

dent had to occur after the birth of the twins in 1585. So Shakspeare is no longer an irresponsible, apprenticed youth of eighteen running away from a butcher-master, but a man of family being forced out of the country into his traditional good fortune by the persecutions of the local magnate. The whole story is also given as genteel a tone as possible by having Shakspeare misled into the gentlemanly sport of deer-stealing, instead of merely indulging a somewhat peasant passion for poaching rabbits and venison. Further, the stages of the persecution had been rather more fully distinguished. Davies knew that Shakspeare kept on stealing and Sir Thomas kept on persecuting till Shakspeare left the country. Apparently, the ill comrades who in Rowe's version tempt Shakspeare into trouble, themselves escape scot free. Why did Sir Thomas continue to pursue Shakspeare alone? The answer is that Shakspeare in revenge for the prosecution by Sir Thomas had made a ballad which so enraged that worthy that he forced Shakspeare to take shelter in London and the playhouse, exactly where Sir Thomas should have found it easy to trace him for the star chamber. But the ballad was already in Rowe's time lost. It will be noticed that the ill-companions are Rowe's addition to the story. They are not in Davies, and in Rowe Sir Thomas Lucy does nothing about them, though they are the real offenders. They are thus a further bit of pious garnish to the story. But the ballad seems to be an element added to the story at Stratford between the time when the story passed to Davies and the time when it passed through Betterton to Rowe. Since, however, the main story is wholly a progressive fiction, this further addition can be no more authentic.

It is significant also to watch the framework of this tradition as the contents shift. The objective, at least, remains always the same. In the story as Aubrey tells it by 1681 it is the literary urge alone which sends Shakspeare to London and fortune. In Castle's version by 1693, the story is the same but the circumstances have altered one important detail. Since Shakspeare is no longer assisting his father at killing calves, but is regularly apprenticed to a butcher, he can no longer merely leave his father at eighteen to follow his literary fortune. The changed circumstances now force him to run away from his master. Thus the fiction of a run-away Shakspeare enters the tradition. The literary urge now must overcome difficulties. In the deer stealing story Shakspeare still goes to London for fame and fortune, but the motivation has changed. No longer is it his own literary urge which takes him there, but the persecution of the local magnate which forces him there. The literary urge has been left out, but it later gets partially recognized through the story of the ballad.

Thus run-away Shakspeare is wholly a fiction, made mostly in Stratford and its neighborhood but with some aid from the outside. So good a story will not die, of course, even though we know that every element in it is a fiction. For we sadly need a good spectacular story to account for verdant Shakspeare's leaving Stratford, and this one has stood the test of time. It seems now, however, likely to take on a further addition by having Shakspeare run away with the players. That element may produce a new metamorphosis, but hardly extinction. For it and George Washington's cherry tree will doubtless flourish forever.