

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INRODUCTION**

Annamma George. “Literary Subversion : A Study of Modern Adaptations of Shakespeare’s Tragedies by Edward Bond, Charles Marowitz and Tom Stoppard” Thesis. Research centre, St. Thomas College, Thrissur, University of Calicut, 2012.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

*The soul- life of a Shakespeare play is, indeed, a thing of divine worth. Its perennial fire is as mysterious, as near and yet as far, as that of the sun, and like the sun it burns while generations pass.*

(Knight 14)

Shakespeare's significance can hardly be over emphasized as a repository of a great culture. But more important is the fact that on account of the wisdom born out of rich humanity and his universal humanism, he has carved a permanent niche for himself in all great literary traditions. In a comprehensive account of a thoroughly romanticized Shakespeare, Coleridge claims that "he is of no age- nor I may add, of any religion, or party or profession. The body and substance of his works came out of the unfathomable depths of his own oceanic mind"(122).The permanent contemporaneity of Shakespeare's work has been hinted at more than once by Shakespeare himself. In Julius Caesar he writes:

How many ages hence

Shall this our lofty scene be acted over

In states unborn and accents unknown. (III.i.128-30)

What Shakespeare says of Cleopatra that 'age cannot wither nor custom stale her infinite variety' (II.ii.235-6) is, indeed, true of his own works.

Shakespeare's works are not limited to expressing the concerns and interests of a narrowly confined historical period. They have in them the potential for generating new meanings in successive epochs. Michael Bakhtin argues that there is something contradictory in the way certain works exist in ages far removed from the time of their composition. In effect, the works outgrow the meanings and functions for which they were intended and achieve new significance.

We may say that neither Shakespeare himself nor his contemporaries knew the 'great Shakespeare' that we know today...The treasures of meaning invested by Shakespeare in his works arose and accumulated over centuries and millennia - they were lurking within language, and not just literary language, but also in those strata of the popular language, which prior to Shakespeare, had not penetrated into literature...Shakespeare, like every artist, constructed his works not out of dead elements, not out of bricks, but out of forms already heavy with meanings, filled with them. (Bakhtin 4)

Shakespeare was a writer who was essentially in touch with the richest possible sources from a wide range of past cultural developments. His works

comprise a vast repository of lost voices that retain their potential to be heard with new force and cadence.

Helen Gardner explicates Shakespeare's enduring value according to a belief that his works are an abundant source of dependable intuitions about the most abiding aspects of human nature. Shakespeare's decisive role in the education of the young draws from the capacity of his works to rise above parochial interests:

The dissemination of knowledge and understanding of the past through its literature is a prime source of society's sense of its own identity and cohesion, something very precious without which it can become a mere ant-heap or beehive devoted to the increase of the Gross National Product. (Gardner 45)

Shakespeare is a possession we share with the world. His authority is connected to the ability of his works to symbolize the intricacy of social time and value in the successor cultures of early modern England. One of the significant aspects common to these successor cultures is the way individuals and institutions must continuously comply with the exigencies of a market economy. For there is no doubt that Shakespeare is one of the great show business success stories.

A comprehensive study of the complete works of Shakespeare might, however, prove that what lie at the heart of Shakespeare's plays are universal human experiences. The depth and mystery of consciousness that he has

spontaneously unfolded in the varied and captivating nuances of his plays have enthralled audiences round the globe for more than four centuries. In fact, each play presents a treasure of endless, unparalleled aesthetic experience.

Yet, as a dramatist his universality is strange as his artifacts are not fixed. Stanley Wells writes:

If Shakespeare is, in Ben Jonson's phrase, 'for all time' this is partly because he demands the collaboration of those who submit themselves to him....this is to some extent a feature of the medium in which he was working....A film, like a naturalistic painting, is closed, final of its age, a period piece. But plays go on growing and developing. They are capable of having a life of their own. (108-9)

Though the text of a play must be placed within the particular historical period in which it was first written, it is not bound to that period in terms of its life in performance. The dramatists do not have a complete authority over what is performed. Hence, dramatic texts are imperfect artifacts as the dramatist has no control over the final product of their drama. Therefore, the textual history of the plays may be different from the performance history.

Literary Subversion deals with new readings or versions of texts that subvert, distort, transform and destroy that which has already been established. Several people have tried their hand at intertextual readings, comparisons and

contrasts of various works and authors, but not many have attempted a study of Literary Subversion.

Works of Shakespeare have been an eternal source of inspiration not only to his contemporaries, the Elizabethans, and immediate successors, but also to post- modern writers. Several adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have made critics try modern, theoretical approaches like post-structural, deconstructionist, psychoanalytical, semiotic, structuralist, Marxist, feminist and cultural materialist criticism. Critics like John Drakakis (*Alternative Shakespeares*, 1985) and Michael Scott (*Shakespeare and the Modern Dramatist*, 1988) have tried to trace the influence or rather resistance of these modern writers to Shakespeare.

Recent theorists have argued that works are made out of other works. They are made possible by prior works which they take up, repeat, challenge and transform. This notion goes by the name of "intertextuality". A work exists between and among other texts, through its relation to them.

A notion popularised in the seventies by Julia Kristeva and other critics is intertextuality. This is a theory of literature which insists that writers never talk directly about the experience which people have of the world. All literature, according to Julia Kristeva, consists of texts, and all texts are reflections or reproductions of different versions of other, pre-existing texts. There is no such thing as "raw material" which the realists in the nineteenth and early twentieth century thought they were presenting to their audience.

Hence writing becomes primarily a reflection on literature itself. The intertextual relations of the text are never purely literary. Fiction draws not only on other fiction but on the knowledges of its period, on discourses in circulation which are themselves sites of power and the contest for power.

Every text is an inter-text. They are all, so to say, certain types of texts constructed like mosaics out of the text of others. Intertextuality has become a major term in literary studies and has been given various definitions by leading theorists and critics. It means “referring to or using some earlier work in the book that has presently been written” (Gaskill 43). One of the significant trends of the twentieth century has been a re-use of classical literature. The distinctions between the original source and the adaptations indicate revision of earlier literature and cultural texts in order to relate to the contemporary sensibility. “In the twentieth century, self-conscious use of a classic has engendered a strain of plays that might be identified as theatre of quotation” (Spencer 25). References to previous works of art are commonplace in architecture, painting and music, as well as in literature. This seems natural and also inevitable. In art, when the fact of evolution is taken into account, each new work of art carries within it the art of its predecessors. In the literary field also, works of literature are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works. Contemporary theorists view literary and non-literary texts as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. In order to make interpretations of the text or to discover its meaning, its relations should be traced. As a result, reading becomes something which exists between a text and all other texts to

which it refers and relates. The text then becomes an intertext when it moves out from the independent text into a network of textual relations.

The origin of intertextuality can be traced to twentieth century linguistics particularly in the seminal work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who emphasized the systematic features of language, which established the relational nature of meaning and themes of texts. Intertextuality also emerges from theories which are more concerned with the existence of language with specific social situations. Julia Kristeva's attempts to combine Saussurean theory with the Russian literary theorist Michael Bakhtin's theory of language and literature produced the first articulation of intertextual theory in the late 1960s. They considered all texts as reflections or reproductions of different versions of other pre-existing texts.

Ironically, intertextuality functions in two ways. On the one hand it creates a subversion or a critique of the text which it parodies, but on the other, it establishes a community of discourse among readers, and thereby marks a kind of interpretive continuity. With continuity comes the elitist pleasure of irony and parody. Irony can refer to the problems of postmodernity because today nothing really means what it says. When we become aware of the notion of irony and specific historical contexts, it becomes possible to trace irony back to earlier texts. Shakespeare's drama was once received as a sincere defence and representation of a pre-modern, well-ordered world. Such a reading was possible because of a widely shared notion about historical context, for the Elizabethan worldview was one of unquestioning belief and obedience to



ordained law. Today, Shakespeare is often read ironically, not as a writer who represented the standard worldview, but as a dramatist who displayed and invented that world view as a position to be questioned. Such new readings are possible because critics have re-created the supposedly original context. A text is never just what it says; it also displays the production and force of different ways of speaking. “The very practice of re-reading the past and of suspecting that all those texts that were once read as sincere might actually be critical of the power they describe, depends upon the structure of irony”(Colebrook 4). When we re-invent a context, it is possible that a text can be read as having a meaning other than what it says.

The word revisionism, within the Marxist movement is used to refer to the various ideas, principles and theories that are based on a significant revision of fundamental Marxist premises. The term is used by those Marxists who believe that such revisions are unwarranted and represent a diluting or abandonment of Marxism. The term has been used in a number of different contexts to refer to a number of different revisions of Marxist theory. Bloom’s *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revisionism* is a strange piece of work, whose chief virtues are not seen on the first or second reading. It exhibits a fierce intellectual struggle. Bloom challenges the dominant view of literary history that an author just receives or borrows a stock of topics and techniques from the writers preceding him. The relationship between a writer and his precursor is dynamic, conflicting- an affair of revisionism and misreading. Bloom claims that the conflicting process is not confined merely to poets and novelists, but

extends to the literary critic himself who struggles to revise what he reads in the light of his own sense of things.

Paul Lehmann, one of the best authorities on medieval parody, states that the history of medieval literature and its Latin literature in particular is the history of appropriation, re-working, and imitation of someone else's property. Thus all literary production according to Marxist Criticism entails certain specific raw material to be transformed, certain determinate techniques of transformation and a definitive product.

Literary raw materials are essentially said to be of two kinds. One is the specific historical experience available to a given writer, which is always ideologically formed. The other is the existence of previous writings, which, the writer may transform in an intertextual manner. These raw materials are never or easily pliable: they come to the literary productive process with specific degrees of resistance, particular valances and tendencies of their own. To the former belongs Literary Parallelism where no influence whatsoever can be traced. A good example is Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*. To this latter category belong subversions and parodies. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* is a parody on Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. Subversion is another form of Parody. But parody is to be distinguished from travesty because the textual transformation which it performs is done in a playful rather than a satirical manner. Pastiche on the other hand is similarly playful but works by imitation rather than direct transformation. In parodying one text, the

parody text holds up a mirror to its own fictional practices so that it is at once a fiction and a fiction about fictions.

Bloom's view on the anxiety of influence is most relevant in this context. The central principle of his argument is thus:

Poetic Influence - when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist. (Bloom 30)

Shakespeare is the largest illustration in the language of a phenomenon that stands outside the interest of Bloom's book. He belongs to the giant age before the flood, before the anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness. The main cause, though, is that Shakespeare's prime precursor was Marlowe, a poet very much inferior to his inheritor. Hence Shakespeare is the Titan figure who has caused this anxiety of influence on many who came after him.

No writer writes in isolation. The writer's and the reader's repertoire becomes essential in interpreting a work of art. Bloom establishes the point of view that every writer is consciously or unconsciously bogged by his

preferences and literary influences. However, this does not make a writer imitative. The force and vitality of a writer is proved by the dexterity with which he moulds his own work.

The post-structuralist critics employ the term intertextuality to disrupt notions of meaning while structuralist critics employ the same to locate and find meaning. In post structuralist theories, intertextuality reminds us that all texts are potentially plural, reversible and open to the readers' own presuppositions. It foregrounds ideas of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in the present day cultural life. However, the basis upon which many of the major themes of intertextuality are deployed takes us back to the Saussurean notion of differential sign. Authors do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of characters, images, way of narrating and even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and tradition. Subversive double voicing that speaks the language of tradition implies a second level of meaning that can alter the tradition from within. In reading literature we become aware that the signs deployed in any particular text have their reference to the literary system out of which it is produced. If a modern author presents a characterization of Satan, he is likely to have in mind John Milton's representation of Satan in his epic, *Paradise Lost*.

Allen Graham in his book, *Intertextuality*, says, "authors do not create their text from their own original minds, but rather compile them from free existent texts" (35). A literary text can no longer be viewed as a unique and

autonomous entity, but as the product of a host of pre-existent codes, discourses and previous texts. Every word in a text, in this sense, is intertextual and so must be read not only in terms of a meaning presumed to exist within itself but it can also be read in terms of meaningful relations stretching far outside the text into a host of cultural discourses. Intertextuality, thus, questions our apparent commonsensical notion of what is inside and what is outside the text, viewing meaning as something that can never be contained and constrained within the text itself. The place of intertextuality within the arts leads us naturally towards the issue of postmodernism. Dennis Lee has suggested that the “post-colonial has at its disposal various means of subverting from within the dominant culture such as irony, allegory, self-reflexivity, etc” (Hutcheon 90).

The primary concern and the comparative contextualization with critics like Bloom and Derrida might be an antagonistic poet-to- poet relationship. Traditional influence can step in, in order to ascertain both works and people and how these operate variously on one another. It is strategic in cultural ambits to ascertain how texts, meanings and utterances are designed to affect, effect and persuade. Influence redirects postmodernism forward from many pasts and their traditions. Intertextuality introduces a new way of reading which destroys the linearity of the text. Each intertextual reference is the occasion for an alternative reading. But an alternative is present only for the analyst.

Bloom’s account of intertextuality is concerned with motivation. People write in a culture where everything seems to have already been written, perhaps

in a better way. As a result there is no way of ever producing writing that is representational of the world. Bloom argues that Shakespeare is the most fictitious writer in history and we live out our life in images and figures which originated in Shakespeare's work. Shakespeare usurps the category of nature and functions as a constant source of our emotional and psychological lives.

Since cultural recycling is among the key dynamics of postmodernism, imitation should fare better. Imitation is not about breaks in a continuum, but about cyclical checks and balances. As a result, pre-modern versions are sure to return when the predominant mode of influence studies and postmodern anti-mimesis have reached the top. The counter movement starts from within, not outside it.

In cultural criticism, quotation also determines a central place and is the most condensed form of paradigm shift. It transmutes the context, form and meaning of the items both inside and outside the quotation marks. "To be or not to be" is undoubtedly Shakespeare, but it is not limited to the character Hamlet or to the play *Hamlet*. Its immense memorable form is just meant for parody. The more unusual postmodern response is to redirect by renaming. The three elements identified as essential to quotation are pithiness, aptness and extraction. Quotation creates word pictures or verbal images. Like quotation, allusion intensifies meaningfulness extensively rather than intensively. Allusion gathers up the many influences of the referent and navigates meanings to another area. It is parasitic. Consideration of quotation and allusion in

extended form will rediscover something of their dual part in generic enhancement itself.

The materialist critic assumes that literary texts cannot be understood in isolation. In fact, they acquire meaning only in relation to their historical contexts. The three most influential strands of materialism- Marxism, New Historicism, and Cultural Materialism interpret differently how we are to understand the notion of history. These three strands have applied their different premises to readings of Shakespeare, and what is more, they have repeatedly found the grounds for these premises in Shakespeare. Fredric Jameson has noted that

the encounter between Shakespeare and radical (or Marxist) criticism and theory is a two- way street: we find ourselves asking not merely what such critical theory has to tell us about Shakespeare...but also what Shakespeare has to tell us about radical criticism.(320)

Marx, a middle-class German exiled to Britain, devoted his life to analysing and strategizing against the social effects of industrial capitalism. He denounced the misery and suffering produced by the capitalist exploitation of the proletariat. His solution was Communism- a classless society based on common ownership of the economic means of production. The rudiments of a Marxist literary criticism entails an economic determinism in which literature

reflects the social and economic organization of the time and place in which it is produced.

Traditional Marxist criticism tends to deal with history in a generalized way. It voices conflicts between social classes, and clashes of large historical forces and relates it closely to the interpretation of a particular literary text. Much recent Marxist thinking on literature has been influenced by the French Marxist theoretician, Louis Althusser. The best-known British Marxist critic since the 1970s, has been Terry Eagleton, whose work has reflected many influences including that of Althusser.

Many Marxists rejected the socialist realist aesthetic so as to theorize literature's revolutionary potential. A good example is the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, who put forward the theory of epic theatre. Brecht's epic theatre tried to impress on its audiences how all behaviour is shaped by specific material conditions that can be challenged and transformed quite unlike naturalist drama, which present its characters' behaviour as the product of a universal, unchanging human nature. To this effect, Brecht made use of a device which he called the "alienation effect", which draws the attention of the audience to the fact that what they see on stage is a constructed literary image, not a natural reality. He found support for his theory in Shakespeare's drama, which frequently draws attention to the several social and theatrical conventions that shape its characters' behaviour.



Both New Historicism and Cultural Materialism tend to read Shakespeare's plays not in isolation but against other texts. But new historicism is American and Cultural Materialism British. The major difference between the two is that New Historicism tends to find containment; Cultural Materialism tends to find subversion. Cultural Materialism generally believes Shakespeare's plays to be genuinely subversive or at least capable of producing subversion. The issue of appropriation - of whether Shakespeare's plays belong to their own historical moment or can be appropriated for use in ours - becomes particularly keen in relation to Cultural Materialism. It presents itself as a way of using Shakespeare's plays to change the current political situation. With the publication of *Political Shakespeares* in 1985, this approach rose to prominence. Its editors, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, openly identified its leading approach as Cultural Materialism. The preface to the volume explains what Cultural Materialism means:

'Materialism' is opposed to 'idealism' ...Cultural Materialism therefore studies the implication of literary texts in history. A play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production - to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production... Moreover, the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years ago, for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare's text is reconstructed, reappraised, reassigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. What the plays signify,

how they signify, depends on the cultural field in which they are situated...

Finally, Cultural Materialism does not pretend to political neutrality. It knows that no cultural practice is ever without political significance... Cultural Materialism does not, like much established literary criticism, attempt to mystify its perspective as the natural, obvious or right interpretation of an allegedly given textual fact. On the contrary, it registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class. (viii)

Cultural Materialism gives a valuable understanding of the processes by which Shakespeare has acquired his present iconic status. This criticism opposes any attempt to pass off things which are the products of culture as inherent or natural. In fact, a key concept for Cultural Materialism is demystification. Yet another example of one of the most consistently provocative of the Cultural Materialists is Terence Hawkes whose book, *Meaning by Shakespeare*, implies that meaning is not something that is controlled by Shakespeare, but produced by us.

Although Shakespeare lived and wrote at a time when English merchantile and colonial enterprises were just beginning, four hundred years later both Shakespeare and colonization have left their mark on cultures across the globe. The historical interactions between Shakespeare and colonialism as

Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin state in the introduction to their collection of essays, *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* have been subjected to

...new and exciting critiques...[which]have shown how Anglo-American literary scholarship of the last two centuries offered a Shakespeare who celebrated the superiority of the ‘civilized races’, and, further, that colonial educationists and administrators used this Shakespeare to reinforce cultural and racial hierarchies. Shakespeare was made to perform such ideological work both by interpreting his plays in highly conservative ways (so that they were seen as endorsing existing racial, gender and other hierarchies, never as questioning or destabilizing them) and by constructing him as one of the best, if not ‘the best’ writer in the whole world. He became, during the colonial period, the quintessence of Englishness and a measure of humanity itself. (1)

This may as well imply that Shakespeare cannot be discussed without colonialism. Loomba and Orkin go on to suggest that

Political criticism of Shakespeare as well as of early modern England has begun to show, with increasing detail and sophistication, that it is virtually impossible to seal off any meaningful analysis of English culture and literature from considerations of racial and cultural difference, and from the dynamics of emergent colonialisms. (4)

The concept of hybridity is specially significant in the context of post-colonial criticism. This is what is produced by the encounter of the two cultures- that of the coloniser and the colonised.

Colonial masters imposed their value system through Shakespeare, and in response colonised peoples often answered back in Shakespearean accents. The study of Shakespeare made them 'hybrid subjects'. (7)

Post-colonial identities are dependent on a keen sense of having once been colonised and since we all live in a post-colonial world, Loomba and Orkin aver that any act of reading and performing Shakespeare in the later twentieth century generates multiple levels of hybridity(8). Re-readings of Renaissance culture and power opened up questions of colonialism and race in relation to Shakespeare. Colonialism which was once only a source material or backdrop for Shakespeare's plays like *The Tempest* or *Othello* became central to the plays' thematic and formal concerns, forming not a background but one of its "dominant discursive con-texts"(Barker and Hulme 198). Literary texts that circulate powerfully in our own lives, but which were written a long time ago, constantly mediate between the 'then' and 'now'. Several critics suggest that present day meanings of 'race' and 'colonialism' cannot be applied to the past. It is possible to think that blackness may not have been the most significant marker of race in early modern Europe.

The cultural landscape of an age is mainly reflected through art and literature and the techniques of presenting the same. In the literature of the late twentieth century also the complexities of the age are reflected in diverse forms, particularly in drama. Every great literary movement is the result of the encounter between sensitivity to the world and sensitivity to the literary tradition. The leading writers represent in their work, the various ways of stamping upon literature, the impress of contemporary life. The best works reflect a “harmonious relationship between feeling and form and a perfect balance between the idea which the artist wishes to express and the means he uses to express it” (Scott 2).

The perplexing complexities of human life and its conflicts are dealt in human terms in drama. In some way or other, the contemporary drama is concerned with the predicament of man living in the age of science and industrialization. It reflects the remarkable changes in theatre design and technology which occurred in the late twentieth century. Theatre has been found to be the most suitable medium for social comment more than any other art form. Michelene Wandor observes:

The changes in the theatrical landscape were themselves a part of a wider social and cultural transformation that not only produced new plays, but created a climate in which many of the traditional assumptions about the way theatre was made were challenged. (ix)

The contemporary history of the tragic absurdity of the human condition finds its intense expression in the writings of some of the contemporary playwrights. The drama of the past few decades has been engaged with the important issues of the day, the changes in world politics, the optimism for social change, changes within the theatre through the voices of women and ethnic writers. Several new dramatists had their first plays performed in the second half of the 1950s. Though these writers who include Beckett, Osborne, Whiting, Arden and Pinter differed widely in the content of their plays and in the techniques they used, they all combined to break with the upper middle class comedy and romantic fantasy.

Contemporary drama attempted to subvert the autonomy of art and its artificial separation from life and validate other neglected forms of cultural expression. It reflected the remarkable changes in theatre design and technology which occurred in the late twentieth century. The discontentment with the gap between the expected and the existing was one of the inspirations for new drama. The basic issues of the playwrights had a distinct family likeness and the younger dramatists and critics found a complete break in the conception of drama. Writing came to be bound with rewritings, adaptations, imitation and parody.

The theatre exploited the artistic reaction against the removal of theatre censorship, the proscenium stage and the two-way communication between the actor and the audience. They showed a devotion to the oppressed and a commitment to art which led towards political and social causes. The

revolution in theatre involved an upsurge of innovations paving the way for a variety of theatrical entertainment. A number of small theatres sprang up all over and they argued about what and whom the theatre was for and whether its forms should be preserved or challenged.

The impact of the post-war boom was also felt in the relationship between the economy and individual life and it generated a literature of socialist thought. World political events became more momentous and the world seemed to be moving towards socialism. There was a broadly shared opinion, that some form of socialism was going to be the answer to the inequalities and injustices that were apparent in the West. Art itself became the site of both creation and struggle. It was also used to convey a political message. All kinds of writers, including the new playwrights of the 1970s who were not consciously political, were affected by the climate of debate.

The modern theatre was characterized by new ideas, a new sort of language and a new type of philosophy which transformed the modes of thought. The plays lacked plot, development, characterization, suspense and even commonsense. They include plays written by Ionesco, Adamov, Pinter and others who testify that they have something to say in relation to the issues of the day. They formed part of a new developing stage convention and when judged by the standards of traditional theatre would certainly be regarded as outrageous imposters. Martin Esslin, in *The Theatre of the Absurd*, says: "If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and

motivation, these are often without recognizable characters...” (21-2). Instead, these plays present the audience with almost mechanical puppets. They have no fully explained theme, beginning or end. They do not hold a mirror up to nature, but are only reflections of dreams and nightmares comprising disjointed babbling. Their aims are different from those of the conventional plays and therefore use quite different methods.

Old and new voices made bold new choices against this backdrop. Playwrights like Wesker, Arden, Stoppard, Beckett, Albee, Ionesco, Orton, Pinter and Bond introduced certain dramatic patterns which were fundamentally similar. Yet, each of these writers was isolated in his own private world and each was different in his approach to source, form, subject and background. The twentieth century has witnessed an enormous expansion in experiment and innovation in European theatre. The epithet most suited to describe the modern stage is “eclectic”. To Allardyce Nicoll, “no era offers such a motley array of complex and confusing trends” (247). During the Elizabethan, the Restoration, and other periods there was considerable diversity in influences from without and in the flow of native theatrical currents but when compared with corresponding conditions in the early and mid twentieth century they must indeed appear simple and orderly. Modern drama in Britain is distinctive for its concern with different issues. The ideas explored in modern drama are those that are specifically associated with Modernism.

The two world wars could not but leave their impression on the theatres. Hence the modern drama of issues and ideas which emerged first in Britain can



conveniently be separated into three distinct phases: Britain before World War 1, Britain between the wars, and Britain after 1945.

The dramatist who stands as a kind of angular and erratically poised colossus over the whole theatre world from the last years of the nineteenth century on to 1940 and even beyond is George Bernard Shaw. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Augustan and Anglo-Irish Shaw was accompanied by another Anglo-Irish dramatist, Oscar Wilde, and together they established their plays on the London stage as a rich alternative to the mediocrity of much late-Victorian drama. Shaw once said that he wrote plays with the specific object of converting the nation to his opinions. His aim was to feed the intelligence of his audience with a diet of new ideas about society such as socialism.

The inter-war period in Britain can boast of no genuine theatrical innovation. A few notable plays which made their appearance during this period continue to be revived. Foremost among these are R.C. Sheriff's *Journey's End* (1928), J. B. Priestley's *Time and the Conways* (1937) and T.S. Eliot's verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). Eliot's play aroused enthusiasm and formed an important milestone in the long slow journey towards the resuscitation of the poetic drama.

The optimism with which people turned to the rebuilding of society after World War II, gradually gave way to anger. The establishment in 1956 of the English Stage Company and its presentation the same year of *Look Back in*

*Anger* by John Osborne is sometimes called the “renaissance” of British drama in the second half of the twentieth century. The play seemed to many to express their own pent-up feelings of anger and frustration. Its hero, Jimmy Porter, was tagged the “angry young man” and the play has subsequently been seen as a turning - point in the history of the modern British theatre. The excitement generated by Osborne's play had reverberations far beyond itself.

The success of *Look Back in Anger* prompted a new generation of writers to use the theatre to make statements about themselves and their society. It was the innovative Royal Court Theatre which was instrumental in furthering the development of new writing. Plays by Arnold Wesker and others centred around domestic life which were sometimes referred to as ‘Kitchen Sink’ drama. As quoted in Nicoll,

The first night of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court on May 8, 1956, was a turning point in the history of the modern British theatre. (330)

Osborne's plays set the trend. They made their impact in the theatre by their abusive wrath and self-centredness as well as by their shock tactics. Both these qualities are reproduced in Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen* (1959) and in his later ambitiously titled “*Wesker Trilogy*”, consisting of *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots*, and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1960). Other playwrights who followed suit were Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, Doris Lessing, Brendan Behan, John Arden, Shelagh Delaney, Alun Owen, and Stephen Lewis.

Of the new but equally talented group of writers who emerged in the sixties it was perhaps Edward Bond who made the greatest immediate impact. Edward Bond is the most fundamental and the most ruggedly potent dramatist writing today. His plays cannot be overlooked. This internationally acclaimed dramatist endures as one of the towering figures of contemporary British theatre. In 1965 his grim portrait of urban violence, *Saved* - in which a baby is stoned in its pram - aroused much admiration as well as a ban from the Lord Chamberlain. The uproar caused by the play was a major factor in hastening the abolition of stage censorship in 1968. His provocative plays which followed continue to arouse extreme responses from critics and audiences. Bond shares with Brecht the objective of provoking social action by exploring complex social and political concerns in his plays.

Yet another playwright who made his mark on modern theatre was the American-born Charles Marowitz who is critic, actor and director all rolled into one. This most controversial theatre director has been a regular columnist on Swans Commentary, the Cultural- Political bi-weekly since 2004. He is, perhaps, best known for being a close collaborator with Peter Brook at the Royal Shakespeare Company and for founding and directing The Open Space Theatre, both in London. This acclaimed stage director probes the mysteries of some of the more problematic plays in the Shakespearean Canon. As the Artistic Director of The Open Space Theatre, London's leading experimental theatre, he has mounted a number of highly innovative productions of Shakespeare seen both in Europe and the United States.

Among other powerful and original dramatists who emerged in recent years is Tom Stoppard who stands out from the rest in terms of popular appeal. He burst upon the English theatrical world at a critical juncture. As C.W.E. Bigsby points out, it was a time when British theatre had gone “Naturalist” and was showing a slightly heavy breathing concern for social “message”. But Stoppard was, particularly in those early years, a “self confessed aesthetic reactionary... [who] believes in the primacy of words” (3-4). In an article entitled “Something to Declare”, published in the *Sunday Times*, Stoppard confessed, “I burn with no causes. I cannot say that I write with any social objective. One writes because one loves writing” (47). In the revival which characterised the British stage from *Look Back in Anger* onwards, Stoppard's position is unique. His concern with the fusion of the intellectual and the visual elements of theatre is manifest in the range of his early creative activity. Parodist and wit, Stoppard's is a theatre as complete as anything since Ben Jonson, with whom he has much in common. He also shares much with other great Elizabethan masters as he professes to work for the “marriage of the play of ideas and ... high comedy” (Ambushes 3).

Bloomian criticism pivots around the theory of the anxiety of influence. Harold Bloom in his book *The Anxiety of Influence* talks of a sense of anxiety which was created in the consciousness of those people who came after the Enlightenment. The main cause of this anxiety was the poets' consciousness of his own belatedness. Added to this was the post-Enlightenment scholars' passion for Genius and the Sublime. Bloom says that in the history of criticism,

this anxiety of influence developed sometime between Ben Jonson and Dr. Johnson. For earlier critics like Ben Jonson art was merely hardwork. The more a later work imitated an earlier one, the better it was. But for the romantic poets who came after the renaissance, art was beyond hard work. As a result, the later poet inherited a melancholic temperament and suffered from a fear of indebtedness.

Thus the anxiety of influence is the later poet's fear of being influenced by an earlier poet. This earlier influence need not be a single work alone, it might be the entire body of work of a single poet or even the works of a number of poets. It is the poet's fear that no proper work remains for him to perform, that his work will be a mere repetition of what came before. "But poetic influence need not make poets less original; as often it makes them more original, though not therefore necessarily better" (Bloom 7). The Bloomian terms for this earlier poet who influences a later poet is called the "precursor", and the one who is influenced is called the "ephebe", which means apprentice. The precursor is also called the "fatherpoet" because the "ephebe" is initiated into poetry by this earlier poet. The first feeling of the ephebe towards the precursor is one of love and admiration which shows that he has totally accepted the precursor. This love for the precursor soon turns out to be a burden stifling the creative power of the late comer. In formulating the relationship between the two, Bloom draws an analogy with the Freudian Oedipus complex. This includes the guilt feeling and the unconscious desire of the son to get rid of the father. Similar to this in the Bloomian precursor-ephebe

relationship, the ephebe's desire is to get rid of the precursor's influence and be original. This includes Freud's notion of the child's desire to be self-begotten. But here the struggle is not between the two individual poets but between their poetic selves or poetic consciousness.

Bloom's theory of criticism is immensely indebted to Freud and to other psycho-analytic theories of criticism. Freud's concept of anxiety is productive for Bloom's work. That is not to claim that it is psychoanalytic. It does not participate in a literary critical object that adapts Freudian psycho analysis to the project of criticism. In this aspect Bloom's work differs from that of Lacan whose works make extensive use of psychoanalysis. Thus Bloom's incorporation of Freudian theories is not a simplistic adaptation of Freudian theories. As Peter de Bolla says:

For the anxiety a poet feels in the face of his precursor poet, is not something within him, it is not part of the psychic economy of a particular person, in this case a poet, rather it is the text. Thus, while a weak reading of anxiety remains within a theory of the poet as individual, a strong reading turns from the neuroses and anxieties we impute to individuals to a consideration of the result of those anxieties, the texts which may or may not be said to be the product of those anxieties. (20)

“Every young man's heart”, Malraux says, “is a graveyard in which are inscribed the names of a thousand dead artists but whose only actual denizens

are a few mighty, often antagonistic, ghosts.” “The poet,” Malraux adds, “is haunted by a voice with which words must be harmonised” (qtd. in Bloom 26). In order to drive home his point, Bloom refers to Oscar Wilde's remarks in *The Portrait of Mr W.H.* According to Wilde, influence is simply a transference of personality. It is a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense of loss. He adds that every disciple takes away something from his master. “This is the anxiety of influencing, yet no reversal in this area is a true reversal”(Bloom 6). Poetic influence need not make poets less original but makes it a study of the life cycle of the poet as poet (Bloom 7). Two years later, Wilde refined his bitterness in one of Lord Henry Wotton's elegant observations in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where he tells Doria that all influence is immoral

because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him.(28- 9)

The word “Influence” meant “having a power over another”. For centuries its root meaning has been “inflow” and its prime meaning that of an emanation or force coming in upon mankind from the stars. A force that was divine and moral but later it came to mean a secret power that exercised itself in defiance of all that had seemed voluntary in one.

Poetic Influence, as time has tainted it, is part of the larger phenomenon of intellectual revisionism. Blake remains the most profound and original theorist of revisionism to appear since the Enlightenment and an inevitable aid in the development of a new theory of Poetic Influence. "To be enslaved by any precursor's system," Blake says, "is to be inhibited from creativity by an obsessive reasoning and comparing, presumably of one's own works to the precursor's. Poetic Influence is thus a disease of self consciousness"(qtd. in Bloom, *Anxiety* 29). Like all revisionism, it is a gift of the spirit that comes to us only through the perversity of the spirit. One is reminded of Lichtenberg's grand remark that he liked to admire great men, but only those whose works he did not understand. He continues by saying that to do just the opposite is also a form of imitation, and that the definition of imitation ought, by rights, to include both.

Bloom further feels that anxiety of influence is not an anxiety about the father, literary or real, but it is an anxiety that is achieved by and in a work of art. Any strong literary work creatively misreads and, hence misinterprets a precursor text or texts. In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom claims that "an authentic canonical writer may or may not internalize her or his work's anxiety, but that scarcely matters: the strongly achieved work *is* the anxiety"(8). This has been expressed well by Peter de Bolla in his book *Towards Historical Rhetorics*:

...the Freudian family romance as a description of influence represents an extremely weak reading. For Bloom, "influence" is



both a tropological category, a figure which determines the poetic tradition, and a complex psychic, historical and imagistic relation. . .influence describes the relations between texts, it is an intertextual phenomenon . . .both interval psychic defense--- the poet's experience of anxiety---and external historical relations of texts to each other are themselves the result of misreading, or poetic misprision, and not the cause of it.(qtd. in Bloom,Canon 8)

“The nature of an influence” according to Charles Marowitz is “like a protein – it comes from without, gets ingested and then assimilated into one’s own bloodstream” (Roar xvi) Hence, he talks of an influence as something that seeps into the mind; like all intellectual influences, gets radically transformed and assumes shapes that their progenitor would neither recognize nor endorse.

Shakespeare’s influence cannot be confined to a particular age. It remains persuasive, and on our chaotic age, particularly on Joyce and Beckett. Both *Ulysses* and *Endgame* are typically Shakespearean representations, each conjuring *Hamlet* with a difference. It is increasingly shocking to observe Freud’s originalities vanishing in the presence of Shakespeare. Only a handful of Western writers can claim to have universality---Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes and perhaps Tolstoy. But where Shakespeare is concerned we can even go a step further and say that Shakespeare is synonymous with the Western Canon. Shakespeare is, according to Bloom, “the largest writer we ever will know, frequently” giving “the opposite impression of making us at home out of doors, foreign, abroad. His powers of assimilation and of

contamination are unique and constitute a perpetual challenge to universal performance and to criticism” (3). Bloom goes on to assert

...that depth of inwardness in a strong writer constitutes the strength that wards off the massive weight of past achievement, lest every originality be crushed before it becomes manifest. Great writing is always rewriting or revisionism and is founded upon a reading that clears space for the self, or that so works as to reopen old works to our fresh sufferings. The originals are not original, but that Emersonian irony yields to the Emersonian pragmatism that the inventor knows how to borrow. The anxiety of influence cripples weaker talents but stimulates canonical genius. (Bloom, Canon 11)

Shakespeare excels in his representation of human beings as also in his metaphor in suggesting new possibilities for language. These particular excellences have not been matched by anyone. As psychologist, thinker or rhetorician, Shakespeare surpasses all those who came either before or after him (Bloom10). Shakespeare, who wrote the best prose and the best poetry in the Western tradition, remained a problem for all those who came after him, And for this reason we must remind ourselves that Shakespeare, who hardly relies on philosophy, is more central to Western culture than are Plato and Aristotle.

Bloom believes in the fact that “all strong literary originality becomes canonical” (25). However, Shakespeare’s greatest originality is in the representation of character:

Bottom is a wistful triumph; Shylock, a permanently equivocal trouble to all of us; but Sir John Falstaff is so original and so overwhelming that with him Shakespeare changes the entire meaning of what it is to have created a man made out of words. (47)

His resources of language is matched by no other writer. In Bloom’s words “he perceived more than any other writer, thought more profoundly and originally than any other , and had an almost effortless mastery of language, far surpassing everyone, including Dante”(56). His command of language is overwhelming, though not unique. It is capable of imitation and is enough to testify to the contaminating power of his high rhetoric. The strange magnificence of Shakespeare is in his power of portraying human characters and personality.

Shakespearean representation of character has a richness about it that cannot be found in any other writer before or since. Each of his characters speaks with a different voice from the others. Johnson attributes this feature to Shakespeare’s accurate portrayal of general nature. We are only likely to be bewildered by his consciousness of reality. You may stand back from the *Divine Comedy* because the poem’s strangeness shocks you but Shakespearean drama is at once familiar and yet so rich to take in all at once.

Bloom makes a distinction between strong poets and weak poets. Weak poets idealize the work of their precursors, but strong poets appropriate it and make it their own. Strong poets invariably deny influence, and thereby they unconsciously reveal an anxiety of influence. Great poets like Goethe and Emerson believed themselves to be incapable of creative anxiety. In this respect only Shakespeare and Milton escaped being criticised by Johnson. Even Virgil was condemned as an imitator of Homer.

All through the years Shakespeare was made use of by various writers. Even when dramatists made a conscious effort to avoid echoes of Shakespeare, the influence persisted. Enough evidence remains to demonstrate a continual borrowing from *Hamlet* during the early seventeenth century. The influence of the play on Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster or Love Lies a-Bleeding* (1611) and *The Maid's Tragedy* (1619) is anything but obvious. Fletcher's *Valentinian* (1610-14) and the anonymous *Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611) also draws on Shakespeare for plot machinery. David L. Frost in his book, *The School of Shakespeare*, affirms that "no less than thirty-five of the fifty-two plays in the "Beaumont and Fletcher" Folio show some knowledge of Shakespeare" (238). On the whole, memorable episodes from *Hamlet* were imitated in several plays. The ghost scene in Gertrude's room, the graveyard scene and Hamlet's speech on the skull were a few favourites. In the early twentieth century Gordon Bottomley attempted to write two Shakespearean plays, *King Lear's Wife* (1915) and *Gruach* (1921) based on Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Though they all weave on a Shakespearean frame, they modify his outlook.

Among modern Shakespeare offshoots written between 1966 and 1970 are those by Charles Marowitz, Joseph Papp, Paul Baker – all Americans, and the Austrian Gerhard Ruhm. They collage *Hamlet* reordering lines and assigning them to different characters. Each of these offshoots is governed by a different attitude toward Shakespeare. Others are Brecht's *Coriolon* (1952) and *Round Heads and pointed Heads* (1969) based on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and *Measure for Measure* ; Arnold Wesker's *The Merchant* a clear sequel to *The Merchant of Venice* ; Marowitz's *An Othello* based on *Othello*, and John Osborne's *A Place Calling itself Rome* a subversion of *Coriolanus* to name just a few. It is against an idealized notion of Shakespeare as a sacrosanct culture hero that the character of Shakespeare in Edward Bond's *Bingo* takes shape. This is another evidence to show that the modern writers are not free from the influence of Shakespeare.

Echoes of literary subversion can be found in the field of novel too. A few noteworthy romances become interpretive revisions of the Shakespearean plays they invoke. A good example is Carla Kell's *Miss Grimsley's Oxford Career* which combines the themes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Measure for Measure*. Carroll makes use of *Othello* in her novel *The Lady Who Hated Shakespeare*. The most elaborate appropriation, however, is Michelle Martin's reworking of the plot of *Much Ado about Nothing* in *The Hampshire Hoyden*. This pitches Shakespeare's plays as precisely the stuff of the romance novel, and shows how readily Shakespearean references can be adapted to the purposes of the romance.

Among the many who have reimagined and retextualised *The Mahabharata* are Shashi Tharoor and M.T. Vasudevan Nair. Speaking in Bombay, Gunter Grass said that literature must refresh memory and that is exactly what Shashi Tharoor has set out to do in *The Great Indian Novel*. Tharoor himself declared that the novel is an attempt to retell the political history of twentieth-century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from *The Mahabharata*, one of our noblest heritages. Vyasa's *Mahabharata* remains a perennial source of delight and inspiration to millions in India. M.T. claims that in *Second Turn* he has not changed the frame work of the story put together by Vyasa. He has taken liberties with Vyasa's silence on some portions and read between the lines to expand on his pregnant silences. Bhima is one character in the *Mahabharata* who is generally perceived as all brawn and no brain. He is wrested out of the epic tradition and endowed with a raging mind and a tormented spirit. What ultimately emerges is a rereading of the whole of Mahabharata through his angle of vision.

Literature is full of such rewriting and the perennial newness of Shakespeare affords the researcher new angles, thus providing for literary subversion another channel to be explored.

The present study concentrates on three post-war playwrights who have written literary subversions of Shakespeare: Edward Bond, Charles Marowitz and Tom Stoppard whose plays *Lear* (1971), *An Othello* (1974 ) and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) are subversions of

Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1608), *Othello* (1604 ) and *Hamlet* (1603) respectively.

Writing in the twentieth century, Bond, Marowitz and Stoppard have deliberately chosen popular texts in order to rework on them their concerns and perspectives. Bonds' moral and social commitments are based on a Marxian ideology. His plays are probably the first literary works in English to display not a working class but a thoroughly politicized and whole-heartedly socialist, essentially revolutionary consciousness. For Stoppard the search for the vital truth of life is inextricably linked with humanism. Every human life for him, whether it be that of a king or an ordinary man, is poignant and relatively important within a social frame work. If for Shakespeare, Lear, Othello and Hamlet are exceptional heroes the same characters become transformed and transmuted into intentional marginal figures in *Lear*, *An Othello* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.