



# The Merry Wives of Windsor (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)

*William Shakespeare*

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*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare's only thoroughly English comedy, created an archetypal literary figure in the shape of the devious, irrepressible John Falstaff. This edition celebrates the play as a joyous exploration of language, but also places elements of its plot firmly in a continental, specifically Italian, tradition of romantic comedy.

In the introduction, Melchiori draws out the complexities of *Merry Wives* as a multi-plot play, taking a fresh and challenging look at both textual and dating issues and examining the play's comic elements and influences. The book includes tables that illustrate, scene by scene, the passage of time and the sequence of events. The narrative structure and the logistics of performing the play are outlined and analyzed, and a casting and doubling chart is included. The introduction fully explores play's extensive performance history, both dramatic and operatic. A facsimile of the first Quarto is included as an appendix, along with a list of abbreviations and references, a catalog of Shakespeare's works and works partly by Shakespeare, and citations for the modern productions mentioned in the text, other collated editions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and other related reading.

**The Arden Shakespeare** has developed a reputation as the pre-eminent critical edition of Shakespeare for its exceptional scholarship, reflected in the thoroughness of each volume. An introduction comprehensively contextualizes the play, chronicling the history and culture that surrounded and influenced Shakespeare at the time of its writing and performance, and closely surveying critical approaches to the work. Detailed appendices address problems like dating and casting, and analyze the differing Quarto and Folio sources. A full commentary by one or more of the play's foremost contemporary scholars illuminates the text, glossing unfamiliar terms and drawing from an abundance of research and expertise to explain allusions and significant background information. Highly informative and accessible, Arden offers the fullest experience of Shakespeare available to a reader.

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