CHAPTER – I
THE SHAKESPEAREAN SCENE

Ever since Shakespeare’s death, there have been a great variety of critical approaches to his work. In fact some of the richest harvest of criticism in our ‘age of criticism’ has been gathered in the field of Shakespeare commentary. Every century has contributed towards its range and depth and also its multiplicity of approaches and methods. If we are able to immerse ourselves in the complexity and sophistication of Shakespeare criticism, the entire intellectual and cultural spirit of the age can be ascertained.

When we begin studying Shakespeare criticism we are confronted by various critical voices and languages. From these three distinct trends, schools or movements can be gleaned. And according to S. Viswanathan, ‘a three fold classification of critics into historical, theatrical and poetic can be made’.

Many other methods of classification have been used by authors, reviewers and literary historians according to their conveniences. But the purpose of this chapter is not merely to comment on the Shakespearian scene but to highlight those critics who have made landmarks in the history of Shakespeare criticism.
This chapter is also concerned with the mode of classification that Allardyce Nicoll has interpreted. Nicoll distinguishes between the school of romantic criticism of which Coleridge is father, and which considers Shakespeare's work as divorced from their age and original theatre and the school which concerns itself with Elizabethan Shakespeares. He also divides critics into 'Bradleyites' and those concerned with the conventions of the Elizabethan stage. This thesis also intends to contemplate on the upsurge of interest in the imagery and symbolism of Shakespeare plays. After having plunged ourselves into the world of Shakespeare criticism, the question may arise, why read everything about Shakespeare that has been written three hundred years ago just to understand Shakespeare, why not just read Shakespeare's plays instead of understanding his critics, and presenting our point of view 'unaided and unencumbered by antiquity', about Shakespeare.

This point of view has also been taken into account by the new critics. This thesis also intends to trace their unique contribution in this context which highlights the plays, dramatic and aesthetic position. The review that has been made on Shakespeare's plays in the last three hundred (or more) years, was accomplished by different men at different times and it belongs to different nations as well. The change in the tone and mode of Shakespeare criticism also reflects the transition that occurred in the European civilization. Hence we
cannot just cannot afford to elevate one critic more at the cost of ignoring the others.

What we have to study is the whole pattern formed by Shakespeare criticism from his own time to ours. In tracing this pattern, certainly we must study some critics more closely than others, and we may for practical purposes select certain critics who serve to determine the main outline of the pattern, but it should be the whole pattern rather than the individual critic in which we interest ourselves.\(^6\)

This is of course the literary point of view that makes a study of Shakespeare criticism inevitable. There is a need to trace the past history of Shakespeare’s review, because unless we look in retrospection, the present remains black. Further, the aspiration of this thesis lies in spotlighting the individual contribution of not only Bradley but to elevate E.E.Stoll’s specific contribution from dejection and gloom. The study of these main approaches from eighteenth century onwards will certainly help clear the atmosphere for the emergence of what is commonly known as the ‘realist’ reaction against the excesses of the Romantic and Victorian criticism which had assumed that there was psychological consistency to the presentation of character in Shakespearean drama.\(^7\) The present undertaking of this topic is also to venture into the phenomenon that caused the rise of the poetic School to have emerged. Although they have completely suppressed history and even ignored the history of texts and theatrical scholarship. But the fact remains it was the earlier
scholarly findings, critical opinion and excessive character indulgence that paved the way for the poetic interpretation to have emanated. It further strengthens the point that the criticism of these men of learning, was not out of time and space, it had a definite solid background for it to have culminated and developed.

The earliest critical references to Shakespeare were either ‘simply admiring or anecdotal’. When the Columbia Encyclopedia was consulted on the same it informed:

During 17th and 18th century, Shakespeare was both admired and condemned. Since then, much of the adverse criticism has not been considered relevant although certain issues have continued to interest critics throughout the years.9

The famous remark of Ben Jonson that included the comment ‘Shakespeare wanted Arte,’ sounded the theme of Shakespearean criticism for the rest of the century.9 So, Shakespeare was mostly censured by his seventeen century contemporaries for lacking learning and the discipline that was thought necessary to elevate a work of art, although proclaimed as a natural genius.

Opinion about Shakespeare up to 1700 is collected in Shakespeare Allusion-Book, as yet it has not been substituted and remains a very dexterous work. Through it, we can chart out the rise of Shakespeare’s influence on the drama of his age. The Allusion Book may be of great use in discovering the
areas and aspects of the play that appealed most to Shakespeare’s contemporaries and successors.\textsuperscript{10}

Augustus Ralli relies entirely on this book for comments on Shakespeare by his contemporaries. Then he starts his chapter by remarking very matter of factly what an ‘imperfect state’ the criticism itself was. And criticism was only ‘recognized as a separate art and a branch of literature’, during the Renaissance, not until sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{11} Hence, even those reviews regarding Aristotle, Dante and Longinus were far and few. Therefore, those references made during Shakespeare’s lifetime and even;

“...a century after, are interesting historically rather than intrinsically being either whimsical and irregular, or enslaved by the rules of an art as yet too uncertain of itself to be liberal.”\textsuperscript{12}

Shakespeare was yet to be really and justly appreciated, even though he had been defended by some and admired for having ‘a mind reflecting ages past’.\textsuperscript{13} Ben Jonson as a friend pays a fine tribute to Shakespeare’s writings in the form of a First Folio (1623), it begins by accepting Shakespeare as the ‘Soule of the Age’, rating him above such poets as Chaucer, Spenser, Beaumont; even exalting his position above ‘Marlowe’s mighty line’, and comparing him to the greatness of Aeschylus. Finally, the critical tone seeps
into the praise followed by the unforgettable lines he had ‘small Latin and less Greek’, which finally sums up this remarkable genius of a playwright for all time to come. “He was not of an age but for all time”. This tribute is of immense significance since not only does it focus the universality of Shakespeare for all time to come but unintentionally it points out that though Jonson was a renowned scholar, book-learned and an expert in the art, (in the technical sense) but what he lacked, Shakespeare had in abundance that is ‘natural genius’, inspiration and a popular success. We can sum up the 17th century criticism of Shakespeare in the words borrowed by D. Nichol Smith:

‘...with all his faults Shakespeare was to Jonson the greatest of dramatists. This was the contemporary view, and it was never seriously challenged throughout the seventeenth century’.

During his own time Shakespeare was not very much written about, but acceptance and approval for his scholarship does no depend on the quantity but rather the quality of his work. Furthermore, the art of criticism developed quite late, there was no question of an annual or quarterly not even a Shakespeare Survey such as we have today or an occasional periodical or lectures.

Indeed this ‘natural genius’, owes a lot to his fellow actors John Heminge and Condell, who collected together thirty six of his plays and published them in the form of a First Folio in 1623. It was mere good fortune
otherwise Shakespeare could have been lost for ever, since it was considered more fashionable during the Jacobean period to amuse oneself with the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher and best of all Ben Jonson.\textsuperscript{17} The lowest point in Shakespeare criticism or rather the nadir in his ratings was reached through the scathing attack of Rymer, who set the pattern of judging Shakespeare ruthlessly according to the adherents of the neo-classical principles of dramatic construction. As a result, though Shakespeare was a member in the ‘triumvirate of wit’ along with Jonson and Fletcher, he was badly overshadowed by these fashionable craftsmen due to all these adverse comments regarding him. George Saintsbury describes Thomas Rymer as “the worst critic who has ever been”. Rymer may have been a learned critic but he was not a success, when his own play ‘Edgar’ was staged. His objection was mainly directed towards the modern dramatist of his time for having broken the rules laid out by the Ancients. His study is mainly a comparison between the ancient (Sophocles and Euripides) and the moderns whom he finds lacking, since they did not mould their plays according to these past masters. D. Nichol Smith is remarkably reasonable about his ‘censures’:

‘He was a learned man, clever, and boisterously witty, but when he attacked Othello with ridicule he knew that it was his last weapon. He called it the Tragedy of the Handkerchief.’\textsuperscript{18}
He has out-rightly made fun of Desdemona’s sorry plight and mockingly conveys the main moral of the story, for wives to take care of their pieces of linen well, otherwise they may face a similar consequence. To quote him exactly:

‘There is in this play, some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of comical wit, some shew, and some mimicry to divert the spectators but the tragical part is plainly none other than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour.’

Interestingly Rymer is of the view that Shakespeare is fit only for writing comedies, and tragedy is out of his scope. He just could not imagine how Othello, a Venetian general, and Iago a soldier, can act out of character. For according to him neither in tragedy nor comedy such a mixture of contradictory nature is never found. It cannot be comprehended by Rymer how Othello a soldier, can be presented like a false, insinuating wreck of a person whereas the general is so vulnerable that out of a fit of jealousy he kills Desdemona. In the same vein, Rymer blames the audience of Shakespeare’s plays, whom he points out were not learned but ignorant men like carpenters and cobblers. In order to please these semi-illiterate audience Shakespeare could not maintain the purity of the genre and this resulted in the debasement and abuse of tragedy. Rymer is scathingly direct and straight forward when he blames Shakespeare for not sparing the historical figure of Julius Caesar, but transforming and distorting its
foundation, and coating a noble Roman figure in the garb of a fool. This habit of Shakespeare’s mingling of the tragedy with the comedy was like a crime to Rymer. He had some preconceived notions about what a tragedy should be and how it should progress and if we study Ralli in some detail he is of the view that this man was an agnostic and his criticism can rightly be explained as ‘atheistic’. He was a believer of ‘external reality’ of the universe which could only be governed by a set of rules with no God and no heaven existing. The Moderns were in fact a sort of correction on their narrow mindedness because it is they who bestowed a place to the ‘human mind’ and ‘soul’. Hence Rymer’s views can neither be refuted nor his atheism blamed, since the aesthetic appreciation of poetry or the mysteries of life was out of his comprehension. Rymer himself has been attacked by Charles Gildon who calls him a ‘hypercritic’ and Professor Saintsbury rejects his worth as a critic.20

Rymers adverse criticism did have some effect on a next generation of followers but when Dryden came into the picture Rymers perverse intellectualism was outsmarted.

Historians of Augustus Ralli’s repute and others have bequeathed John Dryden with the privilege of being the first critic of Shakespeare.
His praise of Shakespeare, tempered by his own neoclassical predictions, offset the fanaticism of Rymer that had served as a pervasive influence in the first half of the 18th century. The discussion, in Dryden's 'Essay of Dramatic Poesy' (1660) in the form of dialogue writing appears to have presented a saner and discerning value of Shakespeare as an artist. Neander, one of the spokespersons takes up the cause of establishing the greatness of Jonson in contrast to all other writers, English or French. And Jonson's Silent Women is commended as a perfect drama. But to establish this fact he is called upon to convey his ingenious belief or opinion. Neander does comply with participation in the discussion but he thinks it necessary to mention Shakespeare and Fletcher first. Jonson's contemporary and 'rivals in poesy'. This talk begins after Neander grants Shakespeare his right place and establishes his superiority above all. Neander as Dryden's mouthpiece utters these notable lines which have resulted in launching Dryden as a prime critic of Shakespeare.

"To begin, then, with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it; you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation; he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards. and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I
The Shakespearean Scene

should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him;

.....If I would compare him (Jonson) with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.”

This was the prevailing frame of mind that followed Shakespeare criticism to the early years of the 18th century, echoing the trend, established by Dryden in his essay, various prefaces and prologues. However, it is quite clear from this discussion that a certain censure or constriction was always attached to the glorification of Shakespeare’s art. He was blamed for neglecting the construction of his plays, lapse was found in his ‘wit’ and his language was also at times disapproved of.

During that time much significance was attributed to dramatic art, mingling of tragic with comic scenes, and to the unity of time and place and action since our playwright practiced neither he was ruthlessly castigated. Ben Jonson’s plays were said to be perfect, because he rigidly practiced these rules in his plays.
We can safely conclude after giving Dryden his due for demonstrating foresight, where appreciation of Shakespeare’s drama is concerned, although he was bound by the custom of his age. Still he agrees that comedy as well as tragedy (of the English) because of Shakespeare has surpassed that of the Ancients. Whatever flaws he finds in Shakespeare is due to the rigid notions of his time. Ralli is bemused to note that Dryden himself a poet, fails to understand the metaphorical language used by Shakespeare. This particular critic of Shakespeare himself has been reproved with similar charges, in the recent times.

His greatest contribution was the character of Shakespeare quoted at length from the Essay on Dramatic Poesy. It strikes like the crescent of the new moon on the night of contemporary criticism but the main body of radiant orb was long to remain in darkness. 23

The Auguston critics of Shakespeare had forgotten that Shakespeare’s plays had been written to be staged. This startling revelation, was noted by this genius of a man. T.S. Eliot and accordingly conveyed:

As soon as we enter the eighteenth century we feel a change in the atmosphere of criticism and in reading criticism itself we are aware that Shakespeare is beginning to be more read than seen upon the stage! 24
The entire focus or attention of these men of scholastic attitude was towards Shakespeare's education same as the seventeenth century artists.

The Augustan Age was dominated by the neo-classical code of dramatic criticism. The interest of Augustan critics was centered above all on Shakespeare's neglect of the Sacred 'unities of time, place and action, on his learning or lack of learning on the obscurity' of his language.\textsuperscript{25}

Shakespeare's works having endured the idolatry as well as scathing remarks from his contemporaries, as well as his critics in the seventeen and eighteen century continues to fascinate his reader. One thing one must not forget as one delves deeper into the world of Shakespeare's criticism is that his plays are very rarely being staged the main purpose for which they were written. Hence, the appreciation of his work took the form of censures. These hard-core critics, who found fault in Shakespeare that he did not maintain the unity of time and place and action, were falling into a similar trap. This is to be emphasized vehemently and highlighted, that this is the very point where these neo-classical critics digressed from their objective. The defects in their study of Shakespeare as a true artist seem to be the following:

1. They were studying Shakespeare in a literary vacuum, that is without a historical perspective.
2. They judged Shakespeare according to the formula prescribed by the experts of classical drama. The most solemn charge was the absence of "poetical justice" in Shakespeare’s plays.

3. These rigid men of classical literature failed to acknowledge the superb talent of character, portrayal, which Shakespeare was endowed with.

Neo-classical critical code, which was derived from the sixteenth century Italian commentary on Aristotle was alien to Shakespeare’s work. Shakespeare could not be judged by external and formal criteria of dramatic work. The application of such criteria created a dilemma for the edifying neo-classical critic. For the offensive neo-classical critic such as Rymer there was no doubt or difficulty. He applied neo-classical criteria to Shakespeare, found him wanting and so out rightly rejected him. For the good critic on the other hand Shakespeare’s work posed a problem. They found him inadequate when they judged him by these neo-classical criteria. Instinctively however, they found that Shakespeare’s work was the product of genius. In Dryden’s case we find him undecided between Shakespeare and neo-classicism. Dryden, is great when he listens to the voice of his instincts and elevates Shakespeare when the need arises and judges him without prejudice of any kind.
In Samuel Johnson’s case we find that he rejected aspects of neoclassical dogma in favour of Shakespeare. So, to sum up one can say that neoclassical dogma should never have been applied to Shakespeare. Those 17th and 18th century critics who had the courage not to apply these archaic notions and have judged Shakespeare’s worth inspite of it have been given the credentials of balanced critic and their work estimated as valuable criticism.

But in the second half of the eighteenth century the rigid neoclassical doctrines were subjected to attack from powerful critics such as Samuel Johnson: Aristotle’s rules gradually began to lose their authority, and a new spirit of freedom entered Shakespeare criticism. Johnson’s attack on the ‘unities’ in his Preface to Shakespeare (1765) was a turning point, and when the observance of the rules ceased to be a live issue, criticism of Shakespeare’s plots almost disappeared. The third quarter of the eighteenth century is the true period of transition in Shakespeare criticism. The great controversy over the extent of his learning had ended, the rigid canons of neoclassical criticism had largely been discredited, and the rise of the Romantic movement, with its love of individuality, helped to bring about a far-reaching change of emphasis in the critical discussion of the plays: Shakespeare’s characters emerged as the principal objects of interest to critics. A tradition was thus established which was to be the dominant one until well into the twentieth century.26

Before reaching a conclusion it would be only proper to emphasis yet again, these eighteenth century men of learning adopted and cherished this picture of Shakespeare as an untutored genius who lived in a rude society and wrote for mean undiscriminating audience; who according to their old
fashioned view committed many faults through ignorance of what Pope called ‘the rules of writing’ however, who by his extra-ordinary natural gifts excelled all other poets or equaled the best of them.\(^{27}\)

The most notable fact about this age may have been the harsh censure that Shakespeare had to undergo. But where praise for his genius was concerned, the voice of all the eighteen century critics united and became one. Shakespeare was judged un-comparable. They failed to understand why a great writers of Shakespeare’s caliber failed, to apply these dogmas which were most important to them. This was the trend of their age and some of them could not surpass this genuine bewilderment and hence were rendered helpless. Some even took up the task of shielding and providing excuses for Shakespeare and defending him because they were naturally confused; they could not visualize beyond the boundaries of their age.

Alexander Pope’s utterance in this context has become so significant that it cannot remain unmentioned:

To judge therefore of Shakespeare by Aristotle’s rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who acted under those of another.\(^{28}\)
Nicholas Rowe was another eighteenth century critic of Shakespeare, who has judged him sympathetically. He himself was a practicing and successful dramatist. It was his contribution that today we have a neat, tidied up edition of the text of the plays, adding scene divisions, lists of dramatis personae, indications of locality, and so on.

Rowe has been applauded for expressing a ‘new critical mode’ in the Preface to his edition (1709) of Shakespeare:

If one undertook to examine the greatest part of these (the tragedies) by those rules which are established by Aristotle, and taken from the model of the Grecian stage, it would be no very hard task to find a great many faults, but as Shakespeare lived under a kind of mere light of Nature, and had never been made acquainted with the regularity of those written precepts, so it would be hard to judge him by a law he knew nothing of.\(^\text{29}\)

This same idea was enhanced by Addison in one of his spectator essays, he explains that there is “more beauty in the work of a great genius who is ignorant of the rules of art than those of a little genius who knows and observes them”.\(^\text{30}\)

The uniformity that is found in the criticism of these neo-classical critics is really amazing. Critic after critic charges Shakespeare for lacking in dramatic art, ‘with failing to observe the moral purpose of art in allowing the wicked to prosper and the just to perish’, and also for violating decorum in language. Not
only in England but also in France Shakespeare’s violation of the rules was discussed upon and speculated.

In the second half of the 18th century Samuel Johnson was the propagator of a new spirit in Shakespeare criticism free from the binding chains of the unities. Johnson always had strictures regarding Shakespeare’s art. For instance, the charges against Shakespeare’s moral propriety was made by Samuel Johnson and extended by George Bernard Shaw in the 20th century. Johnson wholly agreed with the early criticism of the 17th and 18th century that Shakespeare as a stage dramatist should have worked with ‘artistic restraint’ and only defended him on the question of classical rules. On this issue of the unity of time place he argued very sensibly that no one considers the stage play to be real life. Hence this very issue is rendered baseless.

These men with their keen perception brought about an end to this era of judging Shakespeare according to norms he never knew about. His flight of fancy could not be shackled. Gradually as we proceed towards the end of the 18th century, it becomes obvious that the obstinacy in the doctrines of these heavy weight champions of the Augustan period causes their ultimate doom, which was self imposed in a way.
A new era in the study of Shakespeare's work was ushered, the model of Aristotle's perfection had lost its glitter and gleam. The rise of the Romantic movement brought about a change in the classical environment. The various controversies had paled into insignificance. Interest was shifted from the criticism of Shakespeare's plot to his characters.

Romantic movement with its love of personal individuality, helped to bring about a far-reaching change of emphasis in critical discussion of the plays: Shakespeare's characters emerged as the principal objects of interest to critics. A tradition was thus established which was to be the dominant one until well into the twentieth century.

This century was the greatest exhibition of Shakespeare idolatry, he was pictured 'as the supreme creator of characters'. These critics went so far as to presume that character creation was one essential gift that the dramatist possessed. And hence character study became a prime subject of discussion and analysis for these critics. The seeds of this interest in Shakespeare's characters can be seen to have germinated in the last quarter of the 18th century. When interest developed in some of his main characters such as Falstaff, Iago, Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Richard III. This interest gave birth to curiosity that transformed to respect and gradually turned into awe. Shakespeare had reached the height of critical appreciation that continued to grow, of course this popularity of Shakespeare was confined merely to the unique power of
characterization and not elsewhere. The Romantic criticism which was started as a reaction against,

"the reservations about Shakespeare of 18th century neo-classicism. The Romantic in England, France and Germany succeeded in shifting the intellectual climate of opinion about Shakespeare from something that had ranged from erratic enthusiasm in England and Germany to contempt in France, to something closer to wild adulation. But from 1815 in Germany and 1820 in England, by which times Shakespeare had become universally accepted by critics, criticism ceased to be an active or important part of contemporary literary history, it became eulogium adoring, uncurious, sonorous, and above all, redundant of the earlier decades of Coleridge and Schlegel. Not until George Bernard Shaw’s iconoclastic essays appeared at the end of the century was there any abatement of adoration."^32

The neo-classical attitude had met its match in the defensive stand of Mrs. Montagu and others. Even the writings of Lord Kames in 1762, accepts some deficiency ‘in the mechanical part’ of Shakespeare’s plays, but Kames lavishes him with all praise in character delineation, nobody can surpass Shakespeare here not even ‘the ancients and modern’. Mrs. Montagu deserves a better hearing since it is her initiative also, that Shakespeare is not misrepresented due to the strictures of Voltaire. In 1769 she points out in her transcription, ‘In delineating character, he must be allowed far to surpass all dramatic writers’.33
Interestingly this new vision of presenting Shakespeare can also be witnessed in the work of Thomas Whately, who for the first time, felt it necessary to study Shakespeare’s character as the main subject because he felt sure they were endowed with ‘a peculiar excellence’ that belonged only to Shakespeare. He felt it vehemently that instead of roving ones observation in common and useless pursuit of intellectualism. Shakespeare’s character’s should become worthy of that notice, not only that but they must be immortalized. Throughout the end of eighteen century these critics of Shakespeare, known and obscure, had a common indulgence, that is obsession with characters.

Maurice Morgan, not to be left behind studied the character of Falstaff very profoundly in his illuminating Essay on the Dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff. This essay can be cited as a typical case of romantic discussion, perhaps first of its kind. Morgan seems intent on proving that, Falstaff, that fat knight, who appears cowardly and offensive to his readers is not so essentially. Kenneth Muir has rightly pointed out in his article “Changing Interpretations of Shakespeare,” that though Morgan, ‘treats him (Falstaff) as a real person rather than as a character in a play, his essay displays a subtle study of the text and contains some profound remarks on Shakespeare’s methods’.
Muir also clarifies that this aspect of studying character’s exclusively, had existed long before these critics received a breakthrough. It appears essays were written to discuss Polonius and Hamlet, and their origin could be traced back to the theatre in the year 1735. In those years when Morgan’s highlights of Falstaff’s character was being discussed and speculated. However it is perceived that it was not just in defense of Falstaff’s cowardice although on the surface it may appear so. It appeals as a profound study of Shakespeare’s dramatic skill and craftsmanship. Even a historian of Ralli’s stature can not shrug him off, he acknowledges the contribution of Morgan and gives ample space to his valuable hypothesis.

Morgan while comparing Shakespeare’s character to that of the other writers feels that his characters are different and unique. They have a ‘roundness and integrity’ that grants a flexibility to their disposition and gives them variety and independence. He further discusses that these character seen in parts on the stage can be seen in the whole if they are smoothened out. Morgan believes that Shakespeare, in animating his character must have felt those ‘varied situation’ they face in plays. Morgan proceeds a step further and declares Shakespeare’s dramatic personage as ‘whole and original’ and those of other playwrights as mere copies, in other words second hand. Shakespeare is not only a poet of nature, but an exquisite artist. This credit goes to Morgan
entirely for having conferred the title of Supreme delineator, crediting him with
mastery in dramatic perception.37

With the advent of Romanticism, the art of criticism had for sure become
an advantage during this age as it had progressed, and the critics seemed to
have attained an expertise that was not visible before. It is said about Coleridge
that his writing is ‘fragmentary’ yet, he is endowed with the stature of being the
topmost critic of Shakespeare among the Romantics.

As presented by Augustus Ralli, Coleridge is credited for being:

“The first and greatest of the romantic critics, he has transformed
his subject. He is the moon of Shakespearean criticism, so far
accompanied by only one satellite-Maurice Morgan. The greatest
of the others Dryden, Pope, Johnson are but shooting stars across
the darkness. If we would condense his message it is this, that life
is a mystery, that the greatest mystery of all is the human soul,
and that Shakespeare has done more to make darkness visible
than any being who has walked with us on this planet: and that he
worked his miracle with his imagination which is an originating
and not a decorative faculty.”38

Coleridge’s main contribution towards Shakespearian criticism was a
consistent demand towards accepting every work of art according to its own
organic law: His Biographia Literaria (1817) is a literary autobiography, he
dedicates only a chapter here to the study of Shakespeare’s art, the rest of his
work is in the form of lecture notes and records of table talk. It is important to
note here that although he begins by explaining poetry, yet actually he emerges as an expert in character depiction. He also follows in the footstep of the other critics of the last thirty years of eighteenth century. And it is this aspect of his work particularly, that leaves a strong and deep impact on the 19th century. Scholars especially Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy (1904) which carries out the expectation of the Coleridge tradition.39

Can anyone forget his account of Hamlet’s character, he himself has confessed that ‘I have a smack of Hamlet myself if I may say so’.40 Bradley also adopted his ‘over-reflective’ manner of intellectualism while nurturing his characters. The greatest defect as pointed out by the realist school of critics, was that he completely failed to grasp the fact that Shakespeare’s play was written to be enacted on the stage and had nothing to do with real life. Alfred Harbage has paid a tribute to Coleridge in the form of an introduction and adopted a defensive posture in his conclusion. This posture he adopts because he does not agree with the adverse ‘reaction’ towards either Coleridge or Bradley, as they belong to the same tradition.41

Coleridge is a true critic of art, his theme beauty, and his subject human nature. His is one way of talking about Shakespeare, not the only good way, but, in my opinion, the best way. Its possibilities are as inexhaustible as human nature itself, and it can save us from staleness.42
Coleridge has often been compared with the German critic Schlegel and it is said that the English critic was affected by his brilliant writing of that time. But Coleridge has denied such a possibility and instead names Lessing for having inspired him. But yet a similarity does exist in their points of view. Harbage also takes up this contention in support of his protégé that if the likelihood of influence were to crop up at all, Morgan’s criticism was fashioned more to his style than Schlegel’s. For a negative and positive affectation Johnson was seen as a common ‘whipping boy’ for both the German and English critic.\(^{43}\)

During that time, when it was the dawn of the Romantic period, Samuel Taylor Coleridge loomed above all other connoisseurs of art. It was his hay day till the emergence of Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy 1904. Some of Coleridge’s contemporaries were also, interested in Shakespeare, but this involvement was only to serve themselves. Hence, poets such as Wordsworth, Byron and Keats have nothing significant to contribute towards Shakespeare. It is Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt who have promoted this trend of Romantic criticism in Shakespeare.\(^{44}\)

In reply to Johnson’s censure of Shakespeare’s moral and verbal grossness Coleridge exhibits Shakespeare’s language as being ‘poetic and
integral' and not just descriptive. He has de-emphasized the unity of time and place and instead sees the plays as having unity of feeling. This is why perhaps, Alfred Harbage gives credit to Coleridge for having to some extent being responsible for 'the programme of the school of historical criticism', even though this happened in the 20th century. Harbage extends his boundary a little further and declares.

He also,...forecast the so-called 'new criticism'—in his assumption of complete integration in the artistic 'construct', his textual scrutinies, his conviction of the significance of puns and word-play, and his concern with 'imagery'.

For Harbage, Coleridge is the emperor of all that he surveys. Before Coleridge can be summed up, it should be noted that his criticism of Shakespeare was based on the following insight:

First of all, he emphasized the philosophical nature of Shakespeare’s drama. Shakespeare appealed to Coleridge not merely as an imitator but also as an original thinker. He accentuated upon the organic nature of Shakespeare’s plays and not the mechanical as done by the neo-classical men of learning. He upholds this doctrine that Shakespeare’s plays are the product of imagination. And Imagination for him plays various roles in the formation of Shakespeare as an artist. It is a unifying agent and creates symbols. Coleridge therefore excels all other Romantic critics, when he suggest that for the judgment of
Shakespeare one should not depend on external criteria but rather inner reflection. Therefore, he rejects atomistic and adopts organic approach.\footnote{46}

This presentation of Coleridge, was a sure reflection of the age he lived in. The current literary form of his time was based on subjective poetry that reflected or gave expression to one's inner feelings. Hence Coleridge considered Shakespeare's irregularities' as expression of very deep feelings and thoughts. Shakespeare has been universally accepted as a discerning psychologist and a philosopher with depth but our Romantic critic can not leave things there. He depicts Shakespeare as an artist above all and his skill or craftsmanship is not 'mechanical'; no, not even 'true to life' but it is 'unconscious' or 'organic' and not maneuvered. Coleridge, as a critic of this universal genius, has to play his role very seriously and in his enthusiasm and awe of this great dramatist, he even adopts the role of an interpreter. Hamlet is not a stage character, he has to be personified, it is assumed that Shakespeare speaks through him just like the fashion prevalent among the poets of that age. Shakespeare's sonnets were supposed to have 'unlocked' his heart to his readers, this interpretation came from Wordsworth who has traced the development of his intellectual capability, through a long poem.\footnote{47}
It has been noted from time to time that there were certain German admirers of Shakespeare who were diligently working on the other side of the border. But they were in the pursuit of a common enthusiasm. Although the scope of this thesis is limited to the Englishmen. But they have inevitably made themselves heard, they have crept into the world of Shakespeare criticism. To quote from the Columbia Encyclopedia:

The German critics Gotthold Lessing and Augustus Wilhelm Von Schlegel saw Shakespeare as a romantic, different in type from the classical poets, but on equal footing. Schlegel first elucidated the structural unity of Shakespeare’s plays, a concept of unity that is developed much more completely by the English poet and critic Samuel Coleridge. While Schlegel and Coleridge were establishing Shakespeare’s plays as artistic, organic unities, such 19th century critics as the German George Gervinus and the Irishman Edward Dowden were trying to see positive moral tendencies in the plays.48

William Hazlitt, also an English critic of the 19th century has carried out the tradition of emphasizing character study in Shakespeare. This custom, was started by Samuel Johnson. But it is the Romantics who developed and cultivated this art of analyzing and dissecting characters. In Hazlitt’s point of view he accounted:

....each Shakespearean character to be unique, but found a unity through analogy and gradation of characterization. While A.C. Bradley marks the culmination of romantic, 19th century character study, he also suggested that the plays had unifying imagistic
atmosphere, an idea that was further developed in the 20th century.49

While Kenneth Muir has classed Hazlitt with the best of Shakespeare critics. Ralli positions him as 'the third of the great critics. William Hazlitt in his books Characters of Shakespeare's plays (1817) conveys actually what he feels about the characters in Shakespeare and according to a critic of the Romantic era Mr. Jeffrey, feels that, Hazlitt does not explain what he knows about Shakespeare or his writing but likes to project his own feelings about them—and why he feels so. Yet Hazlitt is commendable because it is he who for the first time tried to give us a full account of nearly all of Shakespeare’s plays and character. His discussion on Macbeth and Twelfth Night is worth reading. He has also emphasized the enjoyment and love of Shakespeare’s play in the form of poetry.50

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century there was much excellent criticism on Shakespeare. The two writers who are particularly important during this period are William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey. In his essay: 'On the knocking at the Gate in Macbeth', (1823) he has chosen just one moment, in one play to illustrate Shakespeare’s genius, which has given him celebrity status. This essay is a fine example of Romantic criticism, worth comparing to Lamb and Coleridge. De Quincey through this single essay, has
presented his spiritual journey through Shakespearean poetry. His writing is a sure tribute to Shakespeare’s art.

This enlightening journey through Shakespeare’s critical world and especially when some of his important Romantic critics, are being discussed, this highlight will remain incomplete if Edward Dowden’s, contribution is not mentioned. Hence he needs to be mentioned emphatically since his book *Shakespeare: His Mind and Art* (1875) has carried its popularity right into the 20th century. It was Dowden’s conception entirely to divide Shakespeare’s “art life” into four periods: the years of experiment; the period when “he was gaining a sure grasp of the positive facts of life.” This phase of Shakespeare’s life according to Dowden reflects itself in his Henry IV plays and later in Much Ado About Nothing, As you like It, and Twelfth Night; then the period of the great tragedies; and the last, or the tranquil period; when Shakespeare, after some years of turmoil, reached serenity. Henceforth Dowden by projecting Shakespeare’s mental development tried to show that his plays written in different phase of his life showed the emotional transition in Shakespeare’s own life. Dowden’s work itself is being projected as a good specimen of Victorian criticism at its best, by the other critics. However, Dowden tends to interpret Shakespeare’s enhancement as an artist in a cool and calculated attempt,
The Shakespearean Scene

forgetting that the external influence could have also played a role in his evolution. To quote his exact words from his analysis of *As You Like It*:

Shakespeare, when he wrote this idyllic play was himself in his forest of Arden. He had ended one great ambition—the historical plays—and not yet commenced his tragedies. It was a resting place. He sends his imagination into woods to find repose...

After the trumpet-tones of Henry V. comes the sweet pastoral strain, so bright, so tender. Must it not be all in keeping? Shakespeare was not trying to control his melancholy. When he needed to do that, Shakespeare confronted his melancholy very passionately, and looked it full in the face. Here he needed refreshment, a sunlight tempered by forest-boughs, a breeze upon his forehead, a stream murmuring in his ears.  

Even today Dowden’s work is capable of inciting interest. Dowden’s belief that Shakespeare has revealed his thought and feelings in his work is not shared by Sidney Lee. In his book *Life*-Lee does not find any similarity between Shakespeare the artist and Shakespeare as a person. He was of the opinion that Shakespeare besides being a playwright was primarily a bread earner for his daughters. Hence, the success that he achieved at the theatre meant more to him then his ‘literary attainments’.

Lytton Strachey in his well known essay *Shakespeare’s Final Period* (1903) has made fun of Dowden for having presented the literary journey of Shakespeare in such childish words ‘in the depths’ and ‘on the heights’.
Actually he wants to prove the Victorian critic wrong by his argument that in Shakespeare's later years his mood was not grim, not even serene but it was more due to boredom and disgust and his spirits when they soared created this 'visions of loneliness' and due to the change that Dowden assumes. Strachey's penetrating, brilliant essay may have had a shattering effect but Dowden's contribution towards an understanding of Shakespeare cannot be underrated. Kenneth Muir in his Shakespeare Survey has stated that perhaps:

"Dowden was certainly a sentimentalist, but it is nevertheless arguable that he was near to the truth."\textsuperscript{54}

The major work of these Victorian critics in a way has been to establish Shakespeare's chronology. Another important fact about this period is that it produced no major critic of the stature of Coleridge. Another aspect of Shakespeare that interested them immensely was his morality. These critics believed fervently in Shakespeare as an instructor.

A.C. Bradley's \textit{Shakespearean Tragedy} (1904) is the completion to the criticism of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. He may have come after Hazlitt and Morgan but his work was the best of the Romantic school of critics. In fact in Muir's words, "Bradley's \textit{Shakespearean Tragedy} was the culmination of nineteenth century criticism."\textsuperscript{55}
Since this thesis concerns itself with the impact that Bradley made on the world of Shakespearean criticism, this study on Bradley will typify his definite approach and exemplify his strength and his weakness.

It must not be forgotten that it was initially Coleridge who set a trend for character analysis and then Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy finished off this tradition with a flourish and he was definitely the last of the major critic of the nineteenth century. Shakespearean Tragedy had been and still is a very impressive book. And its writer Professor A.C. Bradley is remembered as the greatest Shakespearean critic. The following lines presents the Professor and projects his personality as a critic:

He combines wide philosophic outlook with grasp of detail, and synthetic power with analytic. In treating a single character he never forgets its relation to the impression produced by the whole play. His mind is powerful enough to cope with the entire world which Shakespeare has hung in chains over chaos, and it is fundamentally poetic. His analysis is effective in so far as it is helped by memories and associations stirred up by the poetry of Shakespeare. He is never merely philosophic, like some of the critics we have previously considered. There are occasions when imagination partly retires and yields place to a more purely scientific method,...

Bradley’s criticism will be discussed at some length in the third chapter of this dissertation and a summary will be presented about his ideas and the
points he has made and his particular contribution towards the understanding of Shakespeare will be expounded.

But it is important and worthwhile not to forget that Bradley belonged to a certain tradition, with definite background, he was not out of time and space. Hence, his main interest was not just explaining. ‘The substance of Shakespearean Tragedy’ or endeavoring to answer the question: “what is Shakespearean Tragedy”? But the dimension with which he works has a definite profound purpose.

It was to the richness and profundity of Shakespeare’s characters that Bradley above all responded: the elaborate springs of their conduct and the elaborate and brilliant plays of their consciousness. Here he is at his best, often both penetrating and exhilarating; and this interest also helps to place Bradley in his own age or rather, at the end of an age, in the period of the 19th century novel with its elaborate and often magnificent development of the individual character.57

The significance of Shakespearean Tragedy further gets amplified, when one takes into account that this book is a sure example of impressionism in Shakespearean criticism. E.E. Stoll was a declared opponent and he vehemently confronted the predominant school of character analysis, illustrated by the criticism of A.C. Bradley and argued for an examination of the plays in the context of the period. Hence, it is aimed here to study Bradley and Stoll in the
Shakespearean context very deeply and profoundly, so that both these critics and their works could be reviewed, separately and studied comparatively.

His work is of a limited scope: a book on Shakespearean Tragedy (1904), which discusses Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear, essays on ‘The Rejection of Falstaff’ (1902) and Anthony and Cleopatra (1906), and a lecture on Coriolanus (1912).

Still Bradley has been applauded by many scholars as being the last and the best of the Romantic school of critics.

Even today the book ‘Shakespearean Tragedy’ remains incomparable. It is a very compact, handy book, and no doubt very intelligently written. The book’s opening chapter itself is very revealing. It creates an impression of opening new avenues or vistas in the study of Shakespeare’s Tragedies. All this will be discussed at length in the chapter devoted to Bradley; i.e., the third chapter.

Bradley, does appear to be tracing a concept of tragedy, but running parallel with his contention of what a Shakespearean Tragedy has to be; there is another motive or interest, a hidden intention of tracing a concept of tragedy that agrees very well with his interpretation of the four major tragedies where the main characters are concerned.\(^{58}\)
The ‘realistic’ or the historical school of critics were not the only reaction, which was initiated against Bradley. This was further propelled by the ‘poetic’ critics, critics like L.C. Knight and F.R. Leavis, this brick batting continued to be hurled at Bradley till the sixties. Bradley’s reputation as a mere psychological critic, no longer is a threat today since his reputation as a worthy critic of Shakespeare has been established, having been tested by the changing interpretation of Shakespeare’s criticism. It still remains a powerful and profound book to reckon with.\(^\text{59}\)

This study of Shakespearean criticism and its major critics, aims to reveal, that these critics would not have survived without the existence of another. If Johnson, and the neo-classical critics were the ‘whipping boy’ of Coleridge and other critics, Bradley in the 19\(^\text{th}\), 20\(^\text{th}\) century became an object of ridicule for the champions of the ‘realist’ drama, the major objection coming from Stoll and Schucking. The ‘poetic’ critics have not spared Bradley either. L.C. Knights in his essay ‘How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth’? (1933) has condemned Bradley and his followers strongly. Yet these same critics who have charged. Bradley for such an offence have frequently, indulged themselves with the perusal of character study. Wilson Knight argues against this system of character depiction in his preface to the \textit{Wheel of Fire}. But when it comes to his own essay he himself is writing about Lucio as if he is a boy next door.
'His wit is often illuminating, often amusing, sometimes rather disgusting. He is never wicked, sometimes almost lovable, but terribly dangerous.'

However, it is not as if these critics were rejecting Bradley on an individual and a personal level. It was a concerted move and a rejection of the tradition itself that Bradley was supporting through his Shakespearean Tragedy. These critics wanted to over throw the long established habit of the ‘character-chasers’.

These opponent critics of the 20th century definitely must have gauged the dangers of such a speculative approach. Because in the true sense of the word this was not interpretation. But they were to blame for the over interpretation which was one very obvious kind of indulgence that aroused many objections.

Bradley’s predecessors The critics who were Bradley’s senior like Morgan and Coleridge did not heed the warning of these critics and even most of Bradley’s successors had fallen into the trap. If we follow the history of Shakespeare criticism keenly it becomes obvious how, this sort of Impressionistic criticism was paving the path for some very notorious kind of contribution to Shakespeare criticism. Interest in characters incited by Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy is responsible for breeding some very degrading kind
of literature illustrated in Mary Cowden Clark’s ‘Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines.’

Stoll’s main objection was regarding the conditions and the conventions of the Elizabethan stage, which Bradley completely forgets. It was indeed Stoll’s keen observation, when he pointed out that Bradley found in discrepancies in Shakespeare’s plays that he terms as faults.’ Stoll in all his writings has upheld this contention that the defects that these critics have interpreted as ‘problem’ in the play and characters is no more than legitimate conventions of poetic drama.

Even Kenneth Muir who tried, with all his might to defend Bradley in his Fifty years of Shakespearean criticism.

‘...it may be said fairly enough that he was sometimes led to consider the character as real people rather than as imaginary characters in a drama.’

Although when in 1904, this book was first published, it was received with tremendous applause and it definitely made an enormous impact. Because during that time people did not know any better. Bradley did not encounter any stiff competition. When we look back in retrospective affect he can now be acclaimed as a giant among pygmies.
Hence his work was hailed as ‘the wisest and truest interpretation of the plays that had ever appeared.’ During that time it became the fashionable craze of all other critics to follow in his step. But after the advent of historical scholarship in Shakespeare’s studies, the critics were now better equipped to understand the works of Shakespeare. Hence the following insufficiency was found in Bradley’s work. Although the flaws found in Shakespearean Tragedy was common to his time and age.

1. Bradley writes like Coleridge in a historical vacuum.

2. He over-psychologies Shakespeare. He makes Shakespearean characters psychologically more coherent then they actually are.

3. He totally ignores the theatrical and dramatic condition of Elizabethan drama. At times his approach becomes anachronistic.

4. Taking a hint from Coleridge Bradley has philosophised ‘Shakespearean Tragedy’.

Nevertheless the purpose of this research is to reinterpret Bradley according to the twenty first century and not merely to point out his inadequacy as a critic of Shakespeare. While highlighting Bradley, it is also the contention of this work to stress that Shakespeare cannot be studied in oblivion of the past.
Since Edgar Elmer Stoll began writing from 1907, it is mostly assumed that he was writing only in reaction towards Bradley whose Shakespearean Tragedy was published in 1904. But in fact it is Stoll who made us remember that besides being a universal genius, a poet, a delineator of character, a naturalist, he was above all a performing artist and a playwright. Shakespeare also like any other men needed to earn his bread and butter. Since his plays were written to be staged, he often had to dispense with 'realism' and make do with artifice, craftsmanship etc. Stoll was from the very beginning concerned about the critics forgetting that the characters in Shakespeare's plays were primarily dramatic personae and not real people. Stoll has done Shakespeare criticism a commendable service. Of course the task he undertook of restoring Shakespeare study to his time and tradition was Herculean. But he diligently worked towards this objective and the result was a long series of books. And to say it in Kenneth Muir's words '...and if they (the books of Stoll) have not always been convincing their impacts has been salutary'. In the fourth chapter his work will be illuminated and the useful function he has performed articulated. Yet Stoll opts to remain unsung and un-applauded by his fellow colleague, all this shall be discussed.

Stoll may have left a valuable insight behind him of studying Shakespeare in his 'real world'. But criticism has since progressed a lot and
there are new avenues that are being explored. Stoll’s work is now criticized as being incomplete and insufficient since he could not trace the genius of Shakespeare’s art that made him a more successful playwright than his contemporaries. In the chapter devoted to Stoll all these matters shall be discussed. These questions will also be dealt with what prevented Stoll from becoming as well known as Bradley. Why although, he does lend a keen ear to the poetry of Shakespeare’s verses, it is not perceived by the other scholars of Shakespeare’s criticism. He has definitely contributed towards the study of symbolism and imagery. Since there is a point of view that the historical scholarship may have been one of the factors responsible for the rise of the New Criticism.

Stoll’s failure to make a mark in the history of Shakespeare criticism in the 20th century may have been because he was overwhelmed by the sudden upsurge of the poetic school of thought.

From here one enters into a distinctly new phase in the history of Shakespearean criticism, a phase that undoubtedly has rejected Bradley’s approach and welcomes instead the naturalistic approach with a booming interest in the imagery and symbolism of Shakespearean plays.
This totally new dimension in the study of Shakespeare’s works embodies forth in the year 1930.

R.A. Foakes in his brilliant essay ‘Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare’s Imagery’ informs us, “In spite of a variety of methods and aims this view that a play should be regarded primarily as a poem has been the governing principle of nearly all writings on Shakespeare’s imagery.”

The first three decades of twentieth century is reported to have explored the theatrical conditions of Shakespearean criticism to its hearts content. Next another set of critics dwelled deep into the language and style of Shakespearean plays and sonnets. This investigation into Shakespeare’s language cleared the way for deeper explorations of the imagery and symbolism not only for aesthetic reason but ‘historic terms’.

Although Kenneth Muir gives credit to Walter Whiter for pioneering Poetic movement or the New Criticism through his work ‘A specimen of a commentary’, but this did not arouse any interest in the world of criticism.

M.C. Bradbrook also discusses this approach under the title; Symbolism, Imagery and Ambivalence. However, Bradbrooks writing conveys that although in 1794 ‘Walter Whiter had anticipated this need to interpret the similes and metaphors of Shakespeare’s works but,...’ was foreshadowed by Coleridge in
some of the most famous chapters of Biographia Literaria, but not
developed. Perhaps these scholars were not competent enough to accomplish
this work of interpretation. It seems that critics tended to follow the prevalent
trend to be on the safe side.

All at once in the 1930, as if there was a prior agreement, works relating
to this aspect of style started getting printed. Una Ellis-Fermors in her
pamphlet, some Recent Research in Shakespeare’s Imagery mentions many
other originators of this approach. She is important and needs mention because
she earnestly tried to present a combination of the work of scholars such as
Spurgeon, Knight and Clemen.

Most importantly, this approach came to be recognized as the ‘New
criticism’ and its adherents are know as the ‘New critics’. A number of critics
ranging from Muir to Bethall, O.J. Compbell’s, ‘Shakespeare and the “new”
critics, W.T. Hastings, ‘The new critics of Shakespeare’ have all contributed
towards the understanding of this new approach. The name of R.A. Foakes
cannot be left behind, his article illustrates the very conceptual understanding of
this criticism. “Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare’s Imagery.”

The champions of this movement were the following as presented in
Bradbrook’s survey:
“The work of Caroline Spurgeon beginning with a couple of essays in 1930 and 1931, culminated in her book Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us (1935). It was preceded by the writings of Colin Still, F.C. Kolbe and Elizabeth Holmes, and contemporary with those of Wilson Knight and Wolfgang Clemen.⁶⁹

A detailed study of their method, the application of poetic imagery to Shakespeare’s language, the limitation of their style, and the individual contribution of these ‘New Critics’. Even the background that compelled them to select this absolutely new method will be discussed in the chapter no. V. Most importantly, prominence has not been given to any one critic in this discussion since it is believed that they all together consist of this novel approach and hence remain indispensable.

According to the logical and reasoning temperament of the current scientific era it never accepts without raising doubts, hence critics, have been vociferous in questioning the validity of this method of studying imagery and symbolism.

Such critics who have achieved great acclaim in analyzing the details of Shakespeare’s Imagery, shall be highlighted. The contribution of Miss Spurgeon, L.C. Knight, Wilson Knight, Cleanth Brooks and to some extent
Wolfgang Clemen have caused ripples in the world of Shakespeare’s criticism, hence, their illuminating work shall be highlighted here.

This movement above all saw Shakespeare as a poet. That Shakespeare had been a playwright and an actor as well, was of no consequence to these image hunters. This is the reason why reviewers observe this approach as a reaction to the Historical school of thought, who have laid excessive emphasis on the study of Elizabethan Jacobean tradition and also the theatrical situation of Shakespeare’s age and time.

Many other factors were also responsible for the poetic school to have made its appearance. It can be said to have flourished under the patronage of Eliot and Yeats. The all pervading, influential critical theories propounded by Eliot, had a definite impact on the study of dramatic imagery as a new development. There were some poets like T.E. Hulme who were under the impact of Mallarme and the symbolist movement that had come from France. So much so that it was given the form of a book by Herbert Reads, which was much further enhanced by Robert Graves. The most intense impact could be felt on the powerful work of I.A. Richards. It needs to be mentioned that this movement was totally independent and did not depend on Shakespeare for its existence. Even T.S. Eliot’s writing was for general use, he may have taken
Shakespeare as an example here and there. But the impact of his writing on the 17th century's style of verse was felt on Shakespeare's criticism. Even Richards when he wrote his Principles of Literary Criticism in 1925, it was the playwright from Elizabethan time whose writings was selected and quoted as an example when he wanted to illustrate a model. F.R. Leavis undertook to write about the 'texture of language essential to poetry' he would seek confirmation from Shakespeare's verses when ever he had to endorse a point of view, since he knew that this genius of a man had stood the test of time.

Another man responsible for this change from character analysis to poetic study: has declared with great emphasis in 'How many children had Lady Macheth?' (1933): that Shakespeare could be understood only after the study of rhythm and imagery is applied to Shakespeare.

The first quarter of the Twentieth century had given us a dramatist Shakespeare, the credit goes entirely to the toils and tribulation of Stoll, Schuking and others like Dover Wilson and Granville Barker. It was the unique achievement of the critics who came after the thirty's, under the epithet of 'New criticism' to have presented Shakespeare as a 'dramatic poet'.

In their eagerness, these writers tried to explore and exploit situations that never was before. In their hands Shakespeare's characters became obscure
because the realm of realism had been crossed. They belonged to no one and
no where, their very purpose became metaphorical. A very apt illustration of the
imagery investigated in Shakespeare’s character can be found in Mikhail M.
Morozov’s presentation.71

This thesis confines itself to tracing the impact of the New critics of the
1930 onwards. The demand for improvement in the understanding of
Shakespeare does not end here. This search for Shakespeare’s play as a
dramatic poem gives birth to more challenging and modern ways of examining
Shakespeare’s works. As we commence further into the twentieth century; the
study of Shakespeare’s imagery and style starts losing its appeal and the need
for a more ‘comprehensive and interpretative work appears to be the first
priority.’ The time is ripe for a volume which should stand with Chambers on
the stage, with Pollard and McKerrow and Grey on the texts.”72

The interest in Shakespeare’s use of symbolic language has extended its
tentacles to a more novel avenue of approaches. Among them, the most noted
are the psychological, anthropological, mythological and Jungian metaphysics,
and the religious aspect which considers the Christian point of view.73

The Freudian psychology has given the psychologist of the recent times
some food for thought. The critics of Shakespeare have now been provided with
ample reason to explain Shakespeare's character' with borrowed new tools and terminology. The worthy sample of such an approach can be gleaned from Ernest Jones, Hamlet and Oedipus. The delay in Hamlet's action to carry out his duty as a revenge to his father's murder, is seen by Dr. Jones as an 'Oedipus complex.' Hamlet because of all these confusion is presented as a living person by him and the real life, psychological laws and real life behaviour is applied to a dramatic personae in order to justify his stance as a psychological critic.

The Formalistic approach went under the banner of New Criticism the advent of this approach has already been discussed and more space shall be provided as the thesis progresses further. This formalist approach was not exclusively applied to the study of Shakespeare criticism, only but the impact was felt on all the genre and was not the achievement of an individual only but was a general movement of the 1920's.

The Russian formalists for the first time in the 1920s gave the doctrine of formalism. They felt that poetry had to be studied as a special kind of language and a lot of concentration focused on its use of metaphor, metonymy, rhyme, and alteration. This legacy of the Russian formalists was brought to the United States by some emigrants of this school of thought, some of them like Rene Welleck and Roman Jakobson brought this profound influence to the
States which gave birth to the existence of the New Criticism during the 1940s and 1950s. Its repercussion was felt not only on Shakespeare’s work but all literary criticism.

Indeed all these transformation from one place to another, and the replacement of literary genres is mind boggling? There was a time when the history of criticism was a part of literature and Shakespeare, the supreme artist. But today at every step one has to know what a certain critic has said about a particular work and how he also was refuted, the theme and style, the theory that he projects has to be understood. There are critics today who freely think it is not their job just to interpret a work of art of a certain artist but they have gone ‘beyond interpretation’. They leave a feeling of helplessness in the students mind and the readers estimate. The critics seem to have grown in stature so much so that their theories and reviews have dwarfed the real work of the artist.

The 1970s saw the emergence of the outburst of the theory of Deconstruction. This has resulted in many other theories and methodologies cropping up and making their presence felt in the criticism of Shakespeare. Derrida the propagator of this idea can be explained by M.H. Abrams: Deconstruction as applied in the criticism of literature designates a theory and
practice of reading which claims to ‘subvert’ or ‘undermine’ the assumption
that the system of language provides adequate grounds to determine the
meanings of a text.”

The climax in this state of deconstruction is reached which is described
as ‘Aporia,’ a term derived from Greek, which has best been described by
Shakespeare in Hamlet’s soliloquy ‘to be or not to be,’ by the followers of
Deconstruction theory. An irresolvable logical difficulty that becomes a
reference for this ‘Aporia’ of Derrida. A definite departure from the rules of
logic that is applied when interpreting a text. According to this theory a critic is
free to choose his direction, it’s a affirmative state with multiple choice. The
theory of Deconstruction is an eye opener. Its scope is very vast. It is a startling
revelation, that the aporia creates a new aporia in a never ending process of
creation.

The advent of structuralism and post structuralism has changed even our
ways of reading. I.A. Richards and many others like Northrop Frye, Terrence
Hawkes and Roland Barthes have revolutionized our very ways of even reading
a page or a passage. ‘Structuralism, Deconstruction, Gender-Theory, New
Historicism, Reader-Response Criticism and the Speech Act theory- these are
the subjects taught and studied, discussed and debated and not the plays and
poems of the great creative artist. Hence, we can sum up that excessive use of any theory or approach is not justified and one should strike a balance.

No matter which school of thought the critics belonged to, they have all turned to Shakespeare’s work when in need of specific example in order to explain their shapeless and obscure ideas. Harry Levin informs us just how even the ‘literary gospel’ of our time Anatomy of Criticism is compelled to make such a statement in order to present a value-judgement. ‘Shakespeare, we say, was one of a group of English dramatists working around 1600 and also one of the great poets of the world.’"76

Mr. Levin takes offence and thinks this statement to be some kind of a sarcasm upon Shakespeare’s greatness. In spite of what Mr. Frye may personally think about Shakespeare, the fact remains that this practicing ‘structuralist’ was drawing illustration from Shakespeare freely than from any other writers. And Mr. Harry Levin points out, (in his zeal to defend Shakespeare’s primacy) that Shakespeare gets mentioned on 209 pages by Mr. Northrop Frye.77 Shakespeare’s reputation increases by the growing years. It does not matter how harsh or crude critics can be, they have always used him to polish their own insight and left him bereft. But Shakespeare has come out with flying colours and the proof lies in the ever bulging editions of bibliographies
monographs, articles, translations, productions and the scholarly works of professors and students which are getting multiplied day by day.

The perusal of the Shakespearian survey No.51 should definitely make us aware of the change in the atmosphere of Shakespearean criticism. Shakespeare is no longer an Elizabethan Jacobean playwright or even an Englishman. He has transcended all barriers. He has become international: ‘...that is to say, that Shakespeare binds nations together, but that each national culture transmutes what it receives and enhances that totality in which it shares.’

Shakespeare no longer can be found only in the pages of critics, but his plays are more and more being performed in the theatres. He can be watched on the screen, and in the film world too. John Russell Brown, a prolific writer of the present time, designates Shakespeare with the name of ‘International currency’. Mr. Brown very simply tells us that Shakespeare’s universality is never going to end. Since this author who lived four hundred years ago is still being performed in the theatres more than any other playwright and that too, all around the world.

The most respected theatre directors turn repeatedly to Shakespeare’s scripts as if nothing modern has so fired their imagination. Giorgio Strehler Ariane Mnouchkine, Peter Brook, Peterstein, Suzeuki Tadashi, Robert Lepage: all these, each from a
different country, have mined Shakespeare repeatedly for productions that are startling in effect, contentiously modern, and, often, sensuously beautiful as well.

If, the poetic school of critics were to be consulted regarding this continuous popularity of Shakespeare, they will definitely say that the merit lies in the poetry that he wrote. The linguist may claim, the language that Shakespeare used, that is the example of how the superb English language has worked wonders for him. But other poets and playwrights have used this language but they have not crossed the boundaries of time, place and culture.

What Shakespeare had written for one of his characters can be applied to him too:

“All the world’s a stage....”

The process of defining and redefining Shakespeare’s work has become quite a profitable industry for the Europeans to perpetuate their brand of Literary preponderance and domination.
NOTES : CHAPTER- I


2. For example ed. L.F. Dean has divided Critics into ‘the Shakespeare-as-a-poet’ one and ‘the Shakespeare-as-a-dramatist’ ones. Anne Ridle prefers to call them ‘the theatrical and the Linguistic.’


6. Ibid., p. 289.

7. Shakespeare’s Encyclopaedia, p. 156.


Ralli himself has freely, made use of the Shakespeare’s Allusion Book. Which was the only reliable source available.


17. All these information’s have been collected from various Encyclopaedia’s such as Encyclopaedia Of Colombia, History of Shakespeare’s criticism etc.; Shakespeare’s Encyclopaedia, George Saintsbuiy’s Criticism of Rymer, this discussion is from Shakespeare Encyclopaedia, Ibid. p. 155.


19. Ibid, Tragedies of the last Age 1678 and Short view of Tragedy, 1692-3.

20. D. Nichol Smith, Ibid. See also Ralli Vol. I.


27. A New Companion to Shakespeare’s Studies. Ibid., P. 40.


30. See A. Ralli’s *A History of Shakespearean Criticism* Vol. I. He has very dexterously followed the trail of Shakespeare’s critical opinion not only in England but France and Germany as well.

31. The *Shakespearean Scene*; Ibid, p. 2.


34. Ibid.

35. See *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*, 1777, for a better understanding of Morgann’s Stance cited in D. Nichol Smith, Ibid.


37. In the pages of P. Murray one feels, Morgan has been given an accurate assessment. He mentions Morgann’s essay on Falstaff as ‘...in many ways representative of the whole tradition of character analysis, on which it had a strong ‘influence’ significantly enough Bradley has also declared that there was ‘no better piece of Shakespeare criticism in the world’. (p.6).


39. See *Shakespeare Criticism* pp. 213, 220, 269.


41. This ‘reaction’ that Harbage has mentioned in his introduction on Coleridge is regarding Stoll and Schucking of whom he discusses in the same vein.


43. Ibid.

44. *Shakespearean Encyclopaedia*, p. 156.
45. Coleridge on Shakespeare, Ibid., p. 28.

46. Ibid.

47. See Ed. Terence Hawke, Coleridge on Shakespeare also see T.M. Raysor’s edition (1930) it is also in estimable.


49. Ibid.


51. In the World of Continental Criticism it is reported that Brandes development could be linked to that of Dowden. Since he also studies Shakespeare’s, progress in art according to the changes in his life. Ibid. p. 82-83.

52. Dowden Edward, Shakespeare: A Critical study of His Mind and Art. Bradley as a critic of Shakespeare attains significance since Bradley has admitted in his Shakespearean Tragedy that he is entirely indebted to Dowden and very much influenced by him.


54. Ibid, p. 2.

55. Ibid, p. 3.


58. See Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy; (London: Macmillon 1985).

59. Art and Artifice, 1933 along with Stoll in all of his writings, G.W. Knights in his Wheel of Fire (1930) and also L.C. Knight in his most famous essay ‘How many Children had Lady Macbeth’ (1933) have all assailed Bradley for his interest in character analysis.
60. Wilson Knight, op. lit., p. 91, L.C. Knight op. cit., p. 68.


64. Shakespeare Survey 4 (1951) Ibid. p. 12.


66. This book was published in 1794. It carried an exploration of similes and metaphors. But perhaps because of the title, it went unnoticed.


69. Cited from the Preface, G.W. Knights; The Wheel of Fire, 1930; See also The Imperial Theme 1931; The Shakespeare Tempest, 1932, Shakespeare Bilder (1936) by Clemen have all had an impact in this new change that swept Shakespeare’s criticism into prominence.

70. L.C. Knight’s, this influential essay of his has been incorporated in his book Exploration reprinted in 1946.


73. For the Religious aspect of Shakespeare’s criticism see P. Murray Ibid., p. 86-126.


79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.