



Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare: Disinheriting the Globe (Rethinking Theory)

Paul A. Kottman

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Paul A. Kottman offers a new and compelling understanding of tragedy as seen in four of Shakespeare's mature plays -- *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.

The author pushes beyond traditional ways of thinking about tragedy, framing his readings with simple questions that have been missing from scholarship of the past generation: Are we still moved by Shakespeare, and why? Kottman throws into question the inheritability of human relationships by showing how the bonds upon which we depend for meaning and worth can be dissolved.

According to Kottman, the lives of Shakespeare's protagonists are conditioned by social bonds -- kinship ties, civic relations, economic dependencies, political allegiances -- that unravel irreparably. This breakdown means they can neither inherit nor bequeath a livable or desirable form of sociality. Orlando and Rosalind inherit nothing "but growth itself" before becoming refugees in the Forest of Arden; Hamlet is disinherited not only by Claudius's election but by the sheer vacuity of the activities that remain open to him; Lear's disinheritance of Cordelia bequeaths a series of events that finally leave the social sphere itself forsaken of heirs and forbearers alike.

Firmly rooted in the philosophical tradition of reading Shakespeare, this bold work is the first sustained interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy since Stanley Cavell's work on skepticism and A. C. Bradley's century-old *Shakespearean Tragedy*.

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