

Critical Comment on Hamlet

By

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Abstract

Claims about Shakespeare's influence on the English language are numerous, yet not always based on empirical research. The questions of what, when, where, why, to what an extent and how does a poet's phrase leave its original context calls for linguistic investigation. Therefore, a number of digitally available text collections, such as The British National Corpus, Literature Online or the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers to name only a few, were searched for verbal traces of Hamlet, Shakespeare's most famous play. The data are brought together in a specialized corpus of quotations and allusions.. One of the most prominent themes in "Hamlet" is acting. Its uses and abuses are constantly remarked on by Hamlet and other characters. Hamlet's view of play-acting is a complicated one; sometimes he admires it, but at other times he is disillusioned with the fakery that playing demands. In this mood, he deplors the ease with which acting can be used to manipulate others. Admiration comes through when he thinks of the player's tears for the non-existent Hecuba. He considers the actor to be able to turn his thoughts to concrete signs or actions, and wishes he was more like the actor.