
UNIT 1 BACKGROUND

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to provide background information which will be useful for a better understanding of the play. After reading this unit you will be able to

- appreciate why background information is relevant to the study of a text;
- acquire an understanding of the text of the play.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Hamlet has inspired more critical speculation and comment from critics and scholars than any other play by any dramatist in English Literature, including Shakespeare himself. The character of Hamlet has inspired even more varied, complex, and intense reaction among its audience as well critics and scholars, actors and directors. So much so that Hamlet has often found to have acquired a life of its own, a life outside the context of the play. And the play has become a cultural icon of our times. No other text commands instant recognition of such a large number of moments, images, lines and words as *Hamlet* does.

A work of such value, meaning, and complexity as *Hamlet* must, therefore, be studied in the context of professional knowledge that scholarship of several centuries has provided for us. Before we can go on to understanding the complex issues of meaning and interpretations of the play and the symbolic value of the vision embodied in it, we must understand how literary scholarship determines a number of related, subsidiary issues and how the tools of scholarship are used before we can learn to appreciate those issues: the issues such as when the play was published,

written or performed; the sources that Shakespeare drew upon to construct his plays; Shakespeare is notoriously known to have almost always borrowed his stories from outside sources rather than invent them himself. Shakespeare's plays have come down to us in many versions and the most authentic and reliable texts of his plays almost always need to be determined or reconstructed by scholars. We have to learn to understand how this determination is achieved.

1.2 THE DATE OF THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF HAMLET.

There is general agreement that the date of the first performance of *Hamlet* falls in all probability within 1601-1602. There are two reasons offered by scholars who believe that the play was not written before 1598. One, Francis Mere's (1565-1647) list of plays in his *Palladis Tamia* published in this year makes no mention of *Hamlet*. Second, a children's company, the Children of the Chapel Royal--began acting at the Blackfriars theatre in London and Shakespeare and other playwrights of the time treated them with some hostility as they were considered to be a threat to the popularity of the Chamberlain's men, the group to which Shakespeare belonged and for which he wrote plays as well as acted in them. *Hamlet* contains a slurring reference to the child actors—an "aery of children" (II. ii. 354-355)--which could have been made only a year or two after they were in business long enough to cause professional discomfort to Shakespeare and other playwrights of the times. The speculative date of such a reference, thus, appears to be between 1598 and 1601. There is yet another piece of evidence to help determine the date of the play. In an edition of Chaucer's works published in 1598, there is a marginal note by the Cambridge scholar and a friend of Edmund Spenser, Gabriel Harvey (1545?-1630), which states:

The Earl of Essex much *commends* Albion England. . . . The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*: but his *Lucrece*, and his tragedy of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, have it in them, to please the wiser sort.

Essex was executed in 1601. Harvey refers to him in the *present tense* in the same paragraph in which he refers to *Hamlet*, clearly establishing that the play must have been performed before 1601. It is not, then, without a certain knack for detective work that we are able to answer some of the ticklish questions for which we otherwise do not have definite answers.

1.3 THE SOURCES OF THE HAMLET STORY

Shakespeare appears to have used an earlier play which told the story of Hamlet. Many references to this lost play have been traced and this play, much to the convenience of all, is referred to as *Ur-Hamlet* (the "original" *Hamlet*). Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) makes an indirect reference to it in his *Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities*, prefixed to *Menaphon*, a novel by Robert Greene (1558-1592), which was published in 1589. Nashe writes: ". . . yet English Seneca read by Candle light yields many good sentences, as *Blood is a beggar*, and so forth; and if you entreat him faire in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets*, I should say handfuls of tragical speeches." *Ur-Hamlet* must have been very well known, indeed, in London in the 1590s. Philip Henslowe (d. 1616), the manager of Admiral's Company, a theatrical group, records a performance of *a Hamlet* on June 11, 1594 at the theatre at Newington Butts, when it was jointly occupied by

Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men (the latter being the theatrical group to which Shakespeare belonged, wrote plays for and also acted). The fact that a mere eight shillings was the cost of the ticket suggests that the play was on the boards for some time and was not exactly sought after by the London theatre-goers. Thomas Lodge (1557/8-1625) in his *Wits Miserie, and The Worlds Madness* (1596) vividly describes a devil looking as pale as "the wizard of the ghost which cried so miserably at the theatre, like an oyster wife, Hamlet, revenge." As the theatre up to 1596 was occupied by Shakespeare's company, the Chamberlain's Men, Hamlet obviously belonged to it. Thomas Dekker's (c.1572-1632) play *Satromastix* (1601) contains a reference which is generally regarded as an allusion to *Ur-Hamlet* rather than to Shakespeare's play as the phrase "Hamlet revenge" does not occur in Shakespeare's play: "my name's Hamlet revenge: thou hast been at Parris garden, have you not?" (IV. I. 150).

Scholars have relied upon a German play, *Der Bestrafte Bruder-Mord (Fratricide Punished)* to gain an idea of what *Ur-Hamlet* was like. *Ur-Hamlet* itself owes its origins to the early Scandinavian folk tales focusing on the essential Hamlet story which acquired a literary form in the hands of the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (1150?-1206). A version of the Hamlet story appears in *Histoires Tragique* by Francois de Belleforest (1530-1583) which he found in Saxo. The author of *Ur-Hamlet* owed much, it seems, to both de Belleforest as well as Saxo for constructing his tale.

Shakespeare put together the story of Hamlet thus on the basis of his familiarity of *Ur-Hamlet*, which in turn was based on an account of Hamlet in Belleforest and Saxo. There are many elements of the story of Hamlet that Shakespeare took from the earlier sources: fratricide, incest, antic disposition and the shape and form of Hamlet's relationship with the other characters in the play. But then there is much that Shakespeare adds to the Hamlet-story on his own. The doubt regarding the certainty of the crime as well as the criminal is planted in the play by Shakespeare himself. Many elements of Hamlet's character, such as his melancholic temperament, owes itself to Timothy Bright's (c. 1551-1615) *Treatise of Melancholy* (1586). Nashe provided a precedent for Hamlet's comments on the bibulous Danes. Some of the details of Ghost as well as Ophelia's burial have come from the Catholic practices in these matters. A sceptical frame of mind that Shakespeare gave to Hamlet may have owed itself to Montaigne's (1533-1592) *Essais* (1580; 1588; 1595) which had been widely known since their first publication in 1580. In the Saxo's version there are no mad songs of Ophelia, nor her suicide, nor the character of her brother. There is no Osric, nor the grave-diggers, or the play and the players. And finally there is good reason to believe the real life and career of the Earl of Essex may have provided a real-life model for Shakespeare to frame the Bard's most popular creation. Shakespeare's own stamp on the character of Hamlet is revealed in the play in the intensity of the impact on Hamlet of his encounter with the ghost, the ambiguity of Hamlet donning a mask of madness, his ambivalent attitude towards Ophelia, his peculiarly cold and insensitive response to the death of Polonius, his development as an unconventional avenger, his obsessive interest in suicide, elements of ambition and a sense of insecurity in his character—all these are the result of Shakespeare developing his tale in myriad directions for which sometimes there is no suggestion in any of the earlier sources, and sometimes earlier elements are put to a different use. An element of ambiguity, in a sense, thus, dominates the play and adds a degree of depth and mystery to the mind and character of Hamlet's character. With the result we have a profounder work of imaginative creativity than any of the earlier versions of the Hamlet story.

Shakespeare, it would appear, did much to distance himself from his original sources and make his own play essentially distinct: his use of long soliloquy points to his

emphasis on Hamlet's inner life, which makes his treatment of Hamlet singularly different from the handling of the character of Hamlet done before or after Shakespeare created his Hamlet. Shakespeare's interest in the inner life of Hamlet fascinated his readers long after the play was first written. Both Goethe (1749-1832) and Coleridge (1772-1834), for instance, were fascinated by inner spiritual depths of his character.

1.4 THE TEXT OF THE PLAY

But what exactly do we mean when we talk about the "play"? Contrary to our expectations, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* does not exist in an authentic manuscript—a text that we could claim Shakespeare wrote and left for us to read, study, examine and interpret. If you look around you might find that the text of *Hamlet* is available in a number of editions—all quotations for example from the present lesson are taken from the New Cambridge Shakespeare (second edition 1936; reprinted 1971) edited by John Dover Wilson. Many other readers, scholars or students use different editions, such as the Oxford Shakespeare, the Arden edition or the Riverside Shakespeare or the editions prepared by scholars in earlier centuries, such as by Pope (1723), Theobald (1733) and Rowe (1709) in the eighteenth century, and by Clark and Wright (1872) and Dowden (1899) in the nineteenth century. Different editions of the same play tend to be in some sense different from each other. And these differences are the result of thoughtful analysis rather than personal whims or fancies or mere individualistic preferences of the editors of these editions.

The answer to the question with which we began this section is that there are so many editions because there is no standard text of the play—the play as it was written by Shakespeare and performed by his theatrical group to which he belonged. Unfortunately there is no such thing as a finite, fixed object called Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. When we look around we find that there are at least three versions of the play which can claim to be the authentic Shakespearean text.

As was the custom, a *Hamlet* was entered in the Stationers' Register ("the official organisations of the Elizabethan printers and publishers") on July 26, 1602 as "A book called the *Revenge of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*." And there are three different texts of the play: the *first quarto* edition which appeared in 1603, the *second quarto* edition which was published in the following year, in 1604, and the *first folio* edition which was published in 1623. (The quarto editions were so called on account of the size of the publication (approximately the size of an ordinary book today) while folio editions were larger in size, almost double the size of quarto editions.) The first quarto is generally believed to be the worst of all the texts, a "bad quarto" (bad quartos is a label attached to early corrupt quarto editions which are full of omissions and interpolations and garbled passages), perhaps a pirated edition as its text "distorts the meaning and mutilates the verse" (as Campbell and Quinn have remarked in *The Readers' Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare*; p. 284), and this was the result, it is believed, of "memorial reconstruction": either actors or the printers' agents who sat among the audience later tried to recollect the play from memory to publish unauthorised editions. When the memory failed the "writer" filled in lines from other sources, perhaps from the *Ur-Hamlet*, or lines from other parts spoken by other characters.

The second quarto was published as "*The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy. At London, Printed by I.R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shop under Saint Dunston's Church in Fleetstreet. 1604." First folio edition is believed to be the transcript of a "prompt book"

(that is how the copies of the plays for use on the stage were referred to) made by a careful, even a professional scribe. It is shorter than the second quarto edition by about two hundred lines and leaves out many passages full of philosophical and or moral elements. For instance, it leaves out the last long soliloquy ("How all occasions . . .") (IV. iv. 32-66).

Of all the three versions the second quarto is the longest—about 4000 lines, and appears to have been printed from a corrected copy of the first quarto and partly from Shakespeare's "foul papers"—an author's original but uncorrected draft of a play, marked with deletions, interlineations and corrections, before it was finalised and copied on clean sheets and became a "fair copy," suitable for submission to an acting company. Shakespeare is also thought to have generally worked only on foul papers as his drafts of plays needed little revision and corrections. Any changes needed were worked into the drafts only. The second quarto contains many new scenes, some of the characters have been given new names (Corambis becomes Polonius, and Rosencraft, Rosencrantz) and some of the important passages are truly recast and enriched. The following lines from the first quarto

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all . . .

are transformed to

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—
No more . . .

(III.i.57-62)

The first folio leaves out some well known lines such as ("How all occasions do inform against me")—and it is shorter by a total of 222 lines but contains eighty-three new lines.

1.5 TOOLS OF SCHOLARSHIP

What, then, we have is three versions of the printed text of *Hamlet*. But which one of these is *the* text of the play?—the authentic, correct, true, original, real text of the poet-playwright? And can we ever hope to find out which of these could possibly have been the text that Shakespeare either wrote, or approved for performance or publication? The answer to all these question is: perhaps not. On top of it, to bring in the question of performance is to make matters even more complicated. Why must we think of a play in terms of its manuscripts; what about the performance of the play; could one not claim that the first, original, first night performance was *the* performance of the play. But performance of a play is never the same night after night. So which one is the authorial, authentic text—on stage or page?

Scholars down the centuries have dealt with this problem by using their judgements on a variety of issues and have given us critical editions of the play that in their view represent the authorial intentions the most—most faithfully reflect the contemporary tastes and circumstances, the level and the kind of authorial skill that we have come to expect as the targeted audience, or the moral and intellectual framework within which a playwright writing in the Elizabethan times functioned. Many indeed are

the scholarly tools, methodologies, analytical skills and arguments employed to recreate an authentic text of the play in the form of a critical edition of the play. Essentially what an editor seeks to achieve is coherence, impart an architectonic quality to the form of the play so that the play can be made to embody, and then impart, a similarly coherent meaning—a coherent vision of man's predicament in the universe and meaningful insights into the value if any in human existence.

But before interpretation can be achieved scholarship employs tools to arrive at meanings in the parts before the whole can be imparted meaning. In other words, once the larger question of the text of the play has been established, scholarship gets to work on the subtler issues. "Textual critics," for instance, use "emendation" to free the text of errors due to careless printing. W. W. Greg has explained "emendation" thus: "... A conjectural correction inserted in a Shakespearean text by an editor in an attempt to restore the original meaning." He goes on to define an acceptable "emendation" as "one that strikes a trained intelligence as supplying exactly the sense required by the context, and which at the same time reveals to the critic the manner in which the corruption arose." One of the finest example of "emendation" in *Hamlet* was the one proposed by John Dover Wilson to correct a first folio reading of Hamlet's first soliloquy in line 129 of act one, scene two, which reads: "O that this too too *solid* flesh would melt . . ." while both the first as well as the second quarto read this as "sallied" flesh. No emendation was traditionally felt necessary until John Dover Wilson pointed out that "sallied" should be treated as misprint for "sullied" as in Elizabethan handwriting "a" and "u" could be easily confused. Also, Wilson points out,

"sullied flesh" is the key to the soliloquy and tells us that Hamlet is thinking of "kindless" incestuous marriage as personal defilement. Further, "sullied" fits the immediate context as : "solid" does not. There is something absurd in associating "solid flesh" with "melt" and "thaw"; whereas Shakespeare always uses "sully" or "sullied" elsewhere with the image . . . of dirt upon a surface of pure white; and the surface Hamlet obviously has in mind is snow, symbolically of the nature he shares with his mother, once pure but now befouled. [*Hamlet*. The New Shakespeare. John Dover Wilson, ed. (1971), p. 151-2.]

Historical Criticism, heavily relying on scholarly research, similarly seeks to place Shakespeare in his own times and to study his plays in the light of Elizabethan philosophical, moral and dramatic traditions and beliefs and prepare a Shakespearean text for us to understand and appreciate it better. Historical critics study the contemporary language, social and philosophical concepts and the political structures and relate them to the study of Shakespeare. **New Criticism** brought to bear upon the text of the play their finer insights and consolidated the meaning behind the authorial intentions through a focus on the texture of the play.

A great deal of scholarship focuses on the detail rather on the larger issues.

Some of the more stimulating and, in fact, provocative insights into the challenge that a scholar faces in interacting with *Hamlet* frequently take the form of brief notes and short comments. Journals such as *The Explicator*, *Notes & Queries* and *The Shakespeare Newsletter* provide much needed opportunities for the scholars to share such insights with their peers. In a short note, Dominick I. Bongiorno ["Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, 1.5.23," *The Explicator*, 54(2) (Winter 1996):67.] points out how there is more to a distraught Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's chamber in Act 2, scene 1 than suggested in the theories generally held by scholars, such as Hamlet is pretending insanity or that he is mentally disordered. Bongiorno seeks to establish that Hamlet's visit to Ophelia is exploited by the playwright to establish "the identity between the King's ghost and the son" through "the grammatical similitude intrinsic to their frightening entrances as also by establishing that Hamlet is driven, much like

the ghost, by a need to find someone compassionate, as Ophelia puts it, "To speak of horrors."

Describing Hamlet's visit to her chamber, Ophelia tells Polonius that Hamlet looked "Pale as shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors - *he comes before me.*" The use of the third person singular pronoun, "he", followed by "comes" occurs before Hamlet's visit to Ophelia only with reference to the dreadful coming of the ghost. Bernardo, in Act one, scene one, is interrupted by an excited Marcellus: "Peace! break thee off! Look where *it comes* again!" Ninety lines later Horatio speaks: "But soft! Behold! Lo, where *it comes* again!"; and then, later, again, "Look, my lord, *it comes.*" In all the four instances grammar is combined with the a mood of dismay to create resemblance between Hamlet and the ghost. Also, Ophelia's later description of Hamlet's facial expression as similar to the ghost's establishes "an additional, shared identity, one of mood". In lines such as "Ghost: List, list, O list!" "list" is generally glossed as "listen" or "hear" as in *OED*, v2, 1. But it should be obvious. Christopher Baker ["Why Did Hamlet Enter Ophelia's Closet?," *The Shakespeare Newsletter* (Summer 1996): 32. maintains, that ghost does not want Hamlet merely to receive the information passively but more in the sense of "to desire, like, wish *to do something*" as in *OED* v1, 2. It is for example in this sense that this word is used in Wyatt's poem "Whoso list to hunt." Hamlet thus is commanded not only to "Hear of this murder!" but "Desire this revenge." The modern remnants of this sense of this word exist in, for example, "listlessness" which *OED*, b, defines as "characterised by unwillingness to move, act or make any exertion."

Lisa Hopkins draws attention ["Hell in *Hamlet* and '*Tis Pity She's a Whore.*' *Notes and Queries* (March 1997): 102-3] to echoes from *Hamlet* in '*Tis Pity She's a Whore* (c.1626) by John Ford (1586-post 6140): "But soft, methinks I see repentance work" appears to echo "But soft, methinks I scent the morning's air." But this apparently minor verbal parallel serves to point up "both a larger similarity between the two plays as well as some fundamental difference between them." The two plays define the horrors of the Hell in similar terms to point to what awaits mankind after death. Both Hamlet and Vasques are very anxious for their victims to be killed while in the act of committing habitual crimes so that their souls may go straight to hell. Both the plays make an issue of Catholicism. Hopkins maintains: "In the case of Hamlet, it is worryingly noticeable that the Protestant prince, hailing from the heartland of Lutheranism and educated at Wittenberg, a university famous in England chiefly through its association with Luther and the Pope-baiting Faustus himself, nevertheless has a father whose ghost is in Purgatory, a location in which only Catholics believe." In '*Tis Pity She's a Whore* Ford presents two faces of Catholicism in the virtuous and conscientious Friar and the venal cardinal. Ford's invoking the earlier play is used to draw attention to the role purgatory plays in avoiding damnation.

James Persoon, in a provocative short note in *The Explicator*, ["Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 55 (2) (Winter 1997): 70-71] focuses on Ophelia's words: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; / pray you, love remember. And there is / pansies, that's for thoughts." Persoon wants us to ask *what* is Laertes to remember and what are to be his thoughts. A meaningful interpretation of the symbolic function of the flowers can be arrived at, he suggests, by focusing on the "inner resonance" within the play. While conventionally flowers signify funerals, courtship or marriages, and pansies specifically suggests love's wounds or an Ophelia bruised in love, a useful way of looking at this context will be to look at the two conventional meanings Ophelia assigns to flowers. Remembrances echo throughout the play -- such as when Ghost seeks to goad Hamlet to avenge his death, "Remember me!"; or,

"do not forget", when in his mother's closet Hamlet seems to forget his darker purpose. Similarly "thoughts" too resonate throughout the play. Hamlet's thoughts are directed towards revenge: he blames them for impeding his immediate purpose in almost every soliloquy. Persoon concludes: "Ophelia's flowers are thus not so much funereal and memorialising, . . . , as they are epiphanies focusing the earlier energies of revenge into a camera-like close-up evoking the causes, meanings, and results of the revenges that are blossoming in the second half of the play."

David Thatcher points out how names for Shakespeare "confer status, reputation, lineage, legitimacy" ["Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," *The Explicator*, 54 (3) (Spring 1996): 134-36]. And yet Claudius remains a nameless king. In *Hamlet* "The erasure of the pejorative Claudius seems complete. . . ." Only at one juncture the king's name makes its presence felt, paradoxically in the form of an elision. In the quatrain

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself: and now reigns here
A very, very—pajock

editors have sought to emend "pajock" as "peacock" (as Pope felt it should be emended), "patchcock", apart from arguing for emended spelling for "pajock" itself. It has been suggested that a clue to a meaningful emendation lies in Horatio's reply to this quatrain: "You might have rhymed" and a widespread view maintains that Hamlet was about to finish with the word "ass"—a suggestion that Theobald first made. Thatcher proposes: "Not just "ass," . . . which is metrically deficient, but the word Hamlet cannot bring himself to utter: Claudius, that is, *Claudi-ass*. Claudius as the end word for this line was first proposed by Appleton Morgan a hundred years ago but has remained ignored even though it fits rhyme, meter, and context. Thatcher offers three additional arguments in its favour. Throughout the play Hamlet is extremely partial to the word "ass"; he is addicted to word-play, especially to quibble; and the practice of punning on names rhyming or near-rhyming with ass was common in Shakespeare's time. Hamlet thus "took advantage of the latter end of his uncle's name to share a victor's witticism with comprehending confidant."

A valuable source of insights into the complexities of *Hamlet* is comparative studies that seek to examine *Hamlet* in the light of insights gained from one's study of literary texts from other cultures and languages. Over the last few decades the work of the Greek-Egyptian poet C. P. Cavafy (1863-1933) has received a great deal of international attention and acclaim. The impact on the life and times of the poet of the culture and empire of Great Britain has been much analysed. Martin McKinsey has translated some of Cavafy's original Greek material into English and has added valuable commentaries ["C. P. Cavafy on Shakespeare: 'King Claudius' and Two Early Essays," *In-between: Essays & Studies in Literary Criticism*, 6 (i), No. 11 (March 1997):3-18].

This includes Cavafy's refashioning of the events of a literary text in "King Claudius," and two of his early essays, "Shakespeare on Life" and "Greek Traces in Shakespeare." In its eleven syllable blank verse the poem, "King Claudius" narrates:

In all the houses of the poor
they wept for him—secretly,
for fear of Fortinbras.

Claudius is portrayed as

A mild and peace-loving monarch
(the land had suffered much

from the campaigns of his predecessors)
 he treated everyone with respect,
 both great and small. He avoided
 throwing his weight around, and always,
 in affairs of state, sought advice
 from serious, seasoned counsellors.

Claudius, thus, is portrayed as a benign monarch. The poem develops oppositionally and the opposing elements in Cavafy's retelling are "Hamlet's *idanikai* (abstract, conceptual) suspicions" and the people's perception of Claudius as a just ruler. McKinsey quotes Diana Haas who points out how King Claudius" can be read in terms of Cavafy's conversion from decadent Romanticism to a post-Enlightenment rationalism. What chiefly appears to have interested Cavafy is the political dimension of "these contending ways of thinking": while the poem is not an attack on monarchy as a form of government, it does reduce to its essential absurdity the belief of the divine right of the kings. The poem, as McKinsey points, out belongs to the listeners. In equating the "majority" with the "poor" Cavafy may have had a political motive in terms of his own place and time. The British had occupied the Egypt since 1882 and the occupation had proved devastating for the Greek merchant-class who had lived in Alexandria.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

It is thus of utmost importance for us to realise that our initial obligation, before we attempt to study, analyse and understand a Shakespearean text, is to establish the text of the play by using the tools of scholarship as well as the resources that scholarship has amassed for us for this purpose. The use of scholarly tools, such as "emendation," or critical approaches such as New Criticism, illustrated above, point to the need for an ever alert, sensitive attention that a literary text—any text—requires before it can be fully studied by professional students of literature, or even read by non-professional readers for pleasure and profit.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Why is it necessary to master the tools of scholarship for a professional student of literature? How would our understanding of *Hamlet* suffer if we ignore this aspect?
2. Write short notes on (i) emendation; and (ii) textual criticism.
3. When was *Hamlet* first staged? What is the nature of the evidence available to establish this fact?
4. What are the major variations in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as compared to the sources he drew upon?