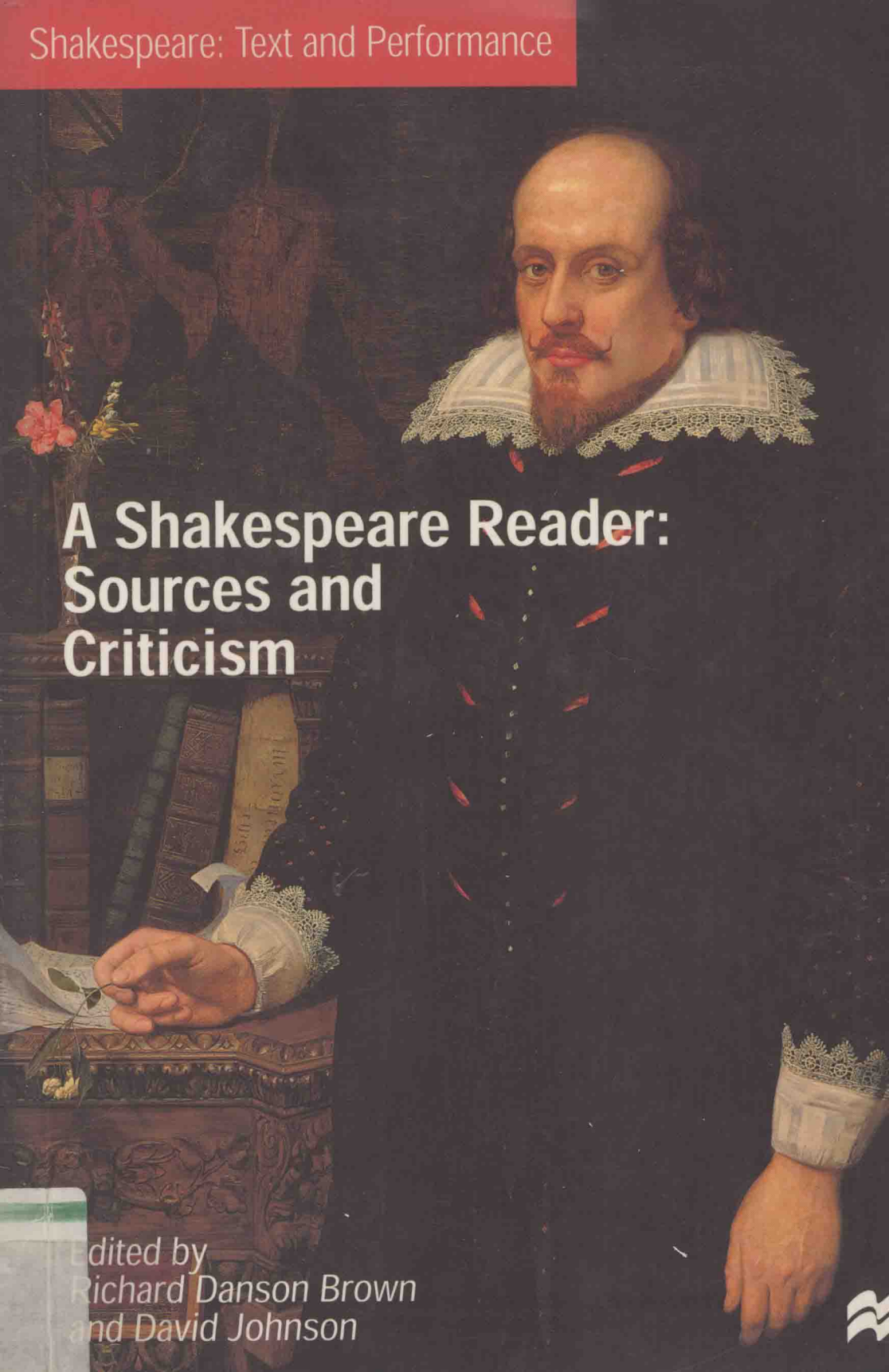
Shakespeare: Text and Performance



A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism

Edited by
Richard Danson Brown
and David Johnson

Shakespeare: Text and Performance

A SHAKESPEARE READER: SOURCES AND CRITICISM

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in association with

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A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism is the third book in a three-volume series which is designed for the third-level Open University course *Shakespeare: Text and Performance*. *A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism* is a collection of secondary reading selected to inform critical engagement with nine of Shakespeare's major plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.

The material in *A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism* is divided into three parts:

- Part One reprints sources and analogues for the nine plays.
- Part Two reprints competing critical readings of the nine plays, as well as extracts discussing their original theatrical contexts, and the difficulties of editing different textual versions of the plays.
- Part Three reprints critical interventions reflecting on the contested meanings of the key terms in the title of the course: 'Shakespeare', Text', and 'Performance'.

A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism is best read in conjunction with the first two books for the course *Shakespeare: Text and Performance*. The first book in the series, *Shakespeare: Texts and Contexts*, provides detailed critical commentaries on the same nine plays that are the focus of *A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism*. The second book, *Shakespeare 1609: 'Cymbeline' and 'The Sonnets'*, looks at two texts in the Shakespeare canon that have endured a controversial reception, namely the neglected play, *Cymbeline*, and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. As such, it throws the Shakespeare canon into clear relief, and suggests important points of comparison for the nine plays studied in the first and third books.

In *A Shakespeare Reader: Sources and Criticism*, we have provided brief introductions to the reprinted extracts, trying in particular to set out the contexts in which they were first published. As *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997) edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al. is the set text for the *Shakespeare: Text and Performance* course, and reprints the widely accepted 1986 Oxford

version of *The Collected Works*, we have changed or added act/scene/line references from Shakespeare's plays in all the extracts to coincide with *The Norton Shakespeare*, though we have retained the spelling and punctuation of the original. Finally, we have taken the difficult decision to suppress footnotes and references in the extracts. Faced with the choice of either reprinting the footnotes, or being able to include several more critical voices, we opted for the latter in the belief that our primary audience, undergraduate students, would thus be better served.

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Richard Danson Brown and David Johnson

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ILLUSTRATIONS

[Part One, 3.1 Macbeth]

Figure 1 Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder (?), *Macbeth and Banquo accosted by the weird sisters*. Woodcut from R. Holinshed, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, 1577 edn, National Library of Scotland

Figure 2 Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder (?), *Macbeth is crowned*. Woodcut from R. Holinshed, *The Chronicles of Scotland*, 1577 edn, National Library of Scotland

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Sources and Analogues

Part 1

Introduction and Headnotes

Introduction

In Part One we reprint some of the source materials and literary analogues Shakespeare drew on in writing these plays. These are intended both to give a sense of the literary culture Shakespeare was working in during the 1590s and 1600s, and to facilitate comparisons between Shakespeare's reading and the play scripts he wrote. In selecting these extracts, rather than going for the most obvious sources for every play, we have tried to include writings from a wide range of genres that Shakespeare might have used. Don't worry if you come across unfamiliar words or spellings of words; you should not try to read these extracts in the same way that you would a Shakespeare play. Rather, you should try to get a sense of the narrative excitement Shakespeare found in these texts.

1 A Midsummer Night's Dream

1.1 From Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft *(1584)*

Source: G. Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Volume I: *Early Comedies, Poems, Romeo and Juliet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 395–7.

Scot's (*c.* 1538–99) work is a long and detailed rejection of the beliefs of contemporaneous demonologists, who asserted the reality of such things as witchcraft and fairies. In the course of attempting to demolish these ideas, Scot gives much invaluable information about early modern ideas

of magic and witchcraft. In these extracts, Scot ridicules the popular belief in Robin Goodfellow and a whole range of other fantastical creatures. It is interesting to compare Scot's attitude to fairies with that exhibited in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Book VII. Chapter II

[Robin Goodfellow is not now much believed in.]

And know you this by the waie, that heretofore Robin goodfellow, and Hob gobblin were as terrible, and also as credible to the people, as hags and witches be now: and in time to come, a witch will be as much derided and contemned, and as plainlie perceived, as the illusion and knaverie of Robin goodfellow. And in truth, they that mainteine walking spirits, with their transformation, &c: have no reason to denie Robin goodfellow, upon whom there hath gone as manie and as credible tales, as upon witches; saving that it hath not pleased the translators of the Bible, to call spirits by the name of Robin goodfellow, as they have termed divinors, soothsaiers, poisoners, and couseners by the name of witches.

Booke VII. Chapter XV

Of vaine apparitions, how people have beene brought to feare bugges, which is partlie reformed by preaching of the gospell, the true effect of Christes miracles

But certeinlie, some one knave in a white sheete hath cousened and abused manie thousands that waie; speciallie when Robin good-fellow kept such a coile in the countrie. But you shall understand, that these bugs speciallie are spied and feared of sicke folke, children, women, and cowards, which through weaknesse of mind and bodie, are shaken with vaine dreames and continuall feare. The *Scythians*, being a stout and a warlike nation (as divers writers report) never see anie vaine sights or spirits. It is a common saieng; A lion feareth no bugs. But in our childhood our mothers maids have so terrified us with an ouglie divell having hornes on his head, fier in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eies like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a beare, a skin like a Niger, and a voice roring like a lion, whereby we start and are afraid when we heare one crie Bough: and they have so fraied us with bull beggers, spirits, witches, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit with the cansticke, tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, giants, imps, calcars, conjurors, nymphes, changlings, *Incubus*, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell waine, the fierdrake, the puckle, Tom thombe, hob gobblin, Tom tumbler, boneles, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne shadowes: in so much as some never feare the divell, but in a darke night; and then a polled sheepe is a perillous beast,

and manie times is taken for our fathers soule, speciallie in a churchyard, where a right hardie man heretofore scant durst passe by night, but his haire would stand upright. For right grave writers report, that spirits most often and speciallie take the shape of women appearing to monks, &c: and of beasts, dogs, swine, horsses, gotes, cats, hairs; of fowles, as crowes, night owles, and shreeke owles; but they delight most in the likenes of snakes and dragons. Well, thanks be to God, this wretched and cowardlie infidelitie, since the preaching of the gospell, is in part forgotten: and doubtles, the rest of those illusions will in short time (by Gods grace) be detected and vanish awaie.

1.2 *From Ovid,* Metamorphoses, *translated by Arthur Golding (1567), Book IV, pp. 67–201*

Source: G. Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare,* Volume I: *Early Comedies, Poems, Romeo and Juliet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 405–9.

Ovid's (43 BCE–*c.* 17 CE) long Roman poem was one of Shakespeare's favourite books; it was a source he frequently drew on in both drama and poetry (see for example the 1593 narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*). The *Metamorphoses* is a witty and digressive redaction of a great range of classical myths, unified by its concern with stories in which people change from one state or body to another. Though he would have been able to read the Latin original, Shakespeare also drew on Arthur Golding's accurate translation of 1567. This example is the source for the Pyramus and Thisbe narrative staged by Bottom and his friends in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

PYRAMUS AND THISBE

Within the towne [...]
Dwelt hard together two young folke in houses joynde so nere
That under all one roofe well nie both twaine conveyed were.
The name of him was *Pyramus,* and *Thisbe* calde was she.
So faire a man in all the East was none alive as he,
Nor nere a woman maide nor wife in beautie like to hir.
This neighbrod bred acquaintance first, this neyghbrod first did stirre
The secret sparkes, this neighbrod first an entrance in did showe,
For love to come to that to which it afterward did growe.
And if that right had taken place, they had bene man and wife,
But still their Parents went about to let which (for their life)
They could not let. For both their heartes with equall flame did burne.
No man was privie to their thoughts. And for to serve their turne

In steade of talke they used signes: the closelier they supprest
The fire of love, the fiercer still it raged in their brest.
The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a crany
Which shronke at making of the wall. This fault not markt of any
Of many hundred yeares before (what doth not love espie?)
These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby
To talke togither secretly, and through the same did goe
Their loving whisprings verie light and safely to and fro.
Now as at oneside *Pyramus* and *Thisbe* on the tother
Stoode often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other,
O thou envious wall (they sayd), why letst thou lovers thus?
What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us
In armes eche other to embrace? Or if thou thinke that this
Were overmuch, yet mightest thou at least make roume to kisse.
And yet thou shalt not finde us churles: we thinke our selves in det
For the same piece of courtesie, in vouching safe to let
Our sayings to our friendly eares thus freely come and goe.
Thus having where they stoode in vaine complayned of their woe,
When night drew nere, they bade adew and eche gave kisses sweete
Unto the parget on their side, the which did never meete.
Next morning with hir cherefull light had driven the starres aside
And *Phebus* with his burning beames the dewie grasse had dride.
These lovers at their wonted place by foreappointment met.
Where after much complaint and mone they covenanted to get
Away from such as watched them, and in the Evening late
To steale out of their fathers house and eke the Citie gate.
And to thentent that in the feeldes they strayde not up and downe,
They did agree at *Ninus* Tumb to meete without the towne,
And tarie underneath a tree that by the same did grow
Which was a faire high Mulberie with fruite as white as snow,
Hard by a coole and trickling spring. This bargaine pleasde them both,
And so daylight (which to their thought away but slowly goth)
Did in the Ocean fall to rest: and night from thence doth rise.
Assoone as darkenesse once was come, straight *Thisbe* did devise
A shift to wind hir out of doores, that none that were within
Perceyved hir: And muffling hir with clothes about hir chin,
That no man might discerne hir face, to *Ninus* Tumb she came
Unto the tree, and sat hir downe there underneath the same.
Love made hir bold. But see the chaunce, there comes besmerde with blood
About the chappes a Lionesse all foming from the wood,
From slaughter lately made of kine, to staunch hir bloudie thurst
With water of the foresaid spring. Whome *Thisbe* spying furst
Afarre by moonelight, thereupon with fearfull steppes gan flie,
And in a darke and yrksome cave did hide hirselfe thereby.
And as she fled away for hast she let hir mantle fall
The whych for feare she left behind not looking backe at all.
Now when the cruell Lionesse hir thurst had stanched well,
In going to the Wood she found the slender weede that fell
From *Thisbe*, which with bloudie teeth in pieces she did teare.
The night was somewhat further spent ere *Pyramus* came there:

Who seeing in this suttle sande the print of Lions paw,
Waxt pale for feare, But when also the bloudie cloke he saw
All rent and torne, one night (he sayd) shall lovers two confounde,
Of which long life deserved she of all that live on ground.
My soule deserves of this mischaunce the perill for to beare.
I wretch have bene the death of thee, which to this place of feare
Did cause thee in the night to come, and came not here before.
My wicked limmes and wretched guttes with cruell teeth therfore
Devour ye O ye Lions all that in this rocke doe dwell.
But Cowardes use to wish for death. The slender weede that fell
From *Thisbe* up he takes, and streight doth beare it to the tree,
Which was appointed erst the place of meeting for to bee.
And when he had bewept and kist the garment which he knew,
Receyve thou my bloud too (quoth he) and therewithall he drew,
His sworde, the which among his guttes he thrust, and by and by
Did draw it from the bleeding wound beginning for to die,
And caste himselfe upon his backe. The bloud did spin on hie
As when a Conduite pipe is crackt, the water bursting out
Doth shote itselfe a great way off and pierce the Ayre about.
The leaves that were upon the tree besprincled with his blood
Were dyed blacke. The roote also bestained as it stoode,
A deepe darke purple colour straight upon the Berries cast.
Anon scarce ridded of hir feare with which she was agast,
For doubt of disapointing him commes *Thisbe* forth in hast,
And for hir lover lookes about, rejoycing for to tell
How hardly she had scapt that night the daunger that befell.
And as she knew right well the place and facion of the tree
(As whych she saw so late before:) even so when she did see
The colour of the Berries turnde, shee was uncertaine whither
It were the tree at which they both agreed to meete togither.
While in this doubtfull stounde she stood, shee cast hir eye aside
And there beweltred in his bloud hir lover she espide
Lie sprawling with his dying limmes: at which she started backe,
And looked pale as any Box, a shuddring through hir stracke,
Even like the Sea which sodenly with whissing noyse doth move,
When with a little blast of winde it is but toucht above.
But when approching nearer him she knew it was hir love,
She beate hir brest, she shricked out, she tare hir golden heares,
And taking him betweene hir armes did wash his wounds with teares.
She meynt hir weeping with his bloud, and kissing all his face
(Which now became as colde as yse) she cride in wofull case
Alas what chaunce my *Pyramus* hath parted thee and mee?
Make aunswere O my *Pyramus*: It is thy *Thisb*, even shee
Whome thou doste love most heartely that speaketh unto thee.
Give eare and rayse thy heavie heade. He hearing *Thisbes* name,
Lift up his dying eyes, and having seene hir closde the same.
But when she knew hir mantle there and saw his scabberd lie