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Introduction: What is this thing called love?

R. S. WHITE

With its volatile mixture of adolescent passion, lyrical poetry and poignancy, *Romeo and Juliet* has always been a favourite amongst Shakespeare plays for performance and on school syllabuses. Memorable film adaptations, particularly by Zeffirelli (1968) and Luhrmann (1996), and its ‘inset’ appearance in *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), have given it wider currency as part of international popular culture. Oddly enough, the only people who have neglected it, at least relative to their attentiveness to other plays, are Shakespeare critics, who have never quite accepted it as a ‘mature tragedy’. This may be because the plot appears to be parodied in the ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ presentation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, as though even the dramatist could not take it fully seriously. But it is also because *Romeo and Juliet* does not conform satisfactorily to the paradigm of Shakespearean tragedy which, until recently, has prevailed: the idea of character as destiny – the ‘great man’ undone from within either by an innate weakness or a fallible moral decision. Certainly, older critics applied this model, and they debated as solemnly as they do over Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Antony, and King Lear, whether the young lovers fully choose the tragic destiny that awaits them, or whether they are victims of fate. However, generally speaking the play was regarded as relying too much on accidental mistiming and external social conflict to give them complete autonomy or choice. The kinds of recent, ‘issues-based’ criticism represented in this volume have at last allowed a
range of new and interesting perspectives to illuminate the play and explain its power in fresh ways. This Introduction does not try to summarise the essays, but rather to provide a series of different contemporary contexts in which the play and the criticism can be read.

The phrase ‘Romeo and Juliet’ has become proverbial, two names fused into a single concept signifying a certain kind of love and a certain kind of tragic destiny. How often do we see newspaper headlines like ‘Romeo and Juliet in Belfast’, ‘Romeo and Juliet in Bosnia’, ‘Romeo and Juliet double teenage suicide’? They refer to young lovers from ‘different sides of the tracks’, divided by their families who represent warring religious or ethnic groups or who disapprove for other reasons of their children’s choices in love. They die for their love, either as a result of social persecution or in acts of self-destruction. Representing love at its most young, passionate and intense, they stand against or above family loyalties, restrictions of conventional everyday obligations and external violence – both glamorous and profoundly sad at the same time. Like Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet deals with a paradoxical fusion of love and death, liebestod or ‘love-death’. Italicised, ‘Romeo and Juliet’, similarly, is not so much a play title as a social phenomenon. It may be unfair to hold Shakespeare responsible for the tragedy of teenage suicides somehow connected with popular songs composed for a film which utilises less than 50 per cent of his words, but such documented consequences today do suggest that there is something, in Kiernan Ryan’s words (in essay 5), ‘subversive and protesting’ about the play.

The whole thrust of the tragedy is to question the legitimacy of a world whose law deprives men and women of unbounded love as surely as it deprives the poor of their right to the world’s wealth.

To some extent, and with their particular differences, each piece in this book deals with an aspect of the play’s subversive potential.

One of the main liberating characteristics beneath recent Shakespeare criticism is a refusal to accept either the authority of a single text or the authenticity of a single performance. Those who argue that there is no such thing as an authoritative text of Romeo and Juliet (or any other play), point out that we have no manuscript from Shakespeare’s own hand and no printed text clearly ‘authorised’ by Shakespeare. There are three contemporary printed versions of Romeo and Juliet, each different in important aspects:
Quarto 1 (1597), Quarto 2 (1599), and the First Folio (1623, after Shakespeare’s death). Moreover, printed texts of Shakespeare’s time are full of details which are clearly mistakes and need to be corrected by modern editors, each of whom, in turn, differs from the others in their ‘corrections’. A quick check of just a few lines from each of the available editions today, such as Arden, Penguin, Oxford, Cambridge, Signet, Riverside, Bell, reveals that no two are identical, especially in punctuation but also often in the words. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that the plays were constantly being revised, either by Shakespeare or somebody else in the company, to suit particular theatrical circumstances such as provincial tours or changing laws of censorship. Textual criticism, the activity of establishing an accurate text, used to be claimed as a ‘scientific’ discipline, but its practitioners nowadays accept that it can be just as plural and indeterminable as literary criticism.

Meanwhile, those who argue that there is no such thing as an ‘authentic’, or ‘inauthentic’ performance, point to the impossibility of recreating Elizabethan theatrical practices, the paucity of eyewitness accounts, the history which dates from the eighteenth century down to the present day of cutting or even rewriting texts for performance. They remind us of the limitations and opportunities of different stages (Shakespeare’s Globe, proscenium arch, apron, theatre in the round) employed in different periods, and of the impact of new technology, whether it be theatrical or the invention of a whole new medium such as film. Therefore, performances and films reflect their own times rather than returning us to an ‘authentic’ experience. The most textually ‘faithful’ are often the most tedious and thus ‘inauthentic’; creative adaptations can refresh and clarify our insight into the plays. Films give us a very immediate proof of this, because unlike performances in the theatre different versions can be compared with each other. Each generation rewrites Shakespeare for its own purposes, and film reflects box office intentions of appealing to the widest audiences possible. Such admissions of textual instability and the apparent infinitude of potential interpretations and performances would have been firmly opposed by critics just twenty years ago as abandoning the search for stable ‘truth’. Nowadays, however, tolerance of such pluralism in turn seems to fit ‘the truth’ in a more appropriate way: *Romeo and Juliet* has observably worked in many different texts, performances, and contexts, and its effectiveness must largely derive from its capacity for recontextualisation.
All this gives critics a licence to read in plural and indeterminate ways. From the evidence of the essays in this book, the play can be read in more or less opposite ways (as well as many in between) – for example, as giving psychoanalytical insight into the emotional state of young love in an individual, or as showing that young love is not an internal emotion but a socially induced, collective, and conventional set of attitudes explainable by material and gender considerations. Throughout the twentieth century, criticism of *Romeo and Juliet* oscillated between these opposite poles. At one end lies psychoanalysis, with its belief in the individual psyche, and its assumption that all people are driven from within by universal, primal feelings that seek fulfilment and happiness but are more often than not thwarted, perverted, sublimated into other pursuits, or repressed. At the other pole lies cultural materialism, which assumes we are driven from without by our circumstances, by chance meetings and random contingencies, by social and cultural attitudes which are unavoidable, by advertising, the sentiments of popular music, family conventions, and so on. At issue are the cherished but contradictory western notions of individualism and of universal human nature. It is significant that defenders of each pole, in their very different ways, deny freedom of choice in our emotional lives. One group asserts that we are compulsively driven and our destinies shaped by largely inherited or manipulated feeling states and expectations, the other that we are at the mercy of the very limited culture of which we have experience.

**LOVE AND DESIRE**

We hear and use the word ‘love’ every day in many different contexts and we seem to understand it in so many ways that it is hard to think of another single word defined so diversely, unless it is ‘desire’. Love describes not only the passionate, physical and emotional attraction to another person and the parodically related *l’amour fou*, but also the achingly solicitous and patient feelings of a parent for a child, the determined symbiosis of elderly couples who light fires against loneliness and infirmity, the caring and frustrating attachment to a physically or mentally disabled relative, dependence on a deity (sacred love), or just the free and easy exchanges of intimacy between trusting companions. All but the first of these kinds of love involve some acceptance of limitations,
sacrifice, commitments and provisionality, and they can strike us as admirable, inspiring, touching, poignant, or funny. ‘Desire’ semantically hovers between genuine need and superficial self-gratification. Its mirror-image is nostalgia, longing for the past as desire is a longing for the future, and we find both points of view in *Romeo and Juliet*. William Hazlitt, emphasising the youthfulness of the protagonists who are engaged in ‘an idle passion between a boy and a girl’, celebrates desire as a yearning for ‘promised happiness’ in the unknown future:

They were in full possession of their senses and their affections. Their hopes were of air, their desires of fire. Youth is the season of love, because the heart is then first melted in tenderness from the touch of novelty, and kindled to rapture, for it knows no end of its enjoyments or its wishes. Desire has no limit but itself. Passion, the love and expectation of pleasure, is infinite, extravagant, inexhaustive, till experience come to check and kill it.7

He describes poetically the dismaying course followed by the play’s action, ‘from the highest bliss to the lowest despair, from the nuptial bed to an untimely grave’. But in emphasising the preciousness of youthful desire as something which exists entirely in hopes for the future, Hazlitt downplays the play’s other perspective, that expressed by Friar Laurence, Juliet’s Nurse, and Lady Capulet – the wariness of experience and the tinge of nostalgia created by hindsight, an altogether more kindly desire that these two young people should not waste their lives in hopes that can never unambiguously be realised. So radically multiple are the associations of ‘love’ and ‘desire’, that we find ourselves circling around an absent centre of meaning, an evacuation. To the very pertinent and honest question which might be asked of the mature by the young, ‘Why do you not offer us reliable advice about love and desire, since our love-choices will affect us for the rest of our lives?’ the only answer can be ‘Because we don’t know what they are’.

Of the kinds of love and desire on offer, one type above all has grabbed headlines, and here the popular, western associations of the word are inextricably linked with romantic love exemplified by Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. We are bombarded with popular songs, television soap operas, and glossy magazines, all telling us that love is for the young or the ‘young in heart’, that it is primarily physical, urgent, reckless, and ecstatic, and very likely doomed in one way or another. The flagging middle-aged, aware of nature’s
stealthy and purposeful abandonment of them, sometimes try to revive its secretive thrills by strategies of adultery. So specific and ubiquitous are the representations of adolescent love in the culture that a new word, ‘limerence’, was once coined (without conspicuous success) to differentiate it from other kinds of love. In explaining ‘young love’, views range across a spectrum. At one end are those who say romantic love is purely instinctual, spontaneous, and felt on the body – other-centred and yet mutually satisfying. At the other end are those who say it is a mental construction so overwhelmingly endorsed by popular culture that we are all deceived into thinking it ‘natural’. They say that it is not spontaneous but externally conditioned behaviour: it thrives on social disapproval or opposition, and is essentially narcissistic. Cooperative friendliness and unillusioned trust seem to be more solid grounds for compatibility. The latter group points to rising divorce rates as evidence of the untrustworthiness and self-centredness of romantic love as a basis for marriage, and also demonstrates that different cultures have quite different concepts of love.

An anthropologist, Helen Fisher, claims that there are three radically different centres in the brain which control three kinds of emotions which can coexist or exist independently of each other: libido (sexual desire), infatuation (fantasy), and attachment (enduring commitment). The rare ideal is seen as all three in tandem. In fact, similar threesomes have been proposed by many analysts of love. The eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume thought it arose from ‘the pleasing sensation arising from beauty; the bodily appetite for generation; and a generous kindness or good-will’, while psychologist Robert J. Sternberg proposes as its essential ingredients intimacy, passion, and commitment. Cultural anthropology reveals that definitions of love differ from culture to culture. For example, in traditional Chinese society the only genuine kind of love acknowledged as such is attachment. Deference to parental guidance and concern for the welfare of children make submission to, and celebration of, libido and infatuation seem unthinkably selfish – so that not only Romeo and Juliet but also King Lear and Othello in their different ways become almost incomprehensible except as symptoms of western decadence. Infatuation, especially, seems a phenomenon limited to western culture influenced by medieval courtly love conventions and refined in movies, advertisements and the cynical packaging of singers. On the other hand, Alan Macfarlane points out that it is only in industrial western soci-
etries that the emotional relationship between man and woman in marriage is considered a primary value system; in other cultures the pivot of the social structure is relationships between parents and children. Courtship is seen as functional, and marriage as no big deal, except as a safe environment in which children can be born and grow up. As a different approach, it would not be difficult to construct an argument that from time to time in some countries and cultures, subservience to the state (or the church, when it had worldly power) has influenced personalised relationships in providing a dominant framework of thinking which is replicated in marriage (‘lie back and think of England’ is one parody of the dutiful wife’s attitude to sex in Victorian England). Even within one culture, such as England’s, amatory and sexual norms have changed quite radically over time. The idea of marriage partners as companions who are mutually supportive is relatively recent, and still changing in nuance as equal opportunity employment laws and childcare facilities become accepted as human rights. Equality in marriage may have scriptural authority in Paul’s advice to men to ‘love their wives as their own bodies’ and in Matthew’s ‘one flesh’, but these Gospel attitudes are not consistently proclaimed throughout the Bible, and the ways in which Paul and Matthew interpreted them seem patriarchal and condescending to women. It has been argued that it needed the Reformation to establish companionate marriage in Protestant countries. And, as several writers in this book demonstrate, love can mean different things to men and to women, to heterosexuals and homosexuals, to royal families and commoners (as the marital fate of Lady Diana Spencer was to demonstrate), to the old and the young.

The outcome, as Catherine Belsey points out in her erudite and beautifully written book entitled *Desire*, is that it is probably impossible to extricate ourselves from our own limited understandings on this issue sufficiently to find more general agreement:

What if, after all, there is no stripped-down, basic sexuality, no simple animal or clinical experience outside our culturally induced expectations, hopes, anxieties, values? ... it would indicate that we in the West now could not, as an act of will, simply step outside the metaphysics of desire which is our cultural heritage.14

As Belsey points out in this volume (essay 2), this kind of radical questioning of what usually in the West is regarded as ‘natural’, leads us to wonder if love is only solipsistic, individual and lonely,
rather than shared, and in so far as it is shared, whether it is a product of an agreed language where metaphors are understood literally, rather than of emotions and psychology. Belsey draws attention to the importance of naming in the play (Romeo is out of bounds for Juliet simply because he is named Montague), while Peter Conrad has pointed to a persistent line of imagery in the play focusing on spoken and written language. The Nurse, Conrad notes, is considered amusing by her exclusion from courtly language, and from her ‘social betters’, who ‘love by the book; their feelings are textual’. Gayle Whittier in a justly admired article shows how prominently the highly artificial conventions of Petrarchan sonnet-writing are implicated in the supposedly spontaneous effusions of love-language, and one of Shakespeare’s own characters, Proteus (whose name means ‘changeable’) in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, encourages the calculated and studied writing of sonnets and songs as a devious ploy in courtship.

If nothing else, it is clear that love, far from being a many splendoured thing, is not a single thing, and in fact it may not even be a ‘thing’ at all, but rather, as Mercutio mordantly suggests of the love connected with Queen Mab, a ‘nothing’, simply a dream. His spellbinding and strange lines in the almost hallucinatory digression on ‘Queen Mab’ add to the play, in their intense bitterness and Bosch-like imagery, a vision of love which is even more dangerous and socially disruptive than the lovers’ experience, since it contains cruelty and mischief-making. In our own day, the skilful construction, commodification and selling of actors or singer/musicians as ‘sex symbols’ shows how depressingly easy it is for the media periodically to manipulate emotions and persuade people what they ‘really want’, whether it is the dreamy romanticism of Juliet, paradoxical confusion of Romeo, earthy sexuality of the Nurse, or the sharp masochism and sadism of Mercutio. Advertising is explicitly based on the cynical knowledge that people’s needs and desires can be cleverly manufactured, and the fashion industry, for example, has the power rapidly to change even what is considered a desirable body-type or a beautiful face. Romeo and Juliet itself has been appropriated by a series of film-makers to reconstruct images of ideal teenage beauty: compare, for example, the impetuous and latin Olivia Hussey with Claire Danes’s college-girl wonder and intellectualism, and Leonard Whiting with Leonardo DiCaprio, from the 1960s and 1990s respectively.
Shakespeare himself gives many different narratives of love. *The Taming of the Shrew* sees courtship as altogether lacking in romance, and marriage as a power struggle resolved only by one partner being accepted as dominant, the other submissive. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *As You Like It* see love as a game-like test in adversity with its ultimate reward as marriage, *Othello* as a kind of compensation where each lover represents to the other the quality s/he lacks (or worse still, as based on simple possessiveness). *Twelfth Night* presents love as privation, repression and sacrifice (or on the other side, wordy self-indulgence), while *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* see premarital love as an overwhelming, bewildering and compulsive emotional experience. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Shakespeare regards courtship as a ‘fantasy’ stage of a relationship and that the fantasies quickly evaporate after marriage: Rosalind in *As You Like It*, replying to her lover’s oath that he will love her forever and a day, says ‘Say a day without the ever. No, no, Orlando; men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives’ (IV.i.138–41). Successful marriage, according to the view that seems to prevail in *As You Like It* as a whole, depends not primarily on passionate wooing (which is seen as a game of role-playing) but on subsequent adaptation to reality: a transition from infatuation to attachment, driven by a kind of willed decision to accept the other as different and likeable, helpful, friendly and compatible on a day-to-day level. Those who cling to the mythologies of high romance, like Othello, Romeo, and Juliet, come to grief for one reason or another.18 Again, Rosalind in *As You Like It* provides a salutary reminder that the death-wish may more plausibly be a fantasy or a temporary stage in maturation, and never needs to be enacted:

**Orlando** Then in mine own person I die.

**Rosalind** No, faith; die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club, yet he did what he could to die before and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year though Hero had turned nun if it had not been for a hot midsummer night, for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and, being taken with the cramp, was drowned; and the foolish chroniclers of that age found
it was Hero of Sestos. But these are all lies. Men have died from
time to time, and worms have eaten them but not for love.

(IV.i.87–101)

At the least, all the evidence suggests that Shakespeare agreed on,
and perhaps helped to naturalise, the idea that love is plural, con-
tradictory and paradoxical, many things rather than one. *Romeo
and Juliet* raises and builds into its vision the free-floating diversity
of the word ‘love’ and of language in general. If we compare the
surrealism of Mercutio on love as fantasy, the Nurse on marriage as
including bawdy physicality, Juliet’s parents on love as something
that will grow within an arranged marriage, and the Friar who cau-
tions against acting on ephemeral emotional states, we find even
within one play a surprising range of incompatible attitudes.

**LOVE AND DEATH IN PSYCHOANALYSIS**

One twentieth-century thinker who has had enormous influence over
literary criticism and Shakespeare studies is the psychoanalytical theo-
rnist Sigmund Freud. His successor, Jacques Lacan, is also frequently
cited by some literary critics. Whatever one thinks of this approach
to human behaviour, it has been highly significant in shaping popular
theories of love and desire, and it is represented in this book in the
essay by Julia Kristeva (essay 3). Some background might make the
essay more accessible. Helen K. Gediman’s *Fantasies of Love and
Death in Life and Art* is, in the words of its subtitle, *A
Psychoanalytic Study of the Normal and the Pathological*. While
it focuses on the *liebestod* (love-death) in contemporary psychiatry
and in the *Tristan and Isolde* story, it has as much to say about
*Romeo and Juliet*. Gediman refers us to the classic work of Dennis
de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, which ‘holds roman-
ticism responsible for the “fact” that happy love has no history in
Western literature’, and links this pessimism with ‘the traditional
psychoanalytical view regarding romantic passion as an illness’. De
Rougemont speaks of love as ‘twin narcissism’ where two people
are ‘in love with their love’: or, as Gediman more prosaically
defines it, ‘as a more or less transient fusion state in which libidinal
investment of the self is transferred to the object ... Self and object
are loved as one because both share a love for a commonly es-
teeemed activity, feeling state, or object’ (p. 20). The presence of nar-
cissism is what marks off the ‘Liebestod fantasy’ form of love from
the more complicated versions of companionate love or attachment which can last through the degradations of time into old age, in which ego integrity has been achieved in the individual, and feeling is now invested through empathy with others rather than gratification of the self. In an apparently unaware echoing of Theseus’s ‘The lunatic, the lover, and the poet, Are of imagination all compact’ (IV.i.7–8), Gediman writes, ‘Twin narcissism is a term for fusion of self and object that is evocative of an early ego state common to infants, lovers, and some creative artists’ (p. 20). John Donne, Shakespeare’s contemporary, uses the rather grotesque image in describing lovers gazing into each other’s eyes in ‘The Ecstasy’:

Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes, upon one double string.

Philip Sidney in Arcadia depicts the male lover as so closely identifying with his beloved that he disguises himself as a woman, partly to gain access to her company since her father denies her male company, but equally to denote his commitment to her. This situation is echoed in Romeo and Juliet when Romeo dons a mask to gatecrash the Capulet ball without detection. Romances and popular songs down through the ages attest to the simultaneous absorption in the other, and the self-sustaining fantasy that marks young love, a total investment in believing that one knows completely the other, because one is seeing only the self. Love as twin narcissism, requited or mutually shared love, is, according to Gediman and other psychoanalysts, a symptom of the infant’s incomplete detachment from the mother, or a desire to return to infant identification with the mother, and is a step from symbiosis to individuation. The brevity and transience of such a state is described similarly in both A Midsummer Night’s Dream (I.i.143–8) and by Juliet, in Romeo and Juliet:

Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night;
It is too rash, too unadvis’d, too sudden;
Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
Ere one can say ‘It lightens’.

(II.ii.116–20)

By way of contrast, Shakespeare shows in As You Like It the slow testing and confirmation of an initial ‘love at first sight’,
through lengthy courtship and complex role-playing (imagining, testing and accepting the other’s difference), suggesting not only the transition to companionate love but also that marriage is a ‘world-without-end bargain’ and can be an ever-changing, ever-deepening love affair which moves past infatuation and dreams.

The psychoanalytical model explains the actual or fantasised role of parental conflict, so important to the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, as essential to the rite of passage which leads, with luck, from romantic love towards affectionate companionship, a more realistic, less fantasy-prone version of mutual attachment. The latter state is seen as less trapped in infantile recollection, less bound by the past, because it represents an overcoming of the past, a growing into individual choice without compulsive and emotional retreat to a childhood fantasy of twin narcissism. In order to achieve the transition, the lovers first need to remove from their line of light the shadow of the past as it is personified in parents, and there is an implication that even if obstacles don’t exist we would need to create them. Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* must overcome ‘the will of a dead father’, even while she paradoxically fulfils the condition of that will, in order to marry. Gediman quotes Freud as saying ‘that obstacles are normally required to heighten libido and “where natural resistances to satisfaction have not been sufficient men have at all times erected conventional ones so as to be able to enjoy love”’ (p. 187). We should be suspicious of Freud’s sweeping phrase, ‘at all times’ – there must surely be easier and happier ways to enjoy a sexual relationship between equals than the long and arduous course of defeating parents. And yet, Gediman continues,

rejection, scorn, the deliberate placement of obstacles to romantic and sexual fulfilment, and a flirting with death, are well-understood as pathological variations of the raising of normal arousal thresholds, which we see in milder versions in normal love relationships. If a real or fictional level of parental opposition is not present, then sadomasochism may fulfil the function of creating an obstacle ... The lovers’ self-imposed obstacles may also function as devices aimed at ensuring an unambiguous state of union.

(p. 157)

In *Romeo and Juliet* the obstacle is both literally and metaphorically the family feud with its consequential veto on the lovers’
union, but it is also the self-inflicted problem of Romeo’s murder of Tybalt, and the more general sense of the psychological necessity of some obstacle or other which is prefigured in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*:

Lysander. Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
    Could ever hear by tale or history,
    The course of true love never did run smooth ...

(I.i.132–4)

Another characteristic of ‘limerence’ or passionate, romantic love, as immortalised in works like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Tristan and Isolde* and Verdi’s *La Traviata*, is double death as the inevitable and only destination guaranteeing immortality to the state of twin narcissism. Gediman again gives the psychoanalyst’s explanation that the double suicide is a ‘wish to have a child with death; it is a suicide with no suicidal intent, but where the wish to die in the arms of the beloved represents a wish to beget a child with the loved one, and at another level, a return to the mother’s womb’ (p. 64). Gediman quotes G. Zilboorg’s ‘The sense of immortality’:

murder–suicide pacts, the drive toward death, always with the flag of immortality in hand, carried with it the fantasy of joining the dead or dying, or being joined in death. The latter is particularly prominent among the double suicides of lovers. There is hardly a primitive race which does not have a lovers’ volcano (Japan), a lovers’ waterfall (Bali) or a lovers’ rock from which the lovers jump so that they may be joined in the beyond.

But we should be suspicious of the dubious anthropology in this passage. It really imposes western conventions and shows no knowledge of ‘primitive races’. The proximity of love and death in the western mythology of romantic love has always interested not only writers but psychiatrists, ever since Robert Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (first edn, 1621) inserted sexual passion within his multifarious categories of ‘melancholy’ (equivalent to our pathological emotional states), the condition we find Romeo in at the beginning of the play when his love is for Rosaline.

The writings of Georges Bataille lie behind some of the psychoanalytical readings of *Romeo and Juliet*. He provides an extreme example of the thesis that desire is inherently transgressive and
linked with violence. He speaks of ‘the profound unity of these apparent opposites, birth and death’:

De Sade – or his ideas – generally horrifies even those who affect to admire him and have not realised through their own experience this tormenting fact: the urge towards love, pushed to its limit, is an urge toward death.25

Bataille is perhaps the thinker who most consistently sees desire as transgressive and neurotic, inextricably linked with taboos and death:

Possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but the idea of death is linked with the urge to possess. If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her. Or else he may wish to die himself ... If the union of two lovers comes about through love, it involves the idea of death, murder or suicide. This aura of death is what denotes passion ...26

But a protest can be voiced against this general view. It sounds more like rape than the mutual desire between Romeo and Juliet, which surely is presented by Shakespeare as a desire to live and love, not to die. Bataille’s approach to erotic love, encapsulated in Oscar Wilde’s ‘We always kill the thing we love’ may have some relevance in interpreting Shakespeare’s other tragedy of love, Othello (although here too we must not ignore the external pressures on the marriage from Iago), but it is problematical in being applied to Romeo and Juliet. The question which sharpens the distinction between psychoanalytical critics and cultural materialists is whether the lovers make an active choice for death or whether it is forced upon them only when all other options are made impossible. While the former ‘pathologise’ the young lovers and suggest that the destructive and tragic element lies within their mutual desire as a kind of unconscious but real choice, the latter suggest that the lovers do not seek death, that their love is healthy, and that external circumstances destroy the possibility of sustaining their love in life.

CULTURAL MATERIALISM AND SOCIAL CONFLICT

The general approach which is often called cultural materialism does not accept that literary and dramatic characters have an unre-
vealed inner or unconscious life which can be psychoanalysed. Instead, materialists insist that explanations for the narrative turns can be found in those social, political and economic conditions which are represented in the literary or dramatic work, and these should be seen in the light of the contemporary realities and prevailing ideologies in Shakespeare's world and also our own. ‘Love is always, first and foremost, social’, writes Dympna Callaghan (essay 4). The overarching external circumstance which sets in train the events leading to the deaths is the feud between the families of Montague (Romeo) and Capulet (Juliet), a feud so ancient that nobody recalls its genesis, and so widespread that it threatens civic disorder at any time. The young lovers try to escape the feud. Although they themselves continually see the obstacles to their peaceful love as an impersonal destiny or providence, in fact there is nothing inevitable or unchangeable about the family rivalry. Indeed, an optimistic reading of the end of the play suggests that the sacrifice of their death does in fact shake the patriarchs into burying the hatchet of enmity, and the end of the film musical based loosely on Shakespeare’s play, West Side Story, powerfully creates this effect (although here the rivalry is between gangs rather than generations). The young lovers, in other words, are not being transgressive and certainly not desiring violence – rather they are asking to opt out of their forefathers’ quarrels in order to live a contented and peaceful life together. This must be their simple aspiration and vision of the future. The deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt are related to the lovers only through the prior feud, and they turn on honour rather than love. Mercutio as Romeo’s kinsman provokes Tybalt in defence of Romeo, and he is killed only because Romeo tries to break up the fight and inadvertently allows Tybalt to stab Mercutio ‘under’ his arm. Romeo, who had earlier tried to pacify and reconcile Tybalt, then kills him as an act of revenge for murdering his friend and cousin. This murder, not the love plot, is what makes Romeo into an outlaw to be hunted as a criminal. In turn, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, both by suicide, are precipitated by tragic mischance – because Friar Laurence’s letter miscarried, Romeo did not know Juliet was in an induced coma, and believing her dead he feels life is not worth living. Similarly, Juliet awakens to find Romeo literally dead, and believing life is not worth living without her new husband, she too kills herself. It is hard to find any evidence that shows love is intrinsically linked with violence and inevitable death.
Dympna Callaghan (essay 4) also resists the psychoanalytical tendency to internalise the tragedy as a consequence of transgressive love, this time from another materialist position, that of feminist politics. She points out that the roots of a Kristevan reading lie in Shakespeare’s source, Arthur Brooke, who sees the deaths as punishment for the ‘unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to unhonest desire’, but that Shakespeare has at least made this interpretation ambiguous if not irrelevant. What emerges is the ‘profound injustice’ at work, not the sense of ‘proper punishment’. However, Callaghan’s argument does not pursue this line for its own sake, but rather suggests from a feminist perspective that desire as it is represented in the play is restrictive for women and homosexuals, for the play contributes to the normalising of heterosexuality with its normative destination of the marriage institution. So powerful is Shakespeare’s myth, coming at a time when western capitalism was reinforcing inequality, that it has deceived and brainwashed even women into thinking such values are benign and irresistible. Others, such as Joseph Porter, and Jonathan Goldberg (essay 10) have argued a similar case in terms of the exclusion of same-sex love. There is, however, some irony in this critical approach. After exonerating the lovers of charges of transgressive love or of love which has within itself violence and potential self-destruction, these critics might be said to reprove the lovers for not being transgressive enough against the norms of their society, for allowing themselves to be deceived into believing their love is not a political construction inherited from their patriarchal society. It does seem somehow odd that like the psychoanalysts, materialists are capable of coming around to blaming Romeo and Juliet, or Shakespeare’s depiction of them, for something. Even Brecht’s piece, while its main intention is to make us question the universality of the story, is harsh on the lovers, turning them into spoilt, self-indulgent, aristocratic brats.

Bertolt Brecht’s ‘intercalary scene’, ‘The Servants’ may seem a curious and perverse choice in this collection, since neither is it criticism nor does it use Shakespeare’s play. But it does stand as a forceful example of cultural materialism and offers an interesting perspective on the play. He wrote the scene to help the actors playing Romeo and Juliet to clarify their own attitudes to the characters, and to build in some conceptual complexity into the social situation. Brecht drew his own theatrical inspiration and much of his theories of drama from what he called the ‘epic theatre’ of the
Renaissance, and especially from Shakespeare. He claimed to learn from Shakespeare that a play should not lure or ambush spectators into total empathy and should not emotionally manipulate audiences like a trick of illusion. People should bring their rational minds and judgements into the theatre, and the play should allow these to be freely exercised. To this end Brecht found continually in each of Shakespeare’s texts a subtext or a perspective that resists emotional coercion into a single, simple response of either tears or laughter: the effect is always complex and contradictory, and a play can be directed and played in such a way that scenes which are widely known to the point of cliché are suddenly defamiliarised or ‘alienated’, distanced in a way that makes us think rather than simply ‘emote’. His ‘practice pieces’ and ‘intercalary scenes’ are designed to make audiences self-aware and actively involved in ongoing interpretation of the action. This, I take it, is the function of criticism as well. ‘The Servants’ works in a way that makes explicit the connection between Ryan’s linking of lovers and of the poor through deprivation. The Apothecary might seem to trade in deathly narcotics, but from another point of view he is a poor man making a living in a society that sanctifies ‘market forces’: if rich lovers need drugs, then he can supply them, in return for money to feed his family. In fact in Brecht’s Marxist view the connection is deeply ironic – ‘one man’s meat is another man’s poison’. Aristocratic lovers who see their rebellion against their respective families as heroic and romantic, in turn are perceived as self-indulgently and irresponsibly failing to notice the adverse consequences of their actions for their social inferiors. Romeo and Juliet callously ignore the rights of their servants to a love life, by giving priority to their own. Brecht may have taken the germ of the idea from a teasingly ambiguous statement by one of the ‘servants’ in Shakespeare’s play, Gregory’s ‘The quarrel is between our masters and us their men’ (I.i.18–22). Gregory’s comment could mean that the Montague masters and men stand together against the Capulet masters and men, but it could equally mean that the masters stand together against the men, in the sense that the servants become hapless tools. It is quite likely Brecht, with his sharp insight into class struggle, would pick up the second meaning. Samson’s shrugging ‘‘Tis all one’ (I.i.20) seems to concede the ambiguity in the situation, and he goes on to gesture towards an equally nasty conflict between men and women, also generated by the prior ‘ancient quarrel’. A cultural materialist’s reading of the play as a
whole would dwell on such details as Samson’s casual condoning of rape, to suggest that everybody, in Verona society, Romeo and Juliet included, is a moral or physical casualty of the family feud which has generated civil brawls and meaningless violence. Such a didactic reading would find support in the Prince’s angry summation:

Where be these enemies? Capulet, Montague,
See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
And I, for winking at your discords, too
Have lost a brace of kinsmen. All are punished.

(V.iii.290–4)

Perhaps Brecht’s scenes are merely an interesting footnote to the study of *Romeo and Juliet* but at least they serve to de-familiarise a ‘sacred’ text so that we can look at it afresh in the light of challenging and sometimes iconoclastic contemporary criticism.

Brecht’s provocative scene is presented here partly to ‘alienate’ this most familiar of plays, inviting readers to exercise scepticism as well as emotional involvement in the action, thus enriching the effect, but also partly to illustrate a point about twentieth-century criticism that underpins the whole collection of essays. Two entirely opposed attitudes to literature’s function are at issue. Cultural materialism argues that a work like *Romeo and Juliet* has endured because it constructs situations which allow us to think and to clarify rationally problems and issues of human behaviour in particular societies. Another argues that a play allows us to feel, to suspend our rational faculties and instead sympathise and to project our emotions into fictional characters who exemplify our own individual dilemmas. The first line of approach is Brecht’s, the second is probably closer to the normative tradition of western criticism. But the second, taken a stage further, leads into psychoanalytical criticism, since if literature and drama are mimetic then they allow us to analyse characters as if they are ‘people like us’ with individual psyches. Taken together, the essays indicate different ways in which the play’s subversiveness, in Ryan’s sense, operates.

**GENDER**

Related to cultural materialism, perhaps as a subspecies, is gender theory, and this approach is pursued by some writers in this collec-
tion. Gender theory evolved from feminist criticism in the 1970s and onwards, which in turn looked back to at least two key texts, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949). Although all definitions would be contested, the general assumptions behind the approach are first, that gender is central to issues of identity, social interaction, and power, and is therefore a valid critical concern; and secondly that it does not hinge on biological sex but on cultural meanings which society has attributed to women and men. It would not be difficult to trace the changes in this rapidly developing field by compiling a different selection of essays on *Romeo and Juliet*, all based solely on gender. One does not hear so often these days the ‘essentialist’ reading assuming difference between men and women, arguing that Juliet, for example, displays the ‘essence’ of femininity while Romeo behaves in a characteristically masculine fashion. This approach had dominated the field for many generations, and was argued in different ways by certain feminists who were interested in ‘images of women’. Nor has the linguistic equivalent, that women speak and write differently (écriture féminine) from men been argued much in recent times, although again earlier critics discriminated between Shakespearean characters on the basis of gendered speech acts and style. One approach summoned up by the word ‘patriarchy’ dominated gendered readings in the 1970s and 80s, and *Romeo and Juliet* criticism certainly reflected this. The play, it was persuasively argued, is dominated by fathers, whose power over families is mirrored in the organisation of the state as a whole. Arguments raged over Shakespeare’s own stance, whether he tacitly accepts the inevitability of patriarchy by not showing it overthrown and by marginalising women as amusing, shrewish mothers or as passive victims; or whether he attacks its ideology and existence by showing the terrible human consequences in the loss of young life, especially Juliet’s. Sasha Roberts, in her splendid, short book on *Romeo and Juliet* which ideally should be read alongside this one (see ‘Further Reading’), develops the principle of ‘constructionism’ which in the early 1990s was an important assumption behind criticism in general and gender studies in particular: the idea that literature does not transparently show or mirror ‘life’ or ‘character’ in a value-free way, but that it is an ideologically loaded construction with assumptions about gender and class. The gendered readings represented in this volume are typical of the pluralist style of 1990s gender studies.
Callaghan (essay 4), Goldberg (essay 10) and Porter (essay 9) all see in Romeo and Juliet both the observation and underwriting of a normative, ‘mainstream’ assumption in Romeo and Juliet that heterosexuality is ‘normal’, while finding enough also in the play to allow a more subversive reading which allows voices ‘from the margins’ to challenge the norm. Mercutio has always been seen as a figure given curiously intense characterisation by Shakespeare, and Goldberg in particular locates the intensity in his homosexual attachment to Romeo, a fact which makes Mercutio resent his friend’s attraction to women and finally explains his early death as the necessary exclusion of his viewpoint from a play celebrating love between man and woman. In some cases subliminally and in others ostentatiously, filmed versions of Romeo and Juliet during the twentieth century have depicted Mercutio as gay.

FILM VERSIONS OF ROMEO AND JULIET

Since many, if not most people these days encounter Romeo and Juliet in one film version or another, the argument for diverse and culturally relative readings of the play can be conveniently demonstrated by a brief history of the play’s adaptation into the twentieth-century medium of film. It may seem a contradiction in terms to speak of ‘silent Shakespeare’, since we value language above all else in the plays, but it is arguable that in fact the golden age of Shakespeare as a popular force came in the period of silent cinema, particularly from 1900 to 1920, when there were dozens of films (often based on single episodes) made from titles by Shakespeare. This is a salutary reminder that his plays can operate effectively as narrative and spectacle, even without the spoken word. There were many silent versions of Romeo and Juliet on screen, and more often than not this particular play was not treated reverently but often as a burlesque apparently unworthy of the seriousness accorded to the other tragedies. Robert Hamilton Ball traces the deliberately hilarious treatments up to the 1920s.

Since the invention of ‘talking pictures’ in the 1920s, there have been at least thirty screen versions of Romeo and Juliet, including ones from Italy, France, Egypt, Mexico, India, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Spain, Brazil, Canada, and (if it can claim Baz Luhrmann) Australia. The statistic does not include some openly pornographic appropriations such as the Swedish film, The Secret.
Sex Lives of Romeo and Juliet (1968), also called Juliet’s Desire, and Romeo and Juliet II, nor the 1990s ‘grunge’ version, Troméo and Juliet. But apart from the oddities, some stand out as demonstrating the special power of Romeo and Juliet in the cinema. They are fine and popular films in their own right, and have reached far greater audiences than any stage production can. In 1936 George Cukor directed a version which cast two heart-throbs of the middle-aged movie-goers of the time – Trevor Howard (aged 39) and Norma Shearer (aged 36) – while Mercutio was played by John Barrymore (aged 54) and Tybalt by Basil Rathbone (aged 42). They were the most famous movie actors of their time, but even on release (and more so now) they were regarded as too old for the roles. Presumably the film was made for audiences over 30, the generation with enough money to go to the cinema, and they would no doubt be comforted to feel that age did not wither them, nor did it preclude them from identifying with youthful passion. One film version which, in hindsight, looks rather tame and old-fashioned, was in its time innovative, and pointed to the future. Renato Castellani in 1954 directed Romeo and Juliet with the kind of close attention to visual detail that would mark Zeffirelli’s version. Whereas previous versions had used sets elaborately built for the occasion, Castellani filmed on location in Italy and produced a work which has been described as ‘extraordinarily rich and voluptuous, photographed in the golden remnants of the High Renaissance in Verona, Venice, and Siena, and with costumes by Leonor Fini that are derived from works of art by Piero della Francesca, Pisanello, Carpaccio, and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo’. As well as carrying these painterly references, the outdoors setting brings burgeoning nature to the fore, not just as a visual spectacle but as a symbol for the young lovers’ relationship to natural forces. By the 1960s a new function was given to Shakespeare in films. He could galvanise hearts and minds to rectify social injustices, and in the words of a very influential book’s title, he became ‘Shakespeare our Contemporary’. Two quite remarkable adaptations of Romeo and Juliet in that decade illustrate the capacity of his texts to be aligned with a social conscience and progressive politics. West Side Story (1961) is a Hollywood musical, transferred from the Broadway stage. It employs no lines from Shakespeare but clearly is based on his play. Instead of setting the lovers against warring families, it places them in the context of violent gang warfare in the slums of New York. The Capulets are a Puerto Rican gang called the
Sharks, the Montagues are white American ‘Anglos’, the Jets. This version trusts Shakespeare’s narrative but not his language, as if that language would falsify the almost documentary and social realist emphasis. Unlike earlier versions, the film demystifies Shakespeare in order to focus the narrative on contemporary social problems. It reflects the contemporary preoccupation with street hoodlums, anarchic youth violence, gang warfare, popular music and youth rebellion (James Dean, Elvis Presley). The violence is seen ironically as the result of failures of their absent parents to restrain and control (or even care – the only older people we see are the bigoted policeman and the isolated ‘Doc’ in the drugstore who is Shakespeare’s Friar).

Franco Zeffirelli directed *Romeo and Juliet* on the stage, and later turned it into a film which was released in 1968 at the height of ’60s youth revolution, student unrest, ‘flower power’ and calls for sexual freedom. He cast actors of 17 (Leonard Whiting, with Beatles haircut) and 15 (Olivia Hussey) respectively, and clearly angled his film at teenagers, the first wave of the baby boomers who already had commercial power and media glamour. The great debates of the times from their point of view were the so-called ‘generation gap’ (being misunderstood by parents), the issue of 20-year-old youths in some countries who did not have the vote being conscripted to fight a war in Vietnam created by their parents; and the emergence of a new ethic encapsulated in the phrase ‘make love not war’. Zeffirelli consciously appeals to these debates, invariably on the side of youth, and he makes the tragedy turn on the fact that family conflict reflects intergenerational conflict between teenagers and their corrupted parents’ generation. The film is perhaps the most didactic of the various versions: the lovers are seen as genuinely innocent victims, whose poignant deaths lead to ending the family feud.

Barbara Hodgdon (essay 6) entertainingly leads us through *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by the Australian Baz Luhrmann in 1997, who hired his old tutor, Professor David Frost at the University of Newcastle in Australia, as Shakespeare adviser for the film, a fate which must be the secret fantasy of all Shakespeare tutors. The version is as much of its time as the others, showing a 1990s youth subculture based on the availability of drugs and guns, enforced idleness of unemployment, a society apparently marked by callous indifference to emotions, contrasted with eruptions of manufactured festivity and spectacle like a Michael Jackson concert.
The vision adds up to a nihilism of the senses which is set against, and presumably caused by, corrupt, profiteering multinational corporations (the families are companies), seedy urban decay (Verona Beach looks like an abandoned film set), and the frustrations of a neglected generation. In some way each of the groupings is, in Porter’s word, ‘liminal’ (essay 9): the Capulets are Latin American, the Montagues are Irish American, Mercutio and the Prince both black, and the setting is represented as a crucible of ethnic and class tension as befits Miami Beach which is both playground for the rich and first port of call for Cuban refugees. In such an array of marginalities, ‘the centre does not hold’, and indeed the film intentionally shows a society devoid of shared, community assumptions. There seems in the film, as presumably in its target audience, to be a confused yearning for religious symbolism but no spiritual heart, and the final scene in the church (a cathedral rather than a chapel, let alone a crypt), full of candles, flowers and operatic music, evokes the music of Madonna with its unique concatenation of religion and eroticism. Here, the older generation is cynical, wilfully unaware of the consequences of their feuds, and literally beyond the law. Romeo and Juliet are victims not only of an uncaring society and their own divided generation, but of the insatiable greed of news moguls who exploit ‘human interest’ stories such as teenage suicide – their narrative is framed in a typically disposable television news story. In its way Luhrmann’s film is as didactic as Zeffirelli’s, but because the picture it gives of society is so bleakly negative, and the watery moments of love between Romeo and Juliet are so rare, brief and naïve, the film tends to confirm a ‘no hope’ reading. The lovers die bewildered and frightened, and it seems that their fate matters to nobody, except as a quickly forgotten news item. As a minor issue, it is hard entirely to reconcile the film’s general anti-consumerist ethic with the ‘hard-sell’ marketing of the film by Fox Studios as commodity, with its CD music, interactive CD Rom, official and unofficial websites, overpowering advertising, and so on. These aspects of the film, together with its eclecticism of settings, costumes and cultural groupings, its juxtapositioning of glamour, stylistliness and seediness, perhaps justify the use of that overused word ‘postmodern’, and make the film a genuine symptom of a generation’s anxieties.

The climax of Luhrmann’s film, with its circling paramilitaries, helicopters, and journalists outside the cathedral, whilst within its hushed and sacred space is played out, to the strains of Wagner’s
music from Tristan und Isolde, a joint suicide for love, makes another point about intertextuality. Versions of Romeo and Juliet, whether on film or stage or in the pages of criticism, work within certain conventions of their own. In this case, we find multi-layered references to familiar tropes, from romantic opera to films like Bonnie and Clyde, numerous romantic thrillers, and the nightly televising of real-life ‘hostage sieges’. The points to be drawn are, first the inescapable influence of Hollywood tragedy of love on contemporary versions of the play, and more intriguingly, Shakespeare’s pervasive influence on Hollywood tragedy of love. In Romeo and Juliet he has made out of an earlier and unpromising source a true myth, the narrative of doomed young love, love in the face of parental disapproval or family/social conflict, which has embedded itself so deeply in our culture that we accept it as ‘natural’ and literally cannot see beyond its perimeters. The enduring and subtle cultural influence of Romeo and Juliet not only proves that Shakespeare has always been a popular writer, but also unnervingly suggests that he may have even invented every generation’s version of its own popular culture.

NOTES


1. For a history of this idea, including a long chapter on Romeo and Juliet, see Maya C. Bijvoet, Liebestod: The Function and Meaning of the Double Love-Death (New York and London, 1988).


3. A Quarto was a printed edition of a single play printed on ‘quarto’ size paper, while the ‘First Folio’ was a larger, handsome volume in which Shakespeare’s complete works were collected. The study of the relationship between these different texts is highly specialised and need not be explained in detail here, but for the interested, more technical detail can be found in the essays by Alan C. Dessen and Jay L. Halio collected in Jay L. Halio (ed.), Shakespeare’s ‘Romeo and Juliet’: Texts, Contexts, and Interpretation (Newark and London, 1995).
4. In a story again too long to be told here, different texts used to be explained as being either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ transmissions of a Shakespeare original, but nowadays it is widely accepted that they represent different versions, perhaps revised by Shakespeare or his company for different theatre venues.

5. New plays had to be inspected by the Master of the Revels who could insist on changes or deletions of politically sensitive material in plays, and there were some relevant laws, for example the 1606 Act which tightened the rules about what phrases and words were considered blasphemous.


12. See, for example, Yang Zhouhan, ‘King Lear Metamorphosed’, Comparative Literature, 39 (1987), 356–62, who compares two Chinese translations of King Lear and raises the particular problems of translating the word ‘nothing’, and how to adjust sympathy for Cordelia in a culture where ‘Filial obedience is as absolute as paternal authority’ (p. 358). See also the fascinating comparative anthropological study, ‘Love and Limerence with Chinese Characteristics: Student Romance in the PRC’, by Robert L. Moore, in Victor C. de Munck (ed.), Romantic Love and Sexual Behavior: Perspectives from the Social Sciences (Westport, CT, 1998), ch. 11: ‘the reduced emphasis of the Chinese on romantic love [as a rationale for marriage] can be seen as merely realistic compared to the Western viewpoint’ (p. 264).


18. Stephen Orgel in the section ‘The marriage contract’ in his article entitled ‘Prospero’s Wife’ comments very pertinently on Shakespeare’s presentation of courtship and marriage as quite separate states: ‘The wooing process tends to be ... not so much a prelude to marriage and a family as a process of self-definition’ and ‘[Shakespeare] seems to have expressed his strongest familial feelings not toward children or wives but toward parents and siblings’. He also points out that Juliet’s marriage at 14 in fact ‘is unusual in all but upper-class families’, a judgement supported by Barbara Everett (essay 8). Orgel’s article first appeared in *Representations*, 8 (1984), 1–13, and is reprinted in this series of New Casebooks on *The Tempest*, ed. R. S. White (London, 1999), pp. 15–31.


23. Shakespeare twice used this phrase to describe marriage, once in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and again in Sonnet 57.


26. Ibid., p. 20.


29. On this debate, and indeed all shades of opinion within feminist criticism, see the useful and exhaustive book, *Shakespeare and Feminist


32. CD-ROM, *Cinemania 5* (Microsoft).


34. For an aspect of this large area, see Timothy Murray, *Drama Trauma: Specters of Race and Sexuality in Performance, Video, and Art* (London and New York, 1997), esp. pp. 1–9, where Luhrmann’s film is used to illustrate cultural ‘traumatophilia’. I am grateful to Gail Jones for pointing out this essay.
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