

Applying Marxist Hermeneutics of the Visions of Shakespeare

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Abstract: This paper examines some of the theoretical foundations of historical processes in the application of the Shakespeare vision, through which plays became the actual collective memory of the events they envision, even when those events are distorted. The debate over this distortion has focused on the possible political motives for applying Shakespeare. That this application on political intention, with official powers largely ignored the impact of these historical distortions was over 400 years later. I suggest that, because of Shakespeare's unique place in the historical calendar for the development of collective memory, Shakespeare's historical twisting application in history plays is a byproduct of the emerging ability to access historical sources while also shaping the emerging collective memory. Shakespeare became archon, in the sense of the Deriding, of English history. As such he exercised an interpretation of Areton's right to interpret English history.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Orson Welles, Hermeneutics, archive.

INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth century witnessed the flowering of the drama in England. At the end of the century, a whole galaxy of brilliant dramatists appeared: Lyly, Kidd, Greene, Marlowe, Heywood, Dekker, and, somewhat later, Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher [1]. Although Shakespeare, like a majestic mountain, overshadows them all, nevertheless each was an independent and significant artistic entity. A similar blossoming of culture, although to a lesser degree, took place in other fields of artistic effort. The gifted Petrarchists, Surrey and Wyatt, were creating a new form of lyric, which reached its height in the sonnets of Shakespeare and the poems of Spenser [2]. There were other poets, like Gascoigne, Puttenham and Sydney, all radically abjuring the medieval tradition [3]. The English novel—the chivalric and pastoral romance, the picaresque, and the realistic novel of manners (Lyly, Greene, Nash, and Delaney)—evidenced like progress. Although less brilliant than the Spanish novel of the same era, it was almost as colorful and interesting. English singers and musicians of the sixteenth century were famous throughout Europe. While in the realm of the pictorial and plastic arts, there was only one outstanding English genius, the renowned architect and theatrical designer Inigo Jones, nevertheless, England

attracted to her shores many great masters—Holbein, for instance.

A new secular learning and a new philosophy supplanted the old scholasticism. At the beginning of the century, Erasmus settled in England, where he spent several years; in 1510 he was teaching Greek at Cambridge [4]. At this time England produced her great humanist, a friend of Erasmus, and one of the forerunners of socialism, Sir Thomas More (1478-1536), author of Utopia. When Henry VIII decreed that all schools in England include Latin in their curricula, a flood of translations was released, not only of the ancient poets but of philosophers, scholars and historians as well. (Cicero, Herodotus, Suetonius, Pliny.) Education was primarily confined to aristocratic and court circles. Most Elizabethan statesmen possessed culture and were men of high attainment. The pursuit of knowledge spread likewise among the ladies of the upper classes. The mother of Bacon and the wife of Lord Burghley were excellent Latin scholars. Lady Jane Grey, the unhappy claimant to the English throne after the death of Edward VI (1553), read Plato in the original, and Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) [5], a pupil of Ascham, knew Latin and Greek in addition to four other languages. She rendered one of the treatises of

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Plutarch into English and intended to translate Euripides. Nevertheless, judging by the number of mythological references and classical allusions in Shakespeare and in other dramatic writing for the public theatres, with their motley audiences, it must be admitted that quite a large section of London's population possessed some degree of culture. This scientific-philosophic movement reached its apex at the end of the century with the appearance of the philosophical system of Bacon (1561-1626) whom Marx called the "first creator" of English materialism [6].

The sixteenth century was the era of the Renaissance in England. This fruition of art and philosophy in England was analogous to that of other Western European countries. It also resulted from the radical upheaval in all domains of economic and social life—the decline of the old feudal order with its method of production, which was now being replaced by capitalist relations characteristic of the epoch of primary accumulation. This movement, which developed in England later than in the countries of southern Europe, swept over the land. It was coloured by specific local conditions, which gave a distinctive character to English culture at the end of the sixteenth century. The forces which gave rise to a New England influenced every sphere of socio-economic life [7].

The first upheaval and the greatest affected agricultural relations. Serfdom disappeared throughout England in the fifteenth century because it was more profitable in a rising capitalist economy to hire labour. With the growth of the wool industry and export markets, sheep-raising increased tremendously and created a heightened demand for pasture land. This resulted in the enclosure system—the forcible seizure of the commons from the peasants by the rich landlords—which developed toward the close of the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century. Moreover, with the development of the wool industry as a more profitable source of income, much-cultivated land belonging to the landlords became converted into sheep-walks [8]. The great mass of the peasantry found itself with no land to cultivate. Hence, a great supply of free agricultural labour was available, ready to work for a pittance to stave off hunger. This was a fundamental prerequisite for the development of the capitalist industry. Another temporary measure to satisfy land hunger was the sale of church land, confiscated by the state after the advent of the Reformation, about 1535.

Most of the land was bought for a trifle by the bourgeoisie, who likewise purchased land from the old feudal lords, land devastated as a result of the feudal Wars of the Roses (1455-1485), graphically described by Shakespeare [9]. Thus, a bond of unity was formed between the old landowners and the new bourgeoisie since the former began to apply capitalist methods to agriculture. As a result, there arose a new social group

alongside of the old—a bourgeois landed gentry. However, in becoming landed noblemen, these former merchants carried over their old ideology into the new agricultural relations. This resulted in the formation of the so called gentry, composed principally of the middle and petty landed nobility, which, by fusing with the old landed nobility, replenished its ranks. This revitalized and ascending class marked the start of that squirarchy which ruled England from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the middle of the nineteenth century [10]. On the other hand, the class of wealthy peasant farmers, the so-called yeomanry—the backbone of old England—degenerated during the sixteenth century. They were dislodged by the new landowners drawn from the bourgeoisie and the nobility, and were forced to accept the status of tenants.

The royal power was utilized to support the new order, whose interests depended upon the political power of the state. Thus, the ruling dynasty, the Tudors, was but the agent of the rising class of the epoch. All the decrees of Elizabeth evidenced a tendency to further the new manufacturing system. Many brutal laws were passed against "beggars" and "vagrants"—people who were being expropriated, and who were resisting economic bondage [11]. During the reign of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, 72,000 "thieves" were put to death. A decree was issued, regulating wages and establishing a fixed maximum. Despite this, the new industry had to carry on a bitter struggle against two obstacles—feudalism in the country, and the guild system in the city.

Literary Explanation

The new manufactures were inaugurated in seaports, or else in parts of the countryside where the old urban system did not run, and where the guilds which were a part of that system had no say. In England, the corporate towns and therefore, there was a fierce struggle between these new industrial nurseries [12]. Finally, the intensive development of English trade was of great significance, closely connected as it was with the new naval and colonial policy. Today, industrial supremacy implies commercial supremacy. In the period of manufacture properly so-called, on the other hand, it was commercial supremacy which implied industrial supremacy. Hence the preponderant role of the colonial system in those days. At the beginning of the epoch raw wool was the chief article of export; later, woollen cloth. English merchants gradually freed themselves from foreign middlemen, sold and shipped their own wares, and established their own markets. Commercial corporations sprang up for the purpose of trading with the Baltic regions, Muscovy, the Mediterranean countries, the Near East, Guinea, America and India [13].

Characteristic of the epoch is the name of the oldest of the commercial companies, "The Merchant Adventurers," which, appearing at the end of the

fourteenth century, numbered 3500 by the beginning of the seventeenth. They knew how to trade with the newly discovered lands, how to steal, smuggle and trade in slaves. If enclosure was the first prerequisite of primary accumulation, colonial trading was the second. There also existed another type of merchant, who engaged in operations on a smaller scale. He traded primarily at home and had close connections with the industrialists [14]. He was thrifty, and carefully and systematically accumulated penny upon penny—the classic type of penurious accumulator, the Puritan. It was precisely this class that approached its goal with such force and certainty that it later was to take history into its hands and forge the great English revolution of the seventeenth century. Thus, the process developed, smoothly and uniformly, in all three fields. The transformation of the agricultural economy and the resulting pauperization of the countryside were closely connected with the development of the new capitalist industry (manufacturing), and commerce (wool, cloth), which were interdependent. As a consequence, the social aspect of England changed completely. An entirely new alignment of class forces came into being, out of which developed new class struggles. Each class contained a number of conflicting groups. At the same time, the two most powerful classes, the landowning gentry and the bourgeoisie, antagonistic by nature, were during this stage of their development, to certain extent collaborators and at times even allies, because of the specifically English conditions. Attending their growth was the early capitalization of the landowning economy, the Reformation with its confiscation of Church lands, and so forth [15]. The great feudal wars had destroyed the old feudal nobility, and the new nobles were children of their own age to whom money was the power of all powers.

Engels Developed This Thought Further

Originally an oppressed state liable to pay dues to the ruling feudal nobility, recruited from serfs and villains of every type, the burghers conquered one position after another in their continuous struggle with the nobility, and finally, in the most highly developed countries, took power in its stead: in France, by directly overthrowing the nobility; in England, by making it more and more bourgeois, and incorporating it as the ornamental head of the bourgeoisie itself [16]. In still another passage he characterized England's position on the eve of the great revolution: The new starting point was a compromise between the rising middle class and the ex-feudal landowners. The latter though called as now, the aristocracy had been long since on the way which led them to become what Louis Philippe in France became at a much later period, "the first bourgeois of the Kingdom." Fortunately for England, the old feudal barons had killed one another during the Wars of the Roses. Their successors, though mostly scions of the old families, had been so much out of the direct line of descent that they constituted quite a new body, with habits and tendencies far more bourgeois

than feudal. They fully understood the value of money, and at once began to increase their rents by turning hundreds of small farmers out and replacing them by sheep. Henry VIII, while squandering the Church lands, created fresh bourgeois landlords by wholesale; the innumerable confiscation of estates regranted to absolute or relative upstarts, and continued during the whole of the seventeenth century, had the same result. Consequently, ever since Henry VII, the English "aristocracy," far from counteracting the development of industrial production, had, on the contrary, sought to indirectly profit thereby [17].

Theoretical Part Shakespeare and Humanity

Shakespeare was not a poet of the government, and still less of a bourgeoisie. On the contrary, it had its roots in the young and powerful aristocratic class, which had broad horizons before it, and which continued the ruling class from a famous people [18]. In the tragedies of Shakespeare, you hear the roar of the sea. In the Cornell tragedies, only the fountains are sprayed in Versailles. We are not entirely in agreement with the saying of Mehring, although he seems to explain refined elements of Shakespeare's writings. We are well aware that in the poetry of Shakespeare's time in France, in the 16th century, the leading position was the work of Ronsard and the Pleiades, which is very aesthetic, enthusiastic and full of vitality. However, it was free of heroic and tragic. In England, the papal counterparts had their counterparts in the words of Petrarch of Wyatt and Sari, in Spencer's poems, in the pastoral novel of Sydney, Arcadia, and even in the complex tendencies of the Elizabethan drama by Beaumont (1584-1616) and Fletcher (1579-1625). The work of these two playwrights, who were usually cooperative, was in common with Shakespeare's work. We find clear individuality, passion, vivid imagery of emotions, colourful characterization and dynamic work. However, besides these, we find strange characteristics of Shakespeare's works, because these playwrights are still trying to strengthen feudalism that was collapsing under the rising bourgeois tide. Thus, they defended the symbol of fencing through the irony of the bourgeoisie who tried to rape this noble privilege [19]. Contrary to Shakespeare's criticism of the monarchy, their remembrance of the absolute justice in the tragedy of *Maid* is so close to worship that he raises the deposed king of the play to an aeroplane over criticism. This trend is most evident in the comedy film *The Loyal Subject*, in which the hero suffers from abuse at the hands of his owner, which finally brings him back to grace. They were filmed as villains throughout the play, suddenly becoming renewed in the last film. In other plays of his plays, a *Bloody Brother*, or *Rolio, Duke of Normandy*, presented the theory that the real wisdom is not in explicit opposition to the tyrant king, nor in his blind obedience, but in the intellectual adaptation to the imperatives of the situation. This reveals to us the

undoubtedly influential Spanish playwrights in the period that Fletcher practised [19].

These playwrights were followers of the Spanish despotism. "Although there is a surface resemblance to the absolute sovereignty from Europe in general, it is placed in an Asian-style form of government." But most importantly, the general part from the drama of Beaumont and Fletcher. They contain Epicureanism non-sealed, free of all moral and tragic problems. The aim of their plays was only to transform and present sensational and entertaining impressions. This explains the elegant structure, skilful handling with the plot, and the magnificent scenic effects. The order of personality, on the opposite hand, since well as the forces that stimulate the activities of their characters dramas, fall to the second place. They have sought for the most strange, the most strange and the most acute. With sarcastic frankness, Fletcher loved to remain more impotent, incestuous and sexually deviant. Look at the theatre as a place to spend enjoyable hours.

Thus, severe social problems are eliminated in his work. Nor does it contain any truly heroic characters. No longer than two or three plays of Beaumont and Fletcher can be named tragedies. Each support is either a light comedy or a trivial comedy or a happy ending. All this is far from the epic heroic art of Shakespeare. No doubt the origins of his art should be asked, not among the epicurean nobility, but in bourgeois revolutionary ideas and attitudes. During this period, there was widespread literature, especially the middle class, in its objectivity and style. A full set of Shakespeare's contemporaries, led by Thomas Heywood (1570-1640) and Thomas Decker (1572-1632), belong to this category. The popular nature, the portrayal of the popular environment, family life, ethics, and surprisingly naive ethics are combined with conspiracies, melodramas, and dramatic motifs as if they had been copied from the log of everyday events in brothels insane asylums, and so forth. Heywood's historical drama *Edward the Fourth* is a glorification of merchants and artisans, the real heroes of the play. In Shakespeare's chronicles, the basic theme deals with two great problems—power and the fate of nations [20].

Shakespeare's World Perspective

Shakespeare was a human being and a precise representative of the era that Engels called "the greatest liberal revolution that man has ever known." As the new ethics, philosophy and ideology that were about to replace that degraded feudalism demonstrated, Shakespeare was an essential part from his time in the broadest sense. But because a thousand threads linked to the special conditions that developed the advancement of capitalism in England, he also belonged to his generation [21]. The extraordinary complexity of his work is due to the compound of these factors more than the social and economic conditions of his time,

although these were also important, What Engels calls "bourgeois content in feudal form" is always reflected in his work, often in the same play, even in the same act, there may be conflicting ideas.

This complexity stunned the bourgeois critics, so many so that they went further to realize that Shakespeare was a genius who offered only the full potential and direction of human thought without regard to our perception of the world's views. Some of them tried to describe Shakespeare's work as an aristocrat. Others have developed the theory that Shakespeare's plays were written with many authors, differ in their ideological and class positions and that Shakespeare edited the entire collection. Even Soviet critics sometimes formulated false theories, which tried to resolve the issue by rejecting it. Shakespeare's recent thesis has appeared three: the political transformer, the artistic form and the philosophical poet. These theories are evasive. It is necessary not only to indicate the complexity of the plays but to determine their causes, natural unity and not official unity. The organic unity of Shakespeare's work stems from his attempt to reverse the process of life objectively, by distinguishing between the basic and the transient, and the permanent transit, and to interpret this process in light of the new global perspective [22].

CONCLUSION

The aforementioned contradictions prevent Shakespeare's universal perspective from crystallizing this entirely global perspective, and thus, it has been revealed only as ambition and inclination, which, given the nature of the class it defended, can't be grasped. It would be futile to try to find a specific ethic in Shakespeare. His morals are of general significance, not composed of doctrinal principles, but of broad rules of conduct. This is the law or policy of combination in *Hamlet* and *King Lear* and to a lesser degree in *Coriolanus*; the principle from duty in *Othello* and *Macbeth*; the principle of mercy in the retailer from Venice and a measure of measure, and so on. So beyond this is the principle of creative love of life, the heroic struggle to maintain the best aspects. From his generation, Shakespeare drew material to the actual expression from these abstract principles. It was created by his generation or survived by tradition. Along with positive

The explanation from great power since the servant of the nation, his plays contains an explanation to absolutism; along with an emotional plea for humanity, relative prudence of murder; along with unconditional recognition of equality, the relative challenge of hierarchy. Thus his vision of the presentation contained a hint that would not be mistaken for the future. Shakespeare does not speak. It's not educational. The ethical aspects of each problem and position are revealed strongly so that the reader is forced to draw his own conclusions. In light of this, it

can be said that Shakespeare's work is full of moral elements. Accordingly, he explains the problems of the individual: his rights and his relations with the family, state, society and ethnic question. It always emphasizes the social roots of each problem. His concept of society is based on a broad and profound concept of the individual.

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