

Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from his Life (Arden Shakespeare Library)

Katherine Duncan-Jones

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Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from his Life (Arden Shakespeare Library) Katherine Duncan-Jones This lively, readable and challenging new biography, by the editor of the acclaimed Arden edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets, takes a fresh look at an enduring cultural icon, about whose life it is widely claimed that nothing is known. As a result Shakespeare has tended to be viewed in Romantic isolation: the Bard as lonely inspired singer enthroned on a mountain peak. The aim of this study is to replace the image of the lonely genius with one of Shakespeare as deeply involved, even enmired, in the geographical, social and literary context of his time. This Shakespeare is a man who lives in a congested city and has to deal with disease, debt and cut-throat competition; his manifest brilliance often makes him the object of envy and malice, rather than adulation. Much of his life and writing is seen as the result of accident and circumstance, rather than the product of artistic vision or a grand career plan. From his shotgun wedding at the age of 18 to the burning down of the Globe Theatre over 30 years later, he is beset by bad luck. His most brilliant works are seen as creative responses to external constraints, such as the plague outbreaks that frequently closed the public theatres during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Katherine Duncan-Jones also takes a fresh look at the tradition of Shakespeare's love for a 'Dark Lady' and concludes rather that he devoted his most personal and passionate writing to the service of young men.



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