

Hamlet, Protestantism, and the Mourning of Contingency

Not to Be

John E. Curran Jr, Marquette University, USA



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Building on current scholarly interest in the religious dimensions of the play, this study shows how Shakespeare uses Hamlet to comment on the Calvinistic Protestantism predominant around 1600. By considering the play's inner workings against the religious ideas of its time, John Curran explores how Shakespeare portrays in this work a completely deterministic universe in the Calvinist mode, and, Curran argues, exposes the disturbing aspects of Calvinism. By rendering a Catholic Prince Hamlet caught in a Protestant world which consistently denies him his aspirations for a noble life, Shakespeare is able in this play, his most theologically engaged, to delineate the differences between the two belief systems, but also to demonstrate the consequences of replacing the old religion so completely with the new.

Contents

Foreword, James Nohnberg; Preface; Guide to the citations; Bad dreams: the loss of contingency; The Be, the Eucharist, and the logic of Protestantism; Purgatory and the value of time; The theater of merit; Chastity and the strumpet fortune; The Be, Protestantism, and silence; Bibliography; Index.

About the Author

John E. Curran Jr is Associate Professor of English at Marquette University, USA. He is also the author of *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and The Historical Imagination in England, 1530-1660*.

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