

KENNETH MUIR

Shakespeare's TRAGIC Sequence



BARNES & NOBLE

KENNETH MUIR
Emeritus Professor of English Literature
University of Liverpool

Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence

BARNES & NOBLE BOOKS • NEW YORK
A division of Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.

Published in the U.S.A 1979 by
HARPER & ROW PUBLISHERS, INC.
BARNES & NOBLE IMPORT DIVISION

Copyright © Kenneth Muir 1979

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form without
permission in writing from the
publishers, except by a reviewer
who wishes to quote brief
passages in connection with a
review written for inclusion in
a magazine or newspaper

First published 1972
in Hutchinson University Library

The paperback edition of this book is
sold subject to the condition that it
shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or other-
wise circulated without the publisher's
prior consent in any form of binding or
cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar con-
dition including this condition being
imposed on the subsequent purchaser

CLOTH. ISBN 0-06-495021-2

PAPER. ISBN 0-06-495022-0

Library of Congress Catalog Number 79-52453

Printed in Great Britain at the
University Press, Cambridge

To Philip Gibbons

PREFACE

In the first edition of this book, published in 1972, I expressed my indebtedness to former colleagues G. Wilson Knight, G. K. Hunter, Inga-Stina Ewbank and the late Ernest Schanzer, and I expressed my gratitude to those amateur actors with whom I have been associated in York, Leeds and Liverpool. I mentioned, too, that I had deliberately excluded certain aspects of the subject on which I had written elsewhere. Since then I have collected my essays on the narrative poems and on the imagery of the plays in *Shakespeare the Professional* (1973) and on questions of style, characterisation and staging in *The Singularity of Shakespeare* (1977). With the publication of the companion volume *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*, which is now in the press, I shall have completed my interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.

Reviewers were kind to the first edition of the present work, and where they disagreed with me on points of detail I have considered each one carefully. In the end I decided not to introduce alterations into the text, not because of my conviction that I was always right, but because they were all matters on which there will always be differences of opinion. One critic pointed out the lack of a theoretical framework to the book. This was indeed true, since I believed, and still believe, that many good books on Shakespeare's tragedies have been damaged by attempting to apply a particular definition to all the plays.

Another reviewer qualified his praise by suggesting that the book was lacking in originality—that I considered many different views on each of the plays before choosing the ones which appeared to be correct. Quite so; but any critic of Shakespeare is bound to build on foundations laid by others. I would claim only, as diffidently as possible,

that the interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedies in this book does differ, for better or worse, from that of previous critics.

Acknowledgements are due to *Les Lettres Françaises*, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., the British Academy and Oxford University Press, the Henry E. Huntington Library, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., Macmillan and Co., Methuen and Co. and Secker and Warburg Ltd. I have tried, in the notes, to indicate my indebtedness to particular books and articles.

Liverpool
March 1978

KENNETH MUIR

CONTENTS

	<i>Preface</i>	7
I	Introduction	11
2	Apprenticeship	20
3	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	42
4	<i>Hamlet</i>	55
5	<i>Othello</i>	93
6	<i>King Lear</i>	117
7	<i>Macbeth</i>	142
8	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	156
9	<i>Coriolanus</i>	172
10	<i>Timon of Athens</i>	187
	<i>Notes</i>	197
	<i>Index</i>	204

Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence

KENNETH MUIR

*Emeritus Professor of English Literature
University of Liverpool*

Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence

BARNES & NOBLE BOOKS · NEW YORK

A division of Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.

Published in the U.S.A 1979 by
HARPER & ROW PUBLISHERS, INC.
BARNES & NOBLE IMPORT DIVISION

Copyright © Kenneth Muir 1979

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be
reproduced in any form without
permission in writing from the
publishers, except by a reviewer
who wishes to quote brief
passages in connection with a
review written for inclusion in
a magazine or newspaper

First published 1972
in Hutchinson University Library

The paperback edition of this book is
sold subject to the condition that it
shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out, or other-
wise circulated without the publisher's
prior consent in any form of binding or
cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar con-
dition including this condition being
imposed on the subsequent purchaser

CLOTH. ISBN 0-06-495021-2

PAPER. ISBN 0-06-495022-0

Library of Congress Catalog Number 79-52453

Printed in Great Britain at the
University Press, Cambridge

To Philip Gibbons

PREFACE

In the first edition of this book, published in 1972, I expressed my indebtedness to former colleagues G. Wilson Knight, G. K. Hunter, Inga-Stina Ewbank and the late Ernest Schanzer, and I expressed my gratitude to those amateur actors with whom I have been associated in York, Leeds and Liverpool. I mentioned, too, that I had deliberately excluded certain aspects of the subject on which I had written elsewhere. Since then I have collected my essays on the narrative poems and on the imagery of the plays in *Shakespeare the Professional* (1973) and on questions of style, characterisation and staging in *The Singularity of Shakespeare* (1977). With the publication of the companion volume *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*, which is now in the press, I shall have completed my interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.

Reviewers were kind to the first edition of the present work, and where they disagreed with me on points of detail I have considered each one carefully. In the end I decided not to introduce alterations into the text, not because of my conviction that I was always right, but because they were all matters on which there will always be differences of opinion. One critic pointed out the lack of a theoretical framework to the book. This was indeed true, since I believed, and still believe, that many good books on Shakespeare's tragedies have been damaged by attempting to apply a particular definition to all the plays.

Another reviewer qualified his praise by suggesting that the book was lacking in originality—that I considered many different views on each of the plays before choosing the ones which appeared to be correct. Quite so; but any critic of Shakespeare is bound to build on foundations laid by others. I would claim only, as diffidently as possible,

that the interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedies in this book does differ, for better or worse, from that of previous critics.

Acknowledgements are due to *Les Lettres Françaises*, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., the British Academy and Oxford University Press, the Henry E. Huntington Library, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., Macmillan and Co., Methuen and Co. and Secker and Warburg Ltd. I have tried, in the notes, to indicate my indebtedness to particular books and articles.

Liverpool
March 1978

KENNETH MUIR

CONTENTS

	<i>Preface</i>	7
1	Introduction	11
2	Apprenticeship	20
3	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	42
4	<i>Hamlet</i>	55
5	<i>Othello</i>	93
6	<i>King Lear</i>	117
7	<i>Macbeth</i>	142
8	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	156
9	<i>Coriolanus</i>	172
10	<i>Timon of Athens</i>	187
	<i>Notes</i>	197
	<i>Index</i>	204

