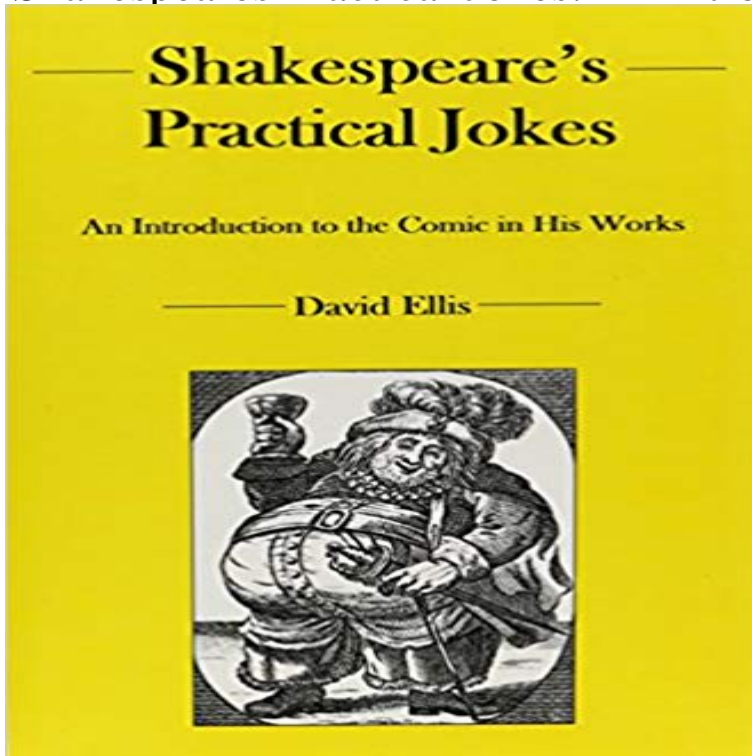


# Shakespeares Practical Jokes: An Introduction to the Comic in His Work



There is a mountain of work on Shakespeares comedies but very little on what, in all the plays, can be described as comic. In this book that topic is approached via a number of practical joke episodes, some of them well known - the deceptions Hal and Poin practice on Falstaff, the tricking of Malvolio or Parolles - the others a little less so (the Induction to The Taming of the Shrew for example). In order to define more closely the many different kinds of comedy Shakespeare can find in the practical joke, comparisons are made with the use of the beffa in both Boccaccio and later Italian writers, and with similar episodes from the work of Jonson. Frequent references are also made to practical jokes as they occur in later literature or in our current popular culture and, throughout the book, there is a running argument with Freud and Bergson, still always cited (surprisingly enough) as the two chief authorities on the comic.

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