



# WHY SHAKESPEARE

Never more popular, more pertinent, especially in America

# WHY JAMES SHAPIRO

- He hated reading Shakespeare in school, never studied it in college
- Appreciation came from “visceral pleasures of sitting in a theater with hundreds of other people watching good and sometimes great productions”





“SHAKESPEARE WAS A PLAYWRIGHT. HE WROTE PLAYS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF AN ACTOR FOR PAYING CUSTOMERS IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS”





# FORMALISM

- Formalism is a literary criticism approach that focuses on the structure of a text, rather than the author's life or the work's historical context.
- Formalist critics analyze a text as a self-contained object, examining its form, structure, and verbal nuances to determine its meaning

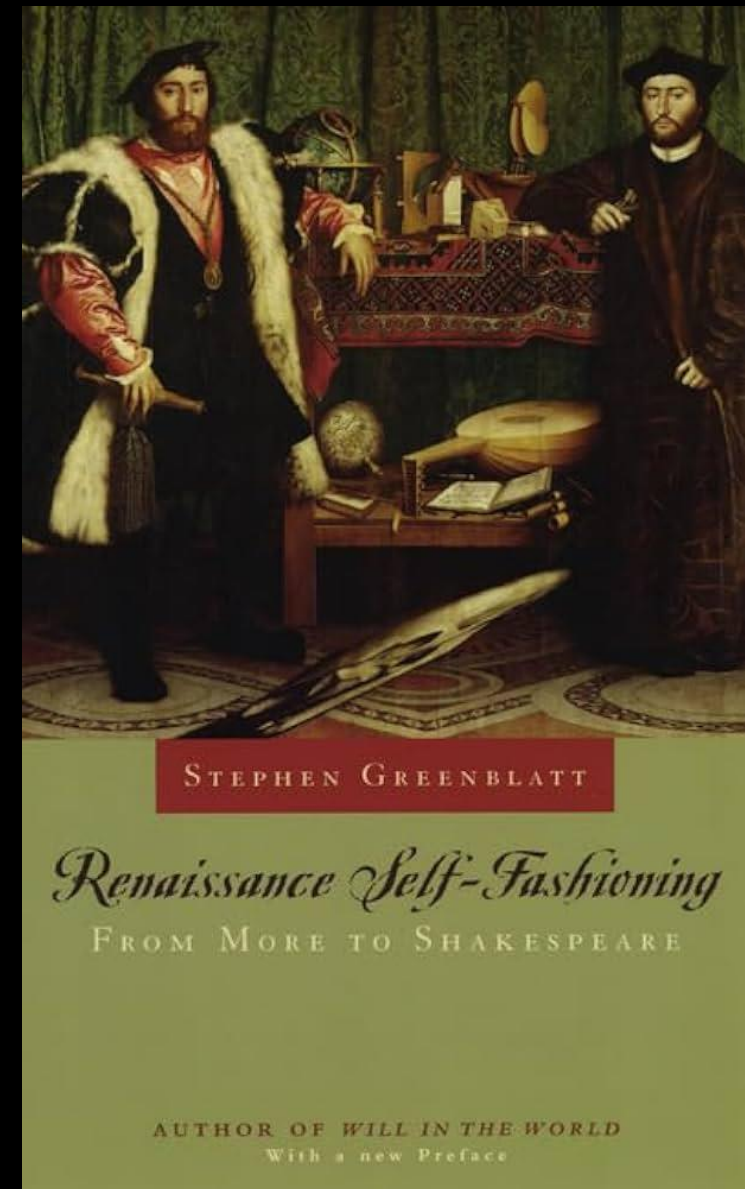


# NEW HISTORICISM

New historicism is a literary criticism movement that is characterized by its examination of the cultural, political, and textual forces that influence the relationship between the past and present.

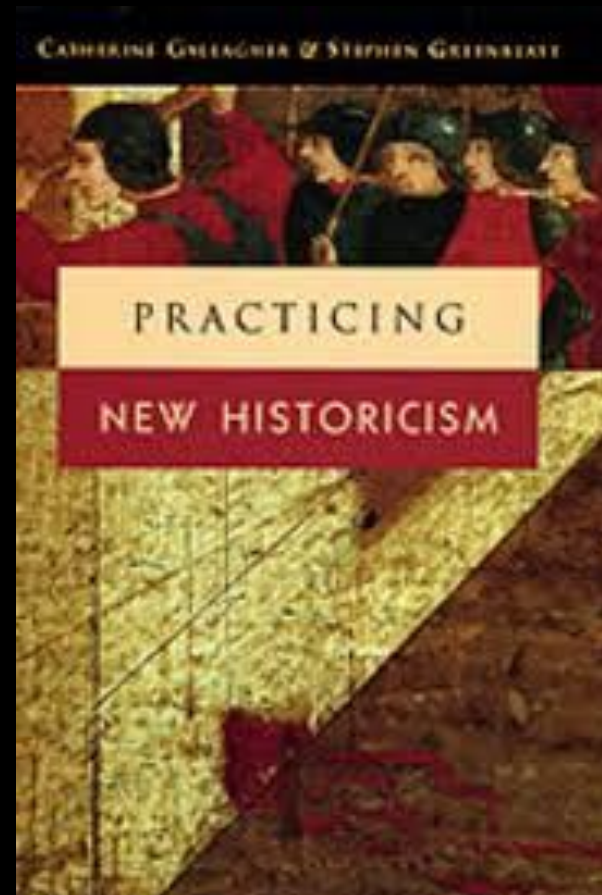
New historicism's main claim is that literature's meaning and themes are not universal and cannot be derived solely from the text itself. Instead, they are the result of the author's time and cultural context.

- To a New Historicist, literature is not the record of a single mind, but the end product of a particular cultural moment.
- In addition to analyzing the impact of historical context and ideology, New Historicists also acknowledge that their own criticism contains biases that derive from their historical position and ideology.





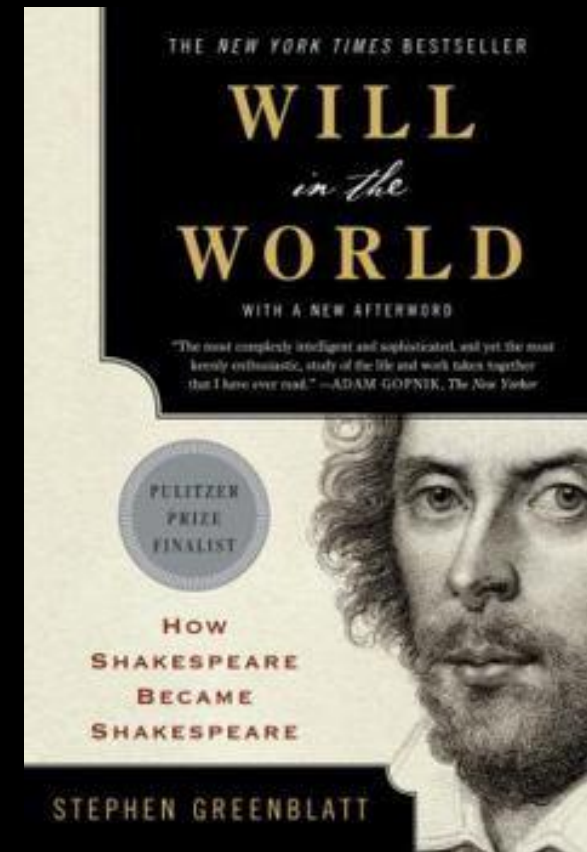
- Because it is impossible to escape one's own "historicity," the meaning of a text is fluid, not fixed.
- New Historicists attempt to situate artistic texts both as products of a historical context and as the means to understand cultural and intellectual history.



# GREENBLATT'S WILL IN THE WORLD

- "On the question of love, (Greenblatt believes) Shakespeare's view on "intense courting and pleading and longing" is shown to be "one of his abiding preoccupations, [and] one of the things he understood and expressed more profoundly than almost anyone in the world"
- "In relating the very complex and generally negative view of marriage in the plays to Shakespeare's own marriage to Anne Hathaway Greenblatt lands on a very unhappy interpretation."

• Ruby Jand







# WHY I LIKE JAMES SHAPIRO

- Email exchange..

# JAMES SHAPIRO: HISTORICAL NOT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

Does not look to his works to discover Will's personality, sex life, marriage.





# WORKS WITH THEATER COMPANIES

- Worked with schools in producing plays
- Worked with men in prison , taking Shakespeare to prisons
- Works with actors, directors as advisor, consultant
- Works with theater companies to compress plays for modern audiences





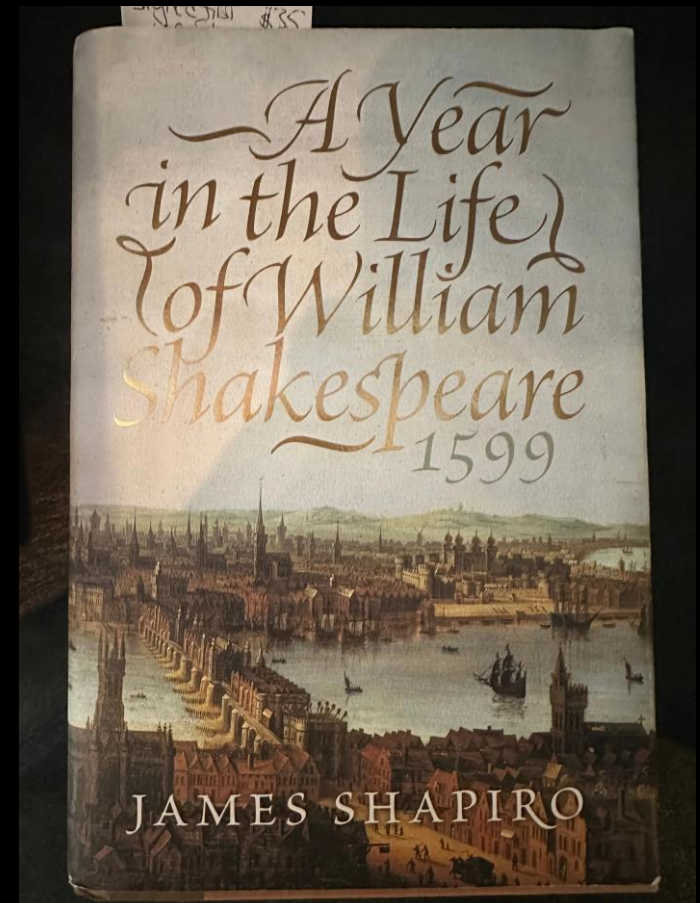
# LIVING WORKS OF ART

- Interested in the plays as *Theater*, open to interpretation not sealed works of art.
- Sees the plays as living works of art, a different production or line can change the meaning

# 1599: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

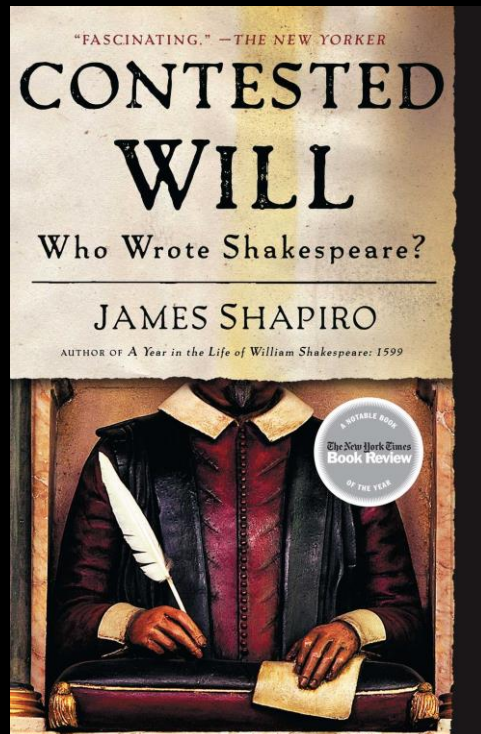
- Henry V
- Julius Caesar
- As You Like It
- Hamlet

- Published 2001, fifteen years research



# CONTESTED WILL WHO WROTE SHAKESPEARE?

- Why so many people think someone else *MUST* have written the play



Class snobbery

Think the plays autobiographical

Lack of knowledge of what we now know about Will

Lack of knowledge of Queen Elizabeth's life

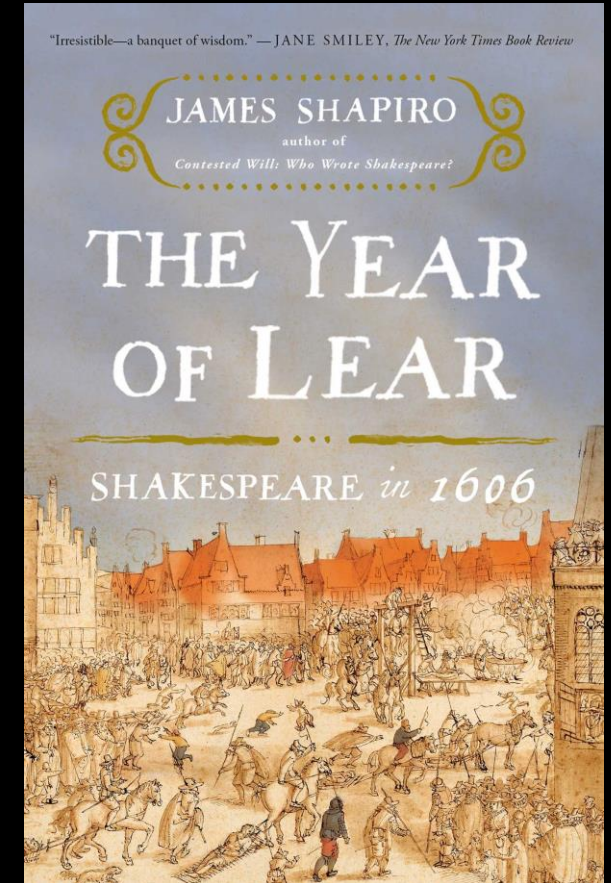
Lack of knowledge of the Elizabethan theater

Published 2010, five years research



# THE YEAR OF LEAR, SHAKESPEARE IN 1606

- King Lear
  - Macbeth
  - Anthony and Cleopatra
- 
- Published 2016, spent ten years researching



# SHAKESPEARE IN A DIVIDED AMERICA: WHAT HIS PLAYS TELL US ABOUT OUR PAST AND FUTURE

SHAKESPEARE  
IN A DIVIDED  
AMERICA

*As I have written after my better and  
longer acquaintance of your works  
I have found that you are a very  
great and noble personage and  
I have much to learn from you  
and I have much to learn from you  
and I have much to learn from you  
and I have much to learn from you*

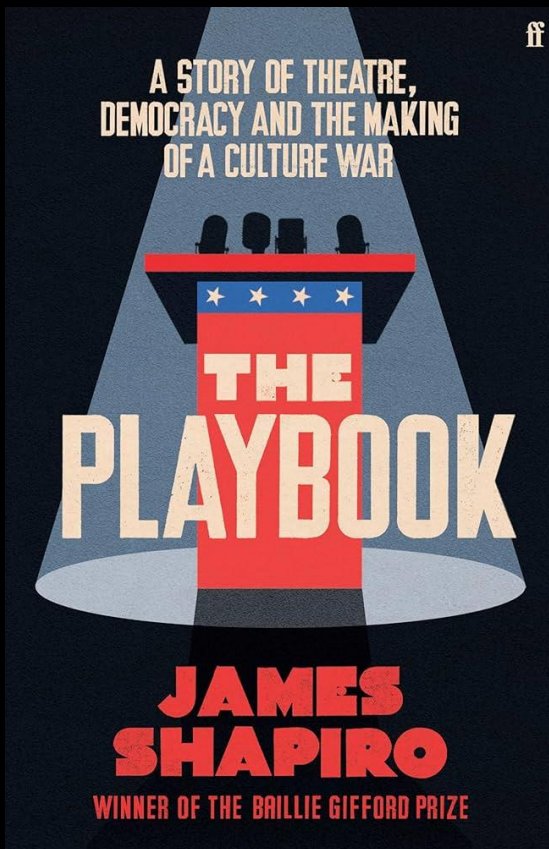
WHAT HIS PLAYS TELL US ABOUT  
OUR PAST AND FUTURE

JAMES SHAPIRO

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- “What Shapiro does, with consummate skill and in a friendly and evocative style, is sort through the information that has emerged from old libraries and dusty archives in the last 50 years, and then he consolidates it and brings it alive in a smooth, lively and conversational style.” Jane Smiley NYTimes
- Published 2016, One of New York Times' ten best books of the year.

# THE PLAYBOOK: A STORY OF THEATER, DEMOCRACY AND THE MAKINGS OF A CULTURE WAR.



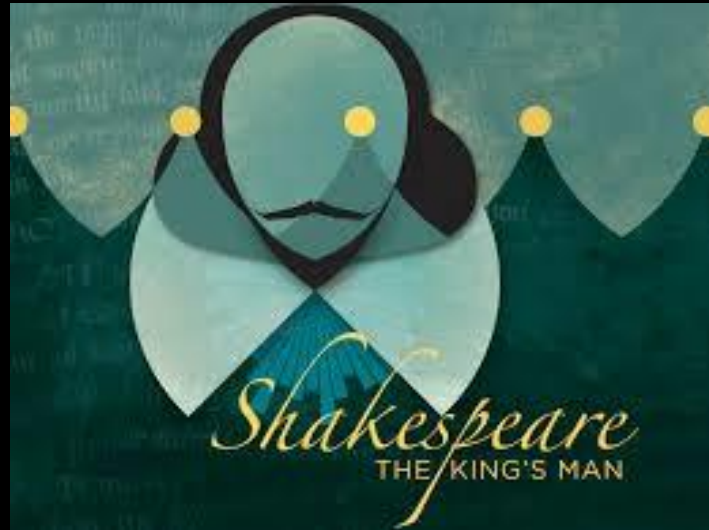
How Congress used Culture Wars to dismantle a Depression Theater project that employed struggling artists including an unknown Orson Wells and Arthur Miller.

Published 2024



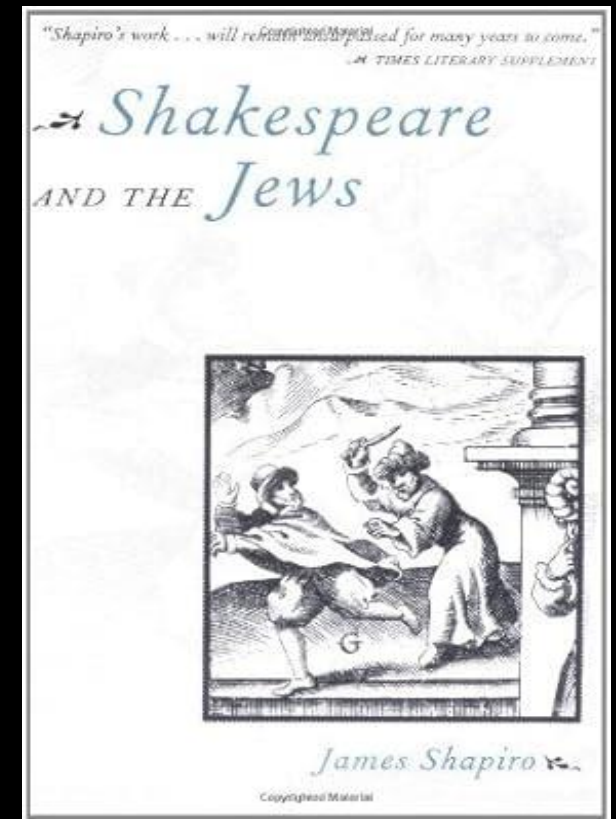
# SHAKESPEARE: THE KING'S MAN

- Three part BBC series about the turbulent reign James I
- Shakespeare wrote darker plays, King Lear, Macbeth, the Tempest



# PLUS

- Rival Playwrights Marlowe, Ben Jonson and
- Will Shakespeare, 1991
- Shakespeare and the Jews, 1996
- Oberammergau The Troubling Story of the World's
- Most Famous Passion Play
- 2001



# BIO

- Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, James Shapiro studied at Columbia University and the University of Chicago.
- He is currently Larry Miller Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where he has taught since 1985.
- He is currently Shakespeare Scholar in Residence at the Public Theater in New York City.





# WHERE TO START

Upstart Crow



