

## SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM IN BENGAL: HOW IDEOLOGY DETERMINES CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The objective of the present essay is to investigate the critical assumptions and presuppositions about the function of criticism and the role of critic, to look at the political affiliations and theoretical orientations of the critics and to regard the other cultural, social and intellectual factors that determined the formation of the bulk of Shakespeare criticism in Bengal, India. According to a recent critic, 'in constructing the history of criticism we are not tracing the exfoliation through history of a linear, if irregular process: it is history of criticisms which is at issue. We are seeking the determinants of the particular historical spaces which make the emergence of such an object possible in the first place, and which determine its relations to other synchronous discourses. The science of the history of criticisms is the science of the historical forms which produce those criticisms' (Eagleton, Criticism 17). In keeping with this view, this essay, instead of dwelling on the surface of the Shakespeare criticism produced in Bengal, has tried to attempt a thorough examination of the historical forms and ideological motivations that made possible the production of such criticism. Along with examining the ideology, methodology and the purpose of such criticism, some attention has been also paid to the language employed by the critics and this study in fact attempts to demonstrate how preference for one particular kind of linguistic configuration over another reveals the critic's perception of his own task and a specific view of the world and writing.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ideology, Shakespeare Criticism, Politics of Criticism, Academic Criticism, Marxist Criticism*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Owing to the tectonic shift brought about in literary studies by the recent theory-revolution, criticism is no longer viewed as an activity subservient to and parasitic on the creative functions of literature, but rather it has come to be regarded as a social practice, an intellectual exercise conditioned by the ideological affiliations of the critic and inextricably enmeshed in the socio-cultural milieu within which it is produced. In the light of this radically altered perspective an attempt can be made to scrutinize the responses of the Indian scholars, teachers and critics to Shakespeare, the cultural icon of the British empire, who seems to have colonized the minds of the educated elites of Pre and Post-Independence India far more effectively than all the exploitative administrative policies and insidious political strategies implemented by the British colonialists. In this modest paper I have made an effort to give an outline of the evolution of the critical reception of Shakespeare in Bengal with reference to three eminent critics- Aurobindo Ghosh, Taraknath Sen and Utpal Dutta, each of whom ventured to read Shakespeare from their own perspective determined by his social, cultural and political positions.

Ashis Nandy's delving/insightful exploration of the contorted and ambiguous psychology of the colonized subject in *Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* has shown how the sense of insecurity, loss and anguish occasioned by his early estrangement from his motherland drove Sri Aurobindo to seek solace in mysticism and spiritual practices. Reared up in a foreign country, alienated from the nourishing contact with the native culture, under the strict instructions of an Anglophile and domineering father, Aurobindo complained of being persistently haunted by an all-enveloping darkness, which may be diagnosed as the sense of exile, uprootedness, cultural inferiority and hollowness that resulted from his uneasy interaction with an alien culture. Such a tormented mental state of naturally made this sensitive scholar turn inward to seek in the spiritual pursuit a refuge/ an escape from the plaguing doubts, fears, anxieties and helplessness all that bedevil his worldly existence. Thus spirituality emerged as a means of cultural self-assertion, a Utopian world to which the ego can revert to continue its quest for power and self-fulfillment which is frustrated on the intractable and hostile mundane plane. Nietzsche in his *Genealogy of Morals* has perceptively explained the emergence of the inner life in man as a reaction formation against the inimical external world that thwarts man's fulfillment through the realization of will to power: "All instincts that do not expend themselves outwardly turn inward. This is what I call internalization of man. It is by means of this that man first acquired what has come to be known as his "soul". The whole of inner experience, which was as thin as it would be if stretched tight between two membranes, expanded. It acquired depth, breadth and height- to the same extent that outward expenditure was curtailed."

In the postmodern era, the word spirituality is dismissed as a form of essentialism that operates at best as a distraction from history and at worst as a justification for pernicious hierarchies of race, gender and class perpetuating the injustices and iniquities that prevail in human societies. But such denunciation of spirituality have overlooked spirituality's investment in otherness and have failed to recognize that spirituality purports to be the experience and knowledge of what is other and is ultimate and the sense of identity and 'mission' that may arise from or be vested in that experience. Spirituality involves ideas of emancipation and an alternative world that have real political potential. Now these reflections on the political implications of spirituality gain weight, force and importance if we apply them to a discreet scrutiny of Aurobindonian brand of spiritual practice. The realization of the self, the basis of the traditional yoga of knowledge, Aurobindo admits, was 'as much the aim' of his yoga 'as of any other'. But self-realization was not the only aim of Aurobindo's yoga. 'The object sought after', he wrote in a letter of 1935, was not 'an individual achievement of divine realization for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness' (qt. in Heehs, *Sri Aurobindo* 96). In most of the traditional systems of yoga, the self-realized, enlightened individual aspires to depart 'out of the world and life into Heaven or Nirvana'. Sri Aurobindo repudiated this as the necessary issue of yogic practice. 'A distinct and central object of' his yoga, he asserted, was 'a change of life and existence' (qt. in Heehs 96). This would be achieved by 'bringing in' a new power of consciousness which he defined as 'the Supramental'. To attain this power and to make it 'active directly in earth-nature' he spent more than four decades 'hewing out a road' in uncharted regions. It was with this in mind that he declared: 'Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure' (Aurobindo, *On Himself* 109). K.N.Panikkar observes that in Colonial India 'there was a shift of emphasis from otherworldliness and supernaturalism to the problems of worldly existence in religious thought'. Panikkar further contends:

The religious protest and reform movements during the pre-colonial period – beginning with Buddhism and going on to the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century— were invariably concerned with the ways and means of

salvation. In contrast religious reform in colonial India was almost indifferent to this earlier preoccupation. More important, even those who assigned a dominant role to religion, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda, were not indifferent to the needs of material existence over religious demands (Panikkar 66).

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual practice too belonged to this tradition and it defined spirituality in terms of the improvement and upliftment of the material existence.

Whatever may be the political implications of Aurobindo's spiritual exercises, his yogic vision of life has indeed cast an indelible impression upon his creative and critical negotiations with literature. Aurobindo may be accepted as the first Indian critic to venture to incorporate Shakespeare works in an interpretative framework, a critical paradigm constructed on the basis of a mystical perception and psycho-spiritual formulation which can be regarded as essentially Indian. Sri Aurobindo, himself a poet of rare genius, endowed with an extraordinarily profound vision reacted against the cool, detached, dispassionate language of analytical and investigative critical exercises that distinguish the western tradition and cast his critical explorations in a rhapsodic language that exudes poetic appeal. Analytical reason, the much vaunted legacy of the Enlightenment, an ignis fatuus in the mind, shutting its eyes to the "light of Nature", pursues specialist paths with the assistance of artificial lights and fails tragically in the lofty effort to attain to the highest truth. The oriental attitude to the subject has been essentially different: "In neither India, nor China" writes William Barret in his *Irrational Man* "nor in the philosophies that these civilizations produced, was truth located in the intellect. On the contrary the Indian and Chinese sages insisted on the very opposite, namely, that man does not attain to truth so long as he remains locked up in his intellect". As Sri Aurobindo has said succinctly: "Reason was the helper, Reason is the bar". While not rejecting reason it is still necessary to surpass it if we wish to see ourselves in relation to Being. Tapan Raychaudhuri in his essay *The Pursuit of Reason in 19<sup>th</sup> Bengal* has traced the outburst of passionate religiosity in 19<sup>th</sup> Bengal to a shift emphasis from reason to emotion in the socio-political culture. "The accumulated frustrations and humiliations of the colonial experience were no doubt one major factor behind the new emotionalism. Rational discourse was an inadequate incentive for the patriotic fervor. Aurobindo too, it can be reasonably assumed was aware of the dichotomy of Western Reason and Indian emotionalism and for him spiritual resistance to the Western rationality became a political stance.

Since for Aurobindo "all life is yoga", the critical pursuit too was envisaged in terms of a spiritual voyage into the heart of transcendental truth, the achievement of which elevates human life to a supra-mundane level. Aurobindo protested against the scientifically-oriented critical methodology which was in vogue then. Aurobindo denounced such critical endeavours that under the influence of psychoanalytic researches ventured to trace the genesis of the work of art back to the complex chemistry of human body and psyche as reductive. In a sonnet composed on Shakespearean model "A dream of Surreal Science", he ridicules the scientific vagary that all poetry on spirituality or conquering dynamism of Man the dreamer and the doer is merely a matter of body's chemistry:

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink  
At the mermaid, capture immortality  
A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink  
Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Instead of subscribing to such critical ingenuity Aurobindo firmly clung to his belief that the original impetus of any great creation comes from within, a mystery inscrutable that does not yield to rational comprehension. In Aurobindo's creative response to poetic creations of Shakespeare the focus is consistently kept on the interiority, inwardness of poetic experience and conception. While the execution and embodiment of the elusive but certainly not insubstantial poetic vision conceived by the poet, requires the participation of the outer mind and other external instruments, the inspiration remains invariably internal. Such a critical perception is in fact a deconstruction or a subtle undermining of the very conception of criticism as a rational activity dedicated to the disinterested, objective unfolding of the essence of literary creations, a deliberate blurring of the artificial boundary drawn between creative and critical functions. Aurobindo's critical explorations by acknowledging its inability to penetrate into the ultimate mystery of poetic creation implicitly proposes a combination of the creative and critical approaches to the literary artifact.

While elaborating on this conception of "overhead poetry" Aurobindo warns against a superficially analytical reading of such productions that manages to capture only the surface mental meaning. In spite of granting that technical perfection (flawlessness) often affords aesthetic pleasure, Aurobindo maintains that "over mind touch" does not consist in technical elements/aspects, but "in the undertones and overtones of the rhythmic cry and a language which carries in it a great depth or height or width of spiritual vision, feeling or experience. But all that has to be felt, not analyzable". Aurobindo draws upon Hamlet's soliloquy to point out the inadequacies of the conventional critical intellect in encountering effectively the "overheard poetry":

"The mere critical intellect not touched by a rarer sight can do little here. What might be called the Johnsonian critical method has obviously little or no place in this field- the method which expects a precise logical order in thoughts and language and pecks at all that departs from a matter of fact or a strict and rational ideative coherence of a sober and restrained classical taste...But also this method is useless in dealing with any kind of romantic poetry. What would the Johnsonian critic say to Shakespeare's famous lines,

Or take up arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them?

He would say, "What a mixture of metaphors and jumble of ideas! Only a lunatic could take up arms against the sea!... Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing! He the mixture as well as any critic could and he accepted it because it brought home, with an inspired force which a neater language could not have had, the exact feeling and the idea that he wanted to bring out."

What is important to note is that while drawing his readers' attention to the limitations of a Johnsonian critic who is governed by his logical expectations and presuppositions in confronting the baffling reality of the literary text, Aurobindo engages in subverting the idea of criticism as a detached, rational, objective activity capable of translating the magic of poetic vision into terms of intelligible everyday reality. Aurobindo thus attempts to establish and buttress through his critical activities a conception of art as an autonomous and independent exercise and by rendering criticism it creative, implicitly advancing the theory that no essential difference exists between creation and criticism. However preposterous the assumption that criticism is an auto telic activity may not seem to the T.S. Eliot of *The Functions of Criticism*, "Aurobindo can find a sympathetic defender of his view in Gilbert, the speaker in Oscar Wilde's dialogue "The critic as Artist", who affirms "Criticism is in fact both creative and independent...The critic occupies the same

relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour or the unseen world of passion and of thought". This view is antithetical to the view of criticism as complementary to creative writing, aiming at objectivity, striving to "see the object as it really is" as Matthew Arnold urged, on discovering its hidden meaning by what Eliot disapprovingly called interpretation. Criticism Wilde's Gilbert contents, is in its essence purely subjective, and seeks to reveal its own secret and not the secret of another ". Aurobindo almost echoes the idea when he asserts "all criticism of poetry is bound to have a strong subjective element in it...all is relative here, Art and Beauty also, and our view of things and appreciation of them depends on the conscious which views and appreciates".

Aurobindo's subjective reception of Shakespeare becomes pretty evident if one considers well the way he has elaborated Shakespeare's insistence on internal action with reference to the ancient Indian distinction between several strata and levels of Universal Being and by bringing in the two names used by the Rishis for the objective and subjective aspect of this Being: Virat and Hiranyagarbha. As Aurobindo judges it, Shakespeare's is "not a drama of mere externalized action, for it lives from within and more deeply than our external life. This is not Virat, the seer and the creator of gross forms, but Hiranyagarbha, the luminous mind of dreams, looking through those form to see his own images behind them". Then Aurobindo mentions the Vedic sage Viswamitra whom Indian tradition credits with creating a new heaven and earth in his sacred wrath against the curbs imposed by God Indra. Sri Aurobindo continues: "More than any other poet Shakespeare has accomplished mentally the legendary feat of the impetuous sage Viswamitra", his power of vision has created a Shakespearean world of its own, and it is, in spite of its realistic elements, a romantic world in the very true sense of the word, a world of the wonder and free power of life and not its mere external realities, where what is here dulled and hampered finds a greater enlarged and intense breath of living, an ultra-natural play of beauty, curiosity and amplitude. Objections may be raised by fastidious critics obsessively preoccupied with the idea of criticism subordinate, complementary to creation, that such an association of Shakespeare with Viswamitra is misleading since the English bard is lacking in that very spirituality which distinguishes the Vedic sage. But what Aurobindo accomplishes here is a dismantling of the traditional conception of criticism as an intellectual exercise devoted to the revelation of the one and only meaning inherent in the text and will therefore definitely secure the approbation of critics like Roland Barthes. Barthes suggested in a pregnant little essay entitled "Criticism as language" published in 1963 that;

The taste of criticism does not consist in "discovering" the work of the author under consideration something "hidden" or "profound" or "secret" which has so far escaped notice...but only in fitting together the language of the day and the language of the author...if there is such a thing as critical proof it lies in the in the ability to discover the work under consideration but on the contrary to cover it as completely with one's own language'. Aurobindo, as a critic of Shakespeare indeed prove his commendable competence in covering the work of Shakespeare as completely as possible with the language of the spiritual philosophy that he propounded and promulgated.

While Sri Aurobindo's encounter with Shakespeare's canon allowed ample space for the play of creative imagination and subjective evaluation, the academic criticism of Shakespeare that flourished in Bengal under the influence of the critical model widely prevalent in the Anglo American universities, embraced the methodology and assumptions of scientific knowledge and aimed at describing and interpreting the works rather than passing any value judgment on them. Literary criticism in the 20th c cannot be divorced from the history of the professionalization of literary study and this becomes apparent once literature is established as an academic study within an institution whose

dominant paradigms of knowledge and research are increasingly derived from the hard sciences. The 20<sup>th</sup> c criticism inherits the idea of a specifically aesthetic form of knowledge from Romantic aesthetics with the concomitant idea of literary language expressive of the unrepresentable and of the reading of literature as a kind of communion with such transcendental truths. But this could hardly serve as a sufficient justification for the professional academic study of literature, nor could it make available pedagogic tools or methodologies for the acquisition of such knowledge. Professionalization required clear methodological tools, yet arguments for the importance of the literary criticism to the public sphere had not often rested on a defence of analytically irreducible nature of literary language.

Professionalization was itself a process which had been shaped in the 19<sup>th</sup> c along scientific lines and already involved specialization and the rise of the expert. As the Victorian sage, or the “man of letters”, was gradually displaced by the professional critic, there was a growing recognition that criticism must become a more systematic form of knowledge. Terry Eagleton has perceptively analyzed this movement from what he defines as the amateurish outlook of the “man of letters” to the more systematic approach that distinguishes the professional critics: “...founding of English as a university “discipline” also entailed a professionalization of literary studies which was quite alien to the sage’s “amateur” outlook and more resolutely specialist than the man of letters could afford to be. The academicization of criticism provided it with an institutional basis and professional structure, but by the same token it signaled its final sequestration from the public realm”.

Taraknath Sen’s “Hamlet’s treatment of Ophelia in the Nunnery Scene”, an essay contributed to *Modern Language Review*(1940) embodies the salient features of the distinctive form of Shakespeare criticism assumed in the hands of the academic critics, who reckoned it as their primary responsibility to ‘teach’ or to help the students and readers understand the subtle nuances of Shakespeare’s creations, to dissociate the “correct interpretation” from what they discarded as several misunderstandings. The title of the essay immediately generates in the readers’ mind certain presuppositions and expectation that the essay does not frustrate. The sole objective of such an essay can be a decipherment or decoding of the meaning that the critic assumes to be inherent in the work itself. The essay begins with reference to some other critical works by Helen Gardener and Dover Wilson devoted to the interpretation of the same scene and these references serve to establish a framework, to draw a boundary, within which the essay is going to operate. Allusions to these critical authorities effectively suggest the domain of academic literary studies to which the essay belongs. What ensues is the conflict of Interpretations but this is absolutely a domestic bickering conducted within the precincts of institution. The critic then proceeds to situate the nunnery scene in the specific context of the play and briefly summarizes what has gone before. This is suggestive of one of the cardinal assumptions upon which such critical enterprises are founded—the Unity and coherence of the literary artifact, the conviction that a scene can never be understood in isolation from rest of the play. Thus a short description of Hamlet’s innate nature, Shakespeare’s portrayal of his character, motivations and inhibitions, the role assigned to him is offered to facilitate the proper understanding of the scene. What strikes us is how coherently the arguments are arranged and how step by step the critic advances towards the crux of the matter. Prof Sen never lets himself forget the invisible yet inviolable rules of critical discourse that dictate and determine his response to the text. To elucidate the soul-torment that Hamlet suffers resorts to a comparison with Prospero who enmeshed in somewhat analogous situation, is able to accept life with all its contradictions that Hamlet due to his incorrigible pessimism aggravated by his world-weariness cannot resign himself to. Such a method of comparison with other works of literature, either by the same or some other author significantly serves to consolidate the notion of the autonomy of the literary studies.

For this generation of academic critics this pivotal assumption of literary studies as an autonomous discipline proved immensely important. Perhaps it lent them a sense of security, and stability in an otherwise topsy-turvy world. The essay under study progresses smoothly by narrating or retelling what happens in the scene; providing simultaneously a running commentary on almost every significant move, gesture and utterance of the characters, purporting to clear the confusions that might flummox the readers and to clarify the ambiguities. The closing section of the essay is devoted to the refutation of some interpretations and conjectures put forward by Dover Wilson and significantly the discussion here revolves around the precise connotations of some word like the “fish monger” or speculations about whether Polonius overheard Hamlet’s conversations with Ophelia or not. The main function of such criticism is obviously elucidatory and illuminative, and not at all evaluative. Such a severance of criticism from evaluative judgment is distinctive of this kind of academic criticism.

When English was established in British universities, criticism played at best a minor part in it. There was a “critical paper” in the Oxford degree but the emphasis was substantially on the scholarship of a tough traditional kind, without much concession to Arnoldian free-play of mind. Helen Gardener, for many years an Oxford luminary, did not believe that the purpose of ‘English’ was to turn out critics, any more than it was to produce poets and novelists. The graduate in English was to be to some extent a scholar, in so far as he or she had a sense of the past and the capacity to understand literature in its historical contexts, particularly linguistic; beyond that, what was looked for was wide reading, an appreciation of masterpieces and a capacity to write well, attend to evidence, and disentangle sense from non-sense in argument. Gardener produced a book entitled *The Business of Criticism* in which she presented her concept of criticism as elucidatory and illuminating rather than evaluative. Her assumptions are broadly Crocean. Value appeared in the individual’s response to the particular work, but should not be erected into hierarchies and the reader should cultivate the receptiveness and disinterestedness which are conditions of aesthetic experience. Gardener was right to think that there was no place for evaluative criticism in the academy for the ‘criticism’ that is copiously produced and read in literature departments eschews and elaborate interpretations that nevertheless remain fundamentally descriptive.

Utpal Dutta’s Shakespearean-exegesis entitled “Shakespearean Samaj Chetona” was published in the politically turbulent 1970s. It was evidently intended to be a radical riposte to the traditional criticism of Shakespeare which eulogizing Shakespeare as the privileged resident of the arcadia of art has invested in his creations with a transcendental glory and timeless significance, cryptically keeping mum about the social reality that manifests itself directly or indirectly in his works and their political implications. Dutta does not spare even the orthodox Marxist who succumbs to the temptation of projecting Shakespeare as the mouthpiece of the progressive bourgeois, on the assumption that Renaissance humanism which Shakespeare incarnated and endorsed was the cultural representation of the progressive character of the bourgeois ideology. By citing Wyndham Lewis’ observation with approbation “Far from being a feudal poet, the Shakespeare that Troilus and Cressida, The Tempest, or even Coriolanus shows us is much more Bolshevik (using this little word popularly) than a figure of conservative romance”, Dutta proceeds to show that Shakespeare far from advocating and disseminating the values of the elite section of contemporary English society, actually articulated anti-bourgeois sentiments and sympathetic feelings for the underdogs. At the very outset, Dutta constructs a theoretical framework and then sets out to incorporate Shakespeare within that structure. Therefore what dominates Dutta’s response to Shakespeare is his allegiance to a particular political ideology, and it has remained his persistent effort to substantiate his argument by adequate reference to Shakespearean texts. Shakespeare’s texts have

been used to justify vigorously the theory that Dutta espouses and in defending his critical position, Dutta bases his reading upon certain assumption which prove that in spite of his professed revolution against the traditional critical standards he adhered unwittingly to the ideology that underpins it.

He emphatically asserts that if an idea keeps on recurring in many plays, in different forms, it can be reasonably taken as Shakespeare's own. Dutta also argues that there are some characters scattered through the plays that enjoy the author's approval and support and whatever sentiment or view these author-backed characters voice is to be assumed as Shakespeare's own. Another naïve assumption that Dutta makes, in order to support the theory he advances is that the villains with the sentiments and values they embody are blatantly denounced by Shakespeare and thus the acquisitive tendency, commercial ethic, and other bourgeois vices that characters like Iago and Edmund represent, arouse the righteous indignation of the playwright. Dutta therefore seems to subscribe still to the conventional world view governed by the rigid distinction between good and evil instead of addressing to the ambivalence of such binary oppositions that Shakespeare dramatizes in plays like *Macbeth*. Dutta's ardent enthusiasm, fervent eagerness to prove the theory he espouses seems to have induced him to cast an indifferent eye at the subtle nuances of Shakespearean creations simplify the thematic and formal complexities in terms of a political vision and an overreaching moral pattern which the critic supposes to be invisibly present in all the plays. What is evident from Dutta's handling of Shakespeare is that he has not been able to purge his critical perspective of the illusion of the sovereignty and autonomy of the authorial subject that the bourgeois aesthetic ideology struggles to perpetuate. In spite of his avowed commitment to the radical aesthetic of Marxism, Dutta in his critical perception has not been able to get rid of the habit of tracing whatever happens in a text to the authorial intention and labors to establish the meaning that he himself has manufactured according to his ideological affiliations as the one that the author wanted to communicate.

Dutta implicitly claims to have grasped the social meaning and significance of Shakespearean texts by locating them in the political history of the time and does not realize the fact that even the history that he uses as a point of reference is a discourse which comes into existence under various social, cultural, political, institutional pressures and influences what Dutta must have implicitly assumed is that a literary artifact has an objective meaning and only the meta narrative of Marxism constructed on the model of scientific knowledge has an access to it. From a hermeneutic point of view such claim to objectivity is absurd and untenable, since there can neither be a truth without a method, nor knowledge without a knower.

To sum up, of the three critics discussed here the first and last did not belong to the Academy, while the middle one was University professor by profession and this difference in their positions in relation to the academy naturally imprinted itself on their critical attitude to the study of Shakespeare. Aurobindo and Utpal Dutta had their own agendas, one spiritual another political and these naturally moulded their responses to Shakespeare and both of them tried in their own way, in various degrees to use Shakespeare to substantiate an already formulated theory they came equipped with. But critic who belonged to the academy has his own agenda too. Inspired by an obviously didactic intention and pedagogic responsibility the academic critics insisted on maintaining the purity and autonomy of the domain of literary studies and labored to perpetuate the myth of criticism as a disinterested, objective pursuit of literary meaning. In spite of flaunting in flamboyant terms the intimate rapport that exists between life and literature, in their critical practice they have consistently restricted themselves to the exploration of problems specific to literature. Academic criticism may pretend, may even deceive itself, that its relation to a creative work is purely complementary.



But it also has its hidden agenda: the demonstration of a professional skill, the refutation of competing peers, and the claim to be making an addition to knowledge. Study of Shakespeare thus becomes not at all a disinterested excavation into the depth of the dramatist's marvelous creations for the exhuming of the secret meaning residing there, but rather a manifestation of the critics' ideological preferences and what may be defined as his world view, a definite way of perceiving life and literature- for as "the eye so the vision".

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