

SHAKESPEARE, THEATRE & TIME

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“Time And Tide Waits for None” a very famous saying since decades. It depicts the ever-changing and uncertainty of the element “Time”. Though there are still many unending argumentative debates, no such proper conclusion has yet been derived, about the stability and existence of the much known element. Relation of Time with Theatre and Art is quite influential and a topic of debate forever. Time always existed, its presence has always been realised. Literature, Art and Artist live, though they are not physically present, their works live, and great people live in their works. Accepting the fact, that many great scholars and genius mind proposed many researches and conclusion of time playing a role in different aspects. But the element is yet to be understood completely.

The book *“Shakespeare, Theatre, and Time”* by Matthew D. Wagner, brings into light the glorious period of Shakespeare and Stage. Time playing a major part at every instance. Elucidating the relationship between different phases of time, it also includes the point, suggestions and concepts presented by many different authors. According to the author of this book, more specifically, theatre sharpens our awareness of different, often conflicting schemes of time, and of the ‘thickness’ of the present, past and future. Aim of the author is to

persuade the reader of the veracity of the claims of the book. He employ here a methodological mix of argumentative and descriptive criticism.

The introductory chapter "*First Breath*" includes the emphasis on Shakespeare's theatrical significance of that age. The chapter also includes contents of Ricardo Quinones criticism on 'three basic conceptions of Time emerge' in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Dissonance and Thickness are the two chief traits of theatrical time of that age, and that's according to the author comes from Shakespeare's plays itself.

In the second chapter "*Time and Theatre*" it continues with the dissonance and thickness characteristics of time. Varying from a phenomenological perspective on time in human experience. Criticism and terms from Edmund Husserl's are also mentioned, terms like objective time and subjective time-consciousness have been used. Example of characters from Shakespeare's play "*As u like it*" "for better understanding of absence of clock but presence of time. Author's argument with Husserl's philosophy, makes it much more interesting to continue with the upcoming terms. Descriptions of many more critics have been mentioned, that talks about kinds of dissonance in the theatre. Therefore, the conception of theatrical time as being characterized first as dissonant, and second as a present moment that contains powerful elements of past and future, and specifically of the birth and death. Shakespeare's era theatrically in England contained the above characteristics, otherwise his culture was much more concerned in presenting the end. It is important to note in this chapter that Richardson's work offers more of a literary perspective than theatrical one, though he does writes insightfully of time on the stage. But his theoretical frame is that of time in dramatic literature, and more broadly of an exploration of time and narrative. Hence the author use here his term 'drama', to mark a distinction from terminology of theatre that he have been employing so far.

The author, in the third chapter "*The Bodies of Time*" brings on the iconographical representation of time and conventional image of time. Mention of influences of Renaissance on the very opinions of time and theatre. Illustration of "Frontispiece to Thomas Blundeville's *a brief and Most Plaine Description of Maister Belgrave His Astrolabe (1594)*."The image promptsnot only the conception of time as both mortal and divine, illuminating each side of that temporal coin, Also the sense of participation in both of those temporal mode. Another distinctive image illustration of Titan, *Allegory of time governed by Prudence (c.1565)*. Offers a different picture of time, one which, like the Blundeville, is more

than slightly dependent on an accompanying text. More in terms of considering the multi-directional temporal overlook of element in those periods, gave a much more vague ideas of existence of any specific ideology. It is thus through the human being, and the human faculty of human prudence, that time is governed. Image illustration of Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Ambassadors* (1533), John Berger depiction “of this painting is useful, he suggests that oil painting of which *The Ambassadors* is an early example, has a ‘special ability to render the tangibility, the texture, the lustre, the solidity of what it depicts.’ “. Author in this chapter frames Time as more succinctly definable embodiments in the daily and theatrical life of the era. He presented the most obvious example of personification of time as a living body in *The Winter’s Tale* and as a rhetorical presence throughout much of the cannon. Indeed, the personification of time in Shakespeare’s plays are particularly duplicitous, operating, as the character in many of his plays are depicted. Basing on the point that “clock” and “time” are two different things, this book then talks about three kinds of mechanical clocks existed in the era; the table clock, the lantern clock, and the turret clock. The latter was the oldest, both technologically and in terms of cultural familiarity. Examples and illustration are plenty for the proper justification of terms is yet a plus point of the book. It presents a total outlook of the element “Time” in Shakespeare’s era, presenting a broader and promising picture. From the many ways of consideration, one is the mechanical timepiece as a materialization of time lies in the nature of machinery and mechanics. Time is frequently figured as propriety itself, in this respect, the mathematical, technological workings of the mechanical clock can be seen as order and degree in material form. It’s been said here that, it was the machine in the mechanical clock that gave earthly, metallic form to time, specifically by virtue of machinery being an exercise in precision, degree, and order. Machinery might embody order, and as such give materiality to time itself, but we can also read in the imperfection of the machinery the fact that we can never fully capture time. Every clock, every image, every watch of time that the era produced implicitly carried this sense of time as death. The relationship between, time, death and the theatre from the materialistic perspective that has occupied the chapter throughout the pages. This chapter also share some of Adam Cohen’s sensible points and analogy. Body of time, theatre as a body of time is regarded as an art form which literally gives body, shapes and form to the abstract. Human experiences and time, both are some where presented to be connected, also in concept of theatre. In Shakespeare’s era, time was material, his skills and efforts, crafted a beautiful masterpiece to be admired and cherished. Some of the examples that followed date from late Shakespeare’s career or even after his death, but they are nonetheless typical of trends he us highlighting here. He chooses them

over earlier examples primarily because of quality of their preservation allows them to be more easily and effectively reproduced in print form.

Time of Shakespeare's theatrical journey is the main attraction of this book and its chapters. In the fourth chapter "*Time and Play*", the concern of the author is not only limited to any confined ground of time, it now includes all the possible characteristic of the element "Time". Drama of Shakespearean's era presented a skilful, meaningful depiction of birth, death and emotions. Thus this chapter consists of a dramaturgical study of plays from a temporal perspective. As in previous chapters, this chapter also includes proper examples from Shakespeare's dramas. But the author finds many aspects of time not directly associated with materiality, dissonance, or thickness. It's just the temporal characteristics as per Wagner's conception, and the outlook of the predominant traits when it comes to the Shakespearean stage. The analysis of the chapter chiefly are compiled of, records of stage works, analysis of plays as things intended for the stage work. Author here worked through those plays in chronological order, though he admits that, it is less of an effort to suggest something about the trajectory of Shakespeare's career, and more of an attempt to allow the arguments within each analysis to build upon one another. Instances form many of Shakespeare's plays have been presented as examples. From the opening of the play's lines, the past, present, and future are evoked as both distinct and collapsed, the present moment of the stage contains the weight of all three tenses, even while the dialogue may strive to distinguish between them. The rhetorical effect is to establish a sharp break between "now" and "then", as the character of king in the play of "*King Henry's*" strives to characterize his own narrative as something of a new beginning. But King Henry here is a victim of that near rhetorical trick whereby the adamant negating of a thing all the more powerfully presences that thing in as a whole of it. The temporal density has a significant impact on characterization dramatic structure, the tension between levity and gravity, and the sense of social or political commentary running through Shakespeare's depiction of this famous piece. In each instance, our sense of character, of dramatic tension, of 'meaning' are all tethered to a sense of thickened time, of 'now' being 'then. In this book the author presents a perfect crystallization of Shakespearean theatre bodying forth time; time is turned into not only material things- clocks, dials the objects that measures time, but further more into things with a specific corporeality. The mechanics of theatre under pinning the 'theme' of the passage, and generating a material immediacy that is more experiential than thematic, Shakespeare's poetics tells us of time, but their contextualization in stage praxis give us time. The chapter progresses with the flow of

description of characters role in Shakespeare's plays. Author is presenting the dialogues and instances of different plays, only with regards of putting forward a critical overview to the time of Shakespeare's theatrical influences. Even the setting of his stage plays, had a great impact, and depicted altogether a meaning of its own. The sub headings of the chapter contains specific sections of study of plays. Thus making an overview study of character and settings of that period. The headings are quite catchy, and instantly rises the interest of readers. The spirit is evident in the textual clues the whole of the scene offers and the attention is occasionally drawn to the time of those days. Altogether, the Fourth chapter holds the critical study and pen down of some of the well-known stage work of Shakespeare. An experience of time as a duration plays a significant part, Shakespeare's historical view of time was not actually so homogeneous. Author's point here is not to over simplify Shakespeare's sense of historical time, but to foreshadow its distinction, to be discussed more fully later, with his sense of tragic time. More important, it is to describe the way in which staging of characters death juxtaposes an individual, subjective view of time with a broader, more socially attuned historical view.

The fifth chapter, "*Time and the Contemporary Shakespearean Stage*" Here on the author concentrated here not much on the Modern stage for failing to follow through the 'real' Shakespeare's time, rather he is much more focused on coming up with a better understanding of how Shakespearean time operates on stage today and to do so via the tools of phenomenological description. The examples and analysis he presents describes some of the ways in which time works on Shakespearean stage now, when the ethos of Shakespearean temporality meets the temporal schemata of highly influential contemporary theatrical conventions. Contemporary habits of reading theatrical activity, in other words, can result in the search for and analysis of the ways in which Shakespeare might have set-up his characters like sense of the scene, supplying information with which an audience can buy into theatrical illusion. But where such theatrical illusion tends to dominate modern day, realistic sensibilities, it is only half of Shakespeare's game. In Shakespeare's play we have time told by both mechanical and heavenly means, Shakespeare's theatre could not overrun 'real' time with illusory time, the way that realistic theatre can, and it did not try; rather, it wove together the time of the world, time in the theatre, and the time in the fiction, and made each thread of that weave available to the audience experience. On other hand his stage conveyed a radical mobility for each, not only between scenes, but also as in case within a scene. It may be that as it should be; twentieth century western theatre has long foregrounded the development of

character, especially in Shakespearean drama, and there's no reason to invalidate that privilege in favour of what might see as an overly inflated sense of historical purism. Ironically, an exaggerated sense of theatricality itself is almost always a buoy for kind of temporal materiality that has concerned the author.

Finally the concluding chapter of the book "*Final Words*" an ending, it contains both his representation of thought and the process of thinking. The author's firm belief on process of working through ideas are as vital as the end product conclusions to which those ideas eventually point. The book began with the hypothesis that temporal dissonance and temporal thickness were the predominant traits of time in Shakespeare theatre. But over the course of progress of the book, we see that, while these elements are indeed crucial to our understanding of time in theatre, and in Shakespeare theatre in particular, they are in themselves a part of a more elementary phenomenon. The dissonance and the density of time both contribute to the manifestations of time in the theatre, though they are temporal phenomena in their own rights, they are also means by which time is made present and immediate on the stage. So, this particular intertwining of life and death, material presence and ethereal absence. Gertrude's words "passing though nature to eternity", is an inevitable and inextricable facet of the theatrical art form. The theatre is transient, transience is, at heart, defined by a movement toward death, and thus the theatre is defined, at heart, by a similar morbidity.

A life is defined by its unique death. One can never say it merely the juxtaposition of life and death, it is the evocation of life within the object of death. Similarly, of course, the plays persistently encourages us to find the figure of death in the live body of the characters.

This book will be a promising help for the group of readers, those who are looking for an elaborate text on drama, stage and theatre of Shakespeare's era in context with the major element "*Time*". Opinions and analysis of many different critics and well known lecturers adds to the worth of this text.