



Instructor: David F Taylor

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Course Number: ENG461H5F

Course Title: Shakespeare in the Long
Eighteenth-Century

Course description: The “William Shakespeare” we know today was created during the long eighteenth century (c. 1660-1830). George Bernard Shaw may have coined the term “bardolotry” at the very beginning of the twentieth century, but in doing so he only gave a name to the cultural apotheosis of Shakespeare achieved long before. Shakespeare’s exemplification of “genius”, his role as the central figure of anglophone literature, his status as a key icon of Britishness, and his commercial value (all of which are connected) are the legacy of the period we are looking at in this course. The process of fashioning this “immortal bard” required the hard work of a large number of writers, actors, and critics who repeatedly, and often ruthlessly, reinvented Shakespeare to suit and serve the ideological imperatives of a changing nation. We will chart this process primarily through a series of plays which adapt and/or rewrite Shakespeare’s dramas, including Nahum Tate’s *King Lear*, the happy-ending reworking that successfully held the stage from the 1680s to the early Victorian era. We will also look at the infamous Shakespeare forgery of 1795-6, the first dramatization of Shakespeare’s life in 1829, and a selection of criticism by

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the likes of Samuel Johnson and William Hazlitt. These readings will help us to think through and question our assumptions about “the text” and artistic “genius”, as well as the construction and validity of the canon.

It is an advantage if students are familiar with Shakespeare’s major plays – especially *The Tempest*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *King Lear*.

Required Reading:

Course reader containing a selection of plays and critical essays from the period.

PLAYS

John Dryden and William Davenant, *The Tempest*, or *The Enchanted Island* (1667)

John Dryden, *All For Love* (1678)

Nahum Tate, *The History of King Lear* (1681)

Lewis Theobald, *Double Falsehood* (1727)

David Garrick, *The Jubilee* (1769)

William Henry Ireland, *Vortigern* (1796)

Charles Somerset, *Shakspeare’s Early Days* (1829)

CRITICISM

Selections from Samuel Johnson, William Hazlitt, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

First Three Texts/Authors to be Studied:

John Dryden and William Davenant, *The Tempest*, or *The Enchanted Island* (1667)

John Dryden, *All For Love* (1678)

Nahum Tate, *The History of King Lear* (1681)

Method of Instruction: Seminar discussion.

Method of Evaluation: Informed participation (20%), term test (25%), annotated bibliography (15%), 8-10 page paper (40% each).