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978-0-521-87291-1 - Shakespeare and the Nobility: The Negotiation of Lineage

Catherine Grace Canino

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## SHAKESPEARE AND THE NOBILITY

*Shakespeare and the Nobility* examines, for the first time, how Shakespeare was influenced by the descendants of the aristocratic characters in his early history plays. The *Henry VI* trilogy and *Richard III* are among the first plays in the English dramaturgy that reflect the lives and activities of the ancestors of sixteenth-century aristocrats. In a time when the upper classes of England were obsessed with family lineage and reputation, the salient question is how William Shakespeare, a socially inferior playwright and actor, handled the delicate matter of portraying the complex and often unattractive ancestors of the most powerful people of his day. In answer to this question, this study examines the lives of the historical figures and their descendants, and argues that Shakespeare consistently modified his portrayal of the ancestors with their descendants in mind. In addition to providing an historical glimpse into the romance, intrigue, and politics of the Renaissance aristocracy, this book also presents fresh readings of the early histories, with new sidelights on characters too often dismissed as an unsavory lot.

CATHERINE GRACE CANINO is an Associate Professor at the University of South Carolina, Upstate. She has published articles on John Skelton, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. This is her first book.

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*This book is dedicated to my own ancestral lineage – my parents,  
John and Kay Canino.*

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