¶ 4.1

Why did drama boom in London after 1576?



The English Stage: The Most Famous Period in English Writing.

What did Marlowe and Shakespeare do with the stage?

How do the plays and sonnets still speak to us today?

Pre-Elizabethan

- Mystery plays
- Morality plays
- Interludes at court
- School plays

1576

James Burbage builds The Theatre in Shoreditch (First permanent playhouse in London).



1599

The Globe.

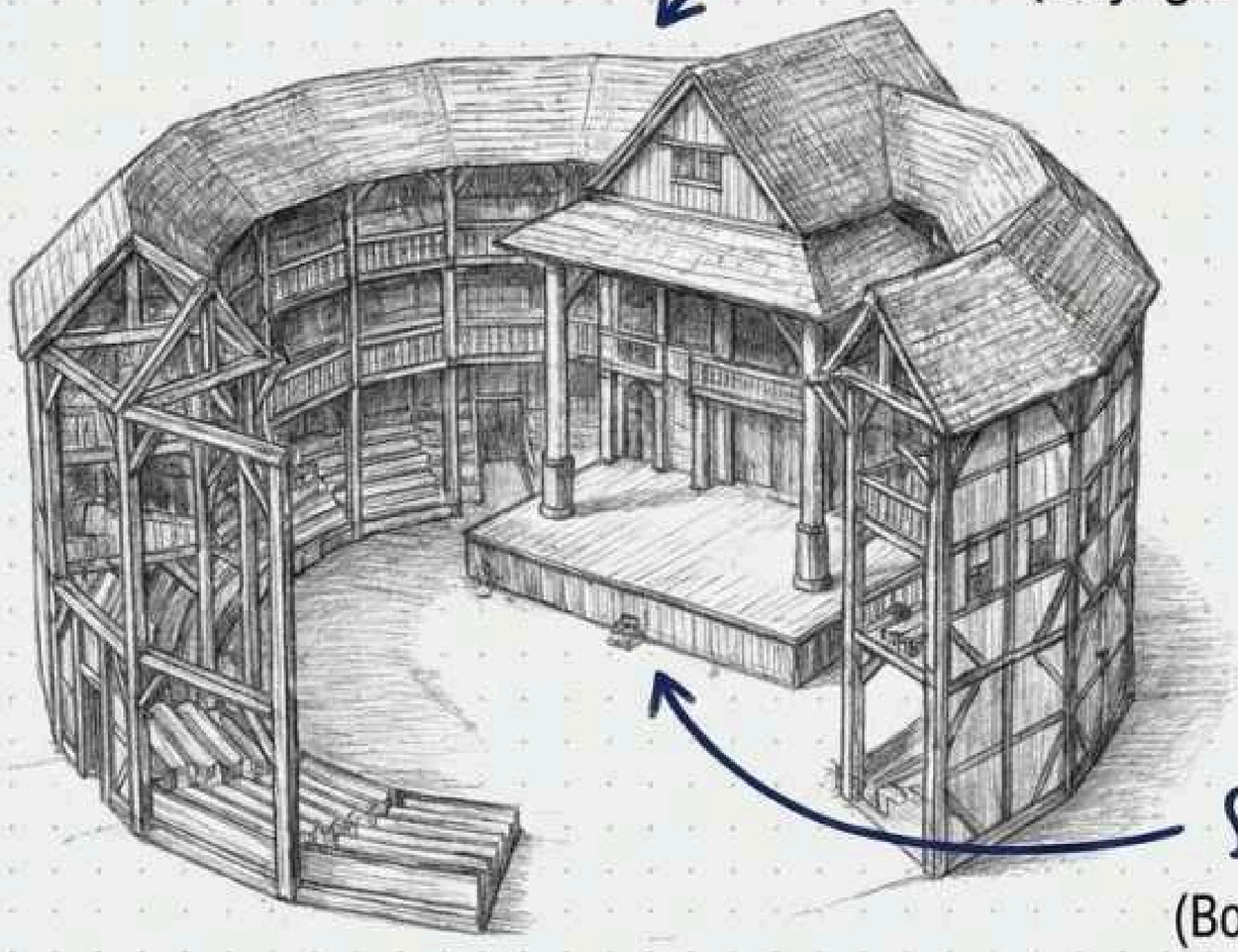


1608

Shakespeare's company utilizes the indoor Blackfriars.

¶ 4.3

Open to the sky
(Daylight acting, little scenery).



1 Penny = Groundlings
(Standing in the yard)

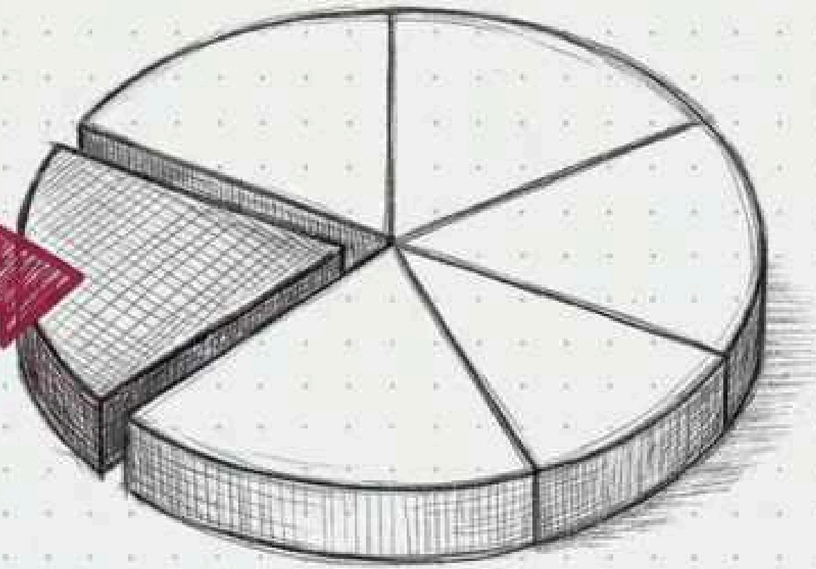
Wealth = Sitting in
covered galleries

Stage juts into the crowd.
(Boys played women's parts; women did not act on public stages until 1660).

Unlicensed Player = Vagabond --> Noble Patronage Required

Lord Chamberlain's Men (1594) → [James I takes throne, 1603] → The King's Men

Shakespeare:
Both Actor & Shareholder.



Business Model: Profit Sharing

The Predecessors: The University Wits

¶ 4.5

Thomas Kyd

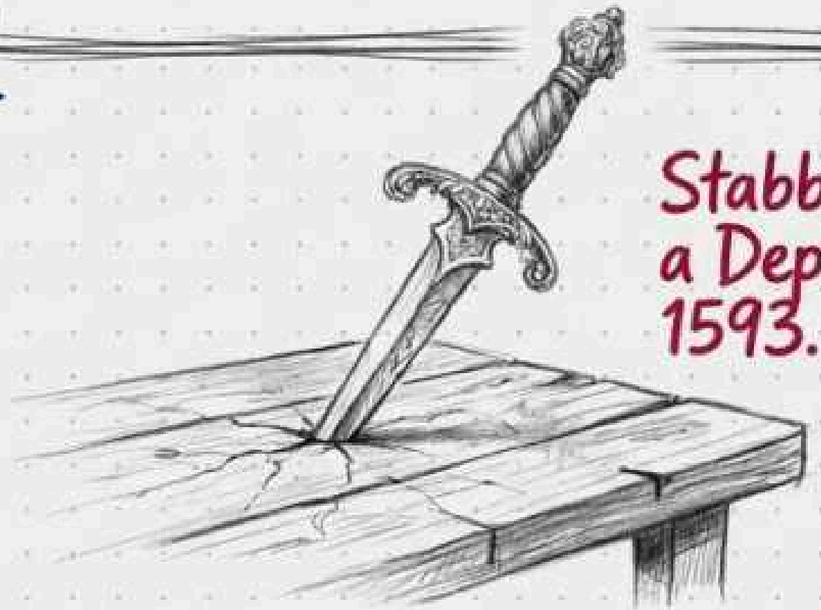
Wrote: The Spanish Tragedy.

Contribution: Launched the revenge play formula.

Christopher Marlowe

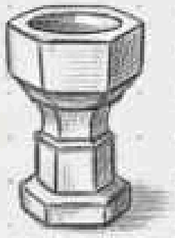
Wrote: Tamburlaine and Doctor Faustus
(A scholar sells his soul for 24 years of power).

Contribution: Thunderous blank verse.



Stabbed to death in a Deptford tavern, 1593.

- 1564: Baptized, Stratford-upon-Avon



- 1582: Marries Anne Hathaway



- Early 1590s: Working in London



- 1616: Death



*Note: Few records of private life survive.

$\sum$ Output = 37 Plays + 154 Sonnets + 2 Narrative Poems

Venus and Adonis,
The Rape of Lucrece



¶ 4.7

Comedy = (Disguise + Mistaken Identity + Clever Talk) → Marriage

Key Plays:

- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- Much Ado about Nothing
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

Character Note:

Heroines (Rosalind, Viola) dress as men to achieve freedom of speech and action denied by society.

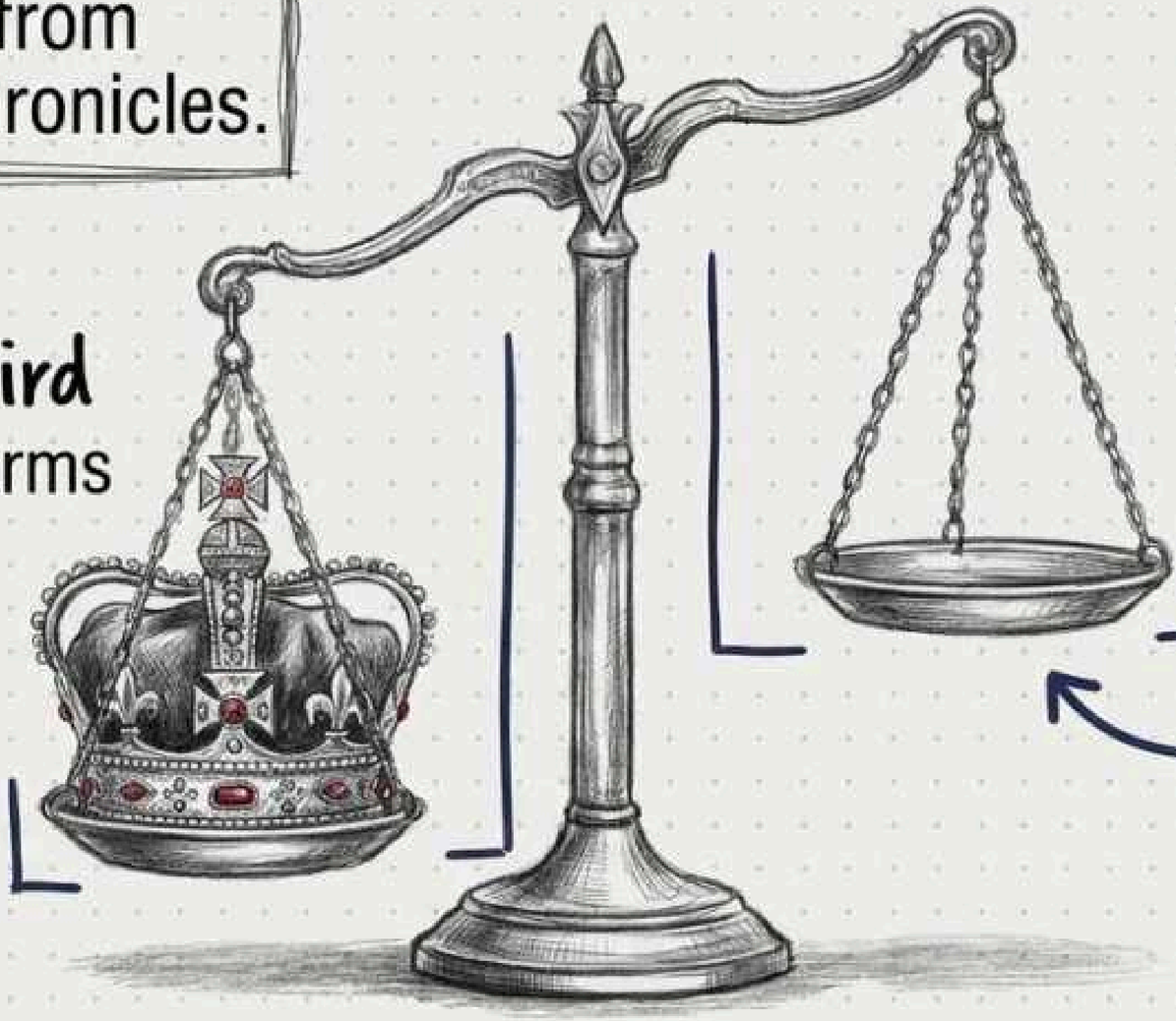


¶ 4.8

What makes a ruler legitimate?

Drawn mostly from Holinshed's Chronicles.

Richard the Third
(A villain who charms the audience)



Henry the Fourth [Parts 1 & 2]
(Prince Hal learns to be a king alongside the comic knight Falstaff)

¶ 4.9

$$\text{Destruction} = \text{High Rank} \times (\text{Fatal Flaw} + \text{Crisis})$$

The Great Four:

- Hamlet (~1600)
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth



~4,000 lines (longest play).

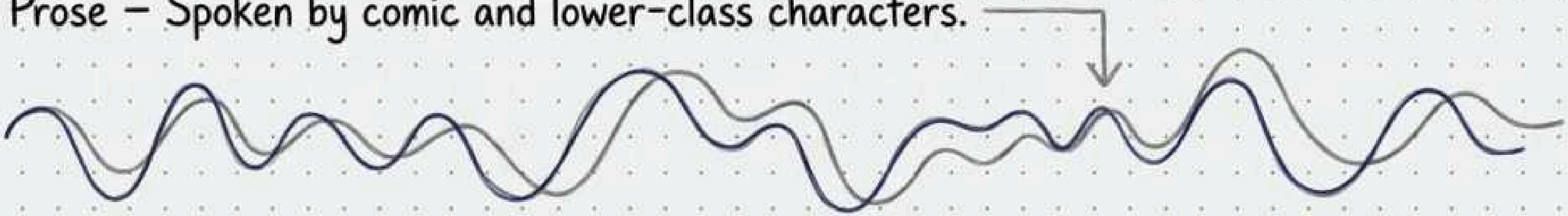
Soliloquies take the audience inside a mind in doubt.

¶ 4.10

Blank Verse (Unrhymed Iambic Pentameter) – Sounds close to natural speech.



Prose – Spoken by comic and lower-class characters.



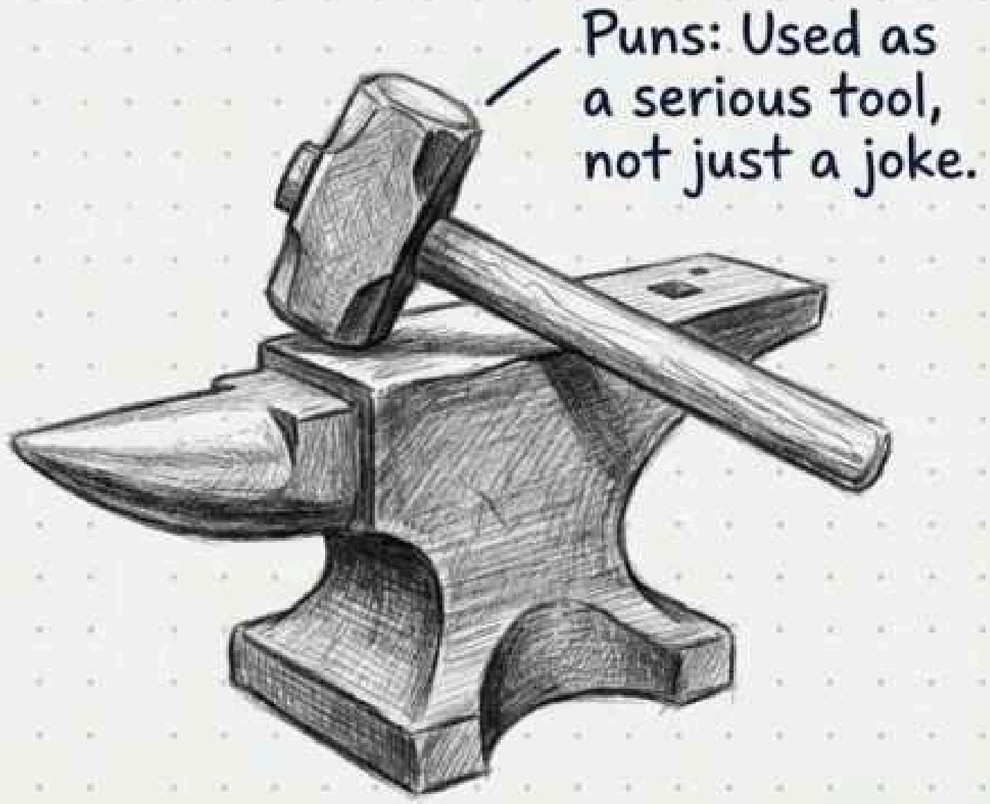
* Note: Rhymed couplets often close a scene.

Δ Verse <--> Prose = Δ Rank, Δ Mood, or Δ Sanity

Range: Moves in a few lines from plain speech to dense metaphor.

Plain Speech ⟷ Dense Metaphor

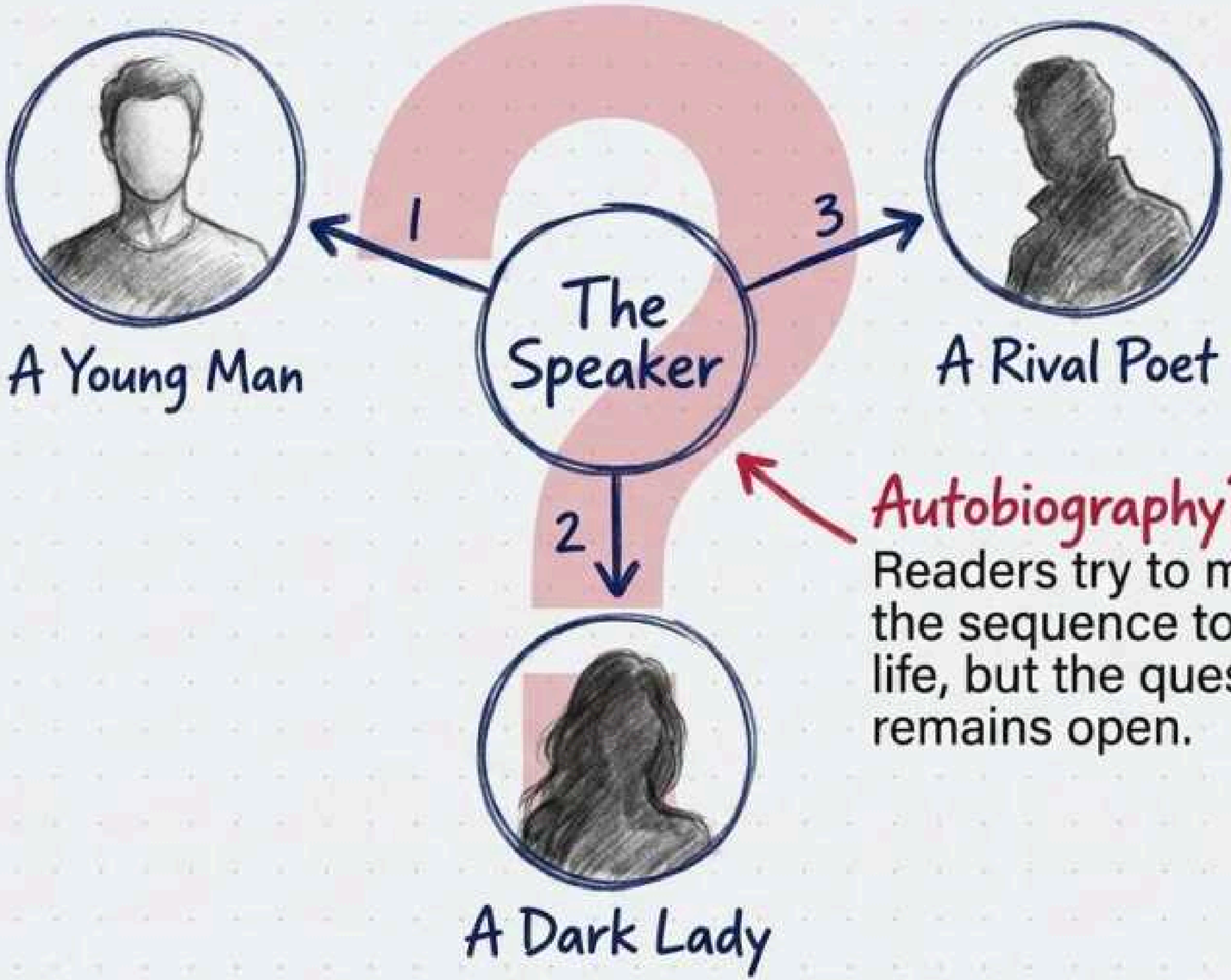
Scholarly Caution: Many words first appear in print here, but credit for coining should be handled carefully (earlier uses may be lost).



The Sonnets (Published 1609)

¶ 4.12

Includes famous lines like Sonnet 18 (comparing a beloved to a summer's day).



Autobiography?

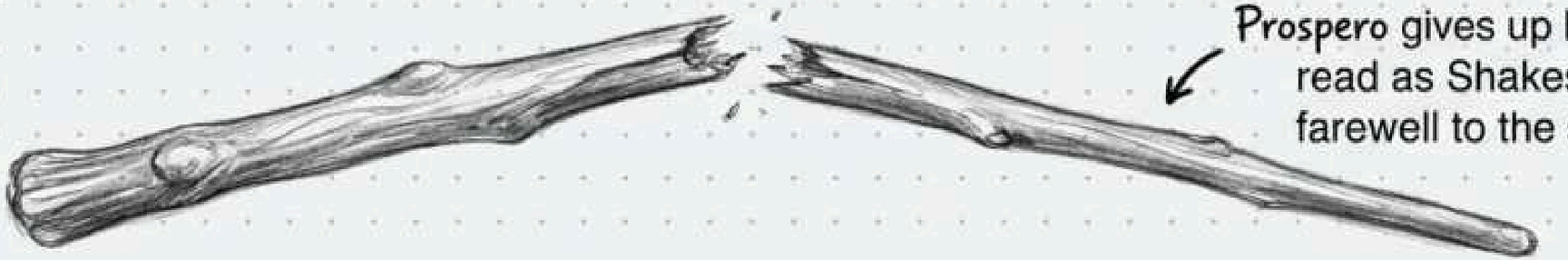
Readers try to map the sequence to his life, but the question remains open.

Transformation Curve

Loss → Exile → World of Wonder → Forgiveness

Key Plays:
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest (~1611)

Collaboration: Shared plays with John Fletcher near the end of his career.



Prospero gives up his power—often read as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.

¶ 4.14

Friend & Rival: Ben Jonson

Jonson's Focus

- Volpone, The Alchemist
- Satires on city greed/fraud
- Polished, classical poems



The Milestone



1616 Milestone:
Jonson publishes his Works in a large folio

Radical shift: Treating plays as serious literature

Not of an age, but for all time.

¶ 4.15

The Jacobean Stage Turns Darker

- John Webster (*The Duchess of Malfi*): Corruption at an Italian court.
- Thomas Middleton: Bitter comedies and tragedies.

Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)
Generally regarded as the first original play in English published by a woman.

¶ 4.16

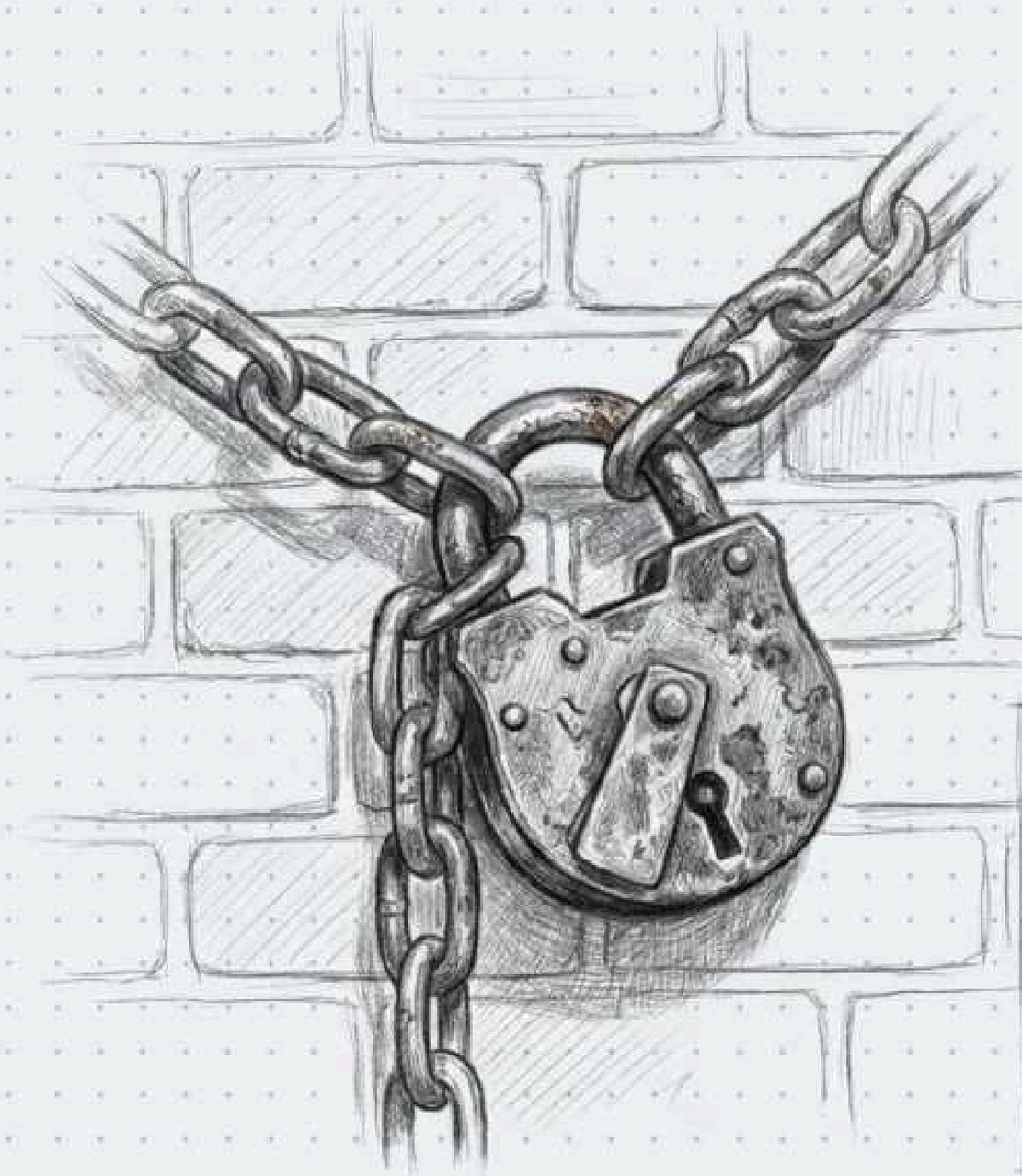
The First Folio (1623) – Heminges & Condell

18 Unprinted Plays / 36 Total Plays Collected = Saved from Loss

Macbeth, Twelfth Night, The Tempest



Seven years after his death, fellow actors ensured some of the best-loved plays were not lost forever.



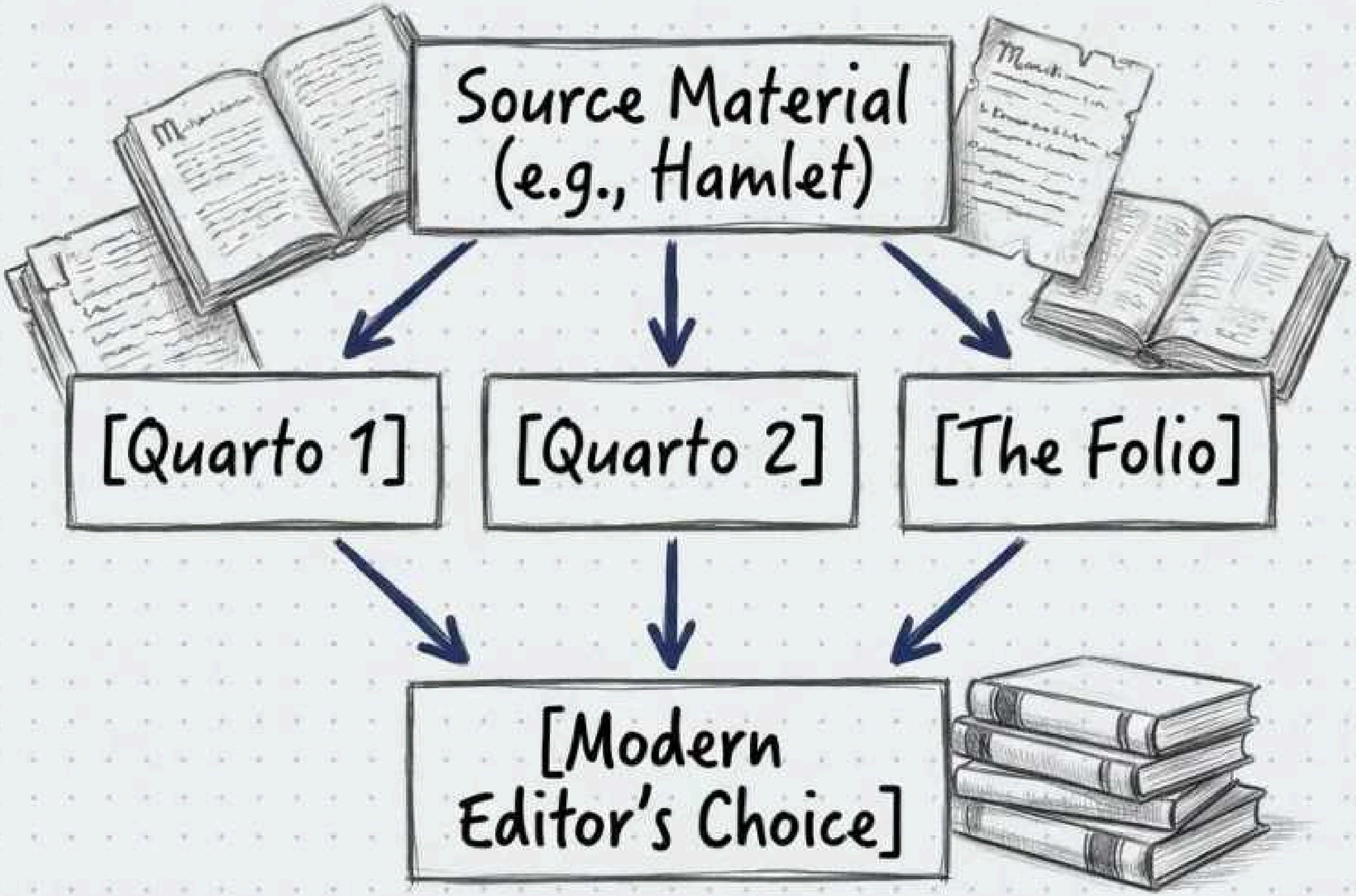
1642 – English Civil War begins.

Parliament orders theaters closed (until the Restoration). The era of public stage as mass art is over.

Literature =
Buildings + Audiences
+ Political Permission

Scripts as Texts: There is No Single True Text

¶ 4.18



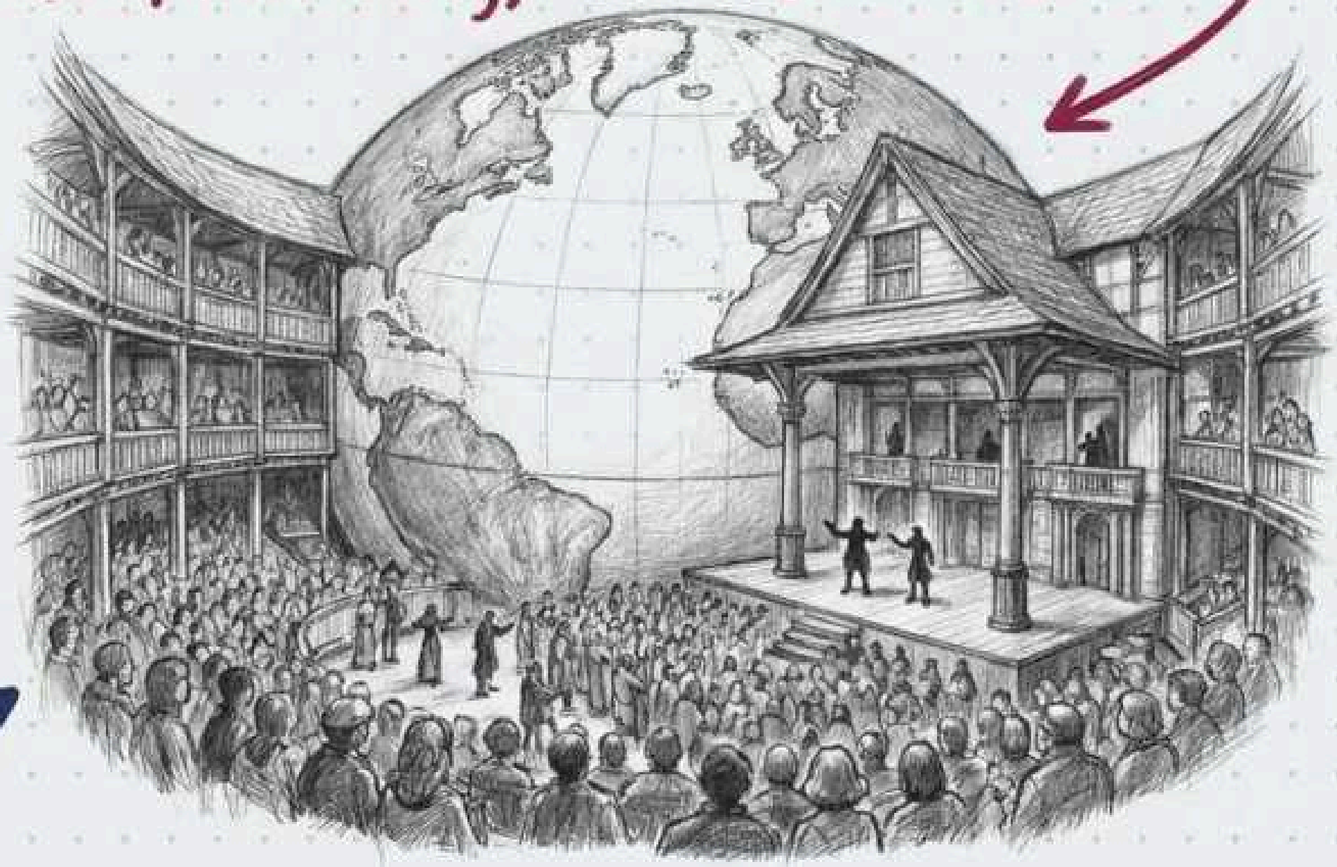
When reading a modern edition, always check which version the editor followed and what has been modernized.

¶ 4.19

Grand Synthesis Equation

Popular Entertainment × Profound Thought (Power, Desire, Mortality) = Enduring Global Art

The stage made English a language of great drama. These plays remain alive on stage and screen globally today.



Where to go next.

Curated Library Matrix

Biography:

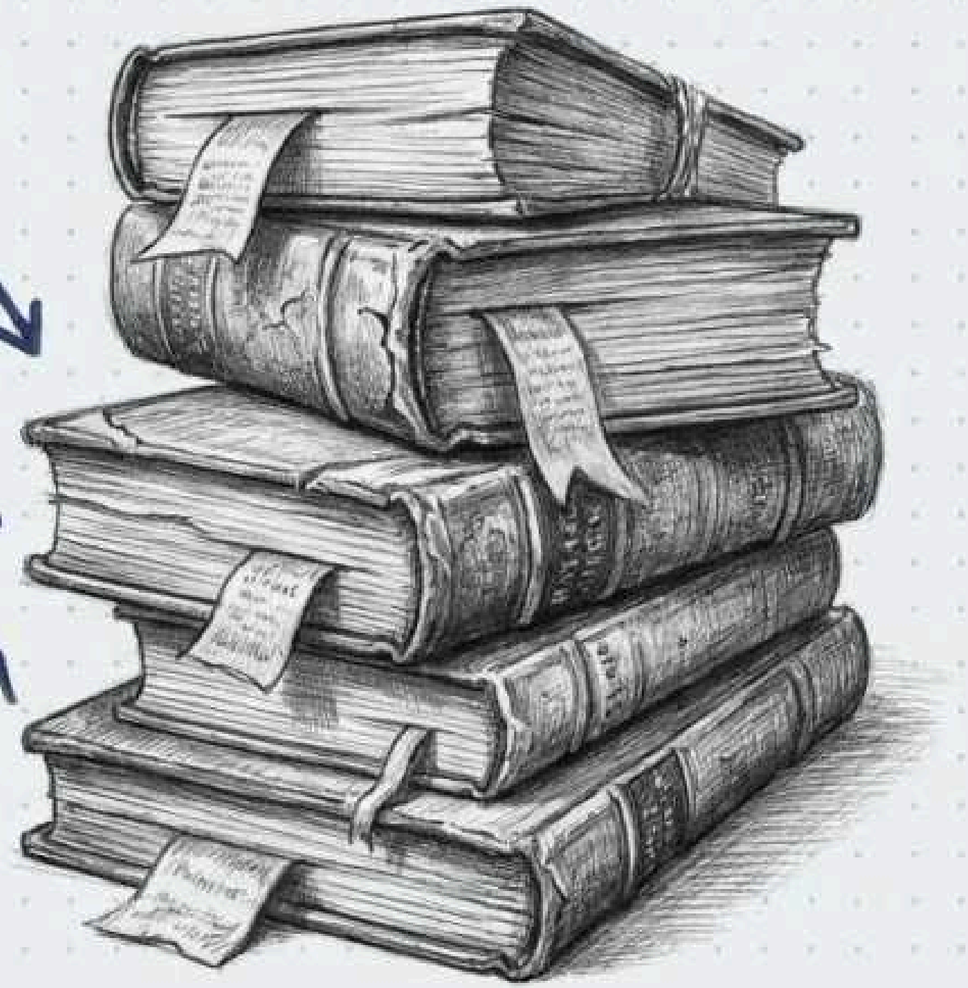
- Stephen Greenblatt (Will in the World)
- James Shapiro (1599)

Editions:

- Folger and Arden (for excellent scholarly notes)

The Entry Plays:

- Comedy: Twelfth Night
- Tragedy: Macbeth



Closing Exercise: Analyzing the Soliloquy

¶ 4.21

1) Choose a short soliloquy.

2) Read it aloud—locate exactly where the sentence breaks against the end of the line.

3) Write a short paragraph connecting the mechanics to the mind (What is the speaker trying to decide? How does the rhythm reveal their state of mind?).

