



The Real Shakespeare: Retrieving the Early Years, 1564-1594

Eric Sams

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In an account of the first 30 years of Shakespeare's life, Eric Sams controverts all orthodox editions, biographics and reference books. He reveals how, in conventional Shakespeare scholarship, the playwright's youth has been concealed within a web of elaborate literary theories which misrepresent his life and work, and reject, ignore, or misdate his early plays. Pioneering a revolution in our understanding of the early years, Sams exposes the gulf between received opinion and documented fact. Shakespeare, he carefully shows, was a disadvantaged country boy from an illiterate Catholic background, removed from school at the age of about 13 to help on the family farm. Far from being a late developer, he was a husband and father at 18, and an actor and writer of popular plays soon afterwards. Sams traces the impact of Shakespeare's upbringing in the language and imagery of his early comedies, histories and tragedies, not only those of the Folio editions but others, including the so-called "Bad Quartos", widely but wrongly assumed to have been the result of "memorial reconstruction by actors". Through detailed textual analysis, he argues compellingly against the established view that Shakespeare wrote nothing until his middle twenties, nor revised his own work.



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