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[More information](#)

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---

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Frontmatter

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# SHAKSPEARE:

A CRITICAL STUDY OF

HIS MIND AND ART.

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN,

VICE-PRESIDENT OF 'THE NEW SHAKSPEARE SOCIETY.'

HENRY S. KING & Co.,

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## P R E F A C E.



THE attempt made in this volume to connect the study of Shakspeare's works with an inquiry after the personality of the writer, and to observe, as far as is possible, in its several stages the growth of his intellect and character from youth to full maturity, distinguishes the work from the greater number of preceding criticisms of Shakspeare. A sense of hazard and difficulty necessarily accompanies the attempt to pass through the creations of a great dramatic poet to the mind of the creator. Still no one, I suppose, would maintain that a product of mind, so large and manifold as the writings of Shakspeare, can fail in some measure to reveal its origin and cause.

The reader must not fall into the error of supposing that I endeavour to identify Shakspeare with any one of his dramatic personages. The complex nature of the poet contained a love-idealist like Romeo—(students of the Sonnets will not find it difficult to admit the possibility of this); it contained a speculative intellect like that of Hamlet. But the complete Shakspeare was unlike Romeo, and unlike Hamlet. Still it is evident, not from one play, but from many, that the struggle between "blood" and "judgment" was a great affair of

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978-1-108-00076-5 - Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art

Edward Dowden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

*Preface.*

Shakspeare's life ; and in all his later works we observe the effort to control a wistful curiosity about the mysteries of human existence. And therefore, I say, a potential Romeo and a potential Hamlet, taking these names as representative of certain spiritual tendencies or habits, existed in Shakspeare. Nor do I identify Shakspeare with Prospero ; although Shakspeare's temper in the plays of the last period is the temper of Prospero. It would not be easy to picture to ourselves the great magician waited on by such ministering spirits as Sir John Falstaff, Sir Toby Belch, and the Nurse of Juliet.

In order to get substantial ground to go upon I have thought it necessary to form acquaintance with a considerable body of recent Shakspeare scholarship, both English and Continental. But I avoid the discussion of purely scholastic questions. To approach Shakspeare on the human side is the object of this book ; but I believe that Shakspeare is not to be approached on any side through dilettantism.

I have carefully acknowledged my obligations to preceding writers. In working out the general design and main features of this study, I was able to obtain little help ; but in details I obtained much. My references express, I may say, considerably more than my actual debt ; for in those instances in which I found that my thought had been anticipated, and well expressed elsewhere, I have noted the coincidence. Doubtless many instances of such coincidence remain unobserved by me. Since I wrote the chapter in which " The Tempest " is considered, I have read for the first time Lloyd's essay upon

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Edward Dowden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface.*

vii

the play, and I have found some striking and satisfactory points of agreement between myself and that good critic.

In all essentials I have adhered to the chronological method of studying Shakspeare's writings. But it seemed pedantry to sacrifice certain advantages of contrast and comparison to a procedure in every instance, from play to play, according to dates. Thus, in the chapter on the English Historical Plays I have, for convenience of illustration, treated Henry VI. after King John and before Richard III. In the opening of the eighth chapter I have explained what I believe to be the right manner of using the chronological method. I have called "The Tempest" Shakspeare's last play, but I am quite willing to grant that "A Winter's Tale," "Henry VIII," and perhaps "Cymbeline," may actually have succeeded "The Tempest." For the purposes of such a study as the present, if it be admitted that these plays belong to one and the same period,—the final period of the growth of Shakspeare's art,—it matters little how the plays succeeded one another within that period.

I refer in one passage to Henry VIII., Act iv., Scene 2, as if written by Shakspeare. The scene was, I believe, conceived by Shakspeare, and carried out in the spirit of his design by Fletcher.

About half of this volume was read in the form of lectures ("Saturday Lectures in connection with Alexandra College, Dublin"), in the Museum Buildings, Trinity College, Dublin, during the spring of the year, 1874.

In some instances I have referred to, and quoted from papers by the Rev. F. G. Fleay as read at meetings of

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Edward Dowden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Preface.*

“The New Shakspeare Society,” but which have not received the final corrections of their author.

In seeing this volume through the press, I received valuable suggestions and corrections from Mr Harold Littledale, the editor for “The New Shakspeare Society” of “The Two Noble Kinsmen,” for which I thank him.

I have to thank the Director of “The New Shakspeare Society,” Mr F. J. Furnivall, for permission to print the “Trial Table of the order of Shakspeare’s Plays,” which appears in his introduction to the new edition of Shakespeare Commentaries by Gervinus.

## TRIAL TABLE OF THE ORDER OF SHAKSPERE’S PLAYS.

[This, like all other tables, must be lookt on as merely tentative, and open to modification for any good reasons. But if only it comes near the truth, then reading the plays in its order will the sooner enable the student to find out its mistakes. (M. stands for “mentioned by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598.”)]

In his Introductory Essays to *Shakespeare’s Dramatische Werke* (German Shakespeare Society) Prof. Hertzberg dates *Titus* 1587-9, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, 1592, *Comedy of Errors* about New Year’s Day 1591, *Two Gentlemen*, 1592, *All’s Well* 1603, *Troilus and Cressida* 1603, and *Cymbeline* 1611.

	Supposed Date.	Earliest Allusion.	Date of Publication.
FIRST PERIOD.			
Venus and Adonis . . . . .	1585-7		1593
Titus Andronicus toucht up . . . . .	(?) 1588	1594 M	[(?) 1594] 1600
Love’s Labour’s Lost . . . . .	1588-9	1598 M	1598 (amended)
[Love’s Labour’s Wonne . . . . .	]	1598 M	
Comedy of Errors . . . . .	1589-91	1594 M	1623
Midsummer Night’s Dream } (? two dates) . . . . . }	1590-1	1598 M	1600
Two Gentlemen of Verona . . . . .	1590-2	1598 M	1623
(?) 1 Henry VI. toucht up . . . . .	(?) 1590-2		1623
(?) Troilus and Cressida, begun Lucrece . . . . .		1594	
Romeo and Juliet . . . . .	(?) 1591-3	1595 M	1597
(?) A Lover’s Complaint . . . . .			
Richard II. . . . .	1593-4	? 1595 M	1597
Richard III. . . . .	1594	? 1595 M	1597
2 & 3 Henry VI. re-cast . . . . .	(?) 1594-5		1623
John . . . . .	1595	1598 M	1623

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00076-5 - Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art

Edward Dowden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface.*

ix

TRIAL TABLE OF THE ORDER OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS—*Continued.*

	Supposed Date.	Earliest Allusion.	Date of Publication.
SECOND PERIOD.			
Merchant of Venice . . . . .	(?) 1596	1598 M	1600†
Taming of the Shrew, part . . . . .	(?) 1596-7		1623*
1 Henry IV. . . . .	1596-7‡	1598 M	1598
2 Henry IV. . . . .	1597-8‡	1598 M	1600
Merry Wives . . . . .	1598-9	1602	1602
Henry V. . . . .	1599‡	1599	1600
Much Ado . . . . .	1599-1600‡	1600	1600
As you Like it . . . . .	1600‡	1600	1623§
Twelfth Night . . . . .	1601‡	1602	1623
All's Well (?L's. L. Wonne re-cast)	1601-2		1623
Sonnets . . . . .	(?) 1592-1602	1598 M	1609
THIRD PERIOD.			
Hamlet . . . . .	1602-3‡	(?)	1603*
Measure for Measure . . . . .	(?) 1603		1623
Julius Cæsar . . . . .	(?) 1601-3	(?)	1623
Othello . . . . .	(?) 1604	1610	1622
Macbeth . . . . .	1605-6‡	1610	1623
Lear . . . . .	1605-6‡	1606	1608*
Troilus & Cressida (?) completed	1606-7	1609	1609
Antony and Cleopatra . . . . .	1606-7	1608 (?)	1623
Coriolanus . . . . .	(?) 1607-8		1623
Timon, part . . . . .	1607-8		1623
FOURTH PERIOD.			
Pericles, part . . . . .	1608‡	1608	1609*
Two Noble Kinsmen . . . . .	1609		1634
Tempest . . . . .	1610	? 1614	1623
Cymbeline . . . . .	1610-12		1623
Winter's Tale . . . . .	(?) 1611	1611	1623
Henry VIII., part . . . . .	1613‡	1613 (?)	1623

\* Entered 1 year before at Stationers' Hall.

† Entered 2 years before at Stationers' Hall.

‡ May be looked-on as fairly certain.

§ Entered in the Stationers' Registers in 1600.

|| 'The Taming of a Shrew' was published in 1594.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00076-5 - Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art

Edward Dowden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS.



## CHAPTER I.

SHAKSPERE AND THE ELIZABETHAN AGE, . . . . .	PAGE 1
--	-----------

## CHAPTER II.

THE GROWTH OF SHAKSPERE'S MIND AND ART, . . . . .	42
---	----

## CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST, AND THE SECOND TRAGEDY : ROMEO AND JULIET : HAMLET, . . . . .	95
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

THE ENGLISH HISTORICAL PLAYS, . . . . .	162
---	-----

## CHAPTER V.

OTHELLO : MACBETH : LEAR, . . . . .	222
-------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE ROMAN PLAYS, . . . . .	276
----------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

THE HUMOUR OF SHAKSPERE, . . . . .	337
------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

SHAKSPERE'S LAST PLAYS, . . . . .	378
-----------------------------------	-----