

# KENNETH BURKE ON SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY SCOTT L. NEWSTOK

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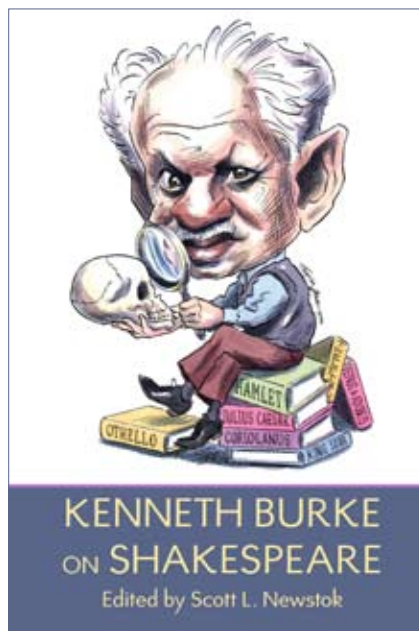
Age cannot wither Kenneth Burke's reflections on Shakespeare, which are as fresh, vital, and quirky now as they were when they first appeared. This volume would be worth having for the celebrated essays on *Othello* and *King Lear* alone, but it is particularly gratifying to find so many other remarkable displays of Burke's quicksilver mind.

—Stephen Greenblatt

This volume gathers and annotates all of the Shakespeare criticism, including previously unpublished lectures and notes, by the maverick American intellectual Kenneth Burke. Burke's interpretations of Shakespeare have influenced important lines of contemporary scholarship; playwrights and directors have been stirred by his dramaturgical investigations; and many readers outside academia have enjoyed his ingenious dissections of what makes a play *function*.

Burke's intellectual project continually engaged with Shakespeare's works, and Burke's writings on Shakespeare, in turn, have had an immense impact on generations of readers. Carefully edited and annotated, with helpful cross-references, Burke's fascinating interpretations of Shakespeare remain challenging, provocative, and accessible. Read together, these pieces form an evolving argument about the nature of Shakespeare's artistry. Included are thirteen analyses of individual plays and poems, an introductory lecture explaining his approach to reading Shakespeare, and a comprehensive appendix of scores of Burke's other references to Shakespeare. The editor, Scott L. Newstok, also provides a historical introduction and an account of Burke's legacy.

This edition fulfils Burke's own vision of collecting in one volume his Shakespeare criticism, portions of which had appeared in the many books he had published throughout his lengthy career. Here, Burke examines *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *King Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Falstaff*, the Sonnets, and Shakespeare's imagery.



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## KENNETH BURKE ON SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY SCOTT L. NEWSTOK

Of all the American "New Critics," Kenneth Burke has been the most interesting to critics and scholars in recent years. In gathering his writings on Shakespeare, Scott Newstok has done an invaluable service, not least because some twenty-five percent of the material is published here for the first time. Though Burke was far more than a literary critic, these essays bring out how important literary expression was to his ideas of human motives and possibilities. There is something for everyone here: even those most at home with Burke and Shakespeare will find surprises and fresh suggestions throughout.

—Paul Alpers, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

Scott Newstok's well-edited collection of Kenneth Burke's essays on Shakespeare is an authentic augmentation of the best modern criticism we have on Shakespeare. Burke, a superb rhetorician, confronts daringly the triple greatness of the greatest of all writers ever: cognitive power, linguistic richness, and a whole cosmos of persuasive women and men made up out of words.

—Harold Bloom, Sterling Professor of Humanities, Yale University

Kenneth Burke's insights into how Shakespeare's plays work -- as poetry, drama, and theater -- are as profound as Aristotle's insights on tragedy, Freud's on dreams, and Stanislavsky's on acting. What treasure, to have all this at last between two covers!

—Toni Dorfman, Yale Theater Studies

As my guides in reading Shakespeare, I name first Kenneth Burke, an American regarded by various of his fellow citizens as the equal of the most formidable literary minds of the American twentieth century, who wrote repeatedly on Shakespeare as well and as consistently as anyone might be thought to have done.

—Stanley Cavell, Walter M. Cabot Professor Emeritus of Aesthetics  
and the General Theory of Value, Harvard University

Age cannot wither Kenneth Burke's reflections on Shakespeare, which are as fresh, vital, and quirky now as they were when they first appeared. This volume would be worth having for the celebrated essays on *Othello* and *King Lear* alone, but it is particularly gratifying to find so many other remarkable displays of Burke's quicksilver mind.

—Stephen Greenblatt, Cogan University Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University

Kenneth Burke turns to Shakespearean drama to find some paradigm of true community. The relation of literature to politics, including modern political religions, from Puritan theocracies to totalitarianisms of Left or Right, is Burke's burden even when he seems to be literary in the most technical sense.

—Geoffrey Hartman, Sterling Professor Emeritus of  
English and Comparative Literature, Yale University

I have been inspired by the example of Kenneth Burke for his repeated emphasis on the inseparability of language, rhetoric, and discourse from political and social issues and for his failure to observe the decorum of a more restricted kind of literary criticism.

—Patricia Parker, Margery Bailey Professor of English and  
Dramatic Literature, Stanford University

Burke's marvelously inventive essays on Shakespeare's plays are too valuable a national resource to languish in the world out of print.

—William H. Pritchard, Henry Clay Folger  
Professor of English, Amherst College



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ON SHAKESPEARE  
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