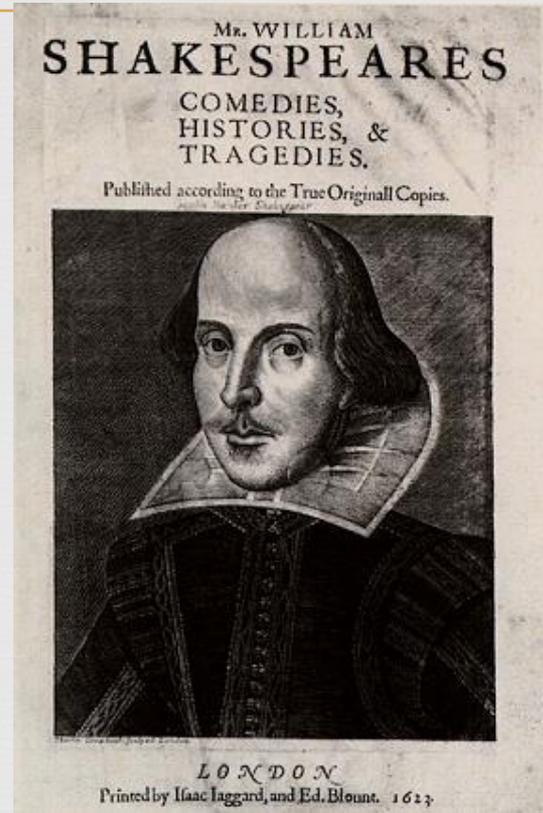


# Early Modern English and The Elizabethan Era



1500 - 1650

# Early Modern English



# Early Modern English



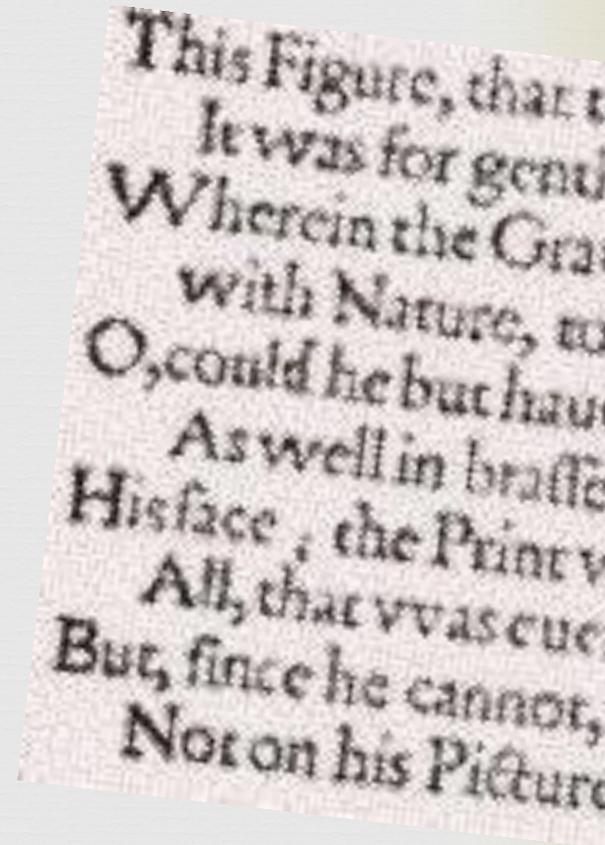
❖ The advent of the printing press in London in 1470 established the Chancery Standard dialect of English as the national standard.



# Early Modern English



❖ Modern readers of English are generally able to understand Early Modern English, though with some difficulties arising from changes in grammar, word meaning, and spelling.



This Figure, that  
It was for gent  
Wherein the Gra  
with Nature, to  
O, could he but hau  
As well in brasse  
His face, the Print v  
All, that vvas eue  
But, since he cannot,  
Not on his Picture

# Early Modern English



❖ English spelling was finally (mostly) standardized in this time period, but it did not happen overnight.



❖ Unfortunately, since this era was filled with political and social upheaval, mass migrations after the Black Death ...

# Early Modern English



... and an exaggerated attempt to further distinguish the "English accent" from that of the French, many peculiarities (i.e. contradictions) in English spelling and pronunciation were standardized into record at this time.

# Queen Elizabeth's Reign



- ❧ Closing off the era of the Tudors, Elizabeth was crowned queen in 1558.
- ❧ Her reign is considered the start of the golden age of English history typified by national pride, classical ideals, international expansion, military might, and a much-welcomed renaissance of the arts.



# Queen Elizabeth's Reign



- ❧ In this peaceful era, the arts flourished and culture bloomed.
- ❧ Significant writers of this time include William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser.

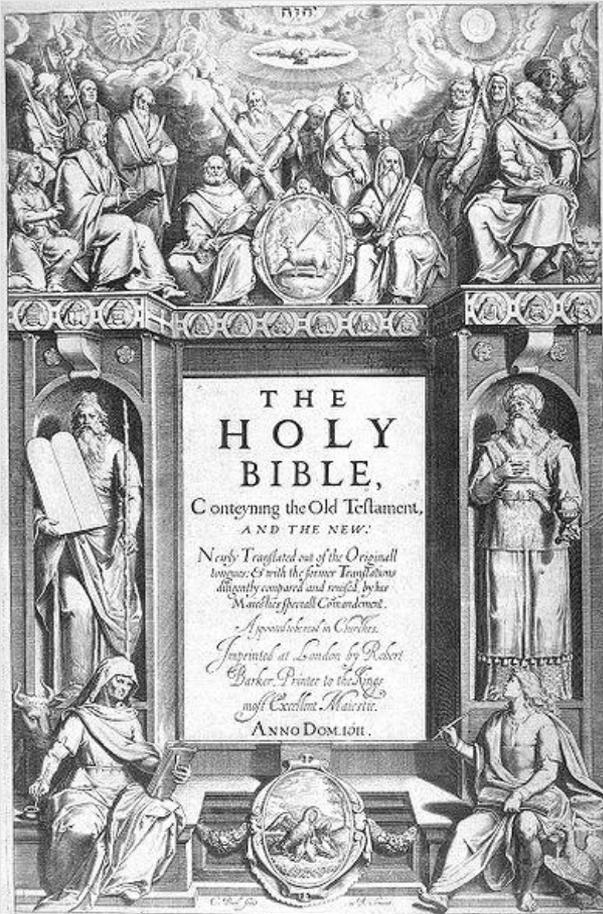


# King James



- ✧ Under King James, the golden age of Elizabethan literature and drama continued.
- ✧ The Authorised King James Version of the Bible (1611) and Shakespeare's collected works (published posthumously in 1623) are the best examples of the English language from this era and remain the top 2 bestsellers to this day.

# King James



- ❧ The translators of the King James Version of the Bible intentionally preserved archaic pronouns and verb endings that had already begun to fall out of spoken use.
- ❧ This enabled the English translators to convey the distinction between the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular and plural verb forms of the original Hebrew and Greek sources.

e.g. **2<sup>nd</sup> Person (You)**



informal singular:

**thou, thee, thy, thine**

formal singular and plural:

**ye, you, your, yours**



# Common Themes of Elizabethan Drama



- ∞ Revenge
- ∞ Sensationalism
- ∞ Melodrama
- ∞ Vengeance
- ∞ the Human Condition

# William Shakespeare



- ✧ ... stands out in this period as a poet and playwright as yet unsurpassed due to sheer giftedness and versatility.
- ✧ Though most of his plays met with great success, it is in his later years that he wrote what have been considered his greatest works: Romeo and Juliet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, The Tempest, and of course Hamlet.

# HAMLET

- Shakespeare wrote The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark between 1599 and 1601.



# HAMLET

- It was first performed in 1602 and first released in print in 1603.
- The story itself is set in Denmark during the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, but culturally it has a very 17<sup>th</sup> century vibe.



# HAMILET

- *What is the play about? ...*
- In a way, that's been debated for centuries.



# HAMILET

- It's a good play for anyone who is having trouble figuring things out.
  - It's also a good play for anyone who isn't having trouble figuring things out – yet.
-

# HAMLET

It's about a young man called on to exact revenge for the murder of his father. Unfortunately ...

- **The murderer is the king.**
  - **The source of the information is a ghost.**
  - **The revenge must be honorable.**
  - **There are spies everywhere.**
  - **The title character might be insane.**
-

# HAMLET

- It is Shakespeare's most famous play about Shakespeare's most famous character, and it contains Shakespeare's most famous lines.
- There exists more literary criticism and analysis on Hamlet than any other single piece of English Literature, so there's no shortage of educated opinion on the play.

# HAMLET

- Hamlet depicts a conflict over what to do when an orderly state is actually internally corrupt and there seems to be no civilized answer.



# HAMLET

- If you remove the actual action of Hamlet (when the body count starts to skyrocket in Act V), the rest of the play is really just made up of soliloquies, asides, conversations, and mullings-over, which – far from being boring – are the real meat of the play.
- They're also the real meat of human beings. Hamlet is significant mostly because it was the first play to really pull that off successfully.

# GENERAL MOTIFS THAT RUN THROUGHOUT HAMLET

- Madness
- Revenge
- Mortality
- Corruption
- Certainty
- Deceit
- Sexuality
- Gender
- Family
- Religion
- Art / Theater

# STYLISTIC MOTIFS USED TO ESTABLISH THE MEANING OF HAMLET AS A WHOLE:

- Internal (mental, psychological) events carry the excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external actions.

# STYLISTIC MOTIFS USED TO ESTABLISH THE MEANING OF HAMLET AS A WHOLE:

- A character with little to no presence in the text is actually a very significant presence in terms of action, theme, and development of other characters..

# STYLISTIC MOTIFS USED TO ESTABLISH THE MEANING OF HAMLET AS A WHOLE:

- Social occasions (e.g. weddings, funerals, parties) are used to reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live.

# STYLISTIC MOTIFS USED TO ESTABLISH THE MEANING OF HAMLET AS A WHOLE:

- A character's mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences.