



Shakespeare

Michael Wood

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A brilliant piece of historical investigative journalism, *Shakespeare* is a fresh telling of the playwright's life based on a wide range of newly discovered sources, such as police and torture records. Rather than approaching Shakespeare as an isolated genius, Wood argues that he was very much a product of his place and time--a period of upheaval that straddled the medieval and modern worlds. It was a time of great tensions, marked by murderous plots and purges of the Elizabethan police state, from the Somerville Plot and the Essex rebellion to the Gunpowder Plot, which can now be shown to have touched Shakespeare and his family directly. If we wonder why Shakespeare was so obsessed with violence, and especially the violence of the state, there is an answer: This was Shakespeare's world. Furthermore, Wood reveals new and surprising evidence about: Shakespeare's Catholic faith, his work, and his attitudes on sex and on race. In doing so he reinstates the image of Shakespeare as a thinking artist, his work based firmly in the religion, politics, culture and class antagonisms of his day. *Shakespeare* plunges us headlong into the turbulent life and times of William Shakespeare. Presented in a beautifully designed package, with over 100 four-color and black-and-white illustrations, the result is a more convincing and complete portrait of the artist than was previously thought possible.

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