CHAPTER- IV
STOLL’S APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE’S DRAMA

Elmer Edgar Stoll (1874-1959) was an American scholar and critic and also for many years a professor of English at the University of Minnesota. He has been vastly acclaimed as an academician, critic and interpreter and above all for being a master in the art of polemics. It is my intended purpose here to trace Stoll’s development as a very significant critic of Shakespeare. But somehow he was not able to make his mark and went away unsung and unnoticed. In this chapter his specific understanding of Shakespeare has been presented. In the conclusive chapter, an endeavour has been made to analyse the reason he was not acclaimed. It has been the prevalent tendency of Stoll’s contemporaries and his censurers, not only to project his contributions as historical but also to link his name with that of L.L. Schucking since both of these critics expressed their disagreement with Bradleys method of dispensing with the characters in Shakespeare’s major tragedies. They were seen as the representative of a historical school of Shakespeare but with a difference. If one cast a backward glance towards the history of Shakespearian criticism, even critic as Dryden, Pope and (even) Dr. Johnson had the inclination to compare Shakespeare to his age and Viewers.¹

What is meant here was that the usage of historical data in the criticism of Shakespeare was not a new discovery. These past masters had already practiced it, but there is a ‘particular version of it that is new, which has been the unique contribution of these two critics Stoll and Schucking.

Morris Weitz, shows his preference in the inclusion of these other critics also, the historical approach that has been attempted by these particulars critics,
as Variegated as, J.M. Robertson, E.E. Stoll, L.L. Schucking, Theodore, Spencer and even to some extent Lily Campbell is comparatively fresh and also untouched. It is enlighting to note that to Morris Weitz, G. Wilson Knight and his group has been identified as ‘anti-historical’, A.C. Bradley, the representative of the criticism of character analysis appears ‘un-historical’ and J. Dover Wilson is said to use history aesthetically.

These men of vision are different because they insist on the urgency “to see Shakespeare in the context of the life and literature of his age, and opposed themselves against what they regarded as the subjectivism of their colleagues”. There is no denying the fact that if Stoll’s name is linked with that of Schucking it was for a definite reason, a sense of purpose that did not go unnoticed. Stoll and Schucking’s approach has been unified, when they, in their own individual manner have opposed, the sort of impressionistic criticism that was represented by Bradley in his Shakespearean Tragedy. They both desired that the plays of Shakespeare should be judged in the context of the period. For as has already been indicated in Chapter-III of this thesis in detail, that since Bradley had become so engulfed with characters analysis, in the major plays of Shakespeare that he left a glaring defect in his interpretation having forgotten that to study Shakespeare’s character, the writer himself cannot be displaced from his own background and setting of the plays Bradley also seems to ignore that Shakespeare above all was a practicing playwright and that his plays had been written to be staged and not read like a novel. Also the role of the audience and its impact on the writer was not considered at all by Bradley. Hence followed, the violent realist or historical reaction, against the extravagance. The excess that was practiced by the romantic critics in the form of character analysis has
already been highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis and all the major critics have been discussed in this context.

Just because Levin L. Schucking was a German Scholar his writing and understanding of Shakespeare is not to be taken for granted. His extensive interest in Shakespeare and his work speaks volumes for this Scholar of Elizabethan conventions. He has written about Shakespeare from the Elizabethan and historical point of view that is what brings him so close to Stoll above all his study concerning the theatre and the audience had introduced a new way of studying not just Shakespeare but all the dramatist in general.

And hence his approach towards Shakespeare has been rated as being historical approach in its purest and simplest form.³

Stanley Wells, in his essay: Shakespeare criticism since Bradley, sees much that is similar in Schucking and Stoll. First of all they were against the over enthusiastic admiration of Shakespeare that the Romantic and the Victorian critics were in the habit of expressing. Both of these authors were very much influenced by Robert Bridges writings especially “his accusation that Shakespeare produced his effects by deliberately pandering to the supposed stupidity and moral bluntness of Elizabethan audiences…”⁴

Mr Wells further enlightens us regarding Schucking’s work that makes interesting reading; “Schucking, in the book referred to, develops the thesis that Shakespeare’s art form is in fact a mixture of the most highly developed with quite primitive elements, like Bridges he finds that Shakespeare neglects consistency and logic, and seek and the immediate effect at the, expense of the overall design. Also like, Bridges, he regards such characteristic and as flaws in Shakespear’s art, and does not, as some later critics have done, attempt to justify them in terms of a higher appropriateness. He agrees in fact with Ben Jonson, that ‘Shakespeare wanted art’.
Adopting common sense explanations where they are available, he tends to reduce everything to its lowest terms; but his book is a good corrective to over subjective attitude.\textsuperscript{5}

Even P. Murray while tracing the Shakespearian scene of the twentieth century perspectives argues in the same vein and sees a similar effect in the work of these critics of different origin, one American and the other German but sadly enough P. Murray does not bestow the same understanding regarding the nature of their work as has been exhibited by S. Viswanathan. Mr Murray even, traces a similarity between Stoll and Schucking with that of Tolstoy and Bridges. Murray has frankly admitted that both these critics appeal to him as historical in this approach just because of their constant insistence towards interpreting Shakespeare according to the Elizabethan times, hence in Murray’s opinion these critics were preventing Shakespeare’s from becoming universal and reaching out beyond time and space. And this is because Murray holds as if Stoll and Schucking had chained Shakespeare to his own time, age and even convention that has resulted in his confinement. It appears distasteful and even offensive to Mr. Murray that Shakespeare should be studied according to Elizabethan tradition which was “crude” and ‘primitive’ and which made adequate and plausible characterization all but impossible.\textsuperscript{6}

Murray emulates Bradley when he argues about the real significance of Shakespeare’s character and wants to accept them as true to nature and to life. He would rather follow in the foots step of the generations of critics who have been beset by the characters in Shakespeare’s drama and for whom characters have been the only criterion of judging Shakespeare’s greatness of art.

Hence he is not ready to either accept or believe, Schucking’s thesis, that Shakespeare often made use of ‘primitive’ devices in the depiction of
characters. Just to make the plays appear more exciting and dramatic he would often alter the depiction of characters half-way and that is why perhaps the characters appear inconsistent and un-unified. If one glance backwards, one will remember Rhymer’s reaction to the characters in Othello, though he could not give a definite reason for the irregularity in Othello and even Iago’s nature. But Schucking cites illustrations and keenly observes that Iago who is presented as a wicked character, and who openly admit in the play that he is perverse and takes pride in his perversion. When in reality, if at all Shakespeare was presenting a character true to life, like the critic of romantic era claims Shakespeare should have disguised the wickedness of his nature. Schucking points at this great lapse on the playwright part that is very objective and very startling too and the reverse of ‘psychological realism’. Not only the minor characters but even the major one have a split personality, and are a bundle of unexpected contradiction. Cleopatra from the beginning of the historical play is presented as a woman of easy virtue, in fact no better than a courtesan but in the later scene she is altered completely and no trace of her initial characterization is found. This side of her character presents a pensive, reflective, selfless and noble woman. And Schucking finds no answer for this change, not even psychological coherence.

While discussing Schucking’s contribution towards the understanding of Shakespeare. It would be worthwhile to contrast Schucking’s outlook with that of Stoll, so that the cord of systematic thoughts may not be disrupted and most important, it was here that these two critics united in their outlook although with a difference, most significant they were always spoken by men of taste as belonging to the same approach and they were classed as historical by most.
Nevertheless, if they are to be studied profoundly and observed minutely, their alternate voices should be distinguished separately so that their outlook and understanding can be classified.

Both Stoll and Schucking appear to attach too much importance to the inconsistency and loopholes that occur during Shakespeare’s presentation of characters and most of the time they are engrossed in the explanation sometimes negative and at other time positive and hence their work appear to most critics of even Kenneth Muir’s eminence or for that matter to P. Murray as being just a reaction against Bradley and his followers. They are depicted as having no other purpose or even interest than following the favourite pasttime of finding pleasure in making Bradley ‘a whipping boy’

Hence decorating them with such epithets as ‘hard-boiled realists’ and shrugging away their original contribution towards Shakespeare’s criticism as being just a ‘reaction’ against Bradley became a common place attitude of their fellow contemporary and intellectuals.

But evaluating them on this basis is actually inflicting a serious injury on their extraordinary achievement.

What is involved is a quite different ulterior conception of Shakespearian drama seen as governed by a set of primitive conventions. This conception, which lays stress on the non-naturalistic conventional basis of Shakespeare’s drama, concerns not just character but all the major elements.™

Furthermore considering the study of both these critics in the same vein is all very well but while doing this one must also perceive that in the matter of interpretation and insight both were different from each other as Schucking most concentrated upon:
‘...the role of primitive stage conventions and emphasizes their force and meaning: their effect on our understanding of the play’.  

In this regard Schucking’s approach can be said to be sociological as well as historical since throughout his book called, The sociology of Literary Taste (1944), he remains very conscious and alert regarding the wishes and expectations of the original audience.

Both Stoll and Schucking explain inconsistencies in terms of conventions. Even though the use of dramatic conventions by Shakespeare to exhilarate and enhance the effect of drama on the audience is viewed by the German scholar as defects in Shakespeare’s Plays. He is often troubled by these lapse that he could not explain away, since perhaps his understanding was not mature enough to grasp what Shakespeare was conveying through the use of convention. Also his bent of mind was towards. Naturalism, he is prejudiced enough to blame Shakespeare for the simplicity of his art. However, this point of view is some what rectified in his later writings. His most popular and valuable individual contribution is the revelation of the device called ‘soliloquy as a technique and convention of ‘direct self-explanation’. His work projects his till towards naturalism.

The significant contribution of these two critics towards Shakespeare’s use of ‘primitive’ devices to achieve ‘dramatic effect’ have been very intelligently and beneficially handled by such critics as M.C. Bradbrook and S.L. Bethell, in order to present the craftsmanship of Shakespeare as he really meant it to be.

To say the least the impact of the countering attack led by these two critics on their own just cannot be undermined. It was they who made the world
aware of Shakespeare as a Elizabethan-Jacobean, playwright although no doubt a universal genius, but with a difficult duty to perform—the pleasing of his audience and keeping with the tradition of his time and place. It was they who broke this looming myth that in A.C. Bradley’s *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) ‘the last word’ about Shakespeare had been written and nothing more could be said. This habit of interpreting ‘art for life’ was also repudiated and the turning point came when the study of the ‘conditions and conventions of the Elizabethan theatre’ became inevitable in order to interpret some of the famous 19th century critical dilemmas, which these critics, loved psychologising and interpreting according to their own whims and fancies. Some of these well known problems are Othello’s jealousy, Iago’s-lack of motivation, Lear-division of his kingdom and of course the most favourite Hamlet’s delay.

More over both these scholars, presented for the first time, a picture of Shakespeare that was entirely new and unique in its origin that of “a busy, often harassed artificer”. In their individual studies of Shakespeare’s work they also kept the reaction of the original audience in mind.

Another critic who has contributed immensely to Stoll’s understanding of Shakespearian drama is Robert Bridges. Once interest in historical knowledge became an essential study

‘...in the second half of nineteenth century, attention was directed to the Elizabethan audience which, in one view, conditioned or determined the nature of Shakespearian drama’.

His book, “*The Influence of the Audience* on Shakespeare’s Drama (1907)” is a thorough study of the audience in Shakespeare’s time. Whatever, Bridges could not understand in Shakespeare’s lines he sorted it as defects or fault in the plays of Shakespeare, these unlikely plots and fickleness in the art
of character depiction was described as, ‘extreme badness of passages’, ‘bad jokes and foolish verbal trifling’. Bridges puts the responsibilities of the ‘inconsistency’ in Shakespeare’s art on the audience. Since by Profession Shakespeare was a playwright he had a difficult job to perform, to please his audience he had to compromise and thus he could not maintain the standard he was actually capable of. If again we walk down memory lane it will be remembered that Elizabethan audience were never thought to lack intelligence by Shakespeare’s critics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This view presented by Robert Bridges is indeed a unique way of looking at things unexplored in the world of Shakespeare. This point of view gave way to a new approach in Shakespeare and now the demands of the audience and their influence on a playwright is also taken into consideration.

Recently, studies of the ‘original audience’ for not only Shakespeare but also his contemporaries and the present dramatist, has also flourished. Stoll has also incorporated this idea of the original audience into his studies, that is in the context of the relationship of a playwright to his playgoer’s. Viswanathan has also keenly noted this contribution with approval of Robert Bridges with approval;

“‘The positive result of Bridge’s approach has been to underline the need for awareness of the nature, taste and response of audiences.’”

However, Bridge’s criticism of the Elizabethan audience has not been acceptable to many critics of the modern times. They have absolutely rejected Bridge’s claim that these audience of Shakespeare’s time were mere ignorant groundlings. Alfred Harbage and many others of his time have questioned this
assumption of Robert Bridges on the basis of the research and investigation carried out, when today nothing is left to conjecture or mere speculation.

Harbage has directly spoken out against Bridge’s censure of the Elizabethan audience in his next book. This inferior view of the Elizabethan audience and the blame that it was their poor taste that was reflected in Shakespeare’s play is as old as 18th century, which was made into a ready made excuse by Bridges. But modern findings and scholarships do not take such opinion into consideration unless it is factual. Bridge’s study of the audience may not have been data based, but initially it was his idea of studying Shakespeare’s play from the point of view of the playgoers. He started the trend of studying the indirect impact of audience-cooperation.

Another very interesting point of view in this context has been raised by G.H. Herfords: He tells his readers that ‘more fundamental questions than that of ‘inconsistency’ have been raised by Shakespearean investigation by Professor Stoll and he wonders that if ever the Elizabethan audience had read Bradley’s analysis of the major tragedy of Shakespeare along the line of Aristotle and Hegel, would they have understood it. Well Herford, seems to be embarking on the same line of enquiry that may be turned speculative and fanciful. He also makes us aware that, there have been instances when the practical sagacity of the literary scholar has helped the poetic interpretation of the modern critics, that has goaded them towards reciprocal cooperation.

We can conclude that these scholars of Shakespeare have studied various aspects of Shakespeare’s scholarship, which had never been considered before. Hence their immense contribution in this respect just cannot be undermined.
A first hand report on Stoll can be gathered from Harry Levin; who described him as a tall, thin, bookish, austerely, conations figure’ he further says that Stoll lived in a weathered and rambling gingerbread house near the east bank of the Mississippi River, close to the University and far from the rest of the town’

Interestingly, we are enlightened that Stoll was a very lonely man, he never was on good terms with his colleagues, however some of his advanced students were very devoted to him. All this about Stoll’s personal life is very significant, as will be seen in the last chapter of this thesis in the conclusion. Levin provides a first hand information since he was known to Stoll.

His method of interpreting Shakespeare was disliked by the other Shakespeare critic. He was seen as a dissenter because he did not indulge in Shakespeare’s eulogy. His contention was Shakespeare would be better understood if he were compared to his fellow contemporaries and the background of his plays were not forgotten. And it was his and lates on Granville-Barkers that brought about a breakthrough in that romanticized character-study which had reached its limits with A.C. Bradley.

There is no denying the fact that some of Stoll’s studies have the subtitle: “A historical and comparative studies”. But this title was not because he was tracing Shakespeare’s history as critics have branded him as a historical critic of Shakespeare. But all Stoll demands is Shakespeare ‘was best understood in the tradition of its prototypes, modes, and conventions, and that he belonged to a world which included Greek drama, Commedia dell’ Arte, Moliere, Racine, Goethe, Ibsen, and Shaw.”
Even Stoll’s article, ‘Shakespeare studies: Historical and Comparative in Method’, has emphasized the fact that Shakespeare’s place was on the stage and he had not written to be read like a novel, interpreting him like the stories of James Joyce and depicting Shakespeare’s character like real persons and even psychologising, according to Stoll’s understanding all this was anachronistic.

In all of Stoll’s work, the thesis that Shakespeare could only be understood according to his tradition has always remained in his mind. He supports this contention first and foremost. All his articles and monographs have floated the idea of an Elizabethan Shakespeare. Stoll is completely submerged by this controversy of the Elizabethan term and condition, he wants one and all to review literature in the way that ‘Shakespeare intended and his audience comprehended it.’

In the very first sentence of his opening chapter ‘Art and Artifice’ he admit frankly that for him: The core of tragedy (and of comedy too, for that matter) is situation; and a situation is a character in contrast and perhaps also in conflict, with other character or with circumstances.

And because the ancients and the Elizabethan’s never wrote an original play but instead ‘an old story was used anew’ hence Stoll thinks it was quite natural that they gave supremacy to plot construction and not characterization. By this, very, simple observation he lays bare his intention from the very beginning. He has again supported this litigation in ‘Poets and Playwrights’ that “.......situation is the essence and soul of drama.”

Stoll appears very keen to trace Shakespeare’s influences. His research regarding the background, stage history and sources, leads Stoll to confirm the tragedy of Hamlet to be in the tradition of revenge tragedies or heroic romance:
“......a drama of intrigue, blood, and fate—a tradition, derived from Seneca and sponsored in the Renaissance especially by Kyd....”

That is why Stoll is always at great pains, to convince, the other men of learning, who have made it a habit to study Shakespeare out of time and space. These anachronistic views of his fellow critics have compelled him to take a defensive attitude in all of his writings and most of the time he is repeating himself. It is due to the urgency of the objective he has chosen for himself to surround Shakespeare’s plays with his own audience and tradition. Since he believes in the interpretation that he had discovered and this is what he thinks Shakespeare had also desired so since it was “more like him and his age.”

Most important, Stoll never ceases to forget Shakespeare’s surrounding and nor that primarily he was a playwright. Although his task is full of strife and controversies and his life filled with isolation, and his work is full of challenges and his style never dull or insipid, and his resolve full of determination. His is not the lone voice crying in wilderness, there were other men of learning who agree to this aspect of interpreting Shakespeare. Robert Bridges and Schucking have already contributed in this regard. Stoll was very modern in presenting this outworn contention of his, he is comparative and very knowledgeable. His study always in the proper context he has a thorough understanding of the Elizabethan conventions. He compares Shakespeare to the French, the Greeks and to all of Shakespeare’s contemporaries and does not spare even the modern authors. He has all the facts and figures on his finger tips. So much so that Herford has called him, the ‘modern realist of the more mechanical type.”
Stoll’s ‘Art and Artifice’ could be given the position of being his mouthpiece since not only is this book the quintessence of all his other extensive works but is also the culmination of his enterprising scholarship. The doctrine that he was able to form here, is not his alone but also the contribution of many other worthy critics. Among them Schucking and Robert Bridge’s have already been introduced.

In his monograph, Professor Maqbool H. Khan has remarked about, E.E. Stoll’s, Art and Artifice:

‘Almost all the books written by Stoll are collection of essays directly or indirectly relating to problems in Shakespearian study. His books are remarkable for the fact that certain themes turn up again and again almost obsessively - whatever the ostensible topic, and this leads one to suggest that anyone of them could have been called Art and Artifice in Shakespeare. 26

We may detect a tinge of sarcasm creeping into his tone but actually the present author is a staunch supporter of Stoll’s work. He does concede that his books do convey the message or the purpose for which they were written ‘in a salient and succinct manner.’

In his preface of ‘Art and Artifice’, Stoll pleads with his readers to be judged according to ‘the light of the Dogmata’. He puts a lot, of emphasis on ‘The Importance of the Poet’s Purpose’. Stolls only purpose in tracing Shakespeare’s craftsmanship is to bring out the incredible beauty of his art which is realistic and not farfetched. And he is definitely rejecting the epithet bestowed upon him of a realist, ‘mechanical’ and historical. Because he stands resolute in his stance and says. “I think in what is positive and constructive, poetical and dramatic, not ‘scientific’ or historical….” 27
It has been recommended by Stoll to study, the conventions as a prelude to the study of Shakespeare. Some of the convention have been discussed elaborately and these undoubtedly illuminate many inconsistencies in Shakespeare’s plays.

The techniques that were employed by the Elizabethan Jacobean writers, in order to write a play whether tragedy or comedy may be considered old fashioned, second hand or even moth-eaten in the present time, but during Shakespeare’s time those devices were thought to be “the traditional means of attaining the contrast or conflict, the compression and condensation, which drama of necessity seeks. In them selves they are devices of accumulation and simplification.”

In addition to this apprises Stoll, the men of taste did not at all hanker after an original product of their own imagination, it was the prevalent trend among the Elizabethan writers to adopt stories and plots from others. The present authors, poets and playwright are found to be much more honest to Stoll, as it is never their intention to catch hold of the work of ancient authors and present it in a new manner. That is, they are not plagiarists like Shakespeare rehashing old plots.

These Elizabethan Jacobean dramatist as has been emphasized by this American stagirite were themselves never creative or inventive they were more at ease grabbing old stories and plots and furnishing them lavishly once more renovating them.

In fact, the Elizabethan and Jacobean were more concerned regarding the proper choice of a situation enriched with intrigue and confrontation and for the achievement of such a striking plot they very easily left out ‘probability and
psychological reasonableness. This was the customary practice prevalent during those time and they were blissfully ignorant of psychology.

Stoll probes deeper and unravels and enlightens us thus:

Indeed, in the greatest tragedies (and comedies and epics too) the situation has been fundamentally improbable, unreasonable. What are the greatest stories in the world? Those of Orestes, Oedipus, Achilles, and Odysseus; of Iphigenia, Dido, Phaedra, Medea, and Herod and Marianne; of Tristram and Isolt, Siegfried and Brunhilde; of the cid, Faustus, and Don Juan; of Lear, Othello, Macbeth, and Hamlet; all of them embodying situations improbable to an extreme degree. Their improbability is the price of their effectiveness. Such fine and fruitful situations life itself does not afford. The sharper conflict provokes the bigger passion; the more striking contrast produces the bigger effect; and to genius the improbability is only a challenge.

And yet again Stoll presents for our perusal some other prominent plays of Shakespeare that may be tragic, comic or for that matter historical, but they do not have any link whatever with the real life, they can be said to offer all other aspect except being true to life.

Timon, Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado, As you Like it, the comedy of Errors, Alts Well, Measure for Measure, Cymbeline, Pericles, the Winter’s Tale, The Tempest: these, and the greater ones already mentioned, are stories of disguise, mistaken identity, feigning, or substitution; of tyranny or trickery, deception or slander; of eavesdropping, or the fateful finding of rings, letters, or handkerchiefs; of apparent deaths and revivals; of riddling wills, vows, or oracles; of love or generosity suddenly and irrevocably turned to hatred; and of fate or the supernatural, villainy or magic, love or revenge, triumphant over all.

Supporting this contention of the use of convention in Shakespeare’s plays, Stoll insists emphatically that these playwrights were compelled to
employ such devices, in order to present a dramatic effect that was harmoniously blended. They were rather more desperate to achieve a dramatic and poetic structure then to just present character that emerged above the theme and structure of a play. They gave all precedence to ‘emotional’ illusion and not to ‘verisimilitude’.

Their object was surely not presenting life as it was, on the stage and in order to garner support for this conviction, Stoll takes the help of Aristotle’s statement. “The impossibilities are justifiable,” speaks the ancient stagirite, if they serve the end of poetry... if they make the effect of some portion of the work more striking.” Longinus is also quoted, by Stoll, “the effect of genius is not to persuade (or convince) the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves, and the object of poetry is to enthrall.”

These are the limitations or restrictions that every dramatists encounter and for Stoll, Shakespeare was no exception, unquestionably the conventions have a great role to play in his tragedies and especially in Hamlet and Othello, Shakespeare has made lavish use of the dramatic illusions.

Regarding the tragedy of Othello- the noble Moor, Stoll apprises that definitely the plot was borrowed from a story or legend and not a play. The situation here is obviously incredible and full of conflicts. The main character is that of a man presented as straitlaced but suddenly his nature changes absolutely which is reflected in his action. When the play begins Othelo is bestowed with all virtues of nobility. He is projected as a hero who is said to be without any jealousy and exceptional large heartedness, after ward he turns out to he a person weak of will and mind and without any evidence, believes, a slanderer, lago, who castes aspersion on his wife’s innocence so much so that
he murders her in cold blood, and does not even give her the benefit of doubt. All this is really and truly fantastic and it takes centuries of investigation in Shakespeare to have realized this great lapse and no one found this or even pointed at such a great defect in Shakespeare’s art. It was Stoll who for the first time had the courage to sort out this kind of implausibility that is very frequent in Shakespeare and also found a reasonable explanation for it. In his “Shakespeare Studies” this topic of a Slanderer’s art’ is minutely illustrated. The convention of the Slanderer believed, even by those who have no sound reason or natural inclination to believe him, is in story or in drama, a very ancient one, and has only of late been quite done away with.

This art of employing convention illuminates Stoll, for creating illusion in a drama was not new that Shakespeare has been made accountable by the Victorians and romantic critics. He was already doing so with Claudio in Much ado, Gloster in king Lear, and Posthumus in Cymbeline; only in Othello this art of the convention becomes much more polished and superior. By using this clever method Shakespeare is able to extract sympathy for his hero at the same time absolving him of all sins.

To make the story appear highly dramatic, the situation is made incredible and full of contradictions. Reason has no place in such stories, the motivator or the temptor has to be external like in Othello; it is Iago, and in Macbeth; the witches and Lady Macbeth. Hence it cannot be stated definitely according to Stoll, that the tragedy occurred because of ambition or jealousy. Like Bradley interprets it is his Shakespearean Tragedy, and it makes interesting reading, but the credibility of his interpretation remains doubtful.
Stoll could not hide the distaste that he felt, about the present generation making interpretation and criticism a basis for their instinct and impulses. No matter how much these critics influenced by Psychology vent their feeling about:

“self-deception and marked movements, brain storms and ‘swoons of the mind’, the method of French classicism prevails, motives perceptibly appear, the mental as well as the emotional integrity and identity of the character are (as far as may be) kept intact, and The man who murders for ambition or jealousy at the end is made discernibly ambitious or jealous from the beginning.”

If the critics of the 19th century have pursued the point that Shakespeare developed his characters according to the psychology of present day and his major characters became tragic figures because of the ‘tragic flaw’ in their character. Well, Stoll cannot agree to such presumptive assumptions Bradley part since the study of the English stage during the Elizabethan time does not give any such indication neither was there any such technique nor was it ever developed by Shakespeare. (Ibid S. Studies).

In his Art and Artifice and also in his monograph on Othello, this connoisseur of criticism puts forth a very emphatic argument and indicates how Shakespeare after having endowed his hero with all virtue:

If virtue no delighted beauty lack,

Your son-in-Law is far more fair than black.

Othello in contrast to the nobility of his nature commits a villainous act that goes against his very nature. Will such an act be called psychology “Though less obvious and external, it is, an artifice of constructive characters,
like other traditional forms of deception in fiction. Such as disguise and eavesdropping.” The backbiting of Iago appeals more to Othello than the trust he had reposed in his beloved’s innocence.

Due to the outcome of this ‘drama of defamation’, Othello is incited into a terrible flame of anger and hate that has no place for reason but can only be satiated after he has actually murdered his wife.

So unimaginable is this theme of the ‘calumniator credited’ that it just cannot stand up to inquiry and logic. Really how could a general of great velour, stoop so low as to imagine that Desdemona who had tainted her honour in eloping with the Moor and chose him even when her father came to her rescue. Why would she be meeting and flirting with Cassio behind his back; most incredible of all the allegations she had been granting many favours to Cassio since her arrival in Cyprus. If we examine the play for evidence it was only a day before. This is the moment Shakespeare wants to attain, explains Stoll: “… the grossness—the improbability—of the charges only serves to enrage the hero the more”.

Such a situation enhances the thrill and the audience are worked up, all this rushes the hero into hasty action. Hence this incitement of excitement was a very popular device among the ancient too and employed into service by the Elizabethan and Renaissance tragedy and comedies such as: Hippolytus by Euripides and also by Seneca and Racine to name a few.

“In these certainly, it is not the image of life; and if Shakespeare’s use of convention, though vastly superior, be intended for such, is this greatly to his credit?”
However this argument is not just Stoll’s figment of imagination because he is a sceptic. Many who have read this play have been confused regarding this sudden change in Othello’s nature and so their opinion have been differed. But a very reputed stage interpreter, Mr. Granville Barker while discussing Glostes has remarked that: “Shakespeare ask us to allow him the fact of the deception even as we have allowed him Lear’s partition of the Kingdom.”

Likewise in the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, unravels Stoll, Shakespeare was not at liberty to pursue the character of Hamlet according to his own vision since the old Hamlet had only been recently staged and if Shakespeare was to transform the entire portrayal, the audience would not accept this new version of Hamlet. Therefore he had to follow the tradition, that was the prevalent custom that all the playwrights followed. The only improvement apparent was in his style of writing and of diction. With his natural flair for writing he transformed such stale traditional devices such as prevaricated madness and the slanderers tale into an advantage and gave to plays as ancient as the story of Hamlet and Othello an exciting turn.

In most of his work based on Hamlet, Stoll directs our attention towards these artifices that artists often employ. He investigates various playwrights before and after Shakespeare who exercise this craftsmanship or skill. In his review of “Hamlet the Man”, Shakespeare’s studies, Art and Artifices and also Hamlet, he confidently acquaints us with Kyd’s, Hieronimo in the Spanish Tragedy, who in order to come close to the kings fakes madness. Shakespeare also in his early plays; like Titus Andronicus etc. has used such tools. During that time the audience knew about such traditions and conventions, so the artist had nothing to lose. P. Murray in this context deems it fit to censure Stoll scathingly that he has converted Shakespeare the great artist into a mere
provides of exciting spectacle’. But S. Visnathan does not agree with Murray regarding Stoll and thinks that his later work has progressed towards acceptance of the power of poetry in Shakespeare’s work.

Scholars of Shakespeare’s plays have always complained regarding the prolongation in Hamlet’s tragedy. And because of it, the romantic critics have even interpreted Hamlet as a person weak of will and mentally sick, who is not able to perform the momentous deed and takes a long time to decide. But all this Stoll brushes aside swiftly and musters all the internal and external evidence in support of his contention. Since all this has already been discussed in detail in the chapter No.ii devoted to Hamlet, its needless to renew the argument. Hence to come to the point briefly, Stoll very much agrees there is delay but what he refutes strongly, it has anything to do with the internal struggle of the hero or his being incapable. To quote stoll in his own words:

“... even if Shakespeare had desired it, he could scarcely, on the contemporary stage, have introduced so fundamental in innovation as, in the place of a popular heroic revenger, a procrastinator, lost in thought and weak of will.”

The tragedy of Hamlet has been explained by Stoll according to the Elizabethan terms and conditions that Shakespeare had wanted and his audiences understood it. Stoll has absolutely rejected the Romantic idea of of Hamlet that has been reflected from the 18th century criticism. Stoll main argument, based on the result and research found in the sources of Hamlet and also Shakespeare, he has accepted that Hamlet is in the tradition of revenge tragedy or heroic romance, a drama of intrigue, blood and fate – a tradition acquired from Seneca. Stoll is further adament that such a hero has no flow and is ideal to the end and in the end accomplishes main task he has been appointed with: revenge.
All this is quite apparent to Stoll that if Hamlet had accomplished the task as soon as the apparition had bid, to do so then nothing would have been left of the tragedy. Since an eventful action or feat could only be performed at the end, hence the hero has to occupy himself some how. Further to satisfy his audiences impatience, the playwright wanted to remind them that soon the execution would follow and this was conveyed through the hero himself. Nothing was wrong with Hamlet, he was only being made to follow tradition, which demanded the delay. Hamlet's occasional out-bursts was to remind “the audience that the main business in hand, though retarded, is not lost to view. They motive it by showing the audience that the hero, even in his delay, is a conscious and responsible and (so far) consistent being. In short, they give a reason for the delay... They provide an epical motive, if a may so call it rather than a dramatic one.”

In addition to these discussion the critic, Mr. Stoll, informs that during Shakespeare's time it was just not customary for writers to hanker after an inner meaning and such casual happenings like the doubting of the ghost and the sparing of the king at prayer and even the trip to England are to be taken at face value. In his evaluation of 'Hamlet The Man' Stoll mentions that these Elizabethans were very well versed on these various traditional means that a playwright often administered. It was not the evasion of the hero but rather that of the author since it was his interest in keeping the nature of his hero unblemished till the end.

Stoll in all of his illustrations remains very alert regarding the taste of the audience and a lot of emphasis is put on their expectations throughout his extensive study. In this he has been influenced by Robert Bridges opinion that Shakespeare's audiences exercise a lot of influence on his art. Such a point of
view may strengthen the case regarding Stoll being historical. In all his
critiques, Stoll whether Art and Artifice or His Studies on Hamlet and even
Literature And Life Once More, he appears to be very well acquainted with
Bridges suggestions he seems to make occasional use of Bridges findings. “It is
when their minds (those of the audience) are pre-occupied with his personality
that the actions follow as unquestionable realities”, says Mr Bridges of....” 45
So whenever Stoll wants to provide evidence for his own statements or
credibility for the motive of Shakespeare’s hero’s where the audience reaction
is concerned, he very aptly takes refuge in Robert Bridges ‘realistic’ criticism.

In his study of Hamlet the Man again Stoll quotes from, The influence of
the Audience on Shakespeare’s Drama (1896): “Fore the good situation, as in
Othello, king Lear, and Macbeth, he ‘risks of even sacrifices’, says Mr Robert
Bridges, ‘the logical and consistent and as such a flaw, if it were perceived,
must ruin the interest, he is ready with abundant means to obscure the
inconsistency’. He does that and more.”46

Stoll, however only partially agreed with Bridges, since he did not share
his opinion that Shakespeare was not as great playwright as he was a poet, or
that Shakespeare was under the influence of the bad taste of his theatre goers
that got reflected in his writing. Mr Bridges thought that Macbeth was just not
capable of murdering Duncan and that the plot of Othello was contrary to all
reasonable expectation since Desdemona could not have had any relationship
with Cassio in such a short span of time ‘much less a thousand times’. Robert
Bridges name was only linked to this ‘realist’ group because of the emphasis he
paid towards the ‘primitive’ nature of Elizabethan audiences. Thus these three
critics Stoll, Schucking and Robert Bridges together have highlighted the
significant relation between the audience and its playwright.
These critics seem to raise the factor of audience-response into a critical, principle and base their interpretation partly on Shakespeare’s manipulation of it.\textsuperscript{48}

Another very vital point regarding Stoll, is that he began his career by writing essays on historical themes, that is ‘Shakespeare’s Marston and the Malcontent Type’ (1905).

He thinks in this respect that Shakespeare had also borrowed from Marston a stage version of Elizabethan ‘humour’ of melancholy. Marston, even before Shakespeare could have written Hamlet on the model of Kyd’s Hamlet and Spanish Tragedy, had produced. Antonio and Mellida and Antonio’s Revenge (1599) and Malcontent (perhaps 1600). Marston unlike Kyd’s Spanish Tragedy had not concealed the revengers purpose with a madman’s disguise, although it was a revenge comedy, and instead was personified with melancholy humour.

Here, in the two roles—revenger and madman or Malcontent—merged in one, there was, for the cruder Elizabethan theatre, a sufficient, though external, motivation—not only craft to match craft, and murder to match murder, but feigned madness or melancholy to warrant picturesque audacity and impudence. For Shakespeare, letting his hero play madman and Malcontent both, there was, through his finer treatment, a dramatic value in the wider scope and freer vent for the hero when in company.\textsuperscript{49}

There are more reference to non-Shakespearean, Elizabethan Drama in Stoll’s books than in Bradley’s book. This statement is absolutely true regarding Bradley’s gospel, his book Shakespearean Tragedy. It has have no foot-note and not even reference. It appears as if Bradley is not concerned with Shakespeare’s writings at all as if he has lifted out the characters from nowhere. The space for footnotes are there but it is used for the constant musings and
speculations of Bradley himself. Whereas Stoll is always very analytical and comparative. All his works and all the pages keep on referring continuously now he is with the Greeks and the ancient then suddenly he is citing the critics of his time. He is certainly a very well read person there is nothing that escapes his notice that is why perhaps he is so convincing.

As has already been noted in the very beginning, Stoll lays emphasis on the intention, ‘the purpose’ of the author. In the Dogmata Critica which he has collected in his most famous book, Art and Artifice, there are two quotations from Aristotle and Pope which has showed the intention of the author. This further suggest that Stoll’s orientation is towards historical criticism.

So far as the doctrine relating to the intention of the author is concerned, Stoll appears to be rather old fashioned. Modern criticism especially ‘New Criticism’ has suggested that unconscious intention and hidden meaning may be reflected in a work of art, of which the author himself may have been unaware. If that is so, we are not here concerned with the fact whether. Stoll was old fashioned or outdated. Our main concern is to show that Stoll did whole heartedly support the intentional theory. The most important aspect of Stoll’s Criticism makes an indelible imprint on our mind, when he lays stress on the fact that most Shakespearian criticism is anachronistic to make it more explicit the critic puts his own philosophy of life into Shakespeare’s work. Bradley’s ‘Shakespearean Tragedy’ is a very good illustration of such a model. Bradley’s Shakespeare is a late 19th century agnostic. Example of this kind of criticism can also found in the recent time in the book called ‘Shakespeare our contemporary’ written by a Polish critic:
In his discussion of Hamlet and Othello Stoll is anguished to find that the present day critic interpret, Hamlet according to the psychology of their age and forget; totally that during Shakespeare’s time they both were heros of blood thirsty drama. Today Hamlet is projected weaker than Ophelia he is supposed to be inflicted with ‘nervous shock’. or ‘a wound in his mind’. These critics have transformed the heroic deed of a brave hero into an irresolute weakling as if mere words are too much for him.

In justice, our present day Hamlet cannot, as he does, rebuke the frailty of the Queen. To many of the critic, to be sure, that is no drawback, for they would have the Prince infected and poisoned by the air about him, his environment. Sociology must have its innings too.

Stoll also rejects Bradley’s conception of Hamlet; in his own words:

And whatever other mystery there is in the character is that of great but irregular art, not—begging the question— the mystery of life itself. It is not that of the still prevailing doctrine, liberalism blent with mysticism, whereby we treat Shakespeare’s characters as if they were real persons, whom we know but cannot explain— . We than freely psychologize and psycho-analyse, to so little artistic or scientific profit.

Not only Bradley but other critics too, who have said to have followed Bradley’s tradition like G. Wilson Knight’s have given all significance to ‘themes’ and ‘images’ and the characters of Shakespeare have been dwarfed, they only matter as symbols to these new critics.

Even L.C. Knight who was not an actor like Knights has showed his distaste regarding Bradley’s only interest in interpreting characters. In ‘How many children had Lady Macbeth?’ (1933). Although he made fun of Bradley
but seem to commit the same mistake of his predecessor. He compares Macbeth to the poem of Mr T.S. Eliot’s ‘Wasteland’ and to the prose play of Ibsen. Sounding just like Bradley he declares that a Shakespearean drama was to be studied like a dramatic poem.

Again in his, *An Approach to ‘Hamlet’* he mentions how grateful he is to Wilson Knight, in *The Wheel of Fire*, and also to F.R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit* and just like they have done in their essays on Othello he also employs the same method in his Approach to ‘Hamlet’, i.e. develop the theme of the relationship between ‘self and world’.  

This is what Stoll asks the present day Critics to avoid, a man living in the 16th century writing for his audience, he has a difficult duty to perform, please the company for which he was writing and see to it the theatre is full of theatre goers and also keep the satisfaction of the audience in mind. Yet, these representatives of character forget all except their own opinion and approaches that they have to impress the readers with and always have to be discovering and revealing, new aspect of Shakespeare in their book of learning.

Stoll throughout his work lays a lot of emphasis on the study of the background of Shakespeare’s plays. Which naturally includes the audience response and reflection of their taste.

Stoll was of the opinion that whatever was being discovered about the stage, the setting and about the Elizabethan audiences could be used in order to enhance our study and knowledge of the ‘real’ Shakespeare and what he had desired for us to understand.
First of all, the existence of this historical sense was felt in the 18th century. When scholars started taking interest in editing and interpreting Shakespeare’s language. Two scholars, Steevans and Malone need mention because of whom Shakespeare’s Scholarship got proper ‘direction’. The light that was thrown by these pioneers on the Elizabethan and Shakespearian scholarship was not grasped well by the romantic interpreters. Hence its development was very gradual since it clashed with that of the romantic ideals. Some of the greatest of Shakespeare’s critic like Coleridge, Lamb and D. Quincey did not receive and take advantage of the findings of scholarship. Perhaps they did this knowingly because otherwise their image of a universal Shakespeare whose play, they had got in the habit of picturing ‘in a timeless context, divorced from his age and theatre’.\(^5\) That image of a romantic Shakespeare would have been marred. And as Viswanathan informs us it was actually latter half of nineteenth century that promoted Shakespeare’s study and made the Elizabethan scholarship in evitable for the educational institutions. Since A.C. Bradley was also the culminator of the character criticism in Shakespeare he had also not employed the Elizabethan scholarship as if the playwright had no background. Bradley also never felt the impact of the audience nor the stage for which the plays were written. It is said about Bradley that he frequented the theatre occasionally, but such an evidence cannot be had from his book. Not only Stoll but also the ‘New Critics’ have lashed out against Bradley for it was alleged his Shakespeare did not belongs to the Elizabethan time and condition and his interpretation of only the four main tragedies of Shakespeare appeared like the novel of a victorian author. Then how can a character be treated like a man that even an unpolished and primitive one belonging to the 16th century, analyzed with psychological formula.
The poetic school especially L.C. Knight made fun of Bradley because Bradley in his eagerness to do justice to Shakespeare’s great art, has gone into such details as Hamlet’s age and the number of children Lady Macbeth could have had.

It is this kind of overstatement or rather senile imagination that Stoll actually wants to restrict which leads to an anachronistic approach and Interpretation.

This was exactly the background against which Stoll was writing. Perhaps now we can understand, this stricture of Stoll was not just in reaction but more than that. Stoll has intensely emphasised the study of the historical background of Shakespeare’s play as it was part of his comprehensive doctrine towards objectivity.

Stoll as we can see has rightly pointed out that Bradley has not adequately bothered himself with the basic question involved in his study of Shakespeare’s the exigencies of the theatre, the requirement of the dramatic modes, and most important the artifices in which great art is always rooted.

Another very vital point that must not escape our notice regarding Stoll as a historical critic, is that in all his work there is no emphasis whatever on Shakespeare’s intellectual background. If Stoll has insisted, that Shakespeare’s plays can properly be understood in Elizabethan term just for that reason, now can he be branded. Well simply and explicitly he can, be distinguished from the other historical critics of Shakespeare.

We take as example J.M. Robertson, during his study of Hamlet, asserts that the basic problem of Hamlet is that of his ‘delay’. And this great lapse in
Hamlet's character cannot be explained by any "esthetic theory." And he insists that only by relating Hamlet to his genes and explaining his background can a conclusion be reached regarding Hamlet.  

The history of the play, persists Robertson, is thus vital to the comprehension of it. Another well known contemporary of Stoll although a German, along with him was called historical. He was paid too much importance on the survival of the primitive technique of Shakespeare's plays and his approach towards Shakespeare was not positive like Stoll. If Robertson has complained about the crude taste of Shakespeare's audience, Schucking has found that Shakespeare often misused the primitive techniques like 'direct self-explanation and this method was very artificial. He applied these conventions directly on Shakespeare failed to assess that a great artist like Shakespeare could transcend, even the limitation of these convention could not imprison the 'soul of all ages'. Schucking can safely be summoned up in Kenneth Muir words 'With Levin L. Schucking we have the historical approach in its purest simplest form.

Stoll was very different from Harley Granville-Barker who has in his effort to stage Shakespeare's play according to the Elizabethan custom, has merged both his experience as a producer and pursuit of a playwright. And his ideas regarding the stage craft of Shakespeare is inestimable.

If this approach had been channalized properly by these men of vision the out come could have been edifying. But as always has been happening one set of approach or interpretation is not acceptable to another school.

But it is rather surprising to call Stoll and Schucking 'realist school' or even historical. Just because they insist on interpreting 'Shakespeare's drama as
in itself it really exist and that he cannot be studied without his Elizabethan setting and perspective. To even say that their writing was just in reaction to Bradley’s Shakespearian Tragedy will also not be correct. As it is, they were not just giving a ‘new view’ of Shakespeare’s character, nor promoting themselves at the cost of mitigating Bradley’s contribution. But is truth, they were trying to prevent anachronistic queries and evaluation of drama in general.

The main purpose which Stoll wanted to achieve from his writings has sadly been mis-represented and neither was it historical for he has not in any of his book been chronological, nor concerned with the intellectual perspective of the Shakespearian age. If he is compared with the pure historical work of Theodore Spencer and E.M.W. Tillyard and even Hardin Craig, he is different from them. He has never agreed with Spencer trying to misplace Shakespeare’s intellectualism, in sure defiance of the critic prescription of Shakespeare’s creativity Stoll says: ‘The time was ripe for Tragedy’. But how does Professor Spencer at his late day, know so much about the chronology?\footnote{59}

Well as it stands out clearly Stoll as an interpreter of Shakespeare was never trying to apply the limitation nor the achievement of the period or the good and bad phase of the writers life into his creative life like Dowden had done before him. The only aspect that he was keen to see established was, an aspect that had been awfully neglected in the 19th century. He laid stress on the non-naturalistic conventional basis of Shakespeare’s drama, concerns not just character but all the major elements.

In his analysis of Shakespeare’s plays and what ever explanation he gives in order to confront the ‘psychologising’ critics of the 19th and 20th century he always stands out because of his objectivity and his comparative
analysis he is never condescending in his tone, nor does he ever try to patronize the Elizabethan culture or make them look inferior...

Perhaps because in the initial years of his writing Stoll began highlighting the dramatic practice of the Orthodox Elizabethan playwrights like the casting of ghosts, criminals, the malcontent and the melancholy kind of heroes, that was very common among these people. This was the only association that Stoll had with historical scholarship, and for which has identification, was blemished. Stoll’s style of writing is very intense and he is often repeating what he has to assert in all his books and article. He is given to reiteration because he wants his readers to believe in him and his disclosures.

Another very strong point regarding Stoll has been noted by R.W. Babcock in his articles. He presents the ‘evolution’ of Stoll’s writing from his early phase as a interpreter of Shakespeare, when he was a ‘sceptic’ then he progressed and became objective and in the later phase of his writing Babcock discerns an aesthetic appreciation in Stoll. This change in Stoll has not been noted by researchers.

Even S. Viswanathan applauds the manner in which:

Stoll views all the major elements of Shakespeare’s drama, not merely character, from the intentionalist and historical angle provided by relating the drama to the conventions and techniques of the time. He directs our attention to variations and control of emphasis by dramatist;... and to the creation of a non-naturalistic poetic and musical ambience through which a commencing dramatic illusion is created.

Viswanathan further interprets that Stoll’s highlight of Shakespearian character with a totally new vision was not deliberate and neither was it is
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reaction but rather an effort on Stools part to shift the focus from character analysis to the study of situation which was the ‘core’ of every great drama during the Elizabethan time and also to correct and guide the mislead 19th century interpretation, on the right path and provide a new view of interest in character depiction.

This study of Stoll from all angles, reveals to us that Stolls main concern was with the nature of drama, he wanted to propond a theory for drama. His attention was also focussed on the problem of realism and life likeness in drama in opposition to the impressionistic attitude towards literature.

These are some views that Stoll believed in, to the last: About Literature he said we are not to forget that it is not life but only fiction.63

“A fact in Literature is not a fact, though in history it must be.”

“The greatest art is a compromise—in any case, a simplification, if need be a sacrifices, of truth for effect.”

And according to Stoll the greatest achievement of Shakespeare:

“And this is the particular crown and triumph of the artist—not to be true merely, but to be lovable: not simply to convince but to enchant.”64

True art as Stoll will tell us is not only creating, ‘the illusion of reality’ but also the beautification of dramatic figures.

If a survey is to be conducted towards, the literary and scholastic vision of Shakespeare studies during the twentieth century. Stoll’s place is definitely not among the historical and realist critic but he should be reimbursed and replaced among the early modernists.65 In the beginning Stoll may not have
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presented the emancipation experienced through the poetry of Shakespeare but later on this subtle change is Stoll has been marked by men of learning and also mentioned. Like R.W. Babcock in his, *The Genesis of Shakespeare's Idolatry*, 1931.

The historical judgement that the insistence on the non-realistic nature of Shakespearian drama by the 'realist' school paved the way for the advent of the poetic interpretation has not had due recognition. The irony is that the poetic interpreters thought of themselves as reacting against the historical critics or the realist when it was really the work of this school that brought about the change of climate that incubated the poetic approach.\(^6\)

The greatest contribution of these man have been to study the dramatic tradition as a whole and not just in parts, also the analysis of characterization is approached by various methods and not just based on psychology.

In his book *Art and Artifice* in the chapter IV he confesses that although is grateful to Mr Bridges for his essay on *The Influence of the Audience in Shakespeare* but had only read it after having finished his essay on *Hamlet* (1919). Hence its baseless to argue his realism was the impact of Mr Bridges or that it was just in opposition to Shakespearian Tragedy. Not even cooperation with Schucking because at many times he has refuted, his negative interpretation but rather because he wanted to counter the attack made by Mr Archer in his book. *The old Drama and the New*.\(^7\)

William Archer considered to be the greatest champion of Naturalism and realism and the well made play of the twentieth century, in the first half of his book, makes a Scathing attack on Elizabethan poetic drama. His book is now little known but had made a great mark at the time of his first publication. Archer lavishly praises the contemporary well made plays of his time. He
points out how their plots are coherent and well connected with characterization. According to him the situations in modern drama are life like and convincing. The characters develop and behave in the way of moral human beings. The motive are clearly indicated. These plays do not observe unnatural dramatic conventions. Archer’s main contention is that the early 20th century drama is much superior to the poetic drama of the Elizabethan age because it is closer to normal and everyday life.

It is quite clear that Stoll’s theoretical position can be determined by presenting him as a critic, who was diametrically opposite to Archer’s approach. My contention is that, Stoll is not basically a historical critic. He also does not belong to the ‘realistic’ school of Shakespeare criticism to which Robert Bridges may be said to belong.

Further more his central position was different from that of the German critic Schucking with whom he is wrongly classed. Schucking’s main contention concerning Shakespeare’s dramatic art is basically primitive. According to him many of Shakespeare’s characters are found to be incoherent, inconsistent because in Shakespeare’s day the art of characterization had not really developed. Most of the conventions of Shakespearian and Elizabethan drama were crude and primitive, these devices were used by untrained dramatist to discover a short cut to dramatic illusion.

The real evidence of Stoll’s approach can be found in the following passage from a French critic, Francisque Sarcey (An Essay on an aesthetic of theatre):

“The dramatic Art is a collection of local and universal, temporary or eternal convention with the help of which in
representing human life in the theatre they create a public illusion of reality."

According to Stoll presentation of reality is not the business of great drama, particularly great poetic drama. Drama is basically concerned with the manipulation of the feelings of the audience. He goes back to Aristotle in his contention that the main function of drama is to produce a cathartic effect. His other contention is, that the ordinary naturalistic play of which William Archer was a great champion and which is concerned with the presentation of every day humdrum phenomenon of actual life would certainly, fail to evoke the necessary tragic emotion and to manipulate the audiences feelings in a significant way. It is only great drama with its absence of drab reality and its intensifications that would produce the necessary effect. The devices that the dramatists use—juxtaposition and contrast, accumulations and compression, irony and conflict—go a long way in achieving the real goal of the drama.

The dramatist distorts reality in order to intensify it. Intensity is thus gained at the expense of verisimilitude of life likeness. The dramatist does so through his poetry. (it is actually the poetry of conception that matters and not the use of metre). Thus we find that Stoll’s theory of drama brings him close to the modernist and poetic approach to drama. It also brings him close to the myth and ritual approach to Shakespeare’s drama.

References:

2. Ibid., p.250.
3. Schuckling, Levin, L, Character Problems in Shakespeare’s Plays (1919) (London: George Herrap, 1922) His plays were translated in 1922.
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5. Ibid.


8. Ibid., p.8.

9. Ibid., see Chapter 1.


15. Ibid., p.8-9.


18. Ibid., p.18.

19. Ibid., p.17.


21. M. Weitz in his book already mentioned above, has explained what these Elizabethan critics mean by Elizabethan terms: they mean Elizabethan
theatrical condition, stage and dramatic connections or philosophical, psychological, and political ideas and ideals. P.74.


23. Stoll, Ibid., p.56.


25. Herford, Ibid., p.49.


27. *Art and Artifice* Ibid., p.IV

28. Ibid., p.3.


30. Ibid., p.3.

31. Ibid., See the Dogmata Critica in the beginning.

32. ‘Shakespeare’s Studies’ p.94.

33. Ibid., p.94-96.

34. Ibid.

35. Act I Sc. 3. *Othello, The Moor of Venice*, The Duke Seems fascinated by othello and his being black does not matter, Brabantio who is Desdemona’s father is also present during this moment.


37. Ibid., p.6.

38. Ibid.


41. S. Viswanathan Ibid., p.41.
42. Stoll, Hamlet, Bloc. Cit., p.74.
43. Stoll, Art & Artifice, Ibid., p.94.
44. Hamlet, Ibid., p.11-7, Exactly the same disclosure's are repeated in Art and Artifice (P. 94-95.)
45. Art and Artifice, p.27.
46. Hamlet the Man, Ibid., p.4 (English Association Pamphlet No. 91, 1935)
47. Bridges; Ibid., : (P.vii-215) 1927.
49. Hamlet the Man, Ibid., pp.4-5.
50. See Bradley, Ibid., pp.113-28 and Clutton Brock, 44-75, cited from Stoll, Art and Artifice Ibid.
51. Art & Artifice Ibid., p.119.
52. Ibid., p.120. The same theme has been explained with much detail in Stolls, Shakespeare Studies, pp.120-5.
55. Viswanathan, Ibid., pp.6-7.
58. Shakespeare Survey no.4. (1951) Ibid., p.15.
59. Stoll From Shakespeare to Joyce Ibid., p.92.
Stoll’s early essays like The Ghosts (1907); Shylock (1911); The Criminals (1912) are included in Shakespeare Studies. Another very inspiring essay which he wrote as early as 1910 is ‘Anachronism in Shakespeare criticism’, MP.7.


S. Viswanathan Ibid., p.13.

Poets and Playwrights Ibid., p.125.

Ibid.

M.H. Khan. Ibid., p.173.

S. Viswanathan. Ibid., p.15.

Poets and Playwrights Ibid., pp139-151.

Arts and Artifico. Ibid., PXIII.