

## SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM

# SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM

AN ESSAY IN SYNTHESIS

*By*

C. NARAYANA MENON

*Benares Hindu University*

HUMPHREY MILFORD  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1938

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
AMEN HOUSE, LONDON, E.C. 4  
EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK  
TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN  
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
PUBLISHER TO THE  
UNIVERSITY

*First published, 1938.*

PRINTED IN INDIA AT THE G. S. PRESS, MADRAS

## PREFACE

The object of this book is to show that almost everything written on Shakespeare is true ; but my purpose has so far exceeded my powers that the hasty reader may see it as the very reverse : he may feel that I have indulged in a series of onslaughts on eminent scholars. The fact is that, for the sake of clarity, I have stuck to one position, and my snapshots of other workers in the field, taken at different angles and distances, must necessarily present them as clumsy and dwarfed. The discerning reader, however, will find herein enough to help him to approach the position taken up by other critics. If, here and there, the tone is aggressive, it is because certain critics have themselves been aggressive in stating their theses, and I am constrained to stress the antitheses in order to suggest a synthesis. The psychological, the historical, and the analytical schools of criticism ought to know that each is invulnerable to the weapons of the rest.

The motive which made me stick to one position has also made me confine myself to the tragedies in which Shakespeare's genius flowered. The kernel of every Shakespearean play—tragedy, comedy, or history—is the potential in us. Hamlet and Falstaff are the obverse and the reverse of the same medal. When the emotional stress is shifted from the centre to the circumference, and from the circumference to a point outside the design, tragedy changes into comedy and history. The corresponding changes of the technique can be grasped by a rereading of Chapters IX and X with this in mind. When a theorem has been proved, its corollaries can be left to themselves.

Any attempt to synthesize existing literature is bound to be incomplete without notes. Shakespearean criticism lies so scattered in books written in different languages and on different topics, that anything like an exhaustive treatise is neither possible nor useful. I have therefore made the references representative rather than exhaustive. More books come within the scope of this essay than are referred to in the notes. This book is substantially the same as my doctoral thesis accepted by the Madras University in 1929. The books on Shakespeare published during these 7 years have fallen in line with it, which gives grounds for the hope that it will shed light on books to be published in future also. If a man has a master-key he need not carry a numbered list of the locks to be opened. My desire is to offer a key which may encourage the reader to open unsuspected chambers of the books on Shakespeare he has read, and to look out through their secret windows on the prospect they all command in common.

Much has been dropped, much relegated to the notes, and the notes themselves relegated to the end, lest the leaves should hide the tree. This essay, consequently, is like a tree in autumn—all branches and no leaves. To come to life it must find the warmth of spring in the reader's mind. Not the foliage only, but the better part of the tree has also to be supplied by the reader. The different threads that run through the texture of the essay appear on the surface only here and there at long intervals. The threads, moreover, are not gathered together and knotted at the end, because the essay is not complete in itself. The reader is the pioneer and this book only a signpost pointing towards a synthesis of Shakespeare Criticism.

*Benares Hindu University,*  
8 January, 1938

C. N. MENON

## CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	OUR APPROACH TO LITERATURE ..	1
II.	TRANSPARENCY ..	12
III.	IMAGINATIVE IDENTIFICATION ..	27
IV.	STATIC AND DYNAMIC ..	33
V.	PSYCHO-ANALYSIS ..	37
VI.	THE ADMISSIBILITY OF CHARACTER- INTERPRETATION ..	42
VII.	THE HISTORICAL AND THE ANALYTICAL METHODS ..	52
VIII.	IMPROBABILITY ..	76
IX.	ISOLATION OF THE TRAGIC HERO ..	86
X.	THE TRAGIC TRAIT ..	95
XI.	TRAGIC SUFFERING: SENSITIVENESS ..	113
XII.	TRAGIC SUFFERING: IMAGINATION ..	124
XIII.	THE ENEMIES OF TRAGEDY: THE MORAL SENSE AND THE COMIC SPIRIT ..	133
XIV.	THE HISTORICAL SENSE ..	149
XV.	THE TRAGIC IN US ..	164
XVI.	THE DYNAMIC RESPONSE ..	176
	A NOTE ON THE NOTES ..	187
	NOTES ..	190
	KEY TO THE SHORT TITLES ..	241
	INDEX ..	273

## INDEX

The figures in italics refer to the notes.

- Acting, 14-15, 16, 19, 178, 191, 27<sup>2</sup>, 27<sup>3</sup>, 27<sup>7</sup>. *See* Stage
- Action and character, 54, 59, 60, 67, 69<sup>2</sup>, 73<sup>1</sup>, 73<sup>4</sup>
- Actors, Elizabethan, 19, 70, 71, 191, 26<sup>1</sup>, 27<sup>2</sup>, 27<sup>3</sup>, 27<sup>4</sup>, 86<sup>3</sup>; boys, 28<sup>8-9</sup>, 29<sup>1</sup>  
—post-Elizabethan, 21, 164<sup>3</sup>, 184<sup>3</sup>
- Actresses, 20-1, 23, 24-5, 28<sup>8</sup>, 30<sup>3</sup>
- Allegory, *see* Topical allusions and allegories
- Analytical criticism, 32, 73, 177
- Antony and Cleopatra, 63, 80, 87, 90, 93, 96, 101, 102, 105, 108, 109, 111, 135, 137, 149-52, 166-8, 28<sup>6</sup>, 163<sup>4</sup>, 179<sup>4</sup>
- Art theories of, 1-2, 3, 5, 30-2, 34, 37, 39-40, 42, 46, 178, 179; great art, 8-9, 17, 18, 46, 50, 74-5, 15<sup>1</sup>, 23<sup>2</sup>, 25<sup>2</sup>, 58<sup>2</sup>; communion, 9-11, 7<sup>4</sup>, 15<sup>2</sup>. *See* Criticism, Illusion, Self-knowledge through criticism
- As You Like It, 48, 121, 181, 43<sup>11</sup>
- Audience, 13-14, 21-2, 32, 65, 67, 29<sup>8</sup>, 29<sup>9</sup>, 29<sup>11</sup>, 29<sup>15</sup>, 86<sup>4</sup>
- Authorship, problems of, 32, 52-4, 59, 60
- Baconian theory, 52, 66
- Catharsis, 29, 40-1, 176-7, 179, 36<sup>2</sup>
- Characters, 9, 44, 79, 138, 29<sup>7</sup>, 74<sup>4</sup>; unhindered by plot, conditions of authorship, etc., 18, 46, 50, 53, 25<sup>4</sup>, 74<sup>4</sup>, 164<sup>3</sup>, 164<sup>4</sup>, 165<sup>7</sup>; their reality, 3-5, 166, 56<sup>3</sup>, 73<sup>4</sup>, 165<sup>2</sup>, 165<sup>6</sup>, 165<sup>12</sup>, 165<sup>13</sup>. *See* Flattening of minor characters
- Character-interpretation, 42-51, 53, 61, 70, 71, 11<sup>1</sup>, 13<sup>1</sup>, 59<sup>1</sup>, 68<sup>5</sup>, 73<sup>4</sup>, 110<sup>4</sup>, 124<sup>2</sup>; limits, 101, 57<sup>5</sup>, 74<sup>4</sup>, 74<sup>9</sup>; interpretations by spectators, actors, critics, 8-9, 51, 164<sup>3</sup>, 164<sup>4</sup>, 184<sup>3</sup>; synthesis, 139-47, 181-4, 185
- Cinema, 24-6
- Collaboration, *see* Authorship
- Comedy and tragedy, 12, 13, 122, 134-6, 180, 161<sup>10</sup>, 162<sup>1</sup>; mixture of both, 136-7, 27<sup>4</sup>, 54<sup>4</sup>, 195<sup>4</sup>; comic characters, 137-40, 165<sup>4</sup>, 169<sup>7</sup>, 218<sup>4</sup>. *See* Laughter
- Conflict, 49, 59, 60, 88, 102,

- 151, 181, 231, 321, 634, 635, 2042. See Tragic suffering
- Coriolanus*, 88, 89, 92, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 107, 109, 110, 111, 134, 135
- Criticism, 5-8, 11, 32, 42-4, 51, 52, 64, 68, 72, 75, 177-8, 131, 516, 683, 862, 901, 2242. See Analytical, Historical, Self-knowledge, Synthesis
- Dark lady, 63, 64, 584
- Date, 52
- Day-dreams, 511, 515
- Death and next life, 57, 148, 173, 182-3, 1771; death-wish, 38, 40, 58, 131, 173
- Elizabethan writers, Beaumont and Fletcher, 131; Chapman, 18, 66; Jonson, 17, 18, 61, 66, 96, 99, 180, 862; Kyd, 17, 67, 812; Lyly, 17; Marlowe, 17, 97, 106, 1095; Peele, 17; Spenser, 70; Webster, 18, 67, 812, 862
- Essex, 63, 66, 68
- Fate, 54-5, 99, 100, 101, 121, 128, 172, 1113. See Symbolism, Unconscious
- Flattening of minor characters, 88, 89, 90, 1122
- Free will, in life, 2, 567; in art, 3, 34, 165; in criticism, 5
- Friendship, 156-62, 174, 1942.
- Ghosts, 57, 94, 723, 1164, 22024
- Hamlet*, 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 18, 25, 38, 40, 46, 48, 49, 50, 52-9, 60, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 96, 98, 99, 100, 139, 165, 171-5, 178-86, 12, 27, 81, 111, 135, 4310, 463, 483, 504, 563, 575, 651, 682, 692, 725, 732, 734, 7910, 833, 864, 1102-4, 1111-2, 1201-2, 1211, 1213, 1271, 1306, 1352, 1366, 1632, 1635, 1637, 1663, 2254
- Henry IV*, 50, 138-48
- Henry V*, 146-7, 1225
- Hero, 19, 33, 48, 86, 91, 625, 1052, 1103, 1301. See Flattening of minor characters
- Historical research, 62-71, 74-5, 177, 1841; stage, 23, 71; psychology, 60, 62, 63-4. See Topical allusions and allegories
- 'Humour', 55, 66, 95, 2185
- Illusion, 3, 14, 44, 45-6, 78-9, 734
- Imagery, 36, 83, 111, 129, 164, 314, 1366, 1952
- Imaginative identification, in life, 28, 47, 177, 351, 411; in art, 29-32, 36, 37, 40-1, 43, 48, 49, 155, 2161; technique to establish identification, 43, 79, 87-92, 93, 97, 285; degrees of identification in types of criticism, 33-4, 44, 63, 75, 133-5, 137, 176, 179-81, 185
- Improbabilities, 45, 961, 973
- Isolation, a principle of art, 87, 98, 103, 104, 137, 1071, 1301; loneliness, 55, 105-6, 132, 2114



- Julius Caesar*, 19, 20, 24, 54, 55, 88, 89, 90, 92, 96, 97, 99, 101, 105, 106, 108, 121, 122, 134, 135, 149, 152-63, 176-7, 43<sup>10</sup>, 122<sup>5</sup>, 130<sup>5</sup>, 136<sup>5</sup>
- King Lear*, 13, 18, 33-4, 47, 48, 73, 80, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 101, 103, 106, 108, 109, 110, 113-23, 131, 135, 186, 41<sup>3</sup>, 60<sup>1</sup>, 62<sup>1</sup>, 85<sup>2</sup>, 96<sup>1</sup>, 116<sup>4</sup>, 130<sup>1</sup>, 132<sup>1</sup>, 161<sup>7</sup>
- Laughter, 18<sup>3</sup>, 19<sup>4</sup>, 161<sup>10</sup> 162<sup>2</sup>
- League of Nations, 15<sup>2</sup>
- Literature, uses of, 4-5, 9-10, 11, 40-1, 42, 7<sup>4</sup>, 13<sup>2</sup>, 14<sup>1</sup>, 51<sup>6</sup>, 129<sup>1</sup>
- Love's Labour's Lost*, 12, 79<sup>5</sup>
- Macbeth*, 8, 9, 10, 25, 34-6, 40, 48, 55, 66, 72, 80, 89, 91-3, 94, 101, 103-5, 106, 108, 111, 124-32, 135, 137, 165, 166, 13<sup>5</sup>, 31<sup>4</sup>, 43<sup>3</sup>, 43<sup>3</sup>, 43<sup>3</sup>, 51<sup>5</sup>, 53<sup>5</sup>, 79<sup>6</sup>, 79<sup>10</sup>, 85<sup>2</sup>, 110<sup>2</sup>, 111<sup>3</sup>, 116<sup>5</sup>, 124<sup>1</sup>, 134<sup>6</sup>, 135<sup>3</sup>, 146<sup>3</sup>, 163<sup>3</sup>
- Madness, 98-9, 103, 110, 111, 114, 119, 124, 131, 135<sup>2</sup>, 136<sup>2</sup>, 138<sup>2</sup>, 138<sup>3</sup>, 139<sup>3</sup>, 211<sup>2</sup>, 232<sup>12</sup>
- Merchant of Venice*, 48, 137-8
- Midsummer Night's Dream*, 12-16, 50, 154
- Mob*, 68, 154
- Nemesis, 135, 163, 180, 43<sup>10</sup>
- Othello*, 27, 34, 38, 43, 45, 55, 60-1, 73, 76-85, 86, 88, 92, 95, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108, 109, 111, 121, 135, 138, 135, 43<sup>12</sup>, 85<sup>2</sup>, 96<sup>1</sup>, 134<sup>2</sup>, 161<sup>7</sup>, 225<sup>4</sup>
- Plot, 1, 59-60, 137-8, 180, 43<sup>4</sup>, 43<sup>6</sup>, 43<sup>7</sup>, 69<sup>2</sup>, 73<sup>3</sup>, 165<sup>7</sup>; unity, 43<sup>2</sup>, 179<sup>4</sup>, 184<sup>2</sup>, 185<sup>12</sup>
- Poetic justice, 134, 185, 119<sup>2</sup>, 119<sup>3</sup>
- Poetry, 44, 28<sup>4</sup>, 29<sup>2</sup>
- Psycho-analysis, 2, 4, 32, 37-40, 46, 49, 50, 54, 124, 2<sup>2</sup>, 51<sup>6</sup>, 58<sup>4</sup>, 220<sup>3</sup>. See Unconscious
- Puns, 142, 29<sup>4</sup>, 46<sup>1</sup>. See Imagery
- Renaissance 21, 26, 34<sup>2</sup>
- Revenge, 60, 67, 81<sup>2</sup>
- Richard II*, 66, 80, 92, 98, 99, 101, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111, 169-71, 79<sup>9</sup>, 122<sup>5</sup>, 161<sup>8</sup>
- Richard III*, 97, 105, 111, 152, 168-9, 43<sup>10</sup>, 119<sup>4</sup>
- Romeo and Juliet*, 12, 13, 48, 80, 88, 92, 93, 94, 100, 101, 102, 108, 155, 165, 109<sup>2</sup>
- Self-knowledge through criticism, 1-2, 7, 11, 25, 30, 39-40, 45, 51, 75, 94, 97, 166, 177, 184-5, 7<sup>4</sup>, 15<sup>1</sup>, 16<sup>2</sup>, 32<sup>1</sup>, 38<sup>1</sup>, 51<sup>6</sup>, 57<sup>1</sup>, 92<sup>1</sup>, 205<sup>1</sup>
- Soliloquy, 21, 54, 70, 71, 97-8, 28<sup>4</sup>, 29<sup>3</sup>, 69<sup>1</sup>, 120<sup>2</sup>, 190<sup>1</sup>
- Sources, treatment of, 1, 71, 76-7, 152, 1<sup>1</sup>, 1<sup>2</sup>, 96<sup>1</sup>
- Stage, Elizabethan, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 70, 71, 27<sup>5</sup>, 30<sup>4</sup>; post-Elizabethan, 22, 24, 30<sup>3</sup>; realism and symbolism, 15, 19, 20, 93,

- 28<sup>1</sup>, 28<sup>7</sup>; presentation of tragedies, 30<sup>1</sup>
- Subjectivity and objectivity, 42, 52, 87, 94, 116<sup>4</sup>
- Symbolism, 90, 91-3, 94, 150, 28<sup>5</sup>, 53<sup>2</sup>
- Synthesis of criticism, 5-8, 32, 42-3, 51, 70, 74, 135-6, 140-7, 177-85, 11<sup>1</sup>, 13<sup>1</sup>, 68<sup>3</sup> 79<sup>1</sup>, 166<sup>3</sup>. *See* Imaginative identification
- Time, treatment of, 20, 78-9, 28<sup>3</sup>, 97<sup>3</sup>
- Timon of Athens*, 80, 89, 102, 103, 107, 109, 114, 121
- Topical allusions and allegories, 60, 61, 62, 65, 66, 69, 70, 74, 74<sup>3</sup>, 79<sup>4</sup>, 79<sup>8</sup>, 79<sup>8</sup>, 79<sup>10</sup>, 83<sup>3</sup>
- Tragedy, 12, 34, 49, 85, 123, 135-6, 148, 166, 168, 180, 63<sup>5</sup>, 104<sup>1</sup>, 218<sup>4</sup>
- Tragic suffering, 97, 105, 121; not exceptional, 85, 106, 132, 104<sup>1</sup>, 132<sup>1</sup>; swelling of heart, 110, 117, 121, 167; pain of personality, 38, 123; its dissolution, 168. *See* Conflict, Isolation
- Tragic trait, and 'humour', 95, 180; quest of value, 82, 96, 98-9, 102, 103, 122, 16<sup>2</sup> 171-4, 118<sup>4</sup>, 205<sup>4</sup>; not a fl. . . 97-8, 99, 121, 133
- Twelfth Night*, 138, 43<sup>11</sup>, 79<sup>3</sup>, 164<sup>4</sup>
- Unconscious, 2, 54-5, 107-11, 115, 126, 166, 168, 15<sup>1</sup>, 82<sup>1</sup>, 135<sup>1</sup>, 144<sup>1</sup>
- Unities, 164-5, 18<sup>2</sup>, 68<sup>1</sup>; time, 20, 78; place, 20, 28<sup>8</sup>, 31<sup>2</sup>, 179<sup>3</sup>; action, 147, 155, 43<sup>3</sup>, 179<sup>4</sup>. *See* Plot
- Universality of Shakespeare, 9, 23, 68, 75, 185, 15<sup>1</sup>, Wit, 110, 111, 142, 136<sup>3</sup>