his little farm at Snitterfield, four miles north of Stratford, from another farmer, Robert Arden of Wilmcote. John Shakespeare married Mary Arden, the daughter of his father's rich landlord, probably in 1557. He had for over five years been a middleman at Stratford, dealing in the produce of his father's farm

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