Life And Works Essay, Research Paper

Shakespeare also spelled SHAKSPERE, byname BARD OF AVON, or SWAN OF AVON

English poet, dramatist, and actor, often called the English national poet and

considered by many to be the greatest dramatist of all time.

Shakespeare occupies a position unique in world literature. Other poets, such as

Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, have

transcended national barriers; but no writer’s living reputation can compare with that

of Shakespeare, whose plays, written in the late 16th and early 17th centuries for a

small repertory theatre, are now performed and read more often and in more countries

than ever before. The prophecy of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben

Jonson, that Shakespeare “was not of an age, but for all time,” has been fulfilled.

It may be audacious even to attempt a definition of his greatness, but it is not so

difficult to describe the gifts that enabled him to create imaginative visions of pathos

and mirth that, whether read or witnessed in the theatre, fill the mind and linger there.

He is a writer of great intellectual rapidity, perceptiveness, and poetic power. Other

writers have had these qualities, but with Shakespeare the keenness of mind was

applied not to abstruse or remote subjects but to human beings and their complete

range of emotions and conflicts. Other writers have applied their keenness of mind in

this way, but Shakespeare is astonishingly clever with words and images, so that his

mental energy, when applied to intelligible human situations, finds full and memorable

expression, convincing and imaginatively stimulating. As if this were not enough, the

art form into which his creative energies went was not remote and bookish but

involved the vivid stage impersonation of human beings, commanding sympathy and

inviting vicarious participation. Thus Shakespeare’s merits can survive translation into

other languages and into cultures remote from that of Elizabethan England.

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