

## Preface

*A play is not really a piece of literature for reading. A true play is three-dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes.*

(Boulton 3)

Every writer is influenced by the literature of his past. He finds an affinity with certain thematic and technical experimentations of earlier writers and disagrees with certain others. At the same time a writer is greatly conditioned by the age in which he lives. His intentions may swing between entertainment and didacticism but he writes with a purpose. If Shakespeare's aim was to entertain, there are others like Shaw and Ibsen whose avowed aim was to reform. A modern writer is a product of many forces, which is not to forget his individuality and uniqueness.

Homer's Iliad, Ovid's Metamorphosis and The Bible formed the source books for most Renaissance writers. The writings of Shakespeare also occupy a position of great importance. If Shakespeare is the most quoted of writers it is because he has seen, experienced and portrayed life in its entirety. There is no aspect of man that his dramatic genius has not captured for posterity. His themes range from the sublime to the ridiculous. The great classics have all undergone intertextual paradigm shift. But Shakespearean appropriations have become more popular than most others, significantly, because of the element of universality which is embedded in his works. Shakespeare's contemporaneity is

discernible in many significant aspects as well. He is our contemporary not only in his dramatization of still relevant aspects of human existence but also technical devices.

Many of Shakespeare's concerns can be seen reflected in the dramatists belonging to the latter half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Contemporary drama is concerned with the plight of man living in an age of technology and industrialization. The modern sensibility is as far removed from Shakespeare's as Shakespeare's was from the ancients. That is why Shakespeare took liberties with the ancients, because he knew that in order to communicate to his own audience, he had to adapt the works of Boccaccio, Marlowe, Holinshed, Kyd, Seneca, Terence etc. and even history itself. The modern dramatists also turned to Shakespeare just as Shakespeare himself had turned to the Greek and Latin classics. Though Shakespeare's views cannot be challenged, contemporary writers like Edward Bond, Charles Marowitz and Tom Stoppard felt the need to alter it to suit the changing times. By doing so they were actually reacting against the myth of Shakespeare. But, ironically enough, they ended up by helping to re-establish his cultural supremacy. With Shakespeare's plays, the audience knows what to expect, especially with regard to certain plays. This is because they are so well established, so often performed and so widely studied that they know what to expect. But the only way Shakespeare can speak to us is through the voices of the twentieth century actors and directors who are the messengers of Shakespeare's thought. There is no end to the meanings his plays generate - that is the glory of Shakespeare.

And each age is able to relate his plays to the concerns of the present day society.

This study focuses on three modern adaptations of Shakespeare's plays by Edward Bond, Charles Marowitz and Tom Stoppard-Bond's *Lear* (a subversion of Shakespeare's *King Lear*), Marowitz's *An Othello* (a subversion of Shakespeare's *Othello*) and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (a subversion of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*). Each has concentrated on different aspects of Shakespeare and reconstituted the plays to project other values. The Shakespearean Canon is enshrined but their survival depends on devising new offshoots from them. With every adaptation, these dramatists help to sustain the literary continuity of Shakespeare.

Chapter 1 - Introduction - gives a brief introduction to Literary Subversion as a branch of study, traces the development of Post-war British Drama till Marowitz and analyses critical theories related to Literary Subversion.

Chapter 2 - Demythologising *Lear*-analyses Bond's *Lear* and examines his contribution to contemporary dramatic literature. He is undeniably a part of an active and innovative period in modern British Theatre. Firmly committed to humanistic values, he is didactic in his intentions and conveys his own ideology and social vision through his plays.

Chapter 3 - Wrestling with *Othello*- recreates Shakespeare's *Othello* against a modern background. The issues of race and gender are viewed in the

light of contemporary sensibility. Marowitz has restructured Shakespeare so as to satisfy the demands of a modern audience.

Chapter 4 - Baffled Innocents in an Off-stage World - reveals the irony and brilliance that derives from Stoppard's placing two minor characters of *Hamlet* at the centre of dramatic action. He drives home his theme that humans are only baffled innocents in the greater scheme of things which are controlled by incomprehensible forces.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion - is a modest attempt to highlight the extraordinary generative power that Shakespeare, as poet and dramatist, has continued to wield over the course and growth of literature and language in the western world for over four hundred years.