



TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE THROUGH PLAYS IN ENGLAND AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION SPIRIT

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ABSTRACT

Modern women and of Shakespeare's female characters in terms of their relation to the private space; that is to say, their construction of 'self-in-relation-to-space', as well as their movements and activities within and outside the private's real or imagined boundaries, thus their ability to fashion the public sphere from within the private. Rather than analyzing the role of women in the plays exclusively from the point of view of opposition

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's plays have the reputation of being among the greatest in the English language and in Western literature. Traditionally, the plays are divided into the genres of tragedy, history, and comedy; they have been translated into every major living language, in addition to being continually performed all around the world.

Many of his plays appeared in print as a series of quartos, but approximately half of them remained unpublished until 1623, when the posthumous First Folio was published. The traditional division of his plays into tragedies, comedies, and histories follows the categories used in the First Folio. However, modern criticism has labelled some of these plays "problem plays" that elude easy categorisation, or perhaps purposely break generic conventions, and has introduced the term romances for what scholars believe to be his later comedies.

When Shakespeare first arrived in London in the late 1570s or early 1580s, dramatists

writing for London's new commercial playhouses (such as The Curtain) were combining two strands of dramatic tradition into a new and distinctively Elizabethan synthesis. Previously, the most common forms of popular English theatre were the Tudormorality plays. These plays, celebrating piety generally, use personified moral attributes to urge or instruct the protagonist to choose the virtuous life over Evil. The characters and plot situations are largely symbolic rather than realistic. As a child, Shakespeare would likely have seen this type of play (along with, perhaps, mystery plays and miracle plays).

The other strand of dramatic tradition was classical aesthetic theory. This theory was derived ultimately from Aristotle; in Renaissance England, however, the theory was better known through its Roman interpreters and practitioners. At the universities, plays were staged in a more academic form as Roman closet dramas. These plays, usually performed in Latin, adhered to classical ideas



of unity and decorum, but they were also more static, valuing lengthy speeches over physical action. Shakespeare would have learned this theory at grammar school, where Plautus and especially Terence were key parts of the curriculum^[2] and were taught in editions with lengthy theoretical introductions.

2. THEATRE AND STAGE SETUP

Archaeological excavations on the foundations of the Rose and the Globe in the late twentieth century^[4] showed that all London English Renaissance theatres were built around similar general plans. Despite individual differences, the public theatres were three stories high, and built around an open space at the centre. Usually polygonal in plan to give an overall rounded effect, three levels of inward-facing galleries overlooked the open centre into which jutted the stage—essentially a platform surrounded on three sides by the audience, only the rear being restricted for the entrances and exits of the actors and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage could be used as a balcony, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, or as a position for a character to harangue a crowd, as in *Julius Caesar*.

Usually built of timber, lath and plaster and with thatched roofs, the early theatres were vulnerable to fire, and gradually were replaced (when necessary) with stronger structures. When the Globe burned down in June 1613, it was rebuilt with a tile roof.

A different model was developed with the Blackfriars Theatre, which came into regular use on a long term basis in 1599. The Blackfriars was small in comparison to the earlier theatres, and roofed rather than open to the sky; it resembled a modern theatre in ways that its predecessors did not.

3. ELIZABETHAN SHAKESPEARE

For Shakespeare as he began to write, both traditions were alive; they were, moreover, filtered through the recent success of the University Wits on the London stage. By the late 16th century, the popularity of morality and academic plays waned as the English Renaissance took hold, and playwrights like Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe revolutionised theatre. Their plays blended the old morality drama with classical theory to produce a new secular form.^[5] The new drama combined the rhetorical complexity of the academic play with the bawdy energy of the moralities. However, it was more ambiguous and complex in its meanings, and less concerned with simple allegory. Inspired by this new style, Shakespeare continued these artistic strategies,^[6] creating plays that not only resonated on an emotional level with audiences but also explored and debated the basic elements of what it means to be human. What Marlowe and Kyd did for tragedy, John Lyly and George Peele, among others, did for comedy: they offered models of witty dialogue, romantic action, and exotic, often pastoral location that formed the basis of Shakespeare's comedic mode throughout his career.^[7]

Shakespeare's Elizabethan tragedies (including the history plays with tragic designs, such as *Richard II*) demonstrate his relative independence from classical models. He takes from Aristotle and Horace the notion of decorum; with few exceptions, he focuses on high-born characters and national affairs as the subject of tragedy. In most other respects, though, the early tragedies are far closer to the spirit and style of moralities. They are episodic, packed with character and incident; they are loosely unified by a theme or character.^[8] In this respect, they reflect clearly the influence of Marlowe, particularly of Tamburlaine. Even in his early work,



however, Shakespeare generally shows more restraint than Marlowe; he resorts to grandiloquent rhetoric less frequently, and his attitude towards his heroes is more nuanced, and sometimes more sceptical, than Marlowe's.[9] By the turn of the century, the bombast of Titus Andronicus had vanished, replaced by the subtlety of Hamlet.

In comedy, Shakespeare strayed even further from classical models. The Comedy of Errors, an adaptation of Menaechmi, follows the model of new comedy closely. Shakespeare's other Elizabethan comedies are more romantic. Like Lyly, he often makes romantic intrigue (a secondary feature in Latin new comedy) the main plot element;[10] even this romantic plot is sometimes given less attention than witty dialogue, deceit, and jests. The "reform of manners," which Horace considered the main function of comedy,[11] survives in such episodes as the gulling of Malvolio.

4. JACOBEAN SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare reached maturity as a dramatist at the end of Elizabeth's reign, and in the first years of the reign of James. In these years, he responded to a deep shift in popular tastes, both in subject matter and approach. At the turn of the decade, he responded to the vogue for dramatic satire initiated by the boy players at Blackfriars and St. Paul's. At the end of the decade, he seems to have attempted to capitalise on the new fashion for tragicomedy,[12] even collaborating with John Fletcher, the writer who had popularised the genre in England.

The influence of younger dramatists such as John Marston and Ben Jonson is seen not only in the problem plays, which dramatise intractable human problems of greed and lust, but also in the darker tone of the Jacobean

tragedies.[13] The Marlovian, heroic mode of the Elizabethan tragedies is gone, replaced by a darker vision of heroic natures caught in environments of pervasive corruption. As a sharer in both the Globe and in the King's Men, Shakespeare never wrote for the boys' companies; however, his early Jacobean work is markedly influenced by the techniques of the new, satiric dramatists. One play, Troilus and Cressida, may even have been inspired by the War of the Theatres.[14]

Shakespeare's final plays hark back to his Elizabethan comedies in their use of romantic situation and incident.[15] In these plays, however, the sombre elements that are largely glossed over in the earlier plays are brought to the fore and often rendered dramatically vivid. This change is related to the success of tragicomedies such as Philaster, although the uncertainty of dates makes the nature and direction of the influence unclear. From the evidence of the title-page to The Two Noble Kinsmen and from textual analysis it is believed by some editors that Shakespeare ended his career in collaboration with Fletcher, who succeeded him as house playwright for the King's Men.[16] These last plays resemble Fletcher's tragicomedies in their attempt to find a comedic mode capable of dramatising more serious events than had his earlier comedies.

5. STYLE

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, "drama became the ideal means to capture and convey the diverse interests of the time." [17] Stories of various genres were enacted for audiences consisting of both the wealthy and educated and the poor and illiterate. Later on, he retired at the height of the Jacobean period, not long before the start of the Thirty Years' War. His verse style, his choice of subjects, and his stagecraft all bear the marks of both

periods.[18] His style changed not only in accordance with his own tastes and developing mastery, but also in accord with the tastes of the audiences for whom he wrote.[19]

While many passages in Shakespeare's plays are written in prose, he almost always wrote a large proportion of his plays and poems in iambic pentameter. In some of his early works (like *Romeo and Juliet*), he even added punctuation at the end of these iambic pentameter lines to make the rhythm even stronger.[20] He and many dramatists of this period used the form of blank verse extensively in character dialogue, thus heightening poetic effects.

To end many scenes in his plays he used a rhyming couplet to give a sense of conclusion, or completion.[21] A typical example is provided in *Macbeth*: as *Macbeth* leaves the stage to murder *Duncan* (to the sound of a chiming clock), he says,[22]

“ Hear it not *Duncan*; for it

That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

Shakespeare's writing (especially his plays) also feature extensive wordplay in which double entendres and rhetorical flourishes are repeatedly used.[23][24] Humour is a key element in all of Shakespeare's plays. Although a large amount of his comical talent is evident in his comedies, some of the most entertaining scenes and characters are found in tragedies such as *Hamlet* and histories such as *Henry IV, Part 1*. Shakespeare's humour was largely influenced by *Plautus*.[25]

6. SOLILOQUIES IN PLAYS

Shakespeare's plays are also notable for their use of soliloquies, in which a character makes a speech to him- or herself so the audience can understand the character's inner motivations and conflict.[26]

In his book *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, *James Hirsh* defines the convention of a Shakespearean soliloquy in early modern drama. He argues that when a person on the stage speaks to himself or herself, they are characters in a fiction speaking in character; this is an occasion of self-address. Furthermore, *Hirsh* points out that Shakespearean soliloquies and "asides" are audible in the fiction of the play, bound to be overheard by any other character in the scene unless certain elements confirm that the speech is protected. Therefore, a Renaissance playgoer who was familiar with this dramatic convention would have been alert to *Hamlet's* expectation that his soliloquy be overheard by the other characters in the scene. Moreover, *Hirsh* asserts that in soliloquies in other Shakespearean plays, the speaker is entirely in character within the play's fiction. Saying that addressing the audience was outmoded by the time Shakespeare was alive, he "acknowledges few occasions when a Shakespearean speech might involve the audience in recognising the simultaneous reality of the stage and the world the stage is representing." Other than 29 speeches delivered by choruses or characters who revert to that condition as epilogues "Hirsh recognises only three instances of audience address in Shakespeare's plays, 'all in very early comedies, in which audience address is introduced specifically to ridicule the practice as antiquated and amateurish.'"[27]

7. SOURCE MATERIAL OF THE PLAYS

As was common in the period, Shakespeare based many of his plays on the work of other



playwrights and recycled older stories and historical material. His dependence on earlier sources was a natural consequence of the speed at which playwrights of his era wrote; in addition, plays based on already popular stories appear to have been seen as more likely to draw large crowds. There were also aesthetic reasons: Renaissance aesthetic theory took seriously the dictum that tragic plots should be grounded in history. For example, King Lear is probably an adaptation of an older play, King Leir, and the Henriad probably derived from The Famous Victories of Henry V.[28] There is speculation that Hamlet (c.1601) may be a reworking of an older, lost play (the so-called Ur-Hamlet),[29] but the number of lost plays from this time period makes it impossible to determine that relationship with certainty. (The Ur-Hamlet may in fact have been Shakespeare's, and was just an earlier and subsequently discarded version.)[28] For plays on historical subjects, Shakespeare relied heavily on two principal texts. Most of the Roman and Greek plays are based on Plutarch's Parallel Lives (from the 1579 English translation by Sir Thomas North),[30] and the English history plays are indebted to Raphael Holinshed's 1587 Chronicles. This structure did not apply to comedy, and those of Shakespeare's plays for which no clear source has been established, such as Love's Labour's Lost and The Tempest, are comedies. Even these plays, however, rely heavily on generic commonplaces.

While there is much dispute about the exact chronology of Shakespeare plays, the plays tend to fall into three main stylistic groupings. The first major grouping of his plays begins with his histories and comedies of the 1590s. Shakespeare's earliest plays tended to be adaptations of other playwrights' works and employed blank verse and little variation

in rhythm. However, after the plague forced Shakespeare and his company of actors to leave London for periods between 1592 and 1594, Shakespeare began to use rhymed couplets in his plays, along with more dramatic dialogue. These elements showed up in The Taming of the Shrew and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Almost all of the plays written after the plague hit London are comedies, perhaps reflecting the public's desire at the time for light-hearted fare. Other comedies from Shakespeare during this period include Much Ado About Nothing, The Merry Wives of Windsor and As You Like It.

The middle grouping of Shakespeare's plays begins in 1599 with Julius Caesar. For the next few years, Shakespeare would produce his most famous dramas, including Macbeth, Hamlet, and King Lear. The plays during this period are in many ways the darkest of Shakespeare's career and address issues such as betrayal, murder, lust, power and egoism.

The final grouping of plays, called Shakespeare's late romances, include Pericles, Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest. The romances are so called because they bear similarities to medieval romance literature. Among the features of these plays are a redemptive plotline with a happy ending, and magic and other fantastic elements.

8. CANONICAL PLAYS

Except where noted, the plays below are listed, for the thirty-six plays included in the First Folio of 1623, according to the order in which they appear there, with two plays that were not included (Pericles, Prince of Tyre and The Two Noble Kinsmen) being added at the end of the list of comedies and Edward III at the end of the list of histories.



Comedies

- The Tempest LR
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- Measure for Measure PP
- The Comedy of Errors
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Love's Labour's Lost
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Merchant of Venice PP
- As You Like It
- The Taming of the Shrew
- All's Well That Ends Well PP
- Twelfth Night
- The Winter's Tale LR PP
- Pericles, Prince of Tyre LR FF
- The Two Noble Kinsmen LR FF

Histories

- King John
- Richard II
- Henry IV, Part 1
- Henry IV, Part 2
- Henry V
- Henry VI, Part 1
- Henry VI, Part 2
- Henry VI, Part 3
- Richard III
- Henry VIII
- Edward III FF

Tragedies

- Troilus and Cressida PP
- Coriolanus
- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet
- Timon of Athens PP
- Julius Caesar
- Macbeth
- Hamlet
- King Lear

- Othello
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Cymbeline LR

9. DRAMATIC COLLABORATIONS

Like most playwrights of his period, Shakespeare did not always write alone, and a number of his plays were collaborative, although the exact number is open to debate. Some of the following attributions, such as for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, have well-attested contemporary documentation; others, such as for *Titus Andronicus*, remain more controversial and are dependent on linguistic analysis by modern scholars.

Cardenio, either a lost play or one that survives only in later adaptation *Double Falsehood*; contemporary reports say that Shakespeare collaborated on it with John Fletcher.

Cymbeline, in which the Yale edition suggests a collaborator had a hand in the authorship, and some scenes (Act III scene 7 and Act V scene 2) may strike the reader as un-Shakespearean compared with others.

Edward III, of which Brian Vickers' recent analysis concluded that the play was 40% Shakespeare and 60% Thomas Kyd.

Henry VI, Part 1, possibly the work of a team of playwrights, whose identities we can only guess at. Some scholars argue that Shakespeare wrote less than 20% of the text.

Henry VIII, generally considered a collaboration between Shakespeare and Fletcher.

Macbeth, Thomas Middleton may have revised this tragedy in 1615 to incorporate extra musical sequences.



Measure for Measure may have undergone a light revision by Middleton at some point after its original composition.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre may include the work of George Wilkins, either as collaborator, reviser, or revisee.

Timon of Athens may result from collaboration between Shakespeare and Middleton; this might explain its unusual plot and unusually cynical tone.

Titus Andronicus may be a collaboration with, or revision by, George Peele.

The Two Noble Kinsmen, published in quarto in 1634 and attributed to Fletcher and Shakespeare; each playwright appears to have written about half of the text.

10. LOST PLAYS

Love's Labour's Won – a late sixteenth-century writer, Francis Meres, and a bookseller's list both include this title among Shakespeare's recent works, but no play of this title has survived. It may have become lost, or it may represent an alternative title of one of the plays listed above, such as *Much Ado About Nothing* or *All's Well That Ends Well*.

Cardenio – attributed to William Shakespeare and John Fletcher in a Stationers' Register entry of 1653 (alongside a number of erroneous attributions), and often believed to have been re-worked from a subplot in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In 1727, Lewis Theobald produced a play he called *Double Falshood*, which he claimed to have adapted from three manuscripts of a lost play by Shakespeare that he did not name. *Double Falshood* does re-work the Cardenio story, but modern scholarship has not established with certainty whether or not *Double*

Falsehood includes fragments of Shakespeare's lost play.

11. PLAYS POSSIBLY BY SHAKESPEARE

Arden of Faversham – the middle portion of the play (scenes 4–9) may have been written by Shakespeare.

Edmund Ironside – contains numerous words first used by Shakespeare.

Sir Thomas More – a collaborative work by several playwrights, including Shakespeare. There is a "growing scholarly consensus"[31] that Shakespeare was called in to re-write a contentious scene in the play and that "Hand D" in the surviving manuscript is that of Shakespeare himself.[32]

The Spanish Tragedy – additional passages included in the fourth quarto, including the "painter scene", are likely to have been written by him.

12. SHAKESPEARE AND THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM

Unlike his contemporary Ben Jonson, Shakespeare did not have direct involvement in publishing his plays and produced no overall authoritative version of his plays before he died. As a result, the problem of identifying what Shakespeare actually wrote is a major concern for most modern editions.

One of the reasons there are textual problems is that there was no copyright of writings at the time. As a result, Shakespeare and the playing companies he worked with did not distribute scripts of his plays, for fear that the plays would be stolen. This led to bootleg copies of his plays, which were often based on people trying to remember what Shakespeare had actually written.



Textual corruptions also stemming from printers' errors, misreadings by compositors, or simply wrongly scanned lines from the source material litter the Quartos and the First Folio. Additionally, in an age before standardised spelling, Shakespeare often wrote a word several times in a different spelling, and this may have contributed to some of the transcribers' confusion. Modern editors have the task of reconstructing Shakespeare's original words and expurgating errors as far as possible.

In some cases the textual solution presents few difficulties. In the case of Macbeth for example, scholars believe that someone (probably Thomas Middleton) adapted and shortened the original to produce the extant text published in the First Folio, but that remains our only authorised text. In others the text may have become manifestly corrupt or unreliable (Pericles or Timon of Athens) but no competing version exists. The modern editor can only regularise and correct erroneous readings that have survived into the printed versions.

The textual problem can, however, become rather complicated. Modern scholarship now believes Shakespeare to have modified his plays through the years, sometimes leading to two existing versions of one play. To provide a modern text in such cases, editors must face the choice between the original first version and the later, revised, usually more theatrical version. In the past editors have resolved this problem by conflating the texts to provide what they believe to be a superior Ur-text, but critics now argue that to provide a conflated text would run contrary to Shakespeare's intentions. In King Lear for example, two independent versions, each with their own textual integrity, exist in the Quarto and the Folio versions. Shakespeare's changes here extend from the merely local to the structural.

Hence the Oxford Shakespeare, published in 1986 (second edition 2005), provides two different versions of the play, each with respectable authority. The problem exists with at least four other Shakespearian plays (Henry IV, part 1, Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, and Othello).

13. CONCLUSION

During Shakespeare's lifetime, many of his greatest plays were staged at the Globe Theatre and the Blackfriars Theatre.[34][35] Shakespeare's fellow members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men acted in his plays. Among these actors were Richard Burbage (who played the title role in the first performances of many of Shakespeare's plays, including Hamlet, Othello, Richard III and King Lear),[36] Richard Cowley (who played Verges in Much Ado About Nothing), William Kempe, (who played Peter in Romeo and Juliet and, possibly, Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream) and Henry Condell and John Heminges, who are most famous now for collecting and editing the plays of Shakespeare's First Folio (1623).

Shakespeare's plays continued to be staged after his death until the Interregnum (1649–1660),[37] when all public stage performances were banned by the Puritan rulers. After the English Restoration, Shakespeare's plays were performed in playhouses with elaborate scenery and staged with music, dancing, thunder, lightning, wave machines, and fireworks. During this time the texts were "reformed" and "improved" for the stage, an undertaking which has seemed shockingly disrespectful to posterity.

Victorian productions of Shakespeare often sought pictorial effects in "authentic" historical costumes and sets. The staging of



the reported sea fights and barge scene in Antony and Cleopatra was one spectacular example.[38] Too often, the result was a loss of pace. Towards the end of the 19th century, William Poel led a reaction against this heavy style. In a series of "Elizabethan" productions on a thrust stage, he paid fresh attention to the structure of the drama. In the early twentieth century, Harley Granville-Barker directed quarto and folio texts with few cuts,[39] while Edward Gordon Craig and others called for abstract staging. Both approaches have influenced the variety of Shakespearean production styles seen today.

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