

[Download ebook] Shakespeare of London (Condor Books)

Shakespeare of London (Condor Books)

Marchette Chute

*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*

 Download

 Read Online

#14511418 in Books 1977-10-13Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 #File Name: 0285648411416 pages |
File size: 18.Mb

Marchette Chute : Shakespeare of London (Condor Books) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shakespeare of London (Condor Books):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lively and MasterfulBy Ricardo MioCould it be? William Shakespeare—the world’s greatest playwright—was better known in his day as one of the great actors of the London stage? This is among the insights drawn by independent scholar Marchette Chute in “Shakespeare of London.” A great deal of scholarly speculation has shaped our view of Shakespeare, because so little is known about his personal life. On the other hand, much is known about his career in the theater, and this is the focus of Ms. Chute’s marvelous portrayal. Chute’s account is of an ambitious man who made his reputation (and his fortune) as an actor, and who happened to write plays as a sideline, and didn’t draw a farthing for the effort.Unlike so many biographers, Ms. Chute doesn’t speculate on the state of Shakespeare’s marriage to Anne Hathaway, or why they separated, or why he moved to London and took up acting. Her account of the Bard’s life really doesn’t begin until 1594, when Shakespeare joined the famed acting group, the Chamberlain’s company. To draw an analogy from sports, the Chamberlain’s company was tantamount to the New York Yankees. They recruited the very best actors, routinely drew the largest crowds, played before the queen regularly, and were so successful they financed construction of their own theater—the Globe. Some time before this, as early as 1590, Shakespeare began writing plays. His first three were histories (Henry VI, parts 1, 2 and 3) followed by a tragedy (Titus Andronicus) and then a comedy (The Comedy of Errors). They were not great plays by Shakespeare’s later standards, but great enough to attract the envy of another writer, Robert Green, who wrote a pamphlet warning his fellow Oxford graduates in the literary scene that their rights were being encroached by

a mere actor. Shakespeare did not attend college, as most Elizabeth playwrights had, but he did attend an exceptional grammar school in well-to-do Stratford. The emphasis was on Latin, Latin and more Latin, but also on devising speeches (written in Latin) appropriate to historical figures, and reading them aloud in a school where eloquence was highly prized. In other words, Shakespeare's education, which stopped at about the 8th grade, prepared him quite well for a career in acting and playwriting. Shakespeare was fortunate to arrive in London at a time when the theater was enjoying something of a golden age. The first actual theater, called the Curtain, hadn't been around all that long when Shakespeare hit town around 1688. Prior to the Curtain, the companies produced their plays in the open courtyards of the inns. At the same time, thanks to the advent of the printing press, books were cheap and reading was a middle-class obsession. Where else for sophisticated Londoners to find entertainment but in the Elizabethan theater where the use of words, and especially blank verse, were a constant delight? There were no English dictionaries at the time, so truly creative talents—and Shakespeare most of all—invented hundreds of new words that became a part of the English language, as many as a dozen or more in a single play, and most notably in *Hamlet*. At first, authorship of Shakespeare's plays was unknown outside of the theater world. But as Shakespeare wrote hit after hit, the public gradually caught on, and wanted his plays published. As a result, a number of plays written by other playwrights but performed by the Chamberlain's company were passed off as Shakespeare's. And his plays that were published were corrupted by cuts and inaccurate texts and hardly representative. It wasn't until publication of the First Folio, eight years after Shakespeare's death, that such errors would be corrected. Why didn't Shakespeare publish his own plays, as did his friend Ben Jonson? Because there was no money in it. The money was in acting. Acting was not an easy profession. Nearly all plays involved some kind of fighting. In staging hand-to-hand combat the actor's training had to be excellent. The average Londoner was an expert at fencing, and he did not pay money to see two professional actors make ineffectual dabs at each other with rapiers when the script claimed they were fighting to the death. They also expected to see real blood spilled. Sheep's blood did the trick, carried in a hidden bladder; when stuck with a blade blood splattered onto the stage as for real. Actors also had to be very agile, able to leap from high places, and to dance with élan. Also required was the ability to play not one but several instruments, and to be fluent in Latin and French. Actors needed a great voice, so that everyone in a large theater could hear all the words distinctly. Finally, an Elizabethan actor needed an excellent memory, because the repertory system was used and no play was given two days in succession. Every night, the actor played a different part. A busy actor like William Shakespeare did not have much time to write. His mornings were taken up with rehearsals and there were performances in the afternoon and sometimes special shows in the evening, to say nothing of the strenuous period when the company made its annual tour of the provinces. As a result, few actors actually wrote plays. How did Shakespeare do it? He wrote fast, says the author. He thought out the play very carefully in advance, and then wrote every chance he got. The texts he handed over to the copyists rarely showed any signs of corrections. He averaged two plays a year, which is not a lot compared with other Elizabethan playwrights who produced five or more plays per annum. Nearly all of Shakespeare's plays are based on old plays, tired, trite, and uninspired stories that in the Bard's hands were elevated into something exalted and timeless. Shakespeare didn't hit his stride until writing *The Taming of the Shrew*, and revealed his genius with *Romeo and Juliet*. When it came to writing history plays, he did not bother much with the facts. Rather, he plumbed for potential conflict, emotion and character development. As a result, generations of English people have accepted as historically accurate Shakespeare's accounts of King John, of Kings Richard II and Richard III, and of the King Henries—Henry IV, V, VI and VIII. In fact, these plays are mostly works of fiction. Shakespeare did not bother much with geography, either. In one of his plays, he has landlocked Bohemia fronted by an ocean. Omnipresent in Shakespeare's London were the Puritans—who believed the theaters were sin-filled places and the devil's work—and Elizabeth I, the beloved Queen, who could not enter a room without creating a stir. Members of her court were forever trying to close down theaters as well, but being an intrepid theater-goer Elizabeth would hear none of it. The theater was one of the few joys in her stress-filled life. She set the tone in so many ways for the English people, especially in making the theater respectful. London women followed suit and like opera goers today made an evening at the theater a special and memorable event. When Elizabeth died, King James I continued the tradition of a theater-going head of state. When he died, the London theater died with him. Much to the Puritan's delight, Charles I shut down the theaters for a good long time. Thus ended a glorious history of the London stage that produced several great actors whose fame is known to this day, and a number of inspired playwrights, of whom William Shakespeare is greatest of all. As was said of another time in English history: "Don't let it be forgot // that once there was a spot // for one brief shining moment // that was known as Camelot." The Bard died in 1616 blissfully unaware of the immortality of his plays. More important to him, perhaps, was that he retired on his own terms as a very wealthy man. He invested wisely in Stratford real estate and spent his last years in and out of court protecting such property that was his. Much has been made of this by present-day biographers, but Ms. Chute points out that at the time this was a common enough practice among men of property. Indeed, Elizabethans were a litigious bunch. Bottom line: The life and times of Elizabethan London is very much alive in the hands of Marchette Chute. Five big stars. See my reviews of her two other books: *Geoffrey Chaucer of England*, and *Ben Jonson of Westminster*. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Shakespeare's life and career in context By S. Jacobson I've read a lot of Shakespeare-related books, and this has

quickly become one of my favorites. All WS bios cover the same set of facts taken from the same set of documents, and this book is no different. But "Shakespeare of London" allows the reader to view those facts in the context of Elizabethan/Jacobean London/Stratford perhaps better than any book I've read. For someone who thought he knew a fair amount about this subject, i've learned a lot from this book. Highly recommended. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the great Shakespeare scholars....By RodwallyProf. Chute is not only very knowledgeable about The Bard, she doesn't treat him like a plaster saint. From this book, you get a sense of the real man and his development, of his times, and of his place in those times. And she effortlessly blows the Earl of Oxford and the other 20 pretenders off the stage. A great book....