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## Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis

Abonnement 550 F Abonnement  
Ce numéro 180 F Dit deel  
Années antérieures 800 F Vorige jaargangen.

Uitgegeven met de steun van de Universitaire Stichting en het Ministerie van Nationale Opvoeding

## Shakespeareana II

[note bibliographique]

 W. Schrickx

[Revue belge de Philologie et d'Histoire](#) Année 1971 49-3 pp. 912-918

Fait partie d'un numéro thématique : [Langues et littératures modernes - Moderne taal- en letterkunde](#)

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**Texte intégral**

In an article (\*) where a number of publications concerning Shakespeare and his age are reviewed, pride of place should be given to the two issues of Shakespeare Survey for the years 1969 and 1970. The two volumes edited by Kenneth Muir (2) include the usual items concerned with the year's contributions to Shakespearean study and with recent outstanding productions of the plays. The volume for 1969, subtitled on the dust jacket "Aspects of Shakespearian Comedy", opens with an article on "Old and New Comedy" by Northrop Frye, whose ideas on the distinctions between these two types of drama are typical of the encyclopaedic and holistic approach which makes the other works of this critic often so difficult to read, but here in this article, happily, he is more urbane. Its conclusion that "Whatever its conventions, the dramatic genus of Old Comedy is the one now established on our stage, and as we enter the age of anarchism it is likely to remain there", adds one more frightening item to the prospects for the future ahead of us. It is of course impossible to discuss the remaining thirteen articles in detail, suffice it to say that Michel Grivelet on Molière and the Comedy of Ambiguity, Robert Weimann on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the Popular Tradition of Comedy (the latter subject is one on which Weimann has written authoritatively in German), Robert Ornstein on Shakespearean and Jonsonian Comedy and Harry Levin on *The Tempest* and the Alchemist as "magian comedies" have contributed articles which seem to me the most important and illuminating ones. An article which adds considerably to our knowledge of English artists at the court of Frederick II is that by Gunnar Sjögren, "Thomas Bull and other English Instrumentalists in Denmark in the 1580s".

The Shakespeare Survey for 1970 is concerned with Shakespeare's language. Of the seven articles dealing with this theme that of Vivian Salmon on some functions of Shakespearean word-formation breaks new ground in its application of the now somewhat hackneyed criteria of deep and surface structure. When she writes that the relationship between character and language is too large a topic to discuss in any detail a reference to Lotte Ehrl's *Sprachstil und Charakter bei Shakespeare* (1957) would have enlightened the reader. The article by G. V. Smithers on the uses of the suffix -ed in Shakespeare's English further shows how much remains to be done in the field of Shakespeare lexicography.

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Kenneth Hudson in "Shakespeare's Use of Colloquial Language", with its allusion to the tendency among scholars to interpret evidence in a way that meets a personal need, is a timely reminder for those who, like Lise Contour- Marsan in a work presently to be reviewed, still toy with the idea of a *mystère Shakespearien*. Hudson's contribution makes interesting use of Elizabethan contemporary sources other than literary in his illustration of how Shakespeare transformed colloquial language into something different

and unforgettable. As always, Shakespeare, though yet an Elizabethan of the purest water, is different. Though the remaining articles of Shakespeare Survey 23 are by no means lacking in interest (M. Grivelet on Shakespeare's war with time in the sonnets and Richard II, E. M. Wilson on Shakespeare and Christian doctrine, K. Muir on Shakespeare's poets, and R. A. Foakes on the text of Coleridge's Shakespeare lectures), I would like to refer more in particular to Harold Fisch's article on « Antony and Cleopatra : The Limits of Mythology », because it draws attention once more to the much neglected subject of Shakespeare's mythology. No scholar has as yet harnessed himself to the task of examining the impact of Renaissance mythographers on Shakespeare and it is high time that an expert — preferably a classical scholar — took this subject in hand. A further interesting feature of this issue of Shakespeare Survey is a review article by W. Habicht and H. W. Gabler on "Shakespeare Studies in German : 1959-68".

Sir James Fergusson's *The Man Behind Macbeth and Other Studies* (x) is a collection of articles of which "The Man Behind Macbeth" develops the well-known theme that Macbeth was a kind of dynastic play used by Shakespeare to ingratiate himself with the new monarch James I, but the claim advanced by Fergusson that we come nearer to appreciating the characters of Macbeth by conceiving Macbeth as a blend of two Earls of Bothwell in his treason and by seeing Lady Macbeth as recalling Mary, Queen of Scots, in charm, ambition and duplicity, is not very convincing in view of the fact that so many characters from other Jacobean plays such as those by Webster and Ford contain examples of similar character-drawing. The opening article of *The Man Behind Macbeth* is on much safer ground because it deals with "The English Comedians in Scotland" on the basis of entries in state papers and extracts from council registers.

There are two further studies concerned with individual plays, Philip J. Traci on Antony and Cleopatra (2) and Lise Contour-Marsan on Hamlet and *The Taming of the Shrew* (3). After ten pages in which we are provided with a re-

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view article of critical pronouncements on Antony and Cleopatra, after which we would have expected Philip J. Traci to have got into his stride, we are offered more samplings from the critics when Traci studies the character-drawing, the imagery — consisting mostly of images of the world, the firmament, the ocean and vastness generally (Caroline Spurgeon) — and the nature of love as a dramatized and a structural theme. To proceed by extensive sampling from criticisms is obvious evidence of the author's wide reading, though not necessarily of the author's originality. It is chapter IV, devoted to "The Nature of Love as a Dramatized Theme in the Play", that seems to me the most rewarding. Lise Contour-Marsan's book consists of three main parts : an initial chapter, on "Shakespeare cet inconnu", expatiates on the theory favoured by the French that Shakespeare is one of those who do not abide our (biographical) questioning and it is no matter for surprise to

find Georges Connes's *Le Mystère Shakespearien* (1928) praised as "un excellent exposé, impartial et juste". Chapter II is concerned with *The Taming of the Shrew* while the third and largest part of her study consists of six chapters on *Hamlet* in which the main critical approaches to *Hamlet*, the prince and the play, are reviewed. For English readers the most interesting chapter of this book will no doubt be the eighth with its discussion of "La descendance de *Hamlet*". This study of *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, though written with enthusiasm, has not been produced with sufficient care. The number of misprints is far too high and the number of inaccuracies is larger than one would expect. On page 212, for example, we learn that in 1602, *Hamlet* was suppressed by censorship and that the original edition of *Hamlet* appeared in 1604; of the Folio, L. Contour-Marsan tells us, only 240 copies have survived. Such statements do not inspire confidence in the author's scholarship.

Maurice Charney's study of *Style in Hamlet* (x) is so different in scope and depth of interpretation from Contour-Marsan's *Étude et analyse of Hamlet* that it is a relief to turn to Charney's sensitive analysis of the dramatic character of Shakespeare's hero. The author has tried — to use his own words — "to track puns to their most secret hiding places, to revive significances in the language and in the staging that may have long since faded, and to indicate relationships and inner coherences that may not be immediately apparent to reader and spectator". The three sections of *Style in Hamlet* deal respectively with the symbolism and imagery of war and corruption, the theatrical aspects and, finally, dramatic character. Charney's study is a brilliant example of what one could call the application of the principle of close reading to literary texts and so no pains have been spared to relate every significant image in

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*Hamlet* to as many passages in the play as possible. It is for this reason that it would perhaps have been better if the author had called his study *Hamlet's Imagery and What it Tells Us* — to paraphrase a well-known title of a well-known book — rather than *Style in Hamlet* for the word "style", surprisingly enough, is not very often used in the body of Charney's text. I would like to make one last point in connexion with studies of *Hamlet* generally. I believe it is necessary to impress on the reader's mind that the revenge convention in Elizabethan times was such that the composition of a revenge play was governed by the biblical injunction "Revenge is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay": this means of course that the revenger was placed in the terrible predicament that he must waver between his own initiative and the intervention of God. The situation in which the central hero finds himself may indeed be said to creatively inform the play. It is the great merit of such publications as Fredson Bowers' *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (1940) to have shown that God's vengeance was something that the revenger was compelled to wait for and this is why, for example, as Professor Bowers has argued, two months have to elapse between the first and the second act of *Hamlet*, in order to leave time for God to

interfere during Hamlet's delay. Of course, I do not want to suggest that Professor Charney does not know the publications of Fredson Bowers, but I strongly believe that no adequate discussion of Hamlet is possible without bearing the above-quoted biblical injunction in mind. One reason why this governing principle of revenge tragedies is so often left out of the picture is that the two most influential studies before Bowers' Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy and his article on "Hamlet as Scourge and Minister" in *PM-LA*, LXX (1955), I mean of course A. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1905) and J. D. Wilson's *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935), have also practically ignored it. And so a reader looking up the entry "revenge conventions" in Charney's index does [not get the required information when he looks up the pages referred to. In fact, early on in his book (p. 10), Charney has missed an adequate opportunity for dealing with the revenge conventions when he discusses the lines in which Hamlet expresses his desire to

... drink hot blood

And do such business as the bitter day

Would quake to look on.

(III, 2, 398-400)

and refers to the fact that the "bitter day" may be Doomsday. It is in such contexts that the biblical injunction becomes again significant and that one would expect scholars to refer to the revenge convention in detail. But I have dwelt too long on something that others may think is so obvious that it hardly needs saying. Let me therefore end this review of Charney's book by praising the lucidity and fascination of his argument which both readers and producers will read with profit and pleasure.

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*Shakespeare and the Students* by D. J. Enright (x) has arisen out of teaching the four plays, *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale* and so it is these plays which the author has decided to discuss in a book. Enright has consciously abstained from "the natural desire to say something new, to produce an effect", and Johnson, as Enright reminds us, spoke about those who, "being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox", and so *Shakespeare and the Students* turns out to be the kind of study one can reasonably expect from an intelligent teacher of literature. But the general impression the whole of the book makes is of landscapes traversed long ago and vistas déjà vus. The method used is the obvious one of giving a scene by scene description and analysis so that any teacher can easily look up those passages about which he finds himself unable to say something illuminating. The book being designed for students, it is regrettable that so few references are made to scholarly literature.

The aim of C. J. Carlisle's long and painstaking study *Shakespeare from the Greenroom* (3) is "to present a coherent and useful account of the best Shakespearean criticisms by

English and American actors, past and present". The author had of course to be selective and so the obvious thing to do was to concentrate on the four major tragedies, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth plays which owe their status not only to Shakespeare's stagecraft, but also to Andrew Bradley who once and for all established the supremacy of these plays in his *Shakespearean Tragedy*. In a long introduction C. L. Carlisle has given a sensible account of the principles guiding exclusion and inclusion in her book. Scholars have often been far from generous to men of the theatre and they have often questioned the actor's critical judgment in his interpretation of the plays. In many respects, however, the actor has the advantage over the scholar because the production of a play with its frequent rehearsals by an actor is something totally different from the reading of a play by a scholar who is patiently pondering the significance of certain lines. It is Carlisle's contention, however, that the critical views held by actors are worthy of serious attention. In fact, actors may be said to test the stage-effectiveness of a play in its natural context so that they help the literary critics to avoid certain pitfalls. C. L. Carlisle has further provided us in her introduction with an interesting sampling from the most characteristic of the actors' general criticisms of Shakespeare and the actors' names which figure most prominently here are Harley Granville-Barker, Henry Irving, William Poel, W. M. Macready, John Gielgud, Helen Faucit, David Belasco and Margaret Webster.

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It is difficult to do justice to the wealth of illustrative criticism and the abundance of illuminating remarks contained in the pages of Carlisle's book. In her treatment of Hamlet, for example, she discusses such items as plot, theatrical effectiveness, criticisms of language, interpretations of meaning, the characters, Hamlet, etc., and "from criticism to theatre". Add to this that her book includes a thirty-page appendix with "Biographical Sketches of the Actor-Critics" and an exhaustive index where every character and actor will be found listed, and it will be realized that Shakespeare from the Greenroom is a treasure-trove for readers and critics of Shakespeare and also, and most characteristically so, for producers of Shakespeare and for actors whose ambition it may some day be to shine in Shakespeare roles.

The last book to be reviewed here is Martin Bircher and Heinrich Strammann's bibliographie raisonn e of Shakespeare and German-speaking Switzerland until the beginning of the nineteenth century (\*). Of all the works discussed here — with the exception of Carlisle's book — it is certainly the most thoroughly documented and detailed and I have therefore thought it useful to discuss it in greater detail. The book is divided into three sections: first an introductory section in which the reader gets all the bibliographical information he needs to study the dissemination of Shakespeare on the continent and in Switzerland in particular. Then follows the second and very important section, which is an alphabetically arranged discussion of all those Swiss writers and critics whose works contain references to Shakespeare or whose connexions are

Shakespearean in some way or other. The space allotted to each writer is of course determined by the significance of his influence and the critical value of his pronouncements. Thus the writers who have been accorded about ten pages of space are Jakob Heinrich Meister and Johann Georg Sulzer. Of each Swiss writer we get a succinct biography, an evaluation of his significance as a student of Shakespeare and a judicious selection from his pronouncements. This is followed by a critical selection from the secondary material on the author discussed. Thus Bircher and Straumann have added an invaluable instrument to the study of Shakespeare in his relation to Swiss culture. The Swiss scholar who did most to stimulate interest in Shakespeare was Johann Jakob Bodmer whose own voluminous dramatic output was heavily indebted to Shakespeare and he therefore gets twenty pages in this bibliographie raisonnée. It is well known that Bodmer often wrote Shakespeare's name as "Sasper" or "Saspar", relative to which it is well to be reminded that the reasons for Bodmer's "Verballhornung" must remain unknown, unless it be that he wanted to acclimatize the name in this fashion in the German-speaking world. Bodmer is also the author of *Marc Anton und Kleopatra* *Verliebung*, a play now

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lost, of which about two pages (reprinted here) have been preserved in one of Bodmer's letters. Of bibliographical interest is further the fact that he possessed a copy of the First Quarto (1611) of *Pericles*. The third section, then, is a survey of the Shakespeare harvest yielded by Swiss periodicals. The whole book is, however, introduced by an extremely able and interesting "Einleitung" by Professor Heinrich Straumann in which the salient features of Swiss interest in Shakespeare are dealt with. In fact, a Swiss traveller from Basel, Thomas Platter, was the only foreigner who was to refer to a performance of a Shakespeare play during the dramatist's lifetime. On 21 September 1599 Platter saw a performance of *Julius Caesar*, probably the première of Shakespeare's play. A later visitor, Johann Rudolf Hess, was to bring home from his stay in London in 1614 a few early Shakespeare Quartos which are now preserved in the Zentralbibliothek of Zürich. It seems a pity that Bircher and Straumann have not thought it necessary to tell us more about these quartos or even about the list of plays they mention on p. 118. Such is the compactness of this bibliographie raisonnée that the authors could easily have increased the number of its pages without becoming repetitive or tiresome. My criticism must therefore be directed to a few minor points.

In connexion with the anonymous translation — or rather adaptation — *The Taming of the Shrew* (Rapperschweyl, 1672, perhaps printed in Hamburg) mentioned on p. 42, attention may be drawn to the existence of a similar adaptation in Dutch dating from 1654 and compiled by Abraham Sybant, an actor who at one time belonged to a touring company of English comedians under John Payne. This adaptation was called *De Dolle*

Bruiloft. An interesting reference unearthed by Bircher and Straumann from L. A. Burckhardt's *Geschichte der dramatischen Kunst zu Basel* (1839), is that to Joris Jolifus. This is an entry neglected by most recent investigators of the wandering actors. It deserves mention, however, that we have to do here with George Jolly, about whom see H.R. Hoppe in *The Review of English Studies*, N.S., V (1954), 265-268.

In a very different respect Bircher and Straumann, in their desire for compactness, have felt the necessity of communicating the minimum of information. The Swiss rightly take pride in Henry Fuseli, the "Shakespeare of the painters", as an artist whose genius was to come to full growth in England. Though the bibliography is of necessity very limited, a brief reference to F. Antal's *Fuseli Studies* (1956) and W. M. Merchant's *Shakespeare and the Artist* (1959) might have been in place. *Shakespeare und die deutsche Schweiz* was obviously written with an international readership in view and this is why certain phrases, such as for example *die innere Schweiz*, which must be immediately clear to Swiss readers, should perhaps have been explained.

Bircher and Straumann have compiled an extremely useful bibliography and their work deserves the highest praise, not in the least because its authors provide numerous hints for further study and because they draw attention to many letters in manuscript sources which have never been put to scholarly use before.

W. Schrickx.

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## Notes

1.

(1) For "Shakespeareana I" see *Revue belge de phil. et d'hist.*, XLI (1968), 796-800.

(2) Kenneth Muir (editor), *Shakespeare Survey* 22. Cambridge University Press, 1969 ; 1 vol. in-8°, ix- 193 pp. Price : £ 2.50. *Shakespeare Survey* 23. Cambridge University Press, 1970 ; 1 vol. in-8°, viii-192 pp. Price : £ 3.

2.

(1) J. Fergusson, *The Man Behind Macbeth and Other Studies*, London, Faber and Faber, 1969 ; 1 vol. in-8°, 187 pp. Price : 45 s.

(2) Philip J. Traci, *The Love Play of Antony and Cleopatra. A Critical Study of Shakespeare's Play*. The Hague-Paris, Mouton, 1970 ; 1 vol. in-8°, 171 pp. Price : 28 Dutch guilders.

(3) Lise Contour-Marsan, *Hamlet. La Mégère Apprivoisée de Shakespeare. Étude et Ana-*

3.

*lyse*. Paris, Éditions de la Pensée Moderne, 1969 ; 1 vol. in-8°, 231 pp. (Collection Mellot-

tée). Price not stated.

(1) Maurice Gharney, *Style in Hamlet*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969 ; 1 vol. in-8°, xxn-333 pp. Price : \$ 9.00.

4.

(1) D. J. Enright, *Shakespeare and the Students*. London, Chatto and Windus, 1970, 1 vol. in-8°, 206 pp. Price : hardback 36 s., paperback 16 s.

(2) Carol Jones Carlisle, *Shakespeare from the Greenroom. Actors' Criticisms of Four Major Tragedies*. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1969. 1 vol. in-8° xrv-

493 pp. Price : \$ 12.50.

5.

(1) Martin Bircher and Heinrich Straumann, *Shakespeare und die deutsche Schweiz bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts. Eine Bibliographie raisonnée*. Berne and Munich, Francke Verlag, 1971 ; 1 vol. in-8°, 232 pp. Price : S.F. 53.

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