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The Institutionalization of Shakespeare Studies in the United Kingdom

Abstract: This essay is devoted to Shakespearean criticism in the UK between 1920 and 1940. I begin by examining the origins of Shakespeare study at Oxford and Cambridge, by figures such as I. A. Richards (1929) and William Empson (1930). I follow this by looking at F. R. Leavis and his journal *Scrutiny*, but I also trace his influence on his fellow Cambridge colleagues highlighting instances where they collaborated, as did Caroline Spurgeon with Arthur Quiller-Couch (the latter two co-editors of the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* series, 1921-1966) on the famous 1921 study for the British Board of Education entitled "The Teaching of English in England"—also referred to as *The Newbolt Report*, after the chairman of the committee, Sir Henry Newbolt.

Keywords: I. A. Richards, William Empson, Arthur-Quiller Couch, F. R. Leavis, *Scrutiny* Magazine, *The Newbolt Report.* Caroline Spurgeon

My essay considers the origins and institutionalization of Shakespeare studies and criticism in the U.K. I take as my starting point the first professorships in England devoted to the study of English literature, one at University College and one at King's College, both of which subsequently became London University. As Terence Hawkes explains, the teaching at University College "showed a practical bent appropriate to the utilitarian spirit which informed that college's ethos," while at King's College, "the emphasis was rather on moral matters, as befitted the Evangelicalism inspiring the college's founders." He concludes that these two different approaches "compete throughout its history in Britain as the opposed modes in which the subject is conceived" (Hawkes 1991: 928). I believe many of the same distinctions, as well as others such as national heritage and tradition, versus innovation inform the origins of the study of Shakespeare in the U.K.

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Before looking at the two most prominent educational institutions, Oxford and Cambridge, I want to begin with a governmental assessment at the time, particularly "The Newbolt Report" on the secondary school system. The mere fact that the government was enlisted to examine, and then propose solutions, to educational issues, particularly regarding Shakespeare, underscores my argument that this moment qualifies as an "origin" of Shakespeare study that still resonates in the 21st century. "The Newbolt Report," as Sarah Olive claims, "cemented" the "place of Shakespeare in [U.K.] schools" (1228).[1] Perhaps equally interesting is that these early educators and scholars tried to answer many of the same questions which are still current in Shakespeare studies a century after the Newbolt Report was issued, such as the deployment of the Bard in promoting national heritage, as well as the page-versus-the-stage divide; however, these origins almost all concur on one thing, that Shakespeare represents the apex of English literary studies.

Oxford

After graduating from King's College, and taking on various university positions, Walter Raleigh was chosen to fill the newly instituted Chair of English Literature at Oxford in 1907, while simultaneously composing the final drafts of a volume on William Shakespeare for the *English Men of Letters* series published by Macmillan. Raleigh's treatise on Shakespeare is an important but often overlooked work in the years leading up to the war, and his speeches, just as the war was ending, are equally significant. In the years between 1907 and 1918, Raleigh and his colleagues spearheaded numerous discussions concerning the content of English studies in university curricula—specifically their role in initiating, promoting, and embracing a new subject of scholarly study in English Literature, something never before attempted.

The *English Men of Letters* series, initially published in 1878 by Macmillan, assembled critical and biographical elements to produce a nationalistic march of English authors through the broader literary and non-literary world, all the while trumpeting their status as ciphers of a sanctified and sanctioned cultural mission. "Right from the start it was accorded semi-official status," proclaims John Gross, adding that "[n]o comparable series has ever come so close to attaining the rank of a traditional British institution" for both teachers

[1] Parts of this essay first appeared in *Shakespeare Between the World Wars: The Angelo-American Sphere*. (Palgrave, 2019). I want to thank their kind permission to reproduce some ideas and wording in this essay. In referring to the Newbolt Report, Hawkes claims its "spiritual father" was Matthew Arnold, and its "spiritual son" was F. R. Leavis (1991: 936).

and "conscientious students" (107). Yet even as the English empire was starting to shrink, the literary series continued to swagger along in spite of this fact (or perhaps because of it); attempting to capture minds of readers instead of miles of territory, its project was as political as it was critical. These attempts not only found a far-reaching audience both within and outside the academy, but almost all proponents settled on Shakespeare studies to be at the vanguard of these new programs. As Hawkes points out about the Macmillan series: "[o]ne of the great pinnacles of the enterprise, the jewel in its crown, was bound, of course, to be the volume on Shakespeare" (1986: 56).

Although the Shakespeare volume Raleigh was completing may have been intended to deliver the final conquering blow for the empire, Matthew Arnold and George Eliot had declined the opportunity for personal reasons. Decades later it was offered to Raleigh, surely a falling off in name recognition and literary prestige to the wider public, although his Oxford pedigree printed boldly on the cover may have made up some ground. Designed for multiple purposes, not the least of which was being an "adoptable" textbook for the soon-to-be increasing university student population, (many drawn from returning servicemen, and the newly literate middle-class), the books in the series sold widely, both in the U.K., and in the Commonwealth, and, most significantly, in the United States, a country which was highly-courted for its business market in the early years of the series. And as World War I broke out in the 1914, the series was heavily promoted in the U.S. hoping to secure and strengthen the political alliance and allegiance of the two countries. Indeed, the entry of America into the war "guaranteed the dominance of English as a world language," although before this point, German had been "the language of international science, of philosophy, of theology," yet it found itself "fatally weakened," after Germany's defeat in World War I (Hawkes 1991: 929). This profound move only accelerated the newly, but soon to be entrenched, study of Shakespeare in the U.K.

Raleigh's prominent portrayal of Shakespeare as a poet/philosopher of written words rather than as a practicing playwright for "fickle players" details the page/stage divide—an emphasis on readerly engagement that would continue throughout the earlier twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic. While Raleigh encourages a wide range of readers to "study" the "works," he champions solitary engagements with the Bard because they would surely prove to be more stable and more permanent than Shakespeare's "continued vogue upon the stage," which Raleigh dismissed as "the smallest part of his immortality," a proclamation obviously surprising to many current Shakespeare enthusiasts, as well as many of Raleigh's contemporaries (Raleigh 2).

Another key professor at Oxford, who furthered Raleigh's ideas, was George Gordon, who had been hired from the University of Leeds where he taught from 1913-1922 to become the Merton Professor of English Literature at

Oxford, a position he held until 1928. In his inaugural lecture, he addressed the "ill" state of his country and its national language: "England is sick … and English literature must save it. The churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still I suppose to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the state" (quoted in Eagleton, 20). During this time, he edited an edition of *Richard II* (1913), but perhaps even more to the point, in 1928 he published *Shakespeare's English* for the "Society for Pure English, tract 29," devoted to Shakespeare's vocabulary and as a means to elevate present-day rhetorical speech. In the same year he edited his book entitled *Nine Plays of Shakespeare* and later in life, he would publish books such as *Shakespearian Comedy and other Studies* (1945). The seeds of Shakespeare study planted by Raleigh began to blossom in a variety of ways.

Cambridge

In 1910, a Chair of English at Cambridge was established in memory of King Edward VII, and it stipulated the very precise nature of the position: "[i]t shall be the duty of the professor to deliver courses of lectures on English Literature from the age of Chaucer onwards, and otherwise to promote, so far as may be in his power, the study in the University of the subject of English Literature. The Professor shall treat his subject on literary and critical rather than on philological and linguistic lines" (qtd. in Tillyard 38)—rehearsing a similar debate between humanism and philology which had already begun at least a decade earlier in newly-formed research universities in the United States.

Appointed to this Chair in 1912, Arthur Quiller-Couch (known as Q) consolidated his new position in three ways: by being "intensely patriotic" to his country, intensely loyal to the Liberal party, and intensely opposed to "the German quasi-scientific approach to English" (Gross 187). Although the First World War has long been recognized as a major factor in the rise of modernism in English literature, as well as in the global arts in general, what has been less noted, as Chris Baldick reminds us, is "that the discipline of English Literary criticism—owes its own renaissance largely to the same catastrophe" of World War 1 (86). This was also the moment when departments of English were morphing from centuries-old methodologies of classical teaching to a more professionalized training ground in order to fill the demand for academic positions anticipating a post-war boom in student enrollment.

As Baldrick also notes, Q was not slow to announce his literary-critical credo, presenting it in his inaugural lecture in this form:

> I propose next, then, since our investigations will deal largely with style, that curiously personal thing: and since … they cannot in their nature be readily brought to rule-of-thumb tests, and may therefore so easily be suspected of evading all tests, of being mere dilettantism; I rebuke this suspicion by constantly aiming at the concrete … always seeking the author's intentions, but eschewing, for the present at any rate, all definitions and theories. (Q, 14-15)

Instead, he suggests that students follow the "Grand Style" of famous English authors, and he begins with three quotations from Shakespeare as examples of this Grand Style. The first comes from Viola in *Twelfth Night*: "I am all the daughters of my father's house / And all the brothers too," before reciting Macbeth's demands of the Doctor: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased / Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow…?, and he concludes with Hamlet's greeting to Ophelia, as she is reading: "Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered!" (15).

While he goes on to quote from Milton, Gray, and Keats, Shakespeare is cited first. Q later adds we can then say "why worry me with any definition of the Grand Style in English, when here, and here and again here—in all these lines, simple or intense, or exquisite or solemn—I recognize and feel the *thing?* (15). In the "Preface" to the collection of lectures, he claimed "Literature is not mere Science, to be studied; but an Art to be practiced" ("Preface").

Employing what Arnold had called "touchstones," Q also saw Literature, and specifically Shakespeare, as an instrument for a nascent nationalism: "the binding of class to class in common respect for the national heritage and all that was precious in it, against the threat of its destruction by the barbaric Hun" (Baldrick 82). With John Dover Wilson, Q would go on to edit the "New Shakespeare" series published by Cambridge University Press beginning in 1921, an updated collection of the plays intended to replace the earlier "Cambridge Shakespeare."[2] Even the title, the "New Shakespeare" series suggests the emergence—one might even say origin—of an innovative production of Shakespeare's texts.

But a new generation of Cambridge professors, such as I. A. Richards and his pupil William Empson, would challenge the notion that literature is not "mere science," as I will detail shortly. Richards, who would soon be instrumental in the transformation of the English "Tripos" at Cambridge, was residing in Clifton at this time suffering from a "near-fatal" bout of pulmonary tuberculosis. Although he was held out of school for a time, he was about to return to the town's Upper School the following year, when he would change his focus from the "Classical Side" to "the Modern Side of the Curriculum" (Russo 5).

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[2] As Wilson would later note, "For some reason or other, the War (WW1), acted as a stimulus to the study of *Hamlet*" (1935: 14).

The two major characteristics of Q's and Raleigh's writing—Shakespeare as poet as opposed to playwright, and Shakespeare as the historical, patriotic, and national Bard—represented two threads often tangled in Raleigh's and Q's era which could only be unraveled by a new "disinterested" and allegedly "scientific" process. Moreover, if the older generation were ineligible to perform their patriotic duty at the front, they were more than capable of striking a blow at the Teutonic threat at Cambridge. In an academic variation of Julius Caesar, "conspirators" in the department were hunted down, and assassinations performed, only this time it was professional reputations which were wounded. Most significantly, Professor Braunholtz, a Romance philologist in the department, and Professor Breul, a naturalized British citizen who taught German and lost a son fighting for the British side, were suddenly treated as outcasts. The de facto demotion of the two professors precipitated the final victory by clearing the way for "the introduction of an English course virtually free of philology" (Baldick 89). Although Raleigh, still at Oxford, was consulted on the plan to introduce the new subject of English literature, he appeared reluctant to embrace such a "radical" idea, so the project became institutionalized and fell to the people and programs at Cambridge to unshackle English study from the "Teutonic yoke" (89).

I. A. Richards and Shakespearean Criticism

John Paul Russo, Richards' most prominent biographer, focuses on similar influential events but does not specifically connect them to Richards' literary theories. His "own severe case of tuberculosis when he was only fourteen, and two more attacks and year-long convalescences within a decade" emerged as the "personal trauma of his youth," claims Russo, and "World War I was to be its great shaping public event" (14). By slightly changing the focus of these events noted by Russo to understand Richards' literary criticism, generally, and his comments on Shakespeare specifically, in the light of these both personal and public events, I argue that Richards was trying to erase any broader vision which might reveal the still visible horrors of the worldwide conflict or remind him of his own disability.

As he once explained to Russo, he moved to "the study of the moral sciences because he 'just couldn't bear history'; that too much of it 'ought not to have happened'; that he always looked ahead, 'even now,'" when the interview was conducted in 1972 (Russo 1976: xxiii). I would also suggest that his failure to confront the trauma of war is not wholly unrelated to his limited engagement with Shakespeare. As Richards sought to avoid any widespread or public debate about the central canonical figure in English literature, he also seemed particularly averse to the patriotic bard evoked by Raleigh and Q, the national

symbol used to justify sectarian violence. Even if Richards' comments on Shakespeare are scattered and never create a cohesive or comprehensive theory, they do form a curious commentary that almost comprises an organized body of work; however, his comments on criticism in general, as well as his references to Shakespeare's status, present theories worth consideration, even if many Shakespeare handbooks fail to provide an entry for him.

After going up to Magdalen College on a small scholarship in 1911, Richards suffered from another onset of tuberculosis and did not return to Cambridge until the 1912-1913 school year. After returning to campus, he began preparing for his examinations in his major, the Moral Sciences, which included courses in logic, psychology, ethics, and philosophy. He later admitted, though, that he had been reading literature of every kind, including Shakespeare and even some modern novelists, indeed "everything except philosophy," until he decided to cram three weeks before the exams in June 1915 (Russo 47).

By the spring and summer of the same year, Richards struck up an acquaintance with Mansfield Forbes (1889-1936), a youngish and well-liked Professor of History at Cambridge. In his first meeting with Forbes in an official capacity, Forbes was so impressed with Richards' literary acumen that he suddenly offered him a "'job teaching English' as a 'freelance' or 'recognised lecturer' who were of 'inferior grade'" (Russo 66), according to Tillyard, a type of adjunct instructor, which meant Richards could "collect fifteen shillings from anyone who came to his course six times," a payment based on enrollment (Russo 66; Tillyard 32). "To be appointed as a lecturer" as Joan Bennett adds, "required no defined qualifications, such as a Ph.D. or published works," but she describes Richards' lectures as spell-binding because students "could not fail to notice … that he was breaking new ground" (47; 49).

While preparing to present his first series of lectures, Richards kept Forbes constantly apprised of his interests and potential topics. Writing that he had "thoroughly fermented [his] general theory of criticism," he noted his focus had narrowed to one issue: "the conditions of 'standard' reading," meaning a single interpretation of a literary work. Although readings would obviously differ over time and space, Richards felt "there must be a standard reading which is what we refer to when we speak of 'Hamlet,' and not of my 'Hamlet' at breakfast this morning" (qtd. in Cary 147). In other words, he sought to discover some steadfast interpretation which an "ideal reader" would find (148). He also explained in the same missive that he planned to break with tradition by avoiding any "historical questions" in his lectures (Cary 147).

This early and very "frank admission of his distaste for history," would, as we know, become a dominant characteristic in his most influential works between 1914-1940 (Russo 67). In the next letter to Forbes, Richards noted that he was "getting a lot of fun out of detailed criticism," adding that he had "just discovered how good 'Othello' is" (qtd. in Cary 148), which he planned to use

instead of *Hamlet* for his first lecture, now entitled "What we refer to when we speak of 'Othello'" (148). These lectures were to become part of the Richards' legend, supposedly so packed that the students spilled into the streets. Both Muriel Bradbrook and William Empson attended them, and as Empson would later recall, "more people would at times come to his lectures than the hall would hold, and he would then lecture in the street outside; somebody said this had not happened since the Middle Ages, and at any rate he was regarded as a man with a message" (qtd. in Brower, Vendler, and Hollander, 73). The search for a "standard reading" emanating from an "ideal reader" squares with Richards' ongoing quest for some "order" or stability, and I concur with John Fekete that Richards' "theoretical center of gravity" was always intertwined with the "problematic of order" (25).

Richards' book *Science and Poetry* (1926), which followed *Principals of Literary Criticism* (1925),[3] announced his search on the very first page of the very first section, entitled "The General Situation," when he declares that humankind's "prospects are not at present so rosy that he can neglect any means of improving them," including poetry but not, as we will see, automatically excluding science (1). While part of this idea directly descends from the Arnoldian notion of "the therapeutic capacity of literature to make the individual mind whole" (Taylor 2001: 23), the addition of rigorous inquiry in literary studies is a startling break not only from Arnoldian ideas, but even from more recent ones such as Raleigh and Q.

What Richards and his followers opposed was the "character criticism" of the late Victorian scholar A. C. Bradley's, promoting instead "a view of the plays as structures deploying depersonalized 'themes' in which opposed concepts (such as appearance and reality, disorder and order, death and life) present a moral or political scheme in general rather than particular psychological terms," the ebb and flow which shapes our daily existence (Hawkes 1991: 936). "The major gain of this sort of reading," which Hawkes calls "a sort of 'un-theorized structuralism,'" lies in its recognition of the Shakespearian text as precisely that: a text" instead of a "guide to the author's stage of mind, or the psychological make-up of the characters involved" (Hawkes 1986: 290).

It is also worth noting that in an appendix buried at the end of the first edition of *Principles of Literary Criticism*, he also employed Shakespeare to defend T. S. Eliot against charges of ambiguity, this time to counter those who

[3] Both *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1926) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) were companion volumes that he used to develop his critical method, and both were based on experimental pedagogy: Richards would hand his students poems in which the titles and authors' names had been removed and then use their responses for further development of their "close reading" and analytical skills.

condemned *The Waste Land* for its allusive saturation: "[t]he work offends against the most elementary canon of good writing," Richards begins by challenging pedantic critics who state that "the immediate effect should be unambiguous." Richards counters, however, with a simple question: "What would happen, if we pressed it, to Shakespeare's greatest sonnets or to "Hamlet"? The truth is that very much of the best poetry is necessarily ambiguous in its immediate effect" (*Principles*, "Appendix B," 1926). This concession by Richards, although almost hidden in his appendix, would lead his student William Empson to champion the multiplicity of poetical interpretation, an original idea that is still prominent, if not celebrated, in Shakespeare studies even today.

William Empson and Ambiguity

While Empson's transfer to the English Tripos at Cambridge in October of 1928 was lamented by his supervisor, Arthur Ramsey, Master of Magdalene College, and tutor in mathematics, due to Empson's analytical acumen, his study of numbers obviously served him well in his new focus on literature. Once he was assigned to Richards as his new supervisor, he made an almost immediate impression on his professor. "At his third visit," according to Richards, Empson "brought up the games of interpretation which Laura Riding and Robert Graves had been playing" in their 1927 book, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry,* a method which consisted of generating multiple meanings for various lines of poetry (Richards 1940: 7).

Prompted by such innovative interpretations, Empson carried with him to the meeting an unpunctuated form of Shakespeare's sonnet 129, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame." Almost as soon as he arrived, according to Richards' account, Empson took the "sonnet as a conjurer takes his hat," and quickly "produced an endless swarm of lively rabbits from it," numerous interpretative possibilities which continued, not unlike the rabbits in Richards' analogy, to rapidly multiply (7). Empson then turned to Richards and slyly asked, "You could do that with any poetry, couldn't you," to which Richards wryly replied, "You'd better go off and do it, hadn't you?" Richards would also recall that such an enthusiastic inquiry by his new student "was a Godsend to a Director of [English] Studies," in spite of, or perhaps because of, Richards' ongoing commitment to find a standard reading for literary works (7). In a week's time, according to Richards, Empson returned "with a thick wad of very illegible typescript" (7) consisting of some 30,000 words, which would soon become the oft-cited *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (*STA*). This work by Empson, perhaps even more prescient than Richard's "practical criticism," remains as another origin point not only for the study of Shakespeare's poetry, but also his dramatic works, something Richard's had little use for except in

isolated soliloquies he critiqued as stand-alone pieces, just as the New Critics in the U.S. attempted to do.

Like a scientist adjusting the magnification of her microscope to narrow the view, Empson adjusted his instrument to focus on Shakespeare. While most readers seemed to believe "Shakespeare can only have meant one thing," he suggested instead that the reader "must hold in mind a variety of things he may have meant, and weigh them, in appreciating the poetry, according to their probabilities" (81). This juggling act in the reader's mind, a sort of literary theory of relativity, was complex enough to be granted almost equal atomic weight with the text itself. He also confessed that he, too, had formerly fallen back on the "either … or," proposition when critiquing literary passages, although actually meaning "both … and." Moreover, Empson's awareness of a parallel but radical "shift" in the theory of "atomic physics" which attempted "to attach the notion of a probability to the natural object rather than to the fallibility of the human mind" now provided him with a scientific basis for his work (81).[4] In other words, like the discovery that "a hydrogen atom may have two different energies at once," explains Jonathan Bate, Empson "demonstrated critically that a text may have two contradictory meanings at once, something impossible under previous literary theory" (315; 314); in his recent biography of Shakespeare, Bate even refers to Empson as "discover[ing] the twentieth-century Shakespeare"—a Shakespeare that would proliferate beyond Oxford and Cambridge and be presented to students for decades, not only in the U.K. but globally (302).

In the passage which follows his admission, we see Empson subtlety applying his Freudian theory to explain traditional editorial procedures in writing about the Bard: "[t]he conservative attitude toward ambiguity is curious and no doubt wise," Empson sardonically begins, for "it allows a structure of associated meanings to be shown in a note, but not to be admitted" in the text itself; in other words, it remains a subterranean suggestiveness rarely brought to the surface of the Shakespeare text by editors. Empson even implies that earlier, perhaps elitist editors, thought it "best not to let [the reader] know that he is thinking in such a complicated medium" (81). In simpler terms, editors would instead choose for readers a single meaning for most words, lines, or phrases in the text, while burying the multiplicity of meaning in the footnote graveyard at the bottom of the page. While Keats, of course, had proposed a century before Empson that a first-rate intelligence could hold contraries to be both true, without "any irritable reaching after fact & reason,"[5] the new scientific theories provided Empson with a workable principle which he repeatedly promoted in his work.

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[4] My citations are to the 2nd edition of *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, published in 1947.

[5] Keats qtd. in a letter to his brother Tom in 1817. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100227203/. Accessed 20 April 2023.

But what is even more striking to me is that unlike Richards, (or for that matter most of the New Critical tribe), Empson realized that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be staged for a public gathering, not to be studied in isolation while looking for patterns of meaning. In preparing us for this point, Empson first grounds the assertion in scientific fact by explaining that the "mind has compartments holding opinions and modes of judgment which conflict when they come together," and one becomes immediately "conscious of anything that mixes them up," as the brain, in basic terms, senses significant cognitive dissonance (*Seven Types*, 114). Surprisingly, however, Empson declares that "the most exciting and painful use" of such conflicting conditions come not in Shakespeare's poetry, as we might expect, but instead in the "scene at the end of *1 Henry IV*, where Falstaff, Harry Percy, and Prince Henry (natural gusto, chivalric idealism, and the successful politician), in a series of lightning changes, force upon the *audience* in succession their mutually incompatible views of the world" (emphasis mine, 114; 116).

In his final year at Cambridge, Empson became a reviewer for *Granta* (the Cambridge magazine), and almost immediately after Empson changed his major to English, he reviewed a production of *As You Like It* for the journal, defending Shakespeare rather violently against unwarranted editing. Because he felt "the guts" had been "taken out" of the play by the director, Terrence Gray, Empson chastised him for cutting the "dramatic poetry" of the comedy, calling it an "extraordinary" example of "castration" (The *Granta,* 16 November 1928: 120). His evaluation also fell back on one of the "either … or" and "both … and" dilemmas, but this time applied to a dramatic production. Complaining that, while not anticipating a great deal from the production, his "ear was still expecting to hear [Shakespeare] said both as if it was poetry and as if the meaning was of some importance" to the plot, a comment which neatly encapsulates even today one alleged debate between actor and academic (Empson in The *Granta*, 89-91).

Over the next three decades, Empson wrote a number of essays on Shakespeare; some of the more prominent were "Dover Wilson and *Macbeth* (1952); and a second challenge to Wilson called "Falstaff and Mr. Dover Wilson" (1953). Also in 1953, he penned "Hamlet When New," and near the end of his life in 1979, he published a review in *The London Review of Books* that critiqued the Arden edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ed. Harold Brooks) called "Fairy Flight in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." In the first two of these works, Empson challenged the editorial techniques of Dover Wilson and admitted that while "his essays have an air of attack" on Dover Wilson, he is merely showing cases where "he has slipped back into taking sides between two viewpoints instead of letting both be real" (Empson 1986: 37), surely a point with which most 20th-century Shakespeare scholars would agree.

Equally significant, back in the years just after Empson's expulsion from Cambridge and the publication of *STA*, a new journal, *Scrutiny*, was taking shape

which would promote a different agenda, (but one that might also be termed "propaganda" by its critics),[6] during the short cessation of world conflicts when it first appeared in 1932. While Empson and Richards were not central members, both contributed essays and both were critiqued in *Scrutiny* magazine in part because the journal was founded by their associates, also Cambridge graduates of the new Eng. Lit Tripos. The inaugural issue sounded its major themes in an essay entitled "The Political Background," when it declared that the two most prominent issues of the day were "war and capitalism"; however, Shakespeare soon became an equally important topic particularly during the journal's "pre-war phase," not only in sheer numbers but also in critical influence (Mulhern 136). Of all the contributions related to "the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," over one third of the critical essays and almost two thirds of the reviews were related to Shakespeare, supporting my claim, via Mulhern, that the poet/playwright provided a "central preoccupation in this chronological area" (136).

For many of the contributors to *Scrutiny*, Shakespeare formed the playing field on which any new critical battle would be waged. It seems clear that this focus resulted from the Bard's position as not only the "pre-eminently" English writer, but one who also "embodied the full moral potential of the national literary tradition" (136). Because L. C. Knights was one of the journal's founders (actually co-editing the journal before F. R. Leavis), it seems apt that readings and interpretations of Shakespeare would dominate the collections; in the eight years leading up to WW2, it was not only Knights who wrote on Shakespeare in the journal but also Leavis himself, as well as Muriel Bradbrook and other Shakespeare specialists. Since the story of *Scrutiny* has been elegantly narrated by Eric Bentley (1964), Mulhern (1979), and most recently by Christopher Hilliard (2012), I want to conclude by turning my attention to the lower-level educational institutes which participated in the origins of Shakespeare study on a parallel, yet more populist, track.

Government Institutions

Basic education for the majority of the English population remained irregular at best until the early twentieth century. Andrew Murphy describes how the Sunday School movement, first set up by Robert Raikes in the 1780s, led to more extensive networks of charitable schools through which the children of poorer families could gain some literacy skills, alongside an education in

[6] Although Mulhern suggests that "little space was given to official propaganda," some essays focused on it including D. W. Harding's "Propaganda and Rationalization in War" (4.1.[1934-35]).

Christian values (30-35). While the Bible formed the main focus of this schooling, cheap anthologies of other texts were increasingly used. Murphy also declares that from around the 1860s, "quotations from Shakespeare become a standard element of the reading books, with certain passages establishing themselves as absolute staples of the schoolbook repertoire" (50).

At the turn of the century, The English Association (U.K.) was founded (1906) and one of its first publications was a pamphlet on "The Teaching of Shakespeare in Schools," which was published in 1908, a pamphlet which regarded Shakespeare as "the supreme figure of our literature" (1908: 2). As compulsory education for all took hold with the Fisher Act of 1918, whole texts became more widely studied, and in the new world of mass education, Shakespeare was centrally set in a hierarchy of literary texts, second only to the Bible. At about the same time, Quiller-Couch, whom we met earlier, produced a series of editions of Shakespeare for secondary schools in the 1920s, which included an "acting appendix" consisting of advice on creating a school production of a Shakespeare play, but he limited his suggestions to considerations of declamation rather than interpretation or political nuances.

In 1921, "The Newbolt Report" (entitled *The Teaching of English in England*) was published[7] and "cemented" Shakespeare's status in pedagogical fields—it again gave prominence to two texts, the Bible and the works of Shakespeare, just as the Fisher Act of 1918 had. The report is generally regarded as a forerunner to the age of child-centered learning, and stressed the need for English to be enjoyable, but also continued to emphasize the universal values found in great literature and considers in prescriptive detail how best to teach Shakespeare. While admitting that Shakespeare's language is difficult, almost "an unfamiliar tongue in modern society," the Report concludes that teaching Shakespeare in the school system is warranted because of his "wonderful power of retelling a story in dramatic form": it admits that his "incomparable mastery of word music" should also be applauded (Newbolt 313).

As the Report makes clear, and as Q's edition of the plays which banished "acting advice" to appendices at the conclusion of his editions in the 1920s demonstrate, the bias toward reading Shakespeare and only a nod toward dramatic productions of the plays were one that began during the origins of Shakespeare studies and continued till the last quarter of the twentieth century when multiple approaches to Shakespeare appeared—including Performance

[7] Commissioned by the Board of Education to enquire into the state of English teaching in England at all educational levels. Since the turn of the century, significant developments had taken place in the provision of English at a tertiary level. The 1921 Report reflected back on this progress, and the majority of the Newbolt panel were also members of the English Association, including Caroline Spurgeon, Arthur Quiller-Couch (Q), J. Dover Wilson, Henry Newbolt, Chair, and four other members. They met on forty-two days, and a sub-committee met on eighteen days.

Criticism, among others. In addition, the reading of the plays as long poems, which characterized the earliest studies of Shakespeare, such as Richards (and the New Critics in the U.S.), were also finally laid to rest at about the same time in the U.K. The hundred years or so between the earliest Shakespeare studies and our current take on the Bard contain echoes and reverberations, if not outright challenges to the original scholars I began with in this survey. As Empson might reminded us, however, an "either / and" approach to Shakespeare studies always trumps an "either / or approach." Shakespeare's words and works contain multitudes of meanings and so should our critical approaches.

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