

also helps to realize how much in fact was written in Poland about the “Bard of Avon” within the space of those two decades. Despite rather humble beginnings (under the Communist regime Shakespeare was a subject of few scholarly works), the number of publications increased gradually (which is particularly noticeable in the last three sections of the book when a number of entries before and after 1990 are compared). *Polish Bibliography* is therefore not only a formal record of Shakespeare-related scholarship, it also becomes the evidence of his constantly growing presence in academic institutions as well as in Polish culture. Although it is mainly addressed to Shakespeare scholars and experts, it seems that the publication will be of use to everybody showing interest in life and works of one of the greatest poets and dramatists ever.

Works Cited

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Newstok, Scott. L., ed. *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*. West Lafayette (Indiana): Parlor Press, 2007. Pp lv + 308.

Reviewed by Sharmistha Chatterjee Sriwastav

Kenneth Burke is a well known name in the field of Shakespeare criticism – popularly recognized for his essay on *Othello* in 1951. However, not many readers know that this is but the tip an iceberg, that consists of many such illuminating contributions to Shakespeare criticism. Newstok has rendered an invaluable service by anthologizing in this edition, most of the rare and scarcely available essays written by Burke during his lifetime. In the editor’s “Introduction” which follows an elaborate acknowledgement, Scott makes his intentions clear. In it he states that the volume gathers and annotates all the published and unpublished Shakespeare criticism by the American scholar Kenneth Burke (1897-1993). The editor seeks to trace the qualities of Burkean dramaturgical investigation which had not only stirred the intellectuals but allured many persons outside academics basically by arousing the curiosity regarding “what makes a play *function*” (xvii). The “Introduction” is thus “less a

linear narrative” (xvii) than a collection of different perspectives on what exactly makes Burke’s Shakespeare meditation so (demandingly) rewarding. Newstok, in this way, aims at *placing* the critic Burke whose writings had resisted such placement in his lifetime.

In an absolutely novel manner, Newstok devises terms and phrases to discuss and categorize various aspects of Burke’s criticism. While the subsection “Dramatis Personae” discusses the open and inviting quality of Burke’s style (he often builds up his argument from basic questions like “Why does the play start this way?”), “Erudite Eructation” elaborates on how Burke’s speech could sometimes be eccentric – mistakenly labelled as formalist new criticism on occasions – but it nevertheless anticipates many contemporary approaches to interpretation. As an editor, Newstok highlights the scientific nature of Burke’s investigation which defies stereotyped academic classification. For example, Newstok points out that Burke recurrently uses the verb “build” (xviii) to indicate that a play or a poem has a deeper structural rationale for its development, rather than a superficial beauty which may attract the readers. He espouses Burke’s innovative technique of speaking in the voice of fictional characters, prompted by Burke imagining “what Burke might have said on behalf of Shakespeare” (Hartman 96 qtd. in Newstok xviii). Reading Burke becomes convenient for us because Newstok takes pains to enlist the crucial concepts elaborated by the critic, viz., “Titles,” “Aristotle,” “Entelechy,” “Prophecy after the Event” (xix).

Newstok also touches upon scholars like Frank Lentricchia who remains indebted to Burke’s thought. However, the editor also laments on the general apathy of academicians towards Burke. Newstok confesses that conventional explanation for “The Resistance to Kenneth Burke” reveals that Burke is “different upon first approach” (Wess 1315 qtd. in Newstok xxiv). The reasons furnished are Burke’s distracted musings, “neologistic impulses” (xxiv), and the inclination to devise new terms that frequently revise and replace previous ones. Burke also displays an ever-elusive attitude towards methodology by using “all that is there to use” (PLF 23 qtd. in Newstok xxiv). The other important reason which Newstok puts forward is the relative inaccessibility of Burke’s pieces on Shakespeare, most of which were published in “little reviews” (e.g. *The Dial*) and its descendents. The readers are informed that in spite of their relative inaccessibility, the essays are still in print and available in the multiple Burke volumes issued by University of California Press.

The “Introduction,” thus, becomes an attempt to trace the intrinsic qualities of Burke as a critic and reinforce the fact that Burke wrote for a general audience – he wanted others to join his ecstatic reading of Shakespeare and establish contact with the *heart* of Shakespearean plays. Burke, in fact, refused to remain circumscribed solely within academic circles.

The edition provides very useful endnotes with annotations at the end of each chapter, which in Newstok’s own words “are intended to help make the text more accessible, to students, scholars and general readers alike” (iii). Burke’s

own notes on the other hand are provided as footnotes with Roman numerals. Newstok does not make an impossible attempt at a “full” annotation for the figures whom Burke cites; he opts instead for a minimalist citation of full name, dates of birth and death, nationality and profession. The allusions have been traced with acknowledgements. Also, the extended annotations mention the acts, scenes and lines. For the sake of consistency Scott has converted Burke’s quotations to match with those found in the Norton Anthology of Shakespeare (1977) and amended the text where necessary. The edition again remains invaluable because Newstok has attempted to review as many extant versions of these essays, including (as he claims) typescripts, (as Burke’s copy of “Psychology and Form” submitted to *The Dial*) to avoid any mistakes or printing errors. The editor has also taken pains to list the abbreviations of the titles of Burke’s works which are to be found in Works Cited that follows editor’s introduction. Translations are similarly indicated.

Although Newstok has ordered the essays according to the sequence, it is interesting to discover the logic of choosing “Shakespeare was what” as the first essay despite its comparatively late composition (1964). This general lecture includes statements about the way of approaching Shakespeare and thus prepares the readers for the next thirteen essays. In progressing chronologically, Scott, in fact, is able to bring an order to the otherwise loosely scattered Burkean writings. In a significant way, he also shows his individualistic and iconoclastic approach because he is able to find a better alternative to Burke’s own suggestion which runs as follows: “a collection such as mine should ideally have a kind of loose-leaf arrangement whereby different examples could be presented, from year to year depending upon the changes of emphasis in the cultural marketplace” (PLF viii, qtd. in Newstok lii). Burke may have had good reasons for chronological inversions [eg. in *Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke’s piece on *Julius Caesar* (1935) immediately precedes that on *Twelfth Night* (1933)] but Newstok highlights the obvious benefits of reading these essays in order of publication.

Apart from the regular essays, Newstok has also included in the Appendix, additional references to Shakespeare in Burke’s writings, which is a fruit of painstaking research to glean all possible Shakespearean references from Burke’s non-Shakespearean writings. The entire range astounds us, who cannot but commend the selection which encompasses topics like “The Poetic Process” (1925), “Applications of the Terminology” (1931), “Perspective by Incongruity: William James, Whitman and Emerson” (1936) etc. Wherever possible, Newstok has provided the date of publication and the page numbers. One is even slightly amused at the modesty of Newstok who confesses that he may have “missed some along the way and was even misled by a red herring or two” (iii). But it is hugely rewarding to have at hand an edition which makes the readers’ work so easy and exposes them to the various shades and nuances of Burkean criticism.

For maintaining order and harmony, Newstok has introduced each essay along with its source and the occasion with the corresponding dates when it was originally written or delivered. For instance, Newstok mentions that Chapter 5 – “‘Socio-anagogic’ Interpretation of *Venus and Adonis*” was first published in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1950: 212-21). While the original Burkean essays are kept intact, the editor includes his own comments (in footnotes) perhaps a passage which Burke had deliberately omitted on the occasion (as on p. 8, footnote vi).

For a reader who attempts to acquaint himself with the fundamentals of Burke’s Shakespeare criticism, the essays touch upon almost all the popular and important works of Shakespeare. In each of them, Burke carefully builds up his argument, prepares us to perceive this argument from a particular point of view and most importantly, summarizes each chapter for the easy comprehension of debutants.

In the Introductory Chapter: “Shakespeare was what?”, Burke argues that Shakespeare’s works are thoroughly literary in intention and as a part of it, the sonnets have been developed as a rule of “highly complicated stylistic game” (4). Burke also argues:

on the other hand, Shakespeare’s plays do reveal a kind of imagination ultimately impinging upon modes of self-involvement that as you prefer, could be called either suicidal or narcissistic. Such traits come to fruition, I feel in plays as different as *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Timon of Athens*.¹

Burke exposes the essential worldlywise ways of Shakespeare as a playwright, making him a perfect representative of the great liberal empire which England evolved into with the rise of capitalism. He believes that Shakespeare shows remarkable dexterity in making his plays seemingly unfold themselves like destiny although they have been constructed with careful technical expertise. Thus Burke hints at the fact the Shakespeare’s works catered to the contemporary socio-cultural setup.

In Chapter 1, “Psychology and Form [*Hamlet*]” (21-32), Burke distinguishes between “psychology of form” and “psychology of information.” He emphasizes that psychology of form shapes the future of the audience’s desire. In this context he provides the example of Antony’s speech: “the value lies in the fact that his words are shaping the future of the audience’s desires, not the desires of the Roman populace, but the desires of the pit” (23). “Trial Translation (from *Twelfth Night*)” (33-37) is an astonishing experiment which reveals Duke Orsino to have undergone a complete transformation: from “larval

¹ The editor adds in the Notes to this chapter: “All plays to which Burke devoted essays included in this volume” (267).

thought” to the “predatory” which ultimately culminates in being critical and diagnostic followed by his chaste quest for Olivia (36-37).

One of Burke’s important premises is that a *dramatis persona* could serve as a critical commentator on the play instead of being merely a dramatic character *within* the play. In this way he/she is able to influence the audience’s opinion. This is what, he feels, Mark Antony does in the Act 3 of *Julius Caesar* – instead of addressing the mob he turns to the audience whom he plays upon as easily as a pipe. The readers would be led to form an opinion in accordance with Burke’s appreciation of Spurgeon’s analysis of Shakespearean imagery.² Burke finds her book to be usable, just as in his socio-anagogic interpretation of “Venus and Adonis” he delineates, how “sexual courtship is intrinsically fused with the motives of social hierarchy” (61). The much celebrated essay on *Othello* seeks to explore “the cathartic nature” of Iago’s role and proves that the “villain and hero are but essentially inseparable parts of ones fascination” (66). In a similar manner, Burke proves by combining the stories of Timon of Athens and Alcibiades that both the characters are indispensable elements of total action. Thus, the haughty invectives of Timon are seen to be apart of dramaturgic invention. This chapter entitled “Imagery” (49-55) is made more lucid by the elaborate thematic summary provided at the end.

Burke inevitably inclines towards the old school emphasis on plot and elucidates the ability of the plot to manipulate the nature and function of characters to suit its objectives. Again, in Chapter 8, “Shakespearean Persuasion: *Antony and Cleopatra*” (113-28). Burke notes the major developments in the plot and feels Shakespeare is working with the specific motive of showcasing that ‘Love is in essence an Empire’ (115). The plot thus glorifies romantic love in terms of politics. Burke finds the theme of *Coriolanus* to be timely and questions how Coriolanus ought to be as a character, for the expectations of the audience will have to be shaped by conditions within the play, but will have to have a strategic relevance to the kinds of values and tensions outside the play. Shakespeare thus chooses a character who is ‘designed to help aggravate the uneasiness of relationship between nobles and commoners’ (130) and consequently becomes a perfect sacrificial victim.³

“*King Lear: Its Form and Psychosis*” (150-65) begins with a prefatory note by the editors of *Shenandoah*⁴ who recommend that the essay be read as a sequel to *Coriolanus*. Burke claims that in *King Lear* the “paradox of substance” (150) is vested with maximum poignancy. He explores the dualistic version of the play’s appeal, noting how and why it contains two quite different messages, one for the youth and the other for age. Burke reveals an interesting fact about

² Burke says: “Her [Caroline Spurgeon] method can disclose statistically how Shakespeare organized a play about a key or pivotal metaphor, which he repeated in variants (...) throughout the play” (50-51).

³ Newstok’s footnotes restore the parts of this essay which were not included in the revised version published in LSA.

⁴ The essay was first published in *Shenandoah* 21.1 (Autumn 1969): 3-18.

the play together with its reason. He claims that Cordelia and the fool never appear together because they serve the same function – namely as a device to make the audience realize to the fullest, the foolishness and pathos of Lear’s predicament – thus emphasizing Shakespeare’s superior craftsmanship, because he is being economical in avoiding duplication of function.

In “Notes on *Troilus and Cressida*” (166-71), Burke argues forcefully at length in response to a paper written by a graduate student. He stresses the underlying affinity between love and war. He elucidates among other issues, how the titles of the plays encompass their themes with which the plays begin and end. On the invitation from the novelist Ralph Ellison (1914-94), Burke delivered a talk on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which was thereafter published in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. In this essay, “Why *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?” (172-86), he elaborates upon the visual aspects of a performance and compares the production of Pyramus and Thisbe to the crude mechanism, whereby “God in a machine” (173) appeared in Aristophanes’ comedy. He argues that although Aristotle rates the spectacular (*opsis*) as the lowest, in contemporary times visual spectacle is a major source of attraction, due to highly developed technology. Burke identifies Puck as the advancer of plot who, by mistakenly squeezing the magic juice in the eyes of the wrong courtier, helps to create the circumstances which make Queen Titania’s infatuation particularly “spectacular” (174). Talking about “form” in “Notes on *Macbeth*” (187-210), Burke stresses that a play’s beginning functions “to point the arrows of our expectations” (201). If the play is well designed it indicates a movement in a certain direction. In *Macbeth*, he feels that the categorization “tragedy” itself indicates the general direction which is further underscored by the utterance of the witches⁵ in the first scene and “the direction of potentialities is set within the terms of the play itself” (202). Burke also discusses the issue of “regicide” before concluding the essay.

Given that the additional “Notes” (267-94), the “Index of Works by Shakespeare” (295-96) and the “General Index” (297-307) provide ready references, such crowding of material (notes/endnotes) often requires an extra effort to comprehend the consistency of the thought process. Again, the collection of Burkes references to Shakespeare in the appendix, although valuable, calls for a very specialized interest not pertaining to the general reader. However, if we do away with the weightiness of the additional notes, appendix, index, the book would prove a delight to Shakespeare lovers – academic, non academic *et al.*

⁵ Burke quotes lines 6-7 of Act 1, scene 1 to prove his point:

First witch: Where the place?

Second witch: Upon the health.

Third witch: There to meet with Macbeth.