
Maurice Charney. *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 234p.

DOWLING G. CAMPBELL
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

In *Shakespeare on Love and Lust*, Maurice Charney's opening adjectives describing love in Shakespeare as "complex and often contradictory" (9) are apt. Charney gets an extra degree of difficulty points, in my opinion, by including Shakespeare's poetry as well as plays in his study. He shows how Shakespeare's treatment of love varies from sympathy through amusement to agony. Taking cultural as well as literary perspectives, Charney shows how Shakespeare's love themes sound the depths of original sin, which is about as deep as a critic can go.

Charney does a good job of synthesizing Shakespeare's love prescription from sources that range from early comedies to tragedies. This prescription, as we might imagine, follows much of what had long been established; but Charney also shows how the love in some plays, particularly *Hamlet*, is deliberately ambiguous, mixing sexual passion with affection. I celebrate Charney's insight when he evaluates Hamlet's bawdy bantering with Ophelia. Explaining Hamlet's remarks, "Lady, shall I lie in your lap" and "Do you think I meant country matters," Charney concludes, "There's an obvious pun on 'country' as an imagined adjectival form of 'cunt'" (77). This interpretation is not a one-play impulse. Later Charney analyzes the "fustian riddle" in *Twelfth Night*, when Malvolio recognizes Olivia's 'Cs,' her 'Us,' and her 'Ts,' where she makes her "great Ps." Charney could have provided even more emphasis and justification with Hotspur's bantering with Kate in *Henry IV.1*.

The point is well taken and illustrated: the intertwining of sex with love in Shakespeare goes beyond traditional prescriptions. While I find no mention of Freud in Charney's book, this sex-love sensibility shows Shakespeare achieving new levels of the love-lust partnership that to me suggest a threshold for Freudian interpretations. Shakespeare's levels as Charney describes them help begin the cultural preparation process that would require three more centuries to establish a mindset receptive of Freud's sexual interpretations, which Sophocles, after all, initiated two millennia ago.

Especially enlightening I think is Charney's treatment of "the old medieval and folkloric motif" that "one woman can easily be substituted for another without doing any harm" (67). Charney's comparison of this motif between *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* is cogent and accurate, as is his comparison of that same motif between *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida*. I was hoping to see

some speculation why Shakespeare's *Cressida* strays so far from Chaucer's more individualistic *Criseyde*, but Charney remains within his Tudor timeframe.

Charney needs to clarify a few points. His opening chapter states that Shakespeare "follows the conventions for falling in love that derive from Petrarch's love poems" (9), but he does not adequately state what those conventions are. We have to comb through his text to find love at first sight, woman's beauty, and melancholy as some of them. Chapter 2 opens by telling us that "Shakespeare's comedies are full of doctrinal statements about love and how it operates" (27). Again a list would help: not a definitive list, but a guide to aid our search.

This need for clarification inevitably spills into Chapter 3, "Doctrine in the Problem Plays and *Hamlet*." It would help to know what he sees as some of the more important doctrines. We also could use a definition or two. In Chapter 5, for instance, we have the doctrine of "use" (110). Does that doctrine appear elsewhere? I didn't find it. Also in this chapter, Charney tells how the duke in *Measure for Measure* is an "enemy of love," which is the title of that chapter. Is this a doctrine? Chapter 3 is especially lively, however. Charney does literary criticism a service by showing how *Hamlet*, while not a love tragedy, features disappointed love as an important element (another doctrine?).

Too many of Charney's paragraphs begin with a play title or act or scene rather than a topic or orientation. The plays should serve as support rather than as topics themselves.

The final chapter, "Love and Lust: Sexual Wit," is provocative. When Charney makes the statement that "Once a boy reaches puberty, he is drawn into Original Sin" (196), he'd better have some convincing proof; and I believe he does. He also has proof for the statement "There is an almost necessary burden of misogyny that accompanies heterosexual relations in Shakespeare"; but I believe his reasoning needs to go a bit farther, at least with *Hamlet*.