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Research Article

Political Messages from Shakespeare's Works

Literature

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Abstract

This study is structured in five main chapters with its relevant sub topics. Under this structure, I have tried to come up to a steady conclusion of Shakespeare's famous works, Criticism on Shakespeare and influence of Shakespeare and his works in politics. At first chapter I presented Shakespeare's works, his life and Shakespeare's theatre and its role for the audience. In the second chapter I have tried to give more details about politics and power, and about Shakespeare represented history. The Shakespeare and Political messages of his works focuses on how Shakespeare's works had an impact on politics. While we know much of Shakespeare's life, we know little of his opinions. Many of his plays are political, to be sure. His feeling for politics was so strong that one political figure in Britain believed his plays must have been written by someone who had personal experience of politics.This was the wrong conclusion. A keen feeling for politics runs through Shakespeare's plays because man is a political animal and Shakespeare's understanding of men meant he understood The study is structured in order to tackle the diverse nature of strategy while developing and expanding on its most essential issues. The third Chapter is about the prose and verse in the Shakespeare's plays and dramatic verse. In the fourth Chapter we see world of politics, censorship and Shakespeare's works protecting women, restoration. In the fifth Chapter, we know more about Criticism on Shakespeare, romantic critics etc. The reason we know little of Shakespeare's politics is that he was a master playwright. He does not lecture. His characters speak, and we can only guess which of them, if any, speak for him. But some themes recur; and some messages in the action of his plays are too powerful to miss. Such themes are most abundant in the four plays written at the height of Shakespeare's powers politics, too.

1. Introduction

1.1 Editing Shakespeare

Shakespeare was born at Stratford upon Avon in April 1564. Little is known about Shakespeare's early life but from 1592 onwards the records are much fuller. The essential facts of his life, his birth , his progress at school, his marriage and his death, are available in public records. His plays, as they come out, are noticed in newspapers and periodicals. Little of this materials remains for the biographer of dramatist of the seventeenth century.There were no newspapers, very few diaries and few individuals wrote chatty letters. There is a special difficulty in trying to write a life of Shakespeare. For the past hundred years a belief has been expressed by various enthusiasts that Shakespeare's plays are not written by W.SH. but by Francis Bacon,Christopher Marlow, Edward de Vere, William Stanley. On 18 April 1953 his first poem, VENUS AND ADONIS, was entered for publications in the Stationer's Register and soon afterwards was printed with a dedications to Earl of Southampton. The poem was immediately popular and during the next five years was reprinted nine times. It was much praised, and established Shakespeare's reputation as a poet.

Shakespeare lived during the early modern period, a time in Western history that is set between the Middle Ages and the Industrial Revolution and has created modern society. During the time of Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth I was ruler of England. The Queen was the head of the state. There were no political parties in England at that time and decided all matters of policy. She chose her own Ministers who formed the Privy Council.

The Privy Council consisted of 10 members.The Privy Council was the supreme governing body in the state and functioned much the same as the modern Cabinet . Only the Councilors have the right of direct access to the Queen herself. The Queen had the power to dismiss her Ministers, though she kept them until they died. When she came to throne, many were against her because she was a Protestant who never married. As a patron of the arts, she admired the works of William Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare was seen as a great entertainer in the Elizabethan Era. Seen as Europe's greatest writer in the English culture, Shakespeare's works included writings of monologues and soliloquies. Many of his works were related with both comedy and tragedy.

Shakespeare began his career during the reign of Elizabeth I. She was the child of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. During her reign (1558-1603) England flourished. This is the reason why her reign is also referred to not only as the Elizabethan era but also as the Golden Age of Elizabeth. The virgin queen was one of the most popular monarchs in English history and loved the theatre. Shakespeare is oftend referred to as an Elizabethan playwright and poet but one needs to remembenr that he still produced plays and poetry during the reign of James I, who was the first monarch of England from the House of Stuart.

James I. was a successful monarch but had a strong taste for political absolutism. Due to his initiative the "King James Bible" (also referred to as "Authorized Version") was published in 1611. The King James Version had a profound influence on religious and political issues as well as on the literature of that time, especially on Shakespeare. During the reign of James I Shakespeare produced some of his major plays such as Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatraand The Tempest. The plays are in many ways the darkest of Shakespeare's work and deal with issues such as murder, betrayal, power and lust.

1.2 Political System of England

The political system of England was mainly monarchy-based. The ruler of the political system at the time was Elizabeth the First. Many opposed Elizabeth for her decision to never marry. In addition to the Queen, the nobility and merchants were in the political system.

1.3 Threats Towards Government

Queen Elizabeth during her rule was a Protestant, but she allowed the practice of Catholicism. This decree, though, was denied by Parliament. In addition to that, Queen Elizabeth wanted to gain control of the Netherlands, leading to the Anglo-Spanish War.

1.4 Shakespeare's Relations With the Court

By the Court, Shakespeare had a great relationship with those in the European government. He was very fond of Elizabeth I and had a strong bond with her. It is said that in some of his plays, he would incorporate secret messages toward Elizabeth.

Far from being an ambitious entertainer who played down his Catholic roots under a repressive Elizabethan regime, Shakespeare took deliberate risks each time he took up his quill, according to Clare Asquith's new book Shadowplay. She argues that the plays and poems are a network of crossword puzzle-like clues to his strong Catholic beliefs and his fears for England's future. Aside from being the first to spot this daring Shakespearean code, Asquith also claims to be the first to have cracked it.

'It has not been picked up on before because people have not had the complete context,' she explained this weekend. 'I am braced for flak, but we now know we have had the history from that period wrong for a long time because we have seen it through the eyes of the Protestant, Whig ascendancy who, after all, have written the history.'

It is now widely accepted that the era was not a period of political consensus, says Asquith. Instead, it was a time in which opposition voices were banished and censorship meant the burning of illegal pamphlets and printed works.

As a result the Catholic resistance, which had been going for 70 years by the time Shakespeare was writing, had already developed its own secret code words; a subversive communication system which the playwright developed further in his work.

'They inevitably had a hidden language, and Shakespeare used it rather like the composer Shostakovich used political codes in the 20th century,' she said. Asquith, the wife of a British diplomat who was posted to Moscow and Kiev during the Cold War, says that while she was living in the Soviet Union she began to understand how 'dissident meanings' worked in live theatre.

2. Political messages of Shakespeare's work

Shakespeare has left 37 plays, 154 Sonnets, two long narrative poems, and few minor short poems. The sonnets, if they are autobiographical tell a story of an intimate friendship with a young man of better social standing, of a love affair with a young man of better social standing, of a love affair with a faithless dark woman[1]. Since neither the young man nor the dark woman has as yet been certainly identified, the Sonnet cannot be regarded as "biographical evidence". Nor are the plays, reliable material for a biographer.

[1]"William Shakespeare". Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica. *Retrieved 14 June 2007.*

It is impossible to know when he is speaking out of his own experience, when he is creating experience proper to his own characters. So, the claims that his works are not written by Shakespeare are wrong –they appeared because at that time the aristocracy could not believe that a person of such humble origin and no university education, could be written of such works. Shakespeare had theatre education, both as actor and as a play writer he dramatized events which had occurred and had been written about.

In any study of the development of Shakespeare's art, the date when each play was written must first be discovered. Only a small proportion of the plays written during Shakespeare's lifetime were acted at the Rose of Fortune theatre[2]

2.1 Editions of Shakespeare Works

When Shakespeare died in 616, 14 of his works were regularly published:Richard III, Titus Andronicus, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV (part 1), Henry IV (part 2), Much Ado About Nothing, Troilus and Cressida, Hamlet, King Lear, Pericles.

2.2 Shakespeare's Company of Actors

The Company of actors known first as the Lord Chamberlain's Players, came into existence in the summer of 1594.[3] The Theatre had been built in 1567. James Burbage acquired a twenty one year's lease of a piece of land of Shoreditch, north of the city, and there erected the first permanent playhouse which was named the Theatre. The venture was success. James Burbage had been chief player of the great Earl of Leicester. His son, Richard Burbage was now making a name for himself as atragic actor. He learnt his business under Alleyn, but they parted the company. In the autumn 1594, Richard Burbage became the leader of a new Lord Chamberlain's Company. This Company also included Will Kempe and Shakespeare, Marlow and Greene, they were members of this company since its formation. . Thus, for a few months, the Chamberlain's Men had a great advantage in Shakespeare, who was the only dramatist with any considerable reputations. In 1953 there was an outbreak of the plague in London the theatres closed down and the actors went on tour. When at least playing could be resumed in London, there was a considerable regrouping of the companies. before that as the groups sere touring the country , the two companies joined together-this were The Admiral's Company of Men and The Stranges Company Of Men. By 1594, Shakespeare, had already written the three parts of Henry VI.

[2]"William Shakespeare". *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 14 June 2007.
[3]Halliday, F. E. A Shakespeare Companion 1564–1964. Baltimore, Penguin, 1964.

2.3 Shakespeare's Theatre

In 1564, when Shakespeare was born, there no theatres in England, there were plays, but there were performed in taverns, banqueting halls of the noble. Theater for Elizabethans was something edgy and even scandalous or dangerous. The religious community saw theater as frivolous and sinful, so many traces were written against the theater that historian refer to a tradition of anti theatrical writing. These writer were afraid that regular attendance at the writer would make people get addicted to the pleasure and entertainment, such they would forget to worry about their soul.

The dramais not immediately affected by material circumstance. The poet or novelist can wait for recognition, perhaps for years, but a dramatist cannot afford a failure. His plays must be written to suit the stage on which they will be performed, the company which is to act them, and the audience which will be pay to see them.

Stage directions. In the early Elizabethan texts, stage directions are usually erratic and lack the details of setting and action provided by modern dramatists. From time to time, they reveal details of the stage business which show something of necessary equipment of the stage. Shakespeare had to write for his Company as it existed. He could not therefore produce characters for which the Company had no physical representative. Nowadays, a director of a play assembles actors suitable for a particular play. If he needs an actor for a particular role , he will find several available[4]. The playwright had to please all members of the audience. This explains the wide range of topic of Elizabethan plays. Many plays included passages of subtle poetry, of deep philosophy, and scenes of terrible violence. Shakespeare was an actor as well as playwright, so he well know what his audience wanted to see. The actors thus had to hold many parts in their heads, which may account for Elizabethan playwrights' blank verse writing style[5].

Shakespeare cleverly uses the art of disguise in both his tragedies and comedies in order to employ a literary device known as dramatic irony, where the audience member are aware of something that characters in play are not. This of course in play creates tension in a play, and excites the audience, actions take place on the stage of which audience know the import, but characters on the stage do not. It also creates a setting for a great deal of irony where characters make comments that take on double meaning.

3. Psychoanalytic Interpretations of Shakespeare's Works

Accompanying the rise of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, many modern critics have applied the methods of this field to literature, and quite fruitfully to the dramatic works of Shakespeare. Tracing its origins to Sigmund Freud's publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, psychoanalytic criticism has demonstrated a natural affinity to the Shakespearean

[4]Colin Chambers *Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company: Creativity and the Institution*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2004,
[5]Stanley Wells. Shakespeare for all Time. London, Macmillan, 2002 p. 220.

oeuvre, as contemporary critics—notable among them, Harold Bloom—have located in the rich examples of Shakespeare's major tragedies *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello,* and *King Lear* significant sources for Freud's theories. Additionally, the contemporary era has witnessed a proliferation of psychoanalytic thought, and has produced a range of theoretical approaches, many of which have been rewardingly applied to Shakespeare's comedies, problem plays, histories, and romances, as well as the tragedies[6]. Likewise, in the last decades of the twentieth century, psychoanalytic criticism has in many cases been successfully combined with other critical approaches, particularly with feminist or gender theory, to produce several of the dominant strains of contemporary critical thought relating to Shakespeare.

The myriad subjects of psychoanalytic criticism coupled with the breadth of Shakespeare's drama make this one of the largest categories of Shakespearean criticism. Unconscious motivation, neurosis, jealousy, matters of autonomy and emotional isolation, sexual desire, and Oedipal or pre-Oedipal conflicts figure prominently among the multitude of psychological topics related to the dramas. Libidinal impulses and Oedipal patterns are frequently explored by critics in relation to such works as *Macbeth, The Tempest, Hamlet,* and *Coriolanus* to name a few[7]. Of these, Coriolanus appears as a common subject for psychoanalytic critics, such as Janet Adelman (1976), who has examined his aggressive, masculine drive toward self-sufficiency as he struggles with an obsessive dependence upon his mother[8]. The subject of uncontrolled, jealous passion has been taken up by several commentators, who have focused on the consuming desires of Othello and *The Winters Tale'*s Leontes. As for Shakespeare's histories, Valerie Traub (1989) has blended psychoanalytic and feminist criticism in studying the psychological effects of a patriarchal social order on the subjugated female Other in the *Henriad,* while Harry Berger, Jr. (1985) has observed the disordering properties of psychological conflict between fathers and sons in this sequence of histories.

Other critics have emphasized the broad sweep of psychoanalytic criticism as it is applied to the Shakespearean text. Norman N. Holland (1964) has outlined the psychology of contrasting worlds in *The Merchant of Venice*and *Romeo and Juliet,* and studied phallic aggression in the histories and late romances. The conflict of trust versus isolation appears in the criticism of Richard P. Wheeler (1980), who has classified Shakespeare's later dramas using these representative psychological polarities. Elsewhere, M. D. Faber (1970) has observed the importance of psychoanalysis as a means of assessing Shakespeare's often brilliantly realized characters, but warns against the extremism that such a narrow focus can create. Additionally, a minority of critics have turned their pursuit of psychoanalytic criticism toward the figure of Shakespeare himself, though typically with only limited success[9].

[6]Ackroyd, Peter (2005). *Shakespeare: the Biography. London: Chatto and Windus. p. 29. ISBN 1-85619-726-3.*
[7]Brooke, Nicholas, (ed.) (1998). *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[8]Miola, Robert S. (2000). *Shakespeare's Reading. Oxford University Press.*
[9]Chambers, Edmund Kerchever (1944). Shakespearean Gleanings. Oxford University Press. p. 35.

3.1 Mixing Memory and Desire: Notes for a Psychodynamic Exploration of Shakespeare

In a critical attempt to interpret a play of Shakespeare in phenomenological terms, that is, as the source of an intensely integrated psychic experience instead of as a self contained artifact with semantic autonomy, nothing seems more crucial than illuminating the relationship of the working of the audience's subliminal mind to the received meaning of the play.

Generally speaking, what a play means is primarily conditioned by how the audience logically makes out the whole sequence of incidents and situations incorporated in the play's action. What happens at a given moment in some development of the plot forms a configuration in our mental vision insofar as it is viewed against the background of all that has been theatrically experienced since the very beginning of the play. Thus, it would appear justifiable to argue that the structured design of the narrative, both temporal and spatial, is the basis for the entire body of audience experience, which is the matrix of the play's central meaning[10].

Not infrequently, however, watching a performance in the theatre, we find ourselves responding to a character or an element of the dramatic action in a way that somehow seems quite impossible from a rational apprehension in the logical narrative context. In these cases it is to be assumed that our response is more or less controlled by some force of our subliminal consciousness, whose working is intuitive, or sometimes even irrational, rather than discursive or cerebral.

The theatrical experience, unlike a reading experience that can be repeated, is an irreversible sequence of an infinite number of immediate 'presents'. Each present moment on the stage recedes into an amorphous past and is replaced by a new 'present'. In the course of this process there are moments when what has withdrawn into the past suddenly takes shape as a virtual memory, while that which is to come is fantasized as an expected future. Operating at the core of our response mechanism at such moments are, more often than not, certain deeply embedded desires. They were engendered as our consciousness singularly reacted to some specific movement of the drama, and have since kept growing obscurely within ourselves so as to function as special psychic attitudes or anticipations, with which ensuing developments of the action are to be envisioned in terms of wish fulfilments.

There is a sense in which the basic formula of the theatrical experience is the creation of desires and the subsequent satisfying (or denying) of those desires in the audience's mind[11].

I should like to try out this sort of analysis on a few plays of Shakespeare—first very briefly on *King Lear, The Winter's Tale,* and *Hamlet,* giving light in each case on the pattern of the inner action of the play from the angle of our subliminal reactions to it in our theatrical experience

[10]The Literary Encyclopedia entry on William Shakespeareby Lois Potter, University of Delaware, accessed 22 June 2006.
[11]Chambers, Edmund Kerchever (1944). Shakespearean Gleanings. Oxford University Press. p. 35.

of the play; then somewhat more extensively on *Othello,* concentrating the speculation on a couple of important issues related to the tragic effect in the final scene of the drama.

In terms of audience response, two separate layers of action can be discerned in *King Lear.* In one layer there is the drama of Lear's anger and curse. His anger, being cut off at an early stage from its initial motive, keeps on increasing through its self-generated energy to an unlimited extent. Running a parallel course, his curse starts with his own unnatural daughters, but soon expands far beyond them to find its object in the female body in general and at last in the fertility of nature[12]. The other layer of action is taken up by the drama of the endlessly growing evil of Goneril, Regan and Edmund. Their transformation into beasts becomes complete when their inhumanity towards their fathers and retainers comes to be coupled with their sexual promiscuity. Between these two layers of action there exists no positive causal relation. Still, it is perfectly possible for the audience to respond to the latter layer of action as though all the evil deeds and moral aberrations presented therein were specific materializations of the universal evil upon which Lear in the former layer of action called down horrible curses.

At the same time, suppose that the audience is made to feel in the middle of the play that Lear gradually has come to partake of the rottenness of nature he himself execrates, and is being dragged into the slough of absolute negation, or that all of nature has fallen from grace, and Lear as a "ruined piece of nature" is turned involuntarily into an element of the infernal scene unfolded on the heath: this response must function as a catalyst for awakening deep within the mind of the audience an earnest longing for the redemption of Lear's soul[13].

This longing soon is projected onto the image of Cordelia, and the audience almost instinctively reads religious overtones into her lines, "O dear father,/It is thy business that I go about", or the Gentleman's words, "Thou hast one daughter,/Who redeems nature from the general curse/ Which twain have brought her to." These psychic phenomena on the part of the audience are made easier by various aspects of Cordelia's characterization—her long absence from the stage, her few words, her total freedom from all the associations of a wife or a queen, and so on.

Thus, in the subconscious of the audience, Cordelia becomes a being whose existence is felt the more intensely for her nonexistence on the stage and whose coming is desired the more earnestly for her slowness in coming. The result is that the audience half subconsciously anticipates her death. The sudden entrance of Lear with her dead body in his arms, therefore, cannot be a surprise to the audience; it is certainly a great shock, but there is something within themselves that tells them that they knew it already, though they did not know they did. This might be one of the reasons the final scene of the tragedy is saturated with an awe-inspiring atmosphere, which partakes more of religious elation than of a nihilistic sense of the vanity of human life.

[12]Frank Kermode, 'King Lear', *The Riverside Shakespeare*(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974)
[13]The Literary Encyclopedia entry on William Shakespeareby Lois Potter, University of Delaware, accessed 22 June 2006

In *The Winter's Tale*, too, the same kind of psychic rhythm of awakened desires and their fulfilment as we noticed in *King Lear* dominates the audience response throughout the play. There is no denying the fact that the episodic scenes with the bear and the clowns during the middle movement of the action psychologically function to distance the pseudo-tragic world of the first half of the play and smoothly modulate the tone of the play from the death-principle to the life-principle. Just at this stage in the theatrical experience of the audience, the role of Autolycus cannot be overestimated. All the time this picaro-trickster is on the stage, play-acting, duping, bragging and pickpocketing, the whole theatre is filled with laughter. This, however, does not mean that the audience laughs *at* him or *with* him. The laughter is rather a symptom of physiological reflex to the *élan vital,* of which Autolycus is an incarnation. With him all moral criticism is simply out of place. To put it after the manner of Falstaff, he is not only the festive spirit in himself, "but the cause that [the festive spirit] is in other men." As the audience is gradually infected by him and nurtures an inclination to sing the joys of life with him, a comic mental set is begot in the deeper layer of the consciousness, which is to annul and remake the pseudo-tragic experience of the past action[14].

The audience, experiencing the unusually long scene of the sheep-shearing feast, where it looks as if time had stopped to let eternal summer reign, has moments of embracing an illusory vision of the healing of all wounds and the restoration of all that has been lost. As long as the audience remains in this psychic state of wishful thinking, in which dreams may come true at any moment, an involutary suspension of disbelief is possible, when the marble statue of Hermione is seen to move. Recognizing the gratification of a hitherto unrecognized desire, the audience is thrown into ecstatic exaltation, as Hermione slowly steps down during Paulina's most heavily punctuated speech to embrace Leontes and Perdita.

What constitutes the core of our *Hamlet* experience is the impact on us of the shadow of death covering the all too susceptible mind of the hero who, being nauseated at the rottenness of nature, has fallen into the desperate abyss of existential doubt. As early as the second scene of the first act the setting of Hamlet's deeper consciousness is revealed, though only partially, to the audience[15]. Furthermore, what the audience receives from the sensuous speeches of the ghost in psychological terms must be identical with what Hamlet receives from the same speeches. This somehow causes the audience to share the mental landscape within the hero, and drives them to take in the entire subsequent action with a double vision, that is, their own as well as Hamlet's. It is for this reason that Ophelia, whose innocence is never doubted by the audience on the rational level, sometimes appears the erotic figure Hamlet takes her to be.

[14]Gaskell, Philip (1998). Landmarks in English Literature. Edinburgh University Press. pp. 13–14.
[15] *Hamlet, Harold Jenkins, ed. The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series. New York:Methuen, 1982; 2nd. ed., 1997. ISBN 0-416-17920-7 Hereafter, Jenkins.*

It is in the middle of the fourth act where the deranged Ophelia rushes on to the stage that a change occurs to the response mechanism of the audience. The theatrical experience of the play up to this moment, which might be called the 'Elsinore Experience', was nothing less than claustrophobic. It was an experience of a suffocating darkness, which was felt to be so much more unbearable, because every time after it appeared for a moment to be streaked with dim light, that sign soon proved hallucinatory. It is natural that the subconscious mind of the audience, aspiring to be relieved of such an oppressive sensation, should set about groping for a remedial vision of peace, which would serve to dissolve the obsessive sense of uncertainty and emptiness underlying the 'Elsinore Experience'. This instinctive drive deep within is given full play when Hamlet, who has constantly been the central object of the audience response, disappears from the stage, leaving the current of the tragic action momentarily at a stand[16].

The sweetly plaintive sentiment which pervades the scene of Ophelia's madness and Gertrude's narration of her drowning subtly works on the audience and exerts a radical influence on the structuring of their tragic experience. Metaphorically speaking, the poison poured by the ghost into the audience's ears is now rinsed off by the water which has claimed Ophelia. If death in the form of poisoned and stabbed bodies has so far been responded to as something ugly, odious and infernal, it is now envisioned as an alluring sight of a lovely maid's homeward return to the element from which she took her existence[17]. The perception functions as an incentive for generating in the mind of the audience an illusory vision of dawn, which is to terminate the long night's journey of the 'Elsinore Experience'. And it is quite possible that this vision, which is felt to be the more endearing because the audience knows it is false and illusory, should occasion the wishful fantasizing of a virtual future in which the tragic agon is brought to a harmonious and meaningful conclusion.

It may be that the much discussed change of Hamlet in the final act, which is usually explained in terms of character criticism, has more to do with this issue of audience psychology. When the audience is instinctively prepared to see the subsequent fate of Hamlet under the aspect of suffering rather than action, the whole final movement of the play—from Hamlet's fatalistic words before the fencing match to the sweet beatific vision in Horatio's requiem speech to the dead prince—can be received as a realization of their half-unconscious expectations.

At the last step of my argument concerning the phenomenological aspect of the theatrical reception of Shakespeare, let me focus on the closing scene of *Othello* and discuss the meaning of what is usually treated as the expression of Othello's heroism just before his suicide. Multifarious comments have been made by scholars and critics on the highly dramatic deportment of Othello in

[16] For an appraisal of the rise of the bibliographic corpus until the mid-1960s, see Jenkins, Harold. "Hamlet: Then Til Now." Shakespeare: Then Till Now. *Shakespeare Survey XVIII*. Allardyce Nicoll, ed. Cambridge University Press, 1965.

[17] The Shakespeare Quarterly. World Shakespeare Bibliography (Annual publication, 1950-present), Washington, D. C.: Folger Shakespeare Library

this catastrophic situation[18]. Among many others, the line of thinking broached by Eliot and later followed by Leavis that Othello, being a Bovarist who is in love with himself, is "cheering himself up" was so influential that Laurence Olivier adopted it as the basic principle of his performance in the film made in 1965, as he had done in the National Theatre production of the previous year under the direction of John Dexter. Indeed, the black general, characterized by Olivier, is extremely self-conscious and self-centred, and appears to retain his sense of and capacity for self-dramatization until the last moment. Dexter-Olivier's design for divesting the play of all possibilities of sentimentalism is marked in every facet of the film. It is evident that we are required to watch the terrifying process of a great ego crumbling into dust *without* any sympathy[19].

However, there is one scene in the entire film in which the response of the common spectator obviously goes contrary to what might be expected towards a Bovarist cheering himself up. Reviewers of the film almost unanimously mentioned the romantic sympathy with which they responded to the behaviour in the final scene of Olivier-Othello, who delivered his last speech, enfolding the dead Desdemona and rocking her back and forth in his long black arms. Beyond doubt, it is unlikely that Olivier, at this decisive moment of the tragedy, should have deliberately set out to act in such a way as to negate and annul the whole histrionic endeavour that had so far been made to work out the Leavisean image of Othello. Clearly, the cause for the romantic exaltation felt instead of realistic criticism on the part of the audience must be sought, not in the intention of the actor or the director, but in the peculiar psychodynamics of audience response in this tragedy. A close reading of the text, accompanied by a mental enactment to be decelerated and accelerated, as occasion requires, could possibly shed light, though in a limited way, on this recalcitrant issue in the dramatic criticism of *Othello*[20].

In most tragedies of Shakespeare there is within the actional movement leading to the catastrophe a sequence of incidents and situations during which the audience, striving to apprehend the meaning of that action, find themselves pressed to choose between two opposite perspectives on life. One is the absurdist vision or the nihilistic perspective of the world, in which the hero's conduct and its consequences, irrespective of their ethical colourings, are viewed as part of the irrational contingency of the cosmos. The other is a vison based on humanistic wishful thinking, which allows the subconscious mind of the audience, looking for order and purpose in all affairs of this world, intuitively to see in the hero of the play a champion fighting for a human cause and value. The friction and the ultimate merging into each other of these two conflicting visions often leads to a tragic catharsis, accomplished with fear and pity working in linkage respectively with the former and the latter visions[21].

[18]Bevington, David, ed. *Othello*. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson, 2009. 1150-1200

[19]Altman, Joel. *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010.

[20]Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. Vol. 7. New York: Columbia UP,

[21]Capell, Edward, ed. *Othello*. *Mr. William Shakespeare His Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. Vol. 10. London: J. and R. Tonson, 176

In *Hamlet* and *King Lear* the conflict of these visions continues until the last moment of the tragedy, burdening the intellection of the audience with a variety of metaphysical questionings. In *Othello,* however, the friction of the two inner perspectives is somewhat more infiltrated with emotionalism and is therefore less liable to be controlled by intellect. This may partly derive from the fact that as the plot develops, the sphere of the action becomes increasingly narrower, and the hero is further separated from his surrounding world, till at last the action confines itself to the claustrophobic space of a closed chamber that symbolizes a complete mental blockade on the part of the hero. But obviously it owes more to the moral ambiguity with which we are expected to experience the ending of the play. In this tragedy the destruction of good and happiness is so wanton that the value and order to be restored by the punitive death of the hero are still out of sight even after the drama has come to its close. It is in search of an escape from this psychological stalemate that the mind of the audience is driven by instinct to conceive in its depth a kind of self-deceptive vision by which the meaning of the life of the unfortunate couple is to be grasped in an affirmative light.

During the earlier half of the play we are not allowed to see inside the hero's mind. It is Iago rather than Othello with whom we are tempted to identify ourselves. Being a cynical debunker as well as a shrewd intriguer, Iago lets us share his cerebration, and in so doing, plants in us a sense of complicity, so that we are made to view Othello somehow with a critical detachment. Moreover, Othello's highsounding eloquence, which culminates in the Senate Scene, seems rather to alienate him from our sympathy. Even the nature of the love between him and Desdemona is not a factor that functions to familiarize them to us. It is such a pure artifact brought into being by many noble exertions other than mutual attachment that it is more likely for us to *understand* it than actually *feel* it. Pertinent to this is the fact that the genesis and the development of this love are only narrated, and not enacted before us[22].

In connection with this it is important to note that the basic mode of reception in *Othello* is comic. During the earlier scenes of the play it is utterly impossible for us to have a presentiment of the horrible developments in the concluding scene. Even in the so-called Great Temptation Scene we constantly feel reassured with an easy assumption that all will ultimately be brought to a comic denouement. When, later on in the same scene, we are made aware for the first time of the green-eyed monster lurking within Othello, we begin to be haunted by unsettling fear. This, however, does not necessarily mean that we are prompted, as Bradley or Leavis assumes us to be, to try to give to ourselves plausible explanations of what is supposed to motivate Othello's behaviour. As far as our theatrical experience is concerned, our response pattern in this situation would rather be that at first we are overcome by an admiration for the subtlety of Iago in manipulating human psychology, which gradually is taken over by our bridling impatience to deliver Othello from the ominous deception he has fallen prey to. The exceptionally speedy development of the plot keeps

[22]Daileader, Celia R. *Racism, Misogyny, and the Othello Myth: Inter-racial Couples from Shakespeare to Spike Lee*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

the audience more or less free of curiosity about the cause, whether logical or psychological, of Othello's jealousy[23].

It is not too much to say that our image of Othello does not wholly depend on what we actually find him to be at a given moment, but is influenced by the way in which we respond to other characters, especially to Desdemona. During the first half of the play Desdemona moves us by her endearing human virtues and capacities—capacities for love, sympathy, respect, trust, patience and, above all, self-effacement, coupled with a sense of humour and polite sociability. After she is victimized by Othello's jealousy, she does not cease to speak of her love for and trust in him. The anguish with which we are made to witness the touching evidence of her innocence and love in the most trying situations functions as energy for generating within ourselves a desire to have Othello worthy of her and her love. Thus, the heroic figure Othello cuts in the finale can only be a fantasized materialization of this subliminal longing in the audience.

In the earlier scenes of the play the image of the heroic Othello is not essentially ours; his histrionic speeches and self-conscious gestures on public occasions may indeed strike us as magnificent, but not necessarily as expressive of a heroic spirit. To Desdemona, however, heroism is just what makes Othello Othello. It is by telling her in a romanticizing language about the extreme hardships and exotic adventures he had been through that Othello earned Desdemona's love[24]. She says explicitly to the Duke and the Senate: "And to his honours and his valiant parts/Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate." Later in the play, when we see Othello drawn deeper and deeper into the besoiling mire excreted from his demeaned imagination, we are, indeed, nauseated. But, paradoxically enough, this occasions the confirmation of our hitherto unconscious unwillingness to dismiss utterly from our hearts the heroic picture of Othello that was so dear to Desdemona and from which she would never have thought of parting. It is quite natural, therefore, that much of the pseudo-heroic language in his imprecatory utterances should sound to our ears not as travesty but rather as a nostalgic echo of those majestic speeches of his, which so deeply impressed us in his prelapsarian stat[25]e.

Seen in this light, Othello's heroism is not a reality, not an actual virtue to be attributed to him, but part of the virtual image of him which is only a phenomenological product of our theatrical experience. Nevertheless, in the final scene of the play, in which Othello's suicide brings the action to a close, it is none other than this virtual image that plays the vital role in creating the meaning of the whole drama.

Othello is unique as tragedy in that it offers us a totally unexpected experience within twenty lines of the end, thereby necessitating a swift, drastic change of our mode of tragic reception.

[23]Evans, G. Blackmore, et al., eds. *Othello*. *The Riverside Shakespeare.* 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997. 1251-96.Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
[24]Harbage, Alfred, ed. *Othello*. *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Maryland: Penguin, 1969. 1021-59.
[25]Hankey, Julie. *Othello*. Shakespeare in Production. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.

Moreover, this concluding sequence of the final scene of the play turns out to be another pregnant moment for the audience's psyche. For it is exposed to a clash of the two opposite perspectives of the world I have referred to above. When the curtain falls on the scene of the dead Othello and Desdemona, our minds begin to work retroactively to reconstruct a coherent story of the drama. We recall the ironic fact that Desdemona's absolute purity became the very cause of her undoing and Othello's fall. What then is most naturally expected to come over us is a keen sense of vanity or absurdity. Yet, at most performances of the play, including Dexter-Oliver's film, the audience experiences a certain deep emotion building up quietly. It is an emotion which is hard to define, but certainly it is aroused by a self-projected vision in their minds of a heroic Othello restored at long last to his nobly loving wife.

Before further probing into the nature of this emotion in concrete terms, it would be in order to observe how the Willow Song Scene, which immediately precedes the fifth act, prepares for this psychic phenomenon in the tragic finale by effecting in the audience a radical transformation of the image of Desdemona.

The scene takes place in Desdemona's closet, where stillness is broken only by gentle female voices, in a desultory conversation between the heartbroken mistress and her maid. This is the only scene in the whole play in which Iago does not appear, and Othello, too, has left the stage after a few initial speeches. In this atmosphere of deceptive peace, Desdemona seems to have taken on a new aspect. There is a certain elusive opacity about her. She is not a mere pathetic figure in wistful stasis. She rather appears to have been depersonalized, and the audience gradually ceases to be conscious of her as flesh and blood with her own will and feelings. That her conduct and speeches become more and more simple and childlike till at last she starts singing snatches of an idle lyric might well be interpreted as a symptom of her growing mental paralysis under extreme pain and sorrow, but as far as the theatrical experience is concerned, this only serves to strengthen the impression of her as a symbol of innocence. The angelic purity and naïveté revealed in her ambiguous and disconnected words uttered intermittently in a weary melancholy tone are brought into relief by contrast with the homespun vulgarity of the gossipy Emilia[26].

In the midst of the Willow Song she suddenly whispers, "Hark! who is't that knocks?" To which Emilia answers, "It is the wind." It may be that this sharp challenge from Desdemona discloses a cleft in her mind, enduring so valiantly all that is unendurable, from which the audience catches a glimpse of conflicting feelings, that is, expectations and fears, hope for love and terror for death, at the prospect of her husband's return in a short time. But there is much more in this. The brief exchange of words between Desdemona and Emilia makes the audience reminisce about those far-off days of childhood when they shuddered at some unidentified noise outdoors on a stormy winter night. In such a Bodkinian archetypal pattern, into which the total

[26]Hunter, G.K. "*Othello* and Colour Prejudice." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 53 (1967); rpt. *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition: Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1978, 31-59.

effect of the scene converges, Desdemona's corporeality is gradually rarefied, and she is found to have been turned into an element of the symbolic landscape envisioned by the audience's mind.

To a novelistic reader all is not yet definite at this stage of the play. Logically speaking, the fate of Desdemona is still open to many different possibilities. It is theoretically possible that Othello should learn the truth and the play abruptly be brought to a happy end. But to a theatre audience which has experienced the Willow Song Scene, Desdemona's death is a*fait accompli,*which means that we are more or less subconsciously prepared for it from the initial lines of the final scene. Othello's smothering of her, therefore, whatever pity it may arouse in our hearts, cannot overcome us with a sense of unexpected doom. What is most shocking and unbearable to us is not so much the murder of a devoted wife by her husband as the ugliness of spirit in which it is committed. In contrast to the indestructible goodness of Desdemona, who uses a few moments of revival only to commend herself to her kind lord and exonerate him of her death, the repulsiveness of Othello, who ignores her pleas for the mercy of a few minutes' delay, severely taxes our forbearance. It sets an edge upon our inmost wish for preventing Desdemona's self-effacing love for Othello from passing into nothingness. Moreover, our psychic stance towards Othello himself has to undergo a subtle change during the actional sequence between the death of Desdemona and his great final speech[27].

No one would deny that one of the peculiarities of our *Othello* experience is the awkwardness we constantly feel at the insurmountable gap in knowledge between Othello and ourselves during the greater part of the play. It is a matter of course that, being an omniscient presence outside the world of the drama, the audience should know all that is happening, while Othello, a character in the drama, is left totally ignorant. Nevertheless, we are continuously made to feel that the smallest bit of information given to him would instantly save him from his impending fate. But the sheer impossibility of this happening constantly irritates us, and oppresses us with an almost physiological discomfort. So, when Othello, after his smothering of Desdemona, has his eyes opened for the first time to the truth, we feel as if the wall that has stood in the way of our emotional engagement with him has suddenly been broken down. The pleasure and delight with which we come to embrace in our heart the hapless victim-hero we rejected for so long may naturally overshadow our judgment, which ought to approve of his imagining himself falling into Hell. We even desire, though not necessarily on the conscious level, that his subsequent behaviour will be such as is revelatory of human dignity, instead of self-scorn or despair in the face of the apparent meaninglessness of the cosmic design.

Thus, the self-conscious understatement in the opening part of Othello's speech, culminating in " … one that lov'd not wisely but too well", functions to endear him to our hearts rather than to alienate him, while the exotic imagery with which he refers to his tears brings back to our memory with nostalgic reverberations those romantic stories of himself that he told to Desdemona in order to win her love. He then proceeds to talk of the resolute patriotic justice he

[27]MacDonald, Joyce Green.“Acting Black: 'Othello,' 'Othello' Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness.” *Theatre Journal* 46 (1994): 231-49.

once inflicted on a Turk who traduced the state of Venice, and we feel ready to reminisce about the magnificent figure he cut in our eyes in the initial acts of the play.

The next moment, however, he himself becomes the Turk, "the circumcised dog", and stabs him, that is, himself[28].

The punisher is transformed into the punished, and the heroic deed of a Christian executing a pagan wrongdoer overlaps with the desperate act of a civilized man annihilating himself in order to punish the barbarian in himself. This is doubly theatrical in that it is an engrossing performance that serves as an effective reminder of his courageous devotion to the state in the past, while at the same time it is a well-calculated gesture to impress his audience on stage (as well as the real audience) with the appropriateness of his self-inflicted justice.

It is possible to view this final deportment of Othello, as Eliot does, as an aesthetic attitude rather than a moral one. Eliot says," … [Othello is] dramatising himself against his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself." Eliot may be right. But isn't the root of the theatrical experience in being *taken in*, that is to say, in being so deluded as to believe in the reality of that which has no existence except as a phenomenon of the mind? As far as audience response in the finale of *Othello* is concerned, it does not matter of what kind of personality the hero has ultimately proved himself to be. What is important is that a quiet upsurge of emotions evoked in response to the integrated effect of his narrative speech and his dramatic action works to make the audience willing to be *taken in* and accept, not morally but *aesthetically,* the beautiful image of the heroic Moor into which Othello at the last moment has fashioned himself[29].

In terms of the psychology of the theatrical experience, Othello's last speech and his self-stabbing make up, so to speak, a provocation for the *audience cheering themselves up* to have their long-nursed inmost desire fully realized once and for all. In a spiritual exaltation of wish fulfilment, we are beguiled into accommodating ourselves to the tragic reality of life. Half unconsciously, we are converted to a humane vision of the world that enables us to accept outward defeat for the sake of inward victories, making life seem not only bearable but worth living as well. It is a vision which moves us to cry to ourselves in calm excitement, against all voices that say it is a fallacy or a self-deluding illusion, that however things may go awry in the world, man nevertheless has splendours of his own.

4. Politics and power

Shakespeare's approach to both historical and contemporary politics has long been a focus of scholarly study. Critics from Shakespeare's own time to the present have attempted to identify individuals and events from the plays with instances of political intrigue that were known to

[28]Hankey, Julie. *Othello*. Shakespeare in Production. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
[29]Muir, Kenneth, ed. *Othello*. London: Penguin, 1968.

Shakespeare. Most modern scholarship has been less concerned, however, with finding correspondences between the fictional and actual, focusing instead on Shakespeare's treatment of prevailing trends in social, intellectual, and political thought. Late-twentieth-century commentators have extended the discussion from the explicitly political to a discussion of politics in Shakespeare as the term is applied in one current sense: to unequal power relationships between individuals and institutions[30].

Commentators remain divided on the question of Shakespeare's knowledge of political history, and even on the issue of whether it ultimately matters if Shakespeare possessed such knowledge. Early critics contended that Shakespeare had little knowledge of classical political history, and tended to speculate that Shakespeare crafted historical political situations in his plays primarily in order to comment obliquely on events that were current at the time he was writing. Most scholarship from the latter half of the twentieth century focuses on Shakespeare's interpretation or adaptation of both current and historical political situations in ways that would have resonance for his late-sixteenth-century audience. It is generally accepted that Shakespeare crafted his plays on many levels to satisfy a whole range of potential audience members, from the poorly educated, often illiterate groundlings, characterized by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* as "for the most part capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise," to the politically astute courtiers—people whose livelihoods and even lives depended on remaining attuned to the contemporary political scene.

5. Shakespeare's Representation of History

Shakespeare dramatized the national history of England in two tetralogies, which cover English history from 1398 to 1485. The first tetralogy includes *Henry VI, Parts One, Two,* and *Three* and *Richard III,* and the second tetralogy includes *Richard II, Henry IV, Parts One* and *Two,* and *Henry V.* While the series from *Richard II* through *Henry V* deals with a historical time earlier than the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III,* it is usually referred to as the second tetralogy in reference to the order in which Shakespeare composed the plays. The two other English history plays, *King John* and *Henry VIII,* have been viewed as prologue and epilogue to the other eight plays. The sources from which Shakespeare drew to write the history plays include Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548) and Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577; the second edition, that used by Shakespeare, was published in 1587).

Much modern critical attention has focused on the way Shakespeare utilized his sources in his interpretations of historical events. The characteristics of Renaissance historiography—the narrative presentation of history based on critical evaluations of primary and secondary source materials—is often compared with Shakespeare's own historiographical style. Graham Holderness (1985) stresses that most of Shakespeare's plays, and especially the English history plays, were intended as historiography. Holderness contends that the new, bourgeois historiography employed

[30]Robin Wells. *Shakespeare, Politics and the State.* (London: Macmillian, 1986)

by Shakespeare grew out of two other historiographical traditions, that of providentialist orthodoxy and humanist historiography. (Providentialism stressed that God's divine will governed the world and ordained the succession of English monarchs; rebellion against God's anoited monarch, it was argued, was punished by political disorder, warfare, and bloodshed. Humanism emphasized the dominance of individual human will and intellect.)[31] Matthew H. Wikander (1986) similarly states that the revolution in Renaissance historiography in which Shakespeare took part grew out of both providential and humanist attitudes. The central issue within this new historiographical attitude, states Wikander, was the problem of how to moralize the past. Tracing the development of Shakespeare's historiography from early histories such as *Henry VI, Part One* to later histories, including *Henry IV, Part One* and *Henry VIII,* Wikander finds that the moral patterns and lessons in the earlier plays are more straightforward than in the later histories. Additionally, Wikander comments that Shakespeare's attitude toward his sources was "cavalier," but that Shakespeare, as well as the authors of his sources, were all guilty of drawing parallels and analogies, allegorizing historical figures, and telescoping historical time. While Wikander sees these tendencies as "faults," Don M. Ricks (1968) observes that sixteenth-century historiography was not bound by modern rules of objectivity and historical accuracy. Rather, it was understood that historical data should be presented in a way that made a subjective and moralistic argument. Such biases, including Shakespeare's, Ricks maintains, resulted from the attitude toward history and its purposes, rather than from ignorance. Ricks further argues that although Shakespeare's own political bias was geared toward defending the Tudor status quo, his views regarding the doctrine of providential order were more subtle and complex than many of his contemporaries. Clifford Leech (1962) agrees, maintaining that although Shakespeare does "enshrine" many of the sixteenth-century attitudes regarding history and its values, his purpose transcends that of stressing the danger of civil rebellion and glorifying England.

The relationship between the two tetralogies in general, and the parts of *Henry IV* in particular, is also an area of tremendous critical interest. Many critics have sought unity in the history plays, while others emphasize the problems with trying to link plays that Shakespeare intended as separate units. Ricks argues that the unity of the two tetralogies stems primarily from the fact that the plays coherently dramatize the consecutive reigns of several kings, but that the eight plays do in fact stand distinctly apart from one another[32]. Paul Yachnin (1991) and Paola Pugliatti (1996) focus their attention on the structural relationship between the two parts of *Henry IV.*Yachnin argues that the plays should be thought of in terms of sequence rather than structure, and that they should be viewed as performance rather than literary texts. As such, Yachnin maintains, the two plays reveal Shakespeare's critique of Renaissance historiography and demonstrate the "open-ended" character of historical change[33]. Yachnin further states that the first play stands as a complete unit until the second play revises the premises of the first, and that the

[31]The Literary Encyclopedia entry on William Shakespeareby Lois Potter, University of Delaware, accessed 22 June 2006

[32]Bevington, David, ed. *Henry the Fourth Parts I and II: Critical Essays*. New York and London: Garland, 1986.

[33]Campbell, Lily B. *Shakespeare's*"*Histories*": *Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy.* 1947. 3rd ed. London: Methuen, 1968.

second play has a darker conception of politics which undercuts the views of the first part of *Henry IV*. The revisionist relationship between the plays, Yachnin asserts, demonstrates that Shakespeare's view of history was not providentialist. Pugliatti agrees with Yachnin's claims in general, but argues that the second play, rather than contradicting the premises of the first, further develops certain elements, particularly the concept of political, as well as historiographical, instability. The two plays are based on the concept of this instability, Pugliatti argues, and this framework of instability is used by Shakespeare to question the providential view of history.

6. Religion and Theology

Critics have adopted a variety of approaches to explore the religious and theological dimensions in Shakespeare's plays. They have identified specific religious themes, explicated biblical allusions, and shed light on numerous theological subtexts. Late twentieth-century commentators almost uniformly decline to speculate about whether Shakespeare held particular sectarian views and, if so, what these might be. Instead they focus on his treatment of religious disputes in early modern England and the controversies that split the Christian church and led to the Reformation. Throughout the period when Shakespeare was writing his plays, religious systems of thought continued to be unstable, and doctrinal issues were vigorously contested.

Many critics find evidence of Shakespeare's familiarity with these conflicts—as well as with centuries of Christian discourse—in his histories, comedies, and tragedies[34].

In her assessment of the Christian aspects in Shakespearean tragedy, Helen Gardner (see Further Reading) emphasizes the dramatist's evident knowledge of the Bible and contemporary theological writings. Gardner maintains that some of the most characteristic features of Shakespearean tragedy—especially those found in *King Lear*—are closely associated with Christian attitudes toward the mysteries of human existence. René Fortin (1979) also examines *King Lear* and finds both Christian and secular interpretations of the play to be equally valid. Acknowledging that the play's final scene poses a unique challenge to Christian or redemptive readings of the tragedy, he suggests that the death of Cordelia, far from contradicting Christian doctrine, confirms the Catholic and Protestant notion of God's judgments as unknown and inexplicable. Similarly, Daryl Tippins (1997) proposes that *King Lear* may be viewed as either nihilistic or transcendent. Cautioning readers to be wary of basing a definitive interpretation of the play as a whole on a reading of its final scene, he claims that the seeming pessimism of this episode does not negate the effect of previous scenes that represent compassion, reconciliation, and Christian optimism[35].

Alan Sinfield (1980) maintains that optimistic humanism is a critical issue in *Hamlet*, and argues that the play depicts the disintegration of the notion that human reason by itself can form the basis of moral action. But, he further contends, it also shows that the Calvinist belief in

[34]Thurston, Herbert."The Religion of Shakespeare" *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912). Accessed
[35]Bearman, R., "John Shakespeare's Spiritual Testament, a reappraisal", *Shakespeare Survey 56 [2003]*

providential justice is an equally inadequate response to the grim realities of this world. Ronald G. Shafer (1990) considers that Hamlet is only temporarily attracted to humanism and that ultimately the prince reaffirms his belief in Christian values and his reliance on the will of God. Both Robert N. Watson (see Further Reading) and Julia Reinhard Lupton (1997) discuss questions of religious differences and theological doctrine in *Othello.* Watson asserts that the play's rendering of Catholic theology is burlesque, intended to caricature the idea that salvation can be earned and to endorse instead the Protestant tenet that salvation is a gift from God, unrelated to individual merit. Lupton examines Shakespeare's depiction of the Moor as at once a Christian hero and a barbarian forever excluded from the covenant of universal brotherhood.

Some critics detect significant religious motifs in the comedies as well as the tragedies. For example, Paul A. Cantor (1987) asserts that in *The Merchant of Venice* these issues are more complex than is ordinarily recognized. The play does not merely represent Christianity's triumph over Judaism, he contends, for its near-tragic ending features the downfall of Antonio, the play's representative Christian, as well as Shylock, its representative Jew. Both G. M. Pinciss (1990) and Julia Brett (see Further Reading) assess the religious dimensions of another Shakespearean comedy, *Measure for Measure.* Princes reads the play in terms of the Protestant belief in the positive value of despair: that is, as an integral part of the struggle to progress from recognition of one's sins to a state of true penitence and the achievement of forgiveness and salvation. Brett is particularly concerned with the distinction between Christian allegorizations and Christian interpretations of *Measure for Measure*[36]. She stresses the importance of appraising the play's religious features in the context of its corresponding concern with political or secular issues, especially with regard to the Duke's dual responsibility as spiritual guide and temporal ruler. Maurice Hunt (1993) and David N. Beauregard (1999) evaluate religious aspects of two other Shakespearean comedies: *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well that Ends Well.* Hunt calls attention to *Twelfth Night*'s many references to non-Christian forces shaping human destiny and to its satirical treatment of Puritanism, concluding that the play's support for the Anglican view of providence is ultimately indeterminate. Beauregard maintains that *All's Well* is steeped in the Roman Catholic theology of grace. He particularly remarks on the play's disparate treatment of Protestant and Catholic attitudes toward merit and free will[37].

Commentators have also found intimations of a number of different sectarian and doctrinal issues in Shakespeare's histories. For instance, Robert G. Hunter (1978) examines the various means Falstaff uses to keep up his hopes of preferment—both in this world and the next. Hunter also proposes that Hal's rejection of Falstaff may be read as the triumph of the Protestant ethic, for the new king turns his back on Sir John in order to carry out the responsibilities of the monarchy to which, he believes, God has called him. By contrast, Roy Battenhouse (1985) argues that Henry V demonstrates a remarkable talent for transferring onto other people's shoulders responsibilities that are rightly his. Moreover, Battenhouse contends, Henry surrounds himself with flatterers and assumes a spurious piety, thus demonstrating the shallowness of his commitment to Christian

[36]Mutschmann, H. and Wentersdorf, K., *Shakespeare and Catholicism*, Sheed and Ward: New York, 1952.
[37]Thurston, Herbert."The Religion of Shakespeare"*Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912).

norms. In his discussion of anticlericalism in Shakespeare's histories, Jeffrey Knapp (see Further Reading) focuses on the pseudo piety of a series of English bishops—from *1 Henry VI* to *Henry V*—who are principally concerned not with saving souls but with inciting violence. James C. Bryant (1984) maintains that Shakespeare presents the religious quarrels in *King John* in a political context that diminishes their significance. In his judgment, the play is on the side of Protestantism to the extent that it upholds the notion that an English monarch rules only by the grace of God and therefore need not answer to any other temporal or spiritual authority. Finally, R. Chris Hassel, Jr. (1986) maintains that *Richard III* presents Richmond as God's chosen agent to liberate England from the heavy hand of Richard's rule. In his analysis of the parallels between this play and the Book of Revelation, Hassel emphasizes the dramatic motifs of prophecy, the Last Judgment, and the destruction of the Antichrist.

7. Shakespeare national history

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[38]The Literary Encyclopedia entry on William Shakespeareby Lois Potter, University of Delaware

One to later histories, including *Henry IV, Part One* and *Henry VIII,* Wikander finds that the moral patterns and lessons in the earlier plays are more straightforward than in the later histories. Additionally, Wikander comments that Shakespeare's attitude toward his sources was "cavalier," but that Shakespeare, as well as the authors of his sources, were all guilty of drawing parallels and analogies, allegorizing historical figures, and telescoping historical time. While Wikander sees these tendencies as "faults," Don M. Ricks (1968) observes that sixteenth-century historiography was not bound by modern rules of objectivity and historical accuracy[39]. Rather, it was understood that historical data should be presented in a way that made a subjective and moralistic argument. Such biases, including Shakespeare's, Ricks maintains, resulted from the attitude toward history and its purposes, rather than from ignorance. Ricks further argues that although Shakespeare's own political bias was geared toward defending the Tudor status quo, his views regarding the doctrine of providential order were more subtle and complex than many of his contemporaries. Clifford Leech (1962) agrees, maintaining that although Shakespeare does "enshrine" many of the sixteenth-century attitudes regarding history and its values, his purpose transcends that of stressing the danger of civil rebellion and glorifying England[40].

The relationship between the two tetralogies in general, and the parts of *Henry IV* in particular, is also an area of tremendous critical interest. Many critics have sought unity in the history plays, while others emphasize the problems with trying to link plays that Shakespeare intended as separate units. Ricks argues that the unity of the two tetralogies stems primarily from the fact that the plays coherently dramatize the consecutive reigns of several kings, but that the eight plays do in fact stand distinctly apart from one another. Paul Yachnin (1991) and Paola Pugliatti (1996) focus their attention on the structural relationship between the two parts of *Henry IV.*Yachnin argues that the plays should be thought of in terms of sequence rather than structure, and that they should be viewed as performance rather than literary texts. As such, Yachnin maintains, the two plays reveal Shakespeare's critique of Renaissance historiography and demonstrate the "open-ended" character of historical change. Yachnin further states that the first play stands as a complete unit until the second play revises the premises of the first, and that the second play has a darker conception of politics which undercuts the views of the first part of *Henry IV*. The revisionist relationship between the plays, Yachnin asserts, demonstrates that Shakespeare's view of history was not providentialist. Pugliatti agrees with Yachnin's claims in general, but argues that the second play, rather than contradicting the premises of the first, further develops certain elements, particularly the concept of political, as well as historiographical, instability. The two plays are based on the concept of this instability, Pugliatti argues, and this framework of instability is used by Shakespeare to question the providential view of history.

[39]Cohen, Derek. "History and the Nation in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*." *Studies in English Literature*
[40]Crystal, David and Ben Crystal. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*.

8. Prose and Verse in Shakespeare's Play

Shakespeare's plays contain both prose and verse. Kim Ballard discusses the playwright's selective use of blank verse, and considers several cases where the choice of prose or verse helps us understand class, character psychology and mood[41].

A quick flick through any edition of a Shakespeare play is a visual reminder that all his drama is written using both prose and verse. On the page, the prose runs continuously from margin to margin, while the verse is set out in narrower blocks, neatly aligned on the left (where lines all begin with capital letters), but forming a slightly ragged right-hand edge. It's easy then to distinguish between the 'natural' mode of prose, where the layout is determined only by the width of the page or the change from one speaker to another, and the 'artificial' mode of poetry, where the length of the line is measured in some other way.

A mix of these two compositional forms is unusual in much of literature, but commonplace in the plays of Shakespeare and other dramatists of his age. Although we would probably expect a modern play to be written in prose, the practice of English dramatists before Shakespeare was to write in rhyming verse. Poetry was regarded as the chief literary form, although prose was used for some types of storytelling, such as chivalric romances and travellers' tales. (The novel as we know it didn't emerge until the 18th century). The use of prose alongside verse was something that gradually crept into English drama towards the end of the 16th century[42].

Shakespeare's early comedies make use of both prose and verse, but his first tragedy, the Roman play *Titus Andronicus*, is – according to convention – written almost entirely in verse, except for Act 4, Scene 3 when Titus has a brief exchange with a simple-minded messenger. The 'clown', as he is listed in the *dramatis personae*, speaks in prose, and at one point Titus, a renowned general in the Roman army, slips into this mode while talking to the clown. Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* in 1593–94. By the time he wrote his later tragedies, he was using a much greater proportion of prose, and in *Hamlet* (composed 1600–01), for example, this is used to telling effect, as you will see below.

8.1 Shakespeare's Dramatic Verse

Shakespeare's dramatic verse is often referred to as *blank* verse, because it doesn't rhyme (although this is not to say that Shakespeare never makes use of rhyme). As for rhythm – the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables – it takes the iambic pentameter pattern used so commonly in English poetry from Chaucer onwards, and illustrated below with Romeo's famous line from *Romeo and Juliet* when he sees Juliet appear at her window:

[41]Bowers, Fredson (1955), *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

[42]Cohen, Derek. "History and the Nation in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*." *Studies in English Literature*

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? (2.2.2)

Read Romeo's question aloud, and you will be able to hear the alternation of the unstressed (˘) and stressed syllables (/) that give the line its regular rhythm: 'de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM, de-DUM'. Each 'de-DUM' is a rhythmic unit, and a pentameter line consists of five such units or 'feet'. ('Pentameter' comes from the Greek for 'five measures'.) A foot can be made up of two or three syllables, and various combinations of unstressed and stressed syllables are possible. An iamb, or iambic foot – the rhythmic unit of Shakespeare's blank verse – contains two syllables, with the stress falling on the second syllable ('de-DUM').

In all speech, whether verse or prose, stressed syllables gain their prominence by having longer vowel sounds, or being articulated with greater volume or even a higher pitch than unstressed ones. Various factors determine whether or not a syllable is stressed. In words of two syllables or more – such as 'yonder' and 'window' – the stress pattern doesn't normally vary. However, monosyllabic words may be given more or less stress depending on their position or function. In Romeo's line, for example, an actor may put more emphasis on 'what' in order to express admiration at the sight of Juliet. So the distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables tends to be a matter of degree, and sometimes also a matter of choice, since actors can often adjust the amount of stress in order to make subtle changes to meaning.

Shakespeare was a master of blank verse, using its basic framework with imagination and flexibility. A well-known speech from *The Merchant of Venice* – Portia's courtroom rebuke to the merciless Shylock – is just one of the hundreds of speeches we could choose from to illustrate this:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown. (4.1.184–89)

The regular blank verse pattern is easy to discern in these lines, but even in this short extract there are instances of Shakespeare deviating from a strict iambic pattern. Line 186, for example, ends with two stressed syllables (forming a 'spondee' or spondaic foot) – 'twice blest' – and this serves to emphasise the double blessing that mercy brings. In line 188, the use of only two fully stressed syllables in the first part of the line highlights 'might' as another quality of mercy:

˘ / ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest …

A few lines later, another adjustment to the regular rhythm also contributes effectively to Portia's eulogy to mercy:

˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
It is an attribute to God himself … (4.1.194–95)

Portia, disguised as a male lawyer, speaks with considerable authority, and the parallel structure and rhythm of these two lines lend weight to her sermon-like pronouncements. Her language here is strikingly different from her earlier love scene (Act 3, Scene 2) with Bassanio and shows how Shakespeare manipulates the iambic pentameter form to suit his dramatic purpose[43].

8.2 Verse and prose in Hamlet

In his tragedies, too, Shakespeare exploits the interplay between verse and prose, and *Hamlet*is a fascinating example of this. Prince Hamlet himself – forced to dissemble while he struggles with grief at the death of his father, the hasty remarriage of his mother to his father's brother[44] Claudius, and the secret knowledge that his father was murdered by this same brother – play-acts his way through encounters with the people close to him, often feigning madness. By employing the properties of both modes, Shakespeare is able to reveal Hamlet's psychological complexity.

At the beginning of the play, before his visitation from his father's ghost to tell him of his murder, Hamlet speaks in verse, but already the cracks are showing, as this extract from his first soliloquy reveals:

That it should come to this!
But two months dead, nay, not so much, not two.
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet within a month –
Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman! –
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears – why, she, even she –
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer! – married with mine uncle,
My father's brother … (1.2.137–52)

[43]Dobson, Michael (1992), The making of the national poet, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press
[44]Young, Robert V. *(22 January 2007).* "Decoding Shakespeare: The Bard as Poet or Politician" *(PDF). Raleigh, NC: Faculty Affiliate Network, University of North Carolina*. Retrieved 13 November 2009.

Here, many lines contain more than 10 syllables, another way in which Shakespeare adapts blank verse. Dramatists and poets often allowed themselves an additional unstressed syllable at the end of a line, but lines 140 and 146 are particularly overloaded. Repetition ('two months ... within a month ... A little month', 'she, even she') seems to suggest Hamlet's inability to understand his mother's behaviour, and the long sentence beginning 'Why, she would hang on him …' is twice interrupted with comments of disbelief (u It isn't long before Hamlet learns of his father's murder, and the heavy burden of revenge is placed on his shoulders. His first appearance at court following this shocking disclosure sees him physically changed ('madly attired') and seemingly mad, and he now speaks in prose. In fact, Hamlet speaks in prose for much of the rest of the play, whether addressing characters of high status (Ophelia, King Claudius) or low status (the treacherous courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the travelling players, and the gravediggers who prepare Ophelia's grave). Interestingly, Hamlet still speaks in blank verse to his friend Horatio, whom he trusts, and also to his mother, a clue perhaps as to how he regards her, despite what he sees as her appallingly fickle behaviour. His soliloquys are also in verse, a suitable vehicle for his moments of complex self-exploration and indicative of the intrinsic nobility of Hamlet's character. But prose is equally versatile – although its rhythms and constructional units are different, sometimes obviously so, sometimes more subtly. Hamlet's prose serves many situations: the cat and mouse game he plays with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the process of detachment from his beloved Ophelia, and the easy camaraderie he establishes with the travelling players who become unwitting allies in the confirmation of Claudius's guilt.nderlined). Already, the verse seems barely able to contain Hamlet's distress[45].

8.3 Verse and prose in The Tempest

In *The Tempest* (written towards the end of Shakespeare's career, possibly in 1611) the interplay between verse and prose seems to serve a thematic purpose. Brooding over the entire play is Prospero, the former Duke of Milan, exiled many years earlier to a remote island with his daughter Miranda. His magical powers have enabled him to bring his enemies to the island, where he intends to confront them, regain his dukedom, and return to Milan.

It is worth mentioning that songs, although found in many of Shakespeare's plays, are a particular feature of *The Tempest* and these of course have their own verse forms. The play also includes a masque – a stylised set piece that Prospero conjures up as an entertainment for Miranda and her future husband, Ferdinand. This 'vanity' of Prospero's art is written in iambic pentameter rhyming couplets, placing it apart from the dramatic action, but the vision comes to an abrupt end when Prospero, suddenly remembering a plot on his life, dismisses the spirits who have performed it. Rhyming couplets are also used in the epilogue (a fairly unusual feature in Shakespeare's plays). Spoken by Prospero, this is written in iambic *tetra*meter (four iambic feet per line). These

[45]Paraisz, Júlia (2006), "The Nature of a Romantic Edition", in Holland, Peter, *Shakespeare Survey*, 59, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

lines of only seven or eight syllables seem to reflect a weakened Prospero, who has given up his magic and whose strength is now 'most faint' (Epilogue, l. 3).

Setting aside these other verse forms, in most respects the play is quite traditional in its assignment of prose and blank verse: the high status characters (Prospero, Miranda and the shipwrecked royals and noblemen) speak almost entirely in verse, while prose is spoken by the low status characters (the mariners, Trinculo the jester, and Stefano the drunken butler). The notable exception to the verse/prose convention is the character of Caliban. This son of the 'damn'd witch Sycorax' (1.2.263) and 'the devil himself' (1.2.319) is kept enslaved by Prospero, who regards him as 'a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick' (4.1.88–89) because he attempted to violate Prospero's daughter. Although he speaks in prose in some scenes, Caliban's habitual mode of speaking is verse – a reflection of the fact that it was Miranda who taught him to speak. Nurture may not entirely have stuck with Caliban but the elevated, 'noble' aspects of verse seem to have done. Here, for instance, he reassures Stefano and Trinculo when they are frightened by music that seems to come from nowhere:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again. (3.2.135–43)

Although he uses verse elsewhere to curse Prospero in no uncertain terms, the poetic and contemplative quality of his language undoubtedly evokes sympathy for him from the audience. This is wrapped up with the viewpoints that are expressed by various characters in the play about the rights and wrongs of colonisation – a subject of lively debate in this period of travel and exploration. Montaigne's popular essay *On Cannibals,* for instance, is likely to have been an influence on Shakespeare, who may have owned a copy of the 1603 English translation. A 'monster' he may be, but in this context Caliban is himself a victim: once the inheritor and ruler of the island, he now finds himself subordinated to the will of Prospero, who has taken the island from him. Arguably, his use of blank verse is an emblem of his lost status, and perhaps even a device of the playwright for making his audience reconsider the humanity in 'savage' races[46].

[46]Evans, G. Blakemore (1996), "Commentary", in Shakespeare, William; Evans, G. Blakemore (ed.), *The Sonnets*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

In "Shakespeare's Politcal Drama," Alexander Leggatt concentrates on the ordering and enforcing, the gaining and losing, of public power in the state, in the English and Roman histories. He sees Shakespeare not as the propogandist for a myth of order, but as concerned both with things as they are and with things as they ought to be. Leggatt sees each play as a fresh experiment, so that what emerges is not a single homogeneous view of Shakespearean politics but a series of explorations of differing material.

8.4 Subtitle

Excerpt

I should begin by stressing the limits of this study. There is, of course, political interest everywhere in Shakespeare. *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* are concerned with kingship, *Measure for Measure* with law, *The Tempest* with power. *Cymbeline* has surprising things to say about war, peace, and international relations generally. Everywhere there are rulers, laws, contracts, questions of authority and obedience. The range widens if, as frequently happens these days, the term 'political' is defined to include any act with a social dimension. In this light there is a political dimension in the relations of the sexes in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *As You Like It,* or of parents and children in *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. But if everything is political then nothing is, for the word has lost its edge. I want to concentrate on what is political in a more narrow, traditional sense: the ordering and enforcing, the gaining and losing, of public power in the state. And I want to concentrate on those plays of Shakespeare's that are most directly concerned with that, rather than with more private emotional, moral, or spiritual issues. A simple test is to observe the different weights given to England in *Richard II* and to Scotland in *Macbeth:* both matter, of course, but England matters more. At the end of *Richard II* the business of the play is only half done, for though Richard is dead England is still in disorder. At the end of *Macbeth* the business is fully done, for that business was to explore the fate of the hero. Scotland has been restored, but we do not feel compelled to think further about its fate, any more than we think of Cyprus under Cassio. With this kind of distinction in mind, I have chosen to study Shakespeare's English history plays and his Roman plays—which are also history plays, though the term is not so often used of them. It is now customary for a critic dealing with the English histories in particular to begin with a ritual attack on E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944). I think we have had enough of this. Shakespeare's history plays are central to his dramatic achievement. In recent years they have become more widely studied than ever, stimulating intensely contested interpretations, due to their relevance to central contemporary issues such as English, national identities and gender roles. Interpretations of the history plays have been transformed since the 1980s by new theoretically-informed critical approaches. Movements such as New Historicism and cultural materialism, as well as psychoanalytical and post-colonial approaches, have swept away the humanist consensus of the mid-twentieth century with its largely conservative view of the plays.

The last decade has seen an emergence of feminist and gender-based readings of plays which were once thought overwhelmingly masculine in their concerns. This book provides an up-

to-date critical anthology representing the best work from each of the modern theoretical perspectives. The introduction outlines the changing debate in an area which is now one of the liveliest in Shakespearean criticism.

9. William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage

The first public reference to Shakespeare was Robert Greene' s letter to 3 of his friends written in 1592 warning them to look out for the newcomer who will take the credit from all great writers –at that time Greene was dying, abandoned so the text is full of bitterness and jealousy today is known as " UPSTAIR CROW"(it is believed that Greene was addressing the University Wits –Christopher Marlow, Thomas Nashe[47].

In 1668 John Dryden published his famous critical dialogue, "ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY" – at that time Shakespeare was already a classic, not a modern poet–according to Dryden. Shakespeare describes image of Nature in such a way that a reader could feel them –he wasn't a learned person but he didn't need books for Nature. Although Shakespeare sometimes is flat, he was a way of making that great too-although others were preferred to him in XII century.

During this century Shakespeare's reputation increased rapidly in the "PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE", Alexander Pope noted that Shakespeare characters are Nature itself-they are not copies of life but life itself.

Samuel Johnson, who didn't praise too extravagantly, differs drastically from Pope in his " Preface to Shakespeare"-at first he is wondering why Shakespeare is still read , when everything used to make him interesting and attractive has gone for many years.

According to Amir Hossain et al. (2014), they state that, "Shakespeares's and Ibsen's works differ in many ways, especially societal, political, economic, familial, feministic questions and so on."[48]

9.1 Synopsis

The Critical Heritage gathers together a large body of critical sources on major figures in literature. Each volume presents contemporary responses to a writer's work, enabling student and researcher to read the material.

[47] Oakes, Edward T. "Shakespeare's Millennium" *First Things*, December 1999. Retrieved 3 November 2011.
[48] Hossain, A., Iseni, A., Siljanovska, L., & Ejupi, V. (2014). Shakespeare and Ibsen: A Comparative Study of Macbeth and Hedda Gabler from 21st Century Radical Feminism Perspective. *Journal of Educational and Social Research. 4(4) 2014.*

9.2 Excerpt

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality—perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

Shakespeare is, in every sense, a special case, and Professor Vickers is presenting the course of his reception and reputation extensively, over a span of three centuries, in a sequence of six volumes, each of which will document a specific period.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

10. The Amoral World of Politics

The first thing that strategists must do to be successful is make a realistic appraisal of the world that they find themselves in. A successful strategist cannot afford to be idealistic; clear-sighted realism alone must be relied upon. In keeping with this premise, one should note the example of Machiavelli, who, far from trying to shock, believed himself to be simply describing the world as it really is:[49]

Many have written about this, and I fear I might be considered presumptuous, particularly as I intend to depart from the principles laid down by others . . . . I find it more fitting to seek the truth of the matter rather than imaginary conceptions. Many have imagined republics and

[49]Hammerschmidt-Hummel; *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare*

principalities that have never been seen or heard of, because how one lives and how one ought to live are so far apart that he who spurns what is actually done for what ought to be done will achieve ruin rather than his own preservation. A man who strives to make a show of correct comportment in every circumstance can only come to ruin among so many who have other designs.

Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how to be able not to be good, and to use or not use this ability according to circumstances. (*P* 15.59)[50]

Is this so? Is the world—and particularly the world of politics—as malignant as Machiavelli insists? As Chabod notes, Machiavelli's point is not necessarily that it is malignant; merely that it just is the way that it is:

The world that Machiavelli presents, far from being either moral or immoral, is actually amoral, for power—the ability to acquire it and the ability to hold onto it—are what count: "[Machiavelli's works are] based upon [his] deeply rooted views of the true motivations of human conduct, and [they are] not so much immoral as remote from commonly held illusions concerning human behaviour" (Keeton 315).

Many critics have noted this lack of illusion in Machiavelli's work, particularly as it relates to Shakespeare's English History Plays, which present an equally amoral world. For example, Kott argues that for Richard III, as for Machiavelli, "politics is ... a purely practical affair, an art, with the acquisition of power as its aim. Politics is amoral, like the art of bridge construction, or the practice of fencing" (*Shakespeare our Contemporary* 34-35). Roe agrees: "Machiavelli argues . . . in defense of breaking faith, that too many factors are lined up against a ruler at any one time to allow for the practice of orthodox morality" ("Shakespeare and Machiavelli"364). This seeming disregard for ethics in politics is most famously summed up in what has become the most famous of all Machiavellian maxims: "the ends justify the means" (Moseley 22).

10.1 The moral approach

If this is the kind of strategist one has to be in order to survive in such a politic world, what are the chances of York's opponent, Henry VI? Machiavelli frequently insists in his works that morality plays no role in politics and that a prince ultimately cannot afford to be good: "I know everyone will maintain that it would be commendable for a prince to have all the qualities ... that are held to be good. But ... a prince cannot wholly have or espouse these qualities, as the human condition will not allow it" (*P* 15.60), or "le condizioni umane che non lo consentono" (45).

If morality has no place in politics, there seems to be no place for moral leaders either. Henry VI appears to be a prince who has been schooled in the very works on politics that seem to

[50] In the original Italian Machiavelli is far more explicit about how his work seeks to express "the truth of the matter." Not only does Machiavelli seek the truth, but he seeks the real truth, the "verità effettuale," and not that which is imaginary or unreal: "alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla immaginazione di essa" (44). At the same time, whereas Constantine chooses to focus on "circumstances," Machiavelli is actually far more focused on the need, or "la necessità," and the utilitarian element, for a prince should not be good only when it is of use to him: "Onde è necessario a uno principe, volendosi mantenere, imparare a potere essere non buono, et usarlo e non usare secondo la necessità" (44). Rebhorn notes that "Machiavelli cautions the prince to .... focus on real problems, avoid abstractions and utopianism, and emphasize practicality .... History will not judge kindly dreamers posing as rulers" (*Foxes and Lions* 15).

be the polar opposite of Machiavelli's: Cicero's *De Officiis* or Erasmus' *Institutio Christiani Principis*.[51]

Handbooks for princes normally presupposed some form of monarchy, and followed Plato in assuming that a better society would be achieved through wiser rule .... The first book of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) ... discusses the need for wise men to involve themselves in politics. In the same year, More's friend Erasmus composed *Institutio Christiani Principis* .... According to Erasmus, the prince's primary aim should be to act as a Christian, and a good Christian was also a pacifist .... (207-08) enough Latin to read the original. According to divine law ... the prince is subject to earthly law and must obey it, even though his will has the force of law ... Erasmus believed that "there can be no good prince who is not also a good man." Our own private standards of integrity, morality and goodness should therefore govern our comportment as public officials and in the public domain generally .... Erasmus argued that the prince must be religious, refrain from plunder and violence, and not let his personal ambitions override concern for the state. He should govern with "wisdom, integrity and beneficence." (153)

Who would fit such a description? Meron feels that Henry V would be Erasmus' ideal prince, while Brockbank argues that Henry VI seems at times to be a dramatization of Thomas Elyot's *The Boke named the Governour* ("The Frame of Disorder" 63). Erasmus specifically espouses a Christian and pacifistic view of politics—a view that Machiavelli does much to criticize in Book II, Chapter 2 of *The Discourses* (Najemy, "Society, class, and state" 102)—and actually argues that it is better to be a just man than an unjust prince[52]

10.2 William Shakespeare and Censorship

Censorship of Shakespeare's plays began in the author's lifetime. In 1581 England's Queen Elizabeth I ordered that all plays to be performed should first be submitted to the Master of the Revels for examination for political and religious sedition. In 1607 this requirement was extended to the printing of plays. At least two of Shakespeare's plays are believed to have fallen foul of the censor: *Richard II* (1597) and *Henry IV*, parts I and II (1598). *Richard II* contains a scene in which Richard is deposed. After the Earl of Essex's unsuccessful revolt against Elizabeth in 1601, the queen complained that a certain play, probably Shakespeare's *Richard II*, had been publicly performed to encourage insurrection. On the eve of the rebellion Essex's followers had sponsored Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, to perform the play. The censor

[51]Briggs notes that Machiavelli's works were written in response to such books: Handbooks for princes normally presupposed some form of monarchy, and followed Plato in assuming that a better society would be achieved through wiser rule .... The first book of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) ... discusses the need for wise men to involve themselves in politics. In the same year, More's friend Erasmus composed *Institutio Christiani Principis* .... According to Erasmus, the prince's primary aim should be to act as a Christian, and a good Christian was also a pacifist .... (207-08) Although *The Prince* predates many of these works, Machiavelli nevertheless seems to anticipate them when he complains of writers who have "imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of" (*P*.5, 59). For more, see Colish, "Cicero's *De officiis and* Machiavelli's *Prince*"

[52]Machiavelli's position on the subject is wonderfully summed up in *The Art of War*: "Christianity does not impose on man the necessity to fight and defend himself that existed in ancient times" (*AW* 2.309).

subsequently judged the deposition scene to be too politically sensitive to be performed. It was omitted from all editions of the play until 1608, after Elizabeth's death.

Henry IV provoked animosity because of its use of the names Oldcastle, Harvey, and Russell for characters. Descendants of these historical figures objected to the unflattering portrayals of their ancestors, so Shakespeare rechristened the characters Falstaff, Bardolph, and Peto.

In 1642, after the execution of Charles I, England became a Commonwealth under the governance of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell, a Puritan, closed the theaters and banned the performance of stage plays, including Shakespeare's. The ban did not include musical entertainments, however, so Shakespeare's plays, along with others, were adapted to accommodate enough music to make them legal.

10.3 The Restoration

With the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, stage plays made a limited comeback. Charles II licensed just two theaters in London (compared with the sixteen that had operated from 1576 to 1614). One holder of a license was Sir William Davenant, who was given Shakespeare's plays to "reform and make fit" for performance by the actors under his management. Davenant typified an attitude to Shakespeare that was born in the Restoration and survived into the nineteenth century—that Shakespeare was a genius who had the misfortune to live in a barbaric age and therefore lacked decorum. He portrayed unpleasant situations and placed rough language in the mouths of royalty. Accordingly, Davenant's version of *Macbeth* does not contain the death of Lady Macduff, and Macbeth's unkind words to a servant "The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!/Where gott'st thou that goose look?" became, "Now, Friend, what means thy change of Countenance?"[53]

In another Restoration version of *Measure for Measure*, Angelo turns out to be a hero, declaring that he loved Isabella all the time and was only testing her. The poet and critic John Dryden adapted many of Shakespeare's plays according to contemporary taste, producing such works as *Truth Found too Late* (1679), a version of *Troilus and Cressida* in which Cressida is faithful. Another notorious adapter, Nahum Tate, rewrote *King Lear* with a happy ending, in which Lear and Cordelia survive, Lear is restored to his throne, and Cordelia is told that she will be a queen.

10.4 Women and Censorship

Shakespeare's portrayal of women was deemed inappropriate to the Restoration sensibility, which romanticized them as gentle, refined creatures innocent of sexual matters. Davenant's version of *Hamlet* "sanitizes" Ophelia, transforming her from a full-blooded and sexually

[53]The Literary Encyclopedia entry on William Shakespeareby Lois Potter, University of Delaware, accessed 22 June 2006

conscious woman to a silent, coy creature. Shakespeare's Ophelia is aware of the sexual implications of Hamlet's banter, responding with double-entendres of her own. Davenant's Ophelia responds only with silence, denoting either embarrassment or ignorance.

Ironically, the arrival in the Restoration period of female actors also led to a kind of reverse censorship, in that Shakespeare's plays were sometimes made bawdier. In his 1670 adaptation of *The Tempest*, Dryden gave Miranda a twin sister called Dorinda who specialized in sexual innuendo.

Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare became the standard acting texts of the eighteenth century. They were so widely used that many people assumed them to be Shakespeare's own words. When, in the mid-1700's, the actor-manager David Garrick announced a production of *Macbeth* "as written by Shakespeare," there was an outcry from those who had long loved the existing version, believing it to be Shakespeare's. In the end, Garrick compromised. He restored the original words in some scenes, but made some "improvements": He left out Lady Macduff's death scene, removed the crude Porter, had the witches sing and dance, and wrote a moralistic dying speech for Macbeth. In his version of *Hamlet*, Garrick cut out the grave-diggers because he thought low-life comedy inappropriate to tragedy. Colley Cibber's 1700 adaptation of *Richard III* remained the popular acting text until well into the nineteenth century, and some of Cibber's additions even survived into Laurence Olivier's film version of 1955.

An incident of 1795 revealed much about eighteenth century attitudes toward Shakespeare. A forger called William Henry Ireland printed an expurgation of *King Lear*, billed as Shakespeare's original manuscript. Ireland's forgery fooled many. He explained after he was caught that he had cleaned up the text because people found it hard to believe that Shakespeare himself had written such "ribaldry." *King Lear* also fell victim to political censorship when it was banned from the English stage from 1788 until 1820, out of respect to George III's insanity[54].

10.5 Protecting Women and Youth

The year 1774 was a landmark in the history of Shakespeare bowdlerization. A drama critic, Francis Gentleman, edited complete plays for the publisher Bell. Bell's Shakespeare aimed to make the plays "more instructive and intelligible, especially to the ladies and to youth." Gentleman objected to such "vulgarisms" as Macbeth's insult to his servant and Cleopatra's threat to her maid to give her "bloody teeth." This, Gentleman says, would be unworthy of a person "in a middling station," let alone of a "royal character." Bell's edition is curiously inconsistent, however. It omits some "glaring indecencies" altogether, but Bell's *Othello* has minor indecencies in italics, as a sign for ladies and youth to skip over them. Sometimes, he simply rebuked the objectionable lines in footnotes.

[54]Campbell, Lily B. *Shakespeare's*"*Histories*": *Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy.* 1947. 3rd ed. London: Methuen, 1968.

The most famous of all expurgated books, Dr. Thomas Bowdler's *The Family Shakspeare*, appeared in 1807. The edition was intended to remove "everything that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty." Its success inspired a number of other expurgations, such as the Reverend J. Pitman's *School-Shakspere* (1822). Pitman aimed to provide a more rigorous expurgation than Bowdler's. In most cases he succeeded, cutting the drunken Porter's speech in *Macbeth* from twenty lines to three, as compared with Bowdler's six. He did not stop short of eliminating entire characters, such as Touchstone and Audrey in *As You Like It*.

10.6 The Backlash Against Expurgation

The nineteenth century saw the beginning of a countermovement to expurgation. Actor-managers such as Robert W. Elliston, William Charles Macready, and Samuel Phelps staged performances with partly restored texts. In 1823 Elliston restored the tragic ending of *King Lear*, and in 1838 Macready reintroduced the Fool after decades of absence from the play. Elliston's 1821 restoration of *Richard III* shocked some people, including a *Times* critic, who thought it a new arrangement, not a return to Shakespeare, and declared it dramatically inferior to the generally used Cibber version. Phelps finished the task that Elliston had begun, virtually eliminating the use of Cibber's *Richard III*.

Other actor-managers were less scrupulous in their fidelity to Shakespeare's texts, manipulating them to suit their own interpretations of roles and to protect the sensibilities of audiences. For example, in 1885 William Kendal adapted *As You Like It* so that the cantankerous Jacques "became more reasonable." Henry Irving's edition of *Macbeth* cuts the murder of Banquo and Fleance, and Lady Macduff's death scene[55].

Another blow for authenticity was struck in 1843, when Parliament removed the monopoly that, since the Restoration, had confined the performance of plays to two London theaters. To circumvent the ban (and feed the popular mania for elaborate spectacle), non-licensed theaters had disguised Shakespeare's plays with spurious elements—pageants, dancing, and singing. After the ban was lifted, a large number of theaters began to produce the plays "straight," with greater sensitivity to his original texts.

10.7 Censorship in Schools

Meanwhile, the Shakespeare expurgation industry was thriving in America, fostered by the growing demand for school texts. In 1849 the first American expurgation of the plays in dramatic form was published: the *Shaksperian Reader*, edited by Professor John W. S. Hows. Hows wrote an apologetic preface, confessing his veneration for the "pure unmutilated text," but explaining that without revision, Shakespeare could not be used as a class book or for family reading. Hows cut mercilessly, removing Falstaff completely from *Henry IV*, part I, and stopping *Othello* at the

[55] E. K. Chambers, William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930.

end of the third act. He also added four years to Juliet's age in *Romeo and Juliet*(Shakespeare makes her not quite fourteen).

Expurgation of school texts continued unabated into the twentieth century. Back in 1750, Garrick cut Juliet's ardent wish that Romeo would hurry and deprive her of her maidenhead. Bowdler removed the same lines. Nearly two centuries later, a 1985 survey revealed that American school texts, including those of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; Scott, Foresman; Macmillan; Ginn; McDougal, Littell and Company; and McGraw Hill, had also cut the lines. Scott, Foresman's *Romeo and Juliet* cut more than three hundred lines, mostly sexual allusions. For example, Romeo's line, "Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight" was changed to " ... I will be with thee tonight." In 1985 a ninth-grade student in Vienna, Virginia, protested these cuts. His teacher responded by supplying the class with a full text and discussing the cuts with the students. In the media debate that followed, some school editions were criticized for failing to state that they were abridged. Ginn, for example, omitted four hundred lines from its *Romeo and Juliet*, yet claimed in its teachers' edition that the play was "presented here as Shakespeare wrote it."

Political censorship manifested in the twentieth century in the form of political correctness. Groups monitoring discrimination on grounds of sex, race, religion, and disability found plenty to object to in Shakespeare. In 1931 *The Merchant of Venice* was eliminated from high school curricula in Buffalo and Manchester, New York, in response to pressure from Jewish organizations, who believed it fostered anti-Semitism. On the twentieth century stage and on film, directors continued to cut Shakespeare—not because it was bawdy, but for reasons of length or obscurity. Often they "interpreted" plays to emphasize a political or philosophical standpoint, sometimes with acclaimed results, sometimes with a decidedly reductionist effect. There has been an antifascist interpretation of *Julius Caesar* with jack-booted crowds saluting Caesar, and a feminist version of *The Taming of the Shrew* in which Kate ends her speech of submission to her husband by spitting in his eye.

11. Literary criticism

During his own lifetime and shortly afterward, Shakespeare enjoyed fame and considerable critical attention. The English writer Francis Meres, in 1598, declared him to be England's greatest writer in comedy and tragedy. Writer and poet John Weever lauded "honey-tongued Shakespeare." Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's contemporary and a literary critic in his own right, granted that Shakespeare had no rival in the writing of comedy, even in the ancient Classical world, and that he equaled the ancients in tragedy as well, but Jonson also faulted Shakespeare for having a mediocre command of the Classical languages and for ignoring Classical rules. Jonson objected when Shakespeare dramatized history extending over many years and moved his dramatic scene around from country to country, rather than focusing on 24 hours or so in a single location. Shakespeare wrote too glibly, in Jonson's view, mixing kings and clowns, lofty verse with vulgarity, mortals with fairies.

11.1 Seventeenth century

Jonson's Neoclassical perspective on Shakespeare was to govern the literary criticism of the later 17th century as well. John Dryden, in his essay "Of Dramatick Poesie" (1668) and other essays, condemned the improbabilities of Shakespeare's late romances. Shakespeare lacked decorum, in Dryden's view, largely because he had written for an ignorant age and poorly educated audiences. Shakespeare excelled in "fancy" or imagination, but he lagged behind in "judgment." He was a native genius, untaught, whose plays needed to be extensively rewritten to clear them of the impurities of their frequently vulgar style. And in fact most productions of Shakespeare on the London stage during the Restoration did just that: they rewrote Shakespeare to make him more refined[56].

11.2 Eighteenth century

This critical view persisted into the 18th century as well. *Alexander Pope* undertook to edit Shakespeare in 1725, expurgating his language and "correcting" supposedly infelicitous phrases. Samuel Johnson also edited Shakespeare's works (1765), defending his author as one who "holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life"; but, though he pronounced Shakespeare an "ancient" (supreme praise from Johnson), he found Shakespeare's plays full of implausible plots quickly huddled together at the end, and he deplored Shakespeare's fondness for punning. Even in his defense of Shakespeare as a great English writer, Johnson lauded him in classical terms, for his universality, his ability to offer a "just representation of general nature" that could stand the test of time.

11.3 Romantic critics

For Romantic critics such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the early 19th century, Shakespeare deserved to be appreciated most of all for his creative genius and his spontaneity. For Goethe in Germany as well, Shakespeare was a bard, a mystical seer. Most of all, Shakespeare was considered supreme as a creator of character. Maurice Morgann wrote such character-based analyses as appear in his book *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777), where Falstaff is envisaged as larger than life, a humane wit and humorist who is no coward or liar in fact but a player of inspired games. Romantic critics, including Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey (who wrote *Encyclopædia Britannica*'s article on Shakespeare for the eighth edition), and William Hazlitt, extolled Shakespeare as a genius able to create an imaginative world of his own, even if Hazlitt was disturbed by what he took to be Shakespeare's political conservatism. In the theatre of the Romantic era, Shakespeare fared less well, but as an author he was much touted and even venerated. In 1769 the famous actor David Garrick had instituted a Shakespeare Jubilee

[56] Mike Collett-White (2010-03-16). *"A new William Shakespeare play? Long lost play to be published."*. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

at Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday. Shakespeare had become England's national poet.

11.4 Feminist Criticism

Under the umbrella of "feminist criticism" there is a wide range of critical practices and approaches to Shakespeare's works, and each of these approaches has its own supporters and detractors. Due to the diverse array of feminist studies, many feminist critics hesitate to posit a general description of what, exactly, feminist criticism is. It has been observed, however, that feminist criticism reflects the assorted theoretical positions of the feminist movement. Common topics of feminist studies of Shakespeare include examinations of patriarchy, gender and sex roles, and the relationship between gender and power in Shakespeare's plays. It is generally agreed that feminist criticism of Shakespeare as a "movement" began in the mid-1970s.

Richard Levin (1988) cites Juliet Dusinberre's publication of *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* in 1975 and the Modern Language Association's special session of feminist criticism in 1976 as the genesis of the feminist criticism movement in Shakespeare studies. Feminist critics of Shakespeare's works are often the subject of critiques—this is due in part to the tension that exists between feminist critics and critics of other branches of criticism. Jonathan Dollimore (1990) critiques various feminist approaches to Shakespearean studies. He explains and defends the approach of cultural materialism as a method of Shakespearean criticism, and responds to feminist critics of this approach. Lynda E. Boose (1987) traces the evolution of feminist criticism, particularly in regard to the treatment of marriage, sex, and family. Boose also discusses feminist debate over Shakespeare's own attitude toward patriarchy and the subordination of women. Feminist criticism is also the subject of Peter Erickson's 1997 essay. Erickson outlines the development of feminist criticism in America, and argues that there is a stark contrast between what he views as prefeminist criticism, before 1980, and feminist criticism after 1980. The year marks a shift, Erickson asserts, toward an emphasis in feminist criticism on culture and ideology. Erickson concludes by reviewing a new wave of feminist criticism which provides an expanded framework for viewing "otherness" in such characters as Shylock and Othello[57]. Character studies often form the focus of feminist analyses of Shakespeare's works. Feminist critics such as Janet Adelman (1985) examine the way in which various characters are portrayed and perceived. Adelman studies the portrayal of Cressida in *Troilus and Cressida* and maintains that the play enacts the fantasy of Cressida's inconstancy. At the moment when Cressida is separated from Troilus, Adelman explains, Cressida becomes "radically unknowable, irreducibly other," and due to the inconsistent way Cressida is portrayed, the other characters in the play, as well as the audience, are forced to view Cressida in the same way. Like Adelman, Sharon M. Harris (1990) studies the portrayal of Cressida. Harris reviews six traditional critical responses to her character: she is ignored, viewed as a whore, thought to possess an inherent limitation or frailty, thought to behave in accordance with a particular theatrical convention, viewed as synonymous with society's disorder, and thought to behave in the only way possible given her circumstances and

[57]Oakes, Edward T. "Shakespeare's Millennium" *First Things*, December 1999. Retrieved 3 November 2011.

environment. Harris identifies the way feminist critics have responded to each of the categorizations of Cressida and notes that feminist critics have found new ways in which to analyze her character. Similarly, Sharon Ouditt (1996) outlines the various methods by which feminist critics examine Shakespeare's characters. Ouditt selects three feminist critics who have studied *Hamlet*'s Gertrude, and uses these studies to elucidate different feminist perspectives. Ouditt then identifies the problems inherent with these approaches.The way feminist critics analyze Shakespeare's plays has been reviewed by a number of critics. Kathleen McLuskie (1985) identifies several feminist avenues of approach and highlights the shortcomings of each. She notes that the mimetic and essentialist modes of feminist theory fail to allow for the "full complexity of the nature of women" in Shakespeare's time or modern times. McLuskie examines the way sex and sexual roles in *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear* are discussed by feminist critics, and reviews the problems with these types of analyses. She notes that feminist readings often "reorder" the terms of the text and shift the critical attention from judgement of the action to focusing on the process by which the action may be judged. Similarly, Richard Levin (1988) investigates the problems with a feminist thematic approach to Shakespeare's tragedies. Levin contends that the central theme of the tragedies is often viewed by feminist thematic critics as the role of gender within the individual and society, and that these same critics identify the cause of the plays' tragic outcomes as masculinity or patriarchy. Levin stresses the illogic of this approach, and also observes that there are problems inherent in the thematic approach in general, not just the feminist thematic approach to Shakespeare's tragedies[58].

11.5 Increasing importance of scholarship

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw major increases in the systematic and scholarly exploration of Shakespeare's life and works. Philological research established a more reliable chronology of the work than had been hitherto available. Edward Dowden, in his *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*(1875), analyzed the shape of Shakespeare's career in a way that had not been possible earlier. A.C. Bradley's magisterial *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), a book that remains highly readable, showed how the achievements of scholarship could be applied to a humane and moving interpretation of Shakespeare's greatest work. As in earlier studies of the 19th century, Bradley's approach focused largely on character

12. Conclusion

Shakespeare studied history as a playwright by dramatizing certain historical events that were based on the history of his own country. The Elizabethans were interested in what was going on at the court, they showed their interest in the political situation of the country- they were not allowed direct comments concerning life at the court because they could be imprisoned, even executed-Elizabeth I was particulary sensitive about how Shakespeare had handled the imprisonment and execution of Richard II.

[58]Honigmann E. A. J. (1999). *Shakespeare: The Lost Years.*Revised Edition. Manchester: Manchester

Shakespeare's political environment had a lot to do with his plays. He often sides with the Tudor line, no matter what they do because they were his patrons. Richard III was painted a monster because he was defeated by the Tudors. However, that's not to say he didn't criticize them. They did some dirty stuff in the War of the Roses and he doesn't shy away from all of it.

MacBeth is my personal favorite example of Shakespeare's political agenda in action. It was written shortly after Queen Elizabeth died and the crown passed to James I. Shakespeare and his company had been a favorite of the Queen's, so it was super important to make a good impression on the new monarch, which is why the play takes place in Scotland (James was Scottish), why it's so much shorter than his other "major" tragedies (James supposedly preferred shorter plays), and why witchcraft features so prominently in the play (James had kind of a... thing about witches, having taken the time to write a whole book on witch-hunting while he was king of Scotland). It's also the reason why Banquo is in the show, as he is a mythic character while the rest of the play is loosely based on actual Scottish history. I'm a bit fuzzy on the particulars of the reference, Scottish folklore not being a specialty of mine, but the whole idea is that the scene where Macbeth has a vision of all of Banquo's royal descendants, the reason he pays special attention to the final one and mentions how impressive he is because he's heavily implied to be James I.

Shakespeare's influence extends from theatre and literature to present-day movies, Western philosophy, and the English language itself. William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the history of the English language, and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He transformed European theatre by expanding expectations about what could be accomplished through innovation in characterization, plot, languageand genre. Shakespeare's writings have also impacted a large number of notable novelists and poets over the years, including Herman MelvilleCharles Dickens,and Maya Angelou, and continue to influence new authors even today. Shakespeare is the most quoted writer in the history of the English-speaking worldafter the various writers of the Bible; many of his quotations and neologisms have passed into everyday usage in English and other languages.

Shakespeare's works have been a major influence on subsequent theatre. Shakespeare created some of the most admired plays in Western literature (with *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*being ranked among the world's greatest plays), and transformed English theatre by expanding expectations about what could be accomplished through plot and language. Specifically, in plays like *Hamlet*, Shakespeare "integrated characterization with plot," such that if the main character was different in any way, the plot would be totally changed. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare mixed tragedy and comedy together to create a new romantic tragedy genre (previous to Shakespeare, romance had not been considered a worthy topic for tragedy).]Through his soliloquies, Shakespeare showed how plays could explore a character's inner motivations and conflict (up until Shakespeare, soliloquies were often used by playwrights to "introduce (characters), convey information, provide an exposition or reveal plans"

Although *Shakespeare's Politics* is mostly argued from the perspective of political philosophy, there are many instances of analysis more typical of literary criticism that shed further light on the peculiar interpretations of the work. For example, Bloom reads Biblical allusions into the four Jewish names in *Merchant of Venice*, finding their origin in Genesis 10 and 11, of which the latter includes the Tower of Babel narrative, underscoring the separateness of ethnic groups which is the theme of the play.Bloom also comments in the chapter on *Othello* on the duke's alternating between rhyming verse and prose as a reflection of his expediency, intending to appear moral until he is no longer on show and can attend to the pressing business. Furthermore, throughout the four essays Bloom and Jaffa engage the critical literature on Shakespeare by citing several past literary analyses; however, these citations are to earlier and non-contemporary figures as the Earl of Shaftesbury, John Upton, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and A.C. Bradley. They refer to only one critical work from the second half of the 20th century, and they use it not for its interpretation, but for the historical context it provides.

Shakespeare's Politics was and is largely ignored by the literary establishment. Ronald Berman panned it in the *Kenyon Review*, taking issue with the *Merchant of Venice* chapter as "[having] the usual sententiousness about the problem of being Jewish...all of which was pretty well settled some 50 years ago by E.E. Stoll" and with the *Othello* chapter as "written in virgin ignorance of the massive scholarship. Although Bloom had written in the introduction that he and Jaffa "[respected] the competence of our colleagues in the literature departments and are aware of the contributions of recent scholarship. Shakespeare was a conservative, in the sense that he supported early modern England's status quo and established hierarchy, which meant defending the Crown's view of divine monarchical right and opposing the radicals, often Puritan, who questioned it.

Shakespeare's Famous Quotes:

Shakespeare has a lot to say about power and politics in his plays. These six quotes touch on what it means to be a king, the power of the law, what separates royal from common, and speaking truth to authority.Folger Director Emerita Gail Kern Paster provides some additional insight into the context of each quote.

1. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

The King in *Henry IV, Part 2* (3.1.31)

At a time of night when most of his subjects are asleep, the king is up and busy about his affairs. "Maybe more suffering from insomnia – really sleepless, feeling guilty," says Paster. "The sleep which is so important (they felt and we feel) to health is not for him, alas."

2. "My crown I am, but still my griefs are mine. You may my glories and my state depose but not my griefs; still am I king of those."[59]

King Richard in *Richard II* (4.1.200-203)

As Richard II speaks these words, he is handing his crown over to Bolingbroke. He may be relinquishing his power and position, but his griefs and cares remain. Watch Ben Whishaw and Rory Kinnear perform this emotional scene scene in a clip from The Hollow Crown: Richard II.

3. "I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me. The element shows to him as it doth to me. All his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man."

King Henry in *Henry V* (4.1.105)

King Henry is in disguise when he speaks these words. It's the night before a big battle, and in talking with the men in his army, he's reminding them that the king is not immune to the fears they feel. "The context is their cynicism, too," says Paster, "since they expect he will let himself be taken for ransom, and they are too low to be eligible. He wants not only to insist on the common humanity but to do so because they are skeptical about the king's motives. He has reasons for fear just as they do. The speech may remind some of the speech 'Hath a Jew eyes' in *The Merchant of Venice*, though the context is utterly different."

4. "We must not make a scarecrow of the law, setting it up to fear the birds of prey, and let it keep one shape till custom make it their perch and not their terror."

Angelo in *Measure for Measure* (2.1.1-4)

From his position of power, Angelo is arguing for strict application of the law and harsh punishment for lawbreakers. Paster points out that Escalus—Angelo's fellow deputy—puts the case for mercy: "Let us be keen, and rather cut a little / Than fall and bruise to death." Angelo doesn't listen, and he ultimately fails to meet the law's standards, revealing himself as a hypocrite.

5. "Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power."

Brutus in *Julius Caesar* (2.1.19-20)

Brutus is mulling over Caesar's rise to power and the calls to crown him, which Brutus views as extremely dangerous. "He asks himself here whether Caesar would in fact be one who—if he got power—would abuse it this way," says Paster.

6. "Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound when majesty falls to folly."

[59]The Columbia Dictionary of Shakespeare Quotations, edited by Mary Foakes and Reginald Foakes, June 1998.

Kent in *King Lear* (1.1.164-167)

Kent is King Lear's loyal subject and friend, so he attempts to intercede when he sees the king making rash decisions and casting off the youngest princess, Cordelia. He pays the price for his boldness when King Lear banishes him on pain of death. "As with modern heads of state," says Paster, "the danger comes when their subjects fear to speak truth to power, when they are surrounded by flatterers. The Elizabethans were very much aware of this danger in their great men, and the dangers of flatterers are a common theme."

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