

William Shakespeare

Playwright

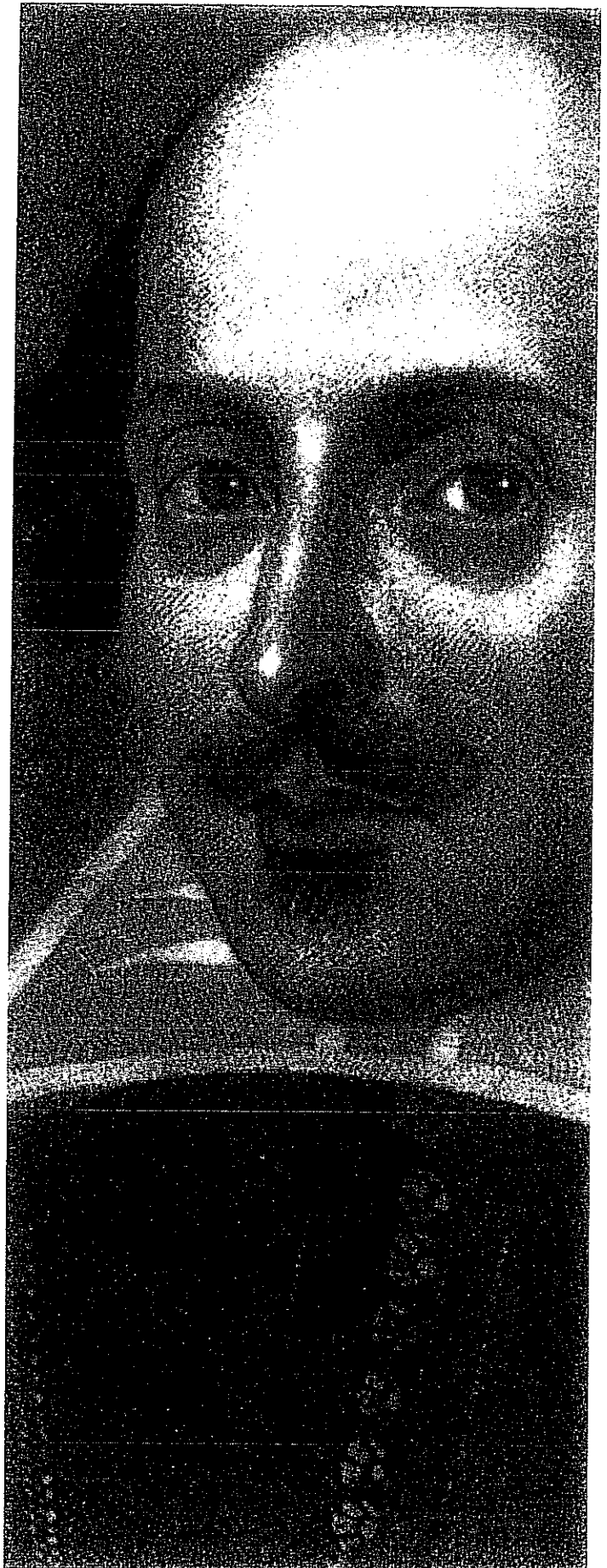
Born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, William Shakespeare was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a glover and tanner who rose to become an alderman and bailiff of the town, and Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy farmer. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but there is a record of his baptism on April 26. Since an interval of two or three days between birth and baptism would have been quite common, tradition has it that he was born on April 23 – the same date as his death 52 years later.

The young Shakespeare is assumed to have attended what is now the Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford, where he would have studied ancient Roman literature in its original Latin. In 1582, when he was 18, he married Anne Hathaway, a farmer's daughter who was eight years his senior. Anne was pregnant at the time, and the couple's first daughter, Susanna, was born a few months afterwards in 1583. Twins followed two years later: a son, Hamnet, who died at the age of 11, and a second daughter, Judith.

Nothing further is known of Shakespeare's life until 1592, by which time he was sufficiently established as an actor and writer in London to be the target of a literary attack by a jealous fellow playwright, Robert Greene. Soon afterwards, an outbreak of plague forced the temporary closure of the theatres, and Shakespeare turned his attention instead to his long narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. He also began writing the Sonnets, a series of 154 love poems that many believe to be at least partly autobiographical.

By 1594, Shakespeare was back in the theatre, writing and acting for the Lord Chamberlain's Men. His income as one of the country's most successful dramatists enabled him, in 1597, to buy a mansion back in Stratford, and in 1599 he became a shareholder in London's newly built Globe Theatre.

In 1603, Shakespeare's company was awarded a royal patent, becoming known as the King's Men. Possibly as early as 1610, the playwright retired to his home in Stratford-upon-Avon, living there until his death on April 23, 1616. He is buried in the town's Holy Trinity Church.



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE