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THIS THING OF DARKNESS: SHAKESPEARE'S DUALISMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS²

It was in Shakespeare's age – now usually referred to as the early modern period precisely for this reason – that many of our own current cultural patterns were shaped, and Shakespeare's works certainly served as one conduit. A concept that has proved to be highly influential is the nearly invariably gendered and hierarchized spirit/matter dichotomy, which lies at the basis of Renaissance Neoplatonism. This paper will strive to identify the most pertinent facets of Shakespeare's work that resonate well with the dualistic traditions extant in Renaissance Neoplatonism, analyze their possible meanings within the contexts offered by these religious and philosophical systems, and hopefully discover their further implications for understanding both Shakespeare and certain aspects of so-called Western cultures, especially in terms of politics, gender, and sexuality. It is hoped that the paper will demonstrate that the Neoplatonic concept of matter and its spirit/matter dichotomy exerted a formative influence not only on Shakespeare and his age, but the ages that followed as well, our own included. This insight offers implications for further research not only in literary criticism, but also political and cultural studies.

Keywords: Shakespeare, spirit/matter dualism, politics, sexuality and gender

1. INTRODUCTION MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANITY VS. DUALISMS

Judaism has always placed emphasis on the relation between God and His creation and asserted that human history was significant as it prepared the Kingdom of God on Earth, which will entail a bodily resurrection of His people. (SZULAKOWSKA 2006: 8) However, after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE, emerging apocalyptic tendencies combined with the influence of dualisms among Hellenized Alexandrian Jews contributed to the development of early Gnosticism and Kabbalah. While Christianity adds to Judaism's insistence on the importance of the world and the body with its revolutionary doctrines of the Incarnation (COPENHAVER & SCHMITT 1992: 129) and the Resurrection of Christ (VELIMIROVIĆ 1972: 501), the writings of Plato and some Neoplatonists were widely used by the early fathers of the church, mostly world-weary-and-wary monastics, with predictable results.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have all been heavily influenced by Platonic notions at different points throughout their respective histories, and a rudimentary, "original," or "pure" monotheism appears to be impossible to excavate. However, certain te-

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nets of “orthodoxy” are undeniable. As Shakespeare lived in a predominantly Christian country, the focus in our attempted excavations here will be on those Christian doctrines which had crystallized before his time and were – explicitly, clearly, and unambiguously – universally accepted as orthodox by Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans alike. (CRESSY & FERRELL 2007)

Orthodoxy in Christianity is usually defined as conformity to those doctrines that the Christian Church held “at the time of, and following, the formal acceptance of the Nicene Creed” in 325 CE. (MORRIS 2008: 6) The Nicene Creed – still used in both Catholic and Protestant religious services and prayer manuals – expresses firm beliefs in God as the creator and ruler of the entire cosmos, in the second face of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, as fully incarnated, crucified, and resurrected, and in a general resurrection awaiting all human beings. This has always easily disqualified anti-cosmic dualisms, but pro-cosmic emanative dualisms, such as those inspired by Plato, have often found ways to masquerade as monisms.

This is why the distinction between “pagan philosophy” and “Christian teaching” made by John of Damascus is also useful to our discussion on what “orthodoxy” might entail – though this might not have been as easily perceived and accepted by all who identified as adherents of Christianity throughout its history. In the words of John Damascene, unlike the pagans, who divide reality into the intelligible and the sensible, Christians only truly distinguish between the created and the uncreated. God is uncreated, and everything else is created. Consequently, God is “wholly other” (MORRIS 2008: 50) and the nature of humans radically different from divinity. For orthodoxy, as Morris plainly puts it, “there is no divine spark.” (MORRIS 2008: 20) Christian mystics – like, for that matter, Jewish and Muslim ones as well – have therefore always cautiously avoided identifying themselves with God. (PAGELS 1998: 33) Creation in monotheisms is humbled, separated from its creator by an insurmountable gulf and utterly dependent on him, but fundamentally whole and good. Crucially, “matter” as something dark, formless, and separable from “spirit” is not really a terribly useful concept in true monism. (BASIL 2001: 80) Just as it has no “divine spark” of spirit, so orthodoxy has no “dark other” of matter. The cosmos and the human body are by definition wholly good (KOLAKOVSKI 1992: 40) and the origin of evil lies elsewhere – not in the dark, formless, and irrational nature of matter. Usually explained as the absence of good, evil is primarily located in demonic powers – significantly conceived of as incorporeal.

In orthodoxies, therefore, God, the world, and fellow humans are seen as Other, all good and to be beloved. The abyss is to be found between God and the created, whereas each human is humbled but whole, and invited to procreate. In dualisms, on the other hand, God is essentially the same as the human subject, whereas matter is seen as Other. The abyss is to be found between spirit and matter, dividing each human being. Procreation is viewed as the inferior option at best. In spirit/matter dualism, spirit is generally represented as masculine, light, rational, forming, and civilizing, whereas matter is represented as feminine, dark, irrational, chaotic, and barbaric.

There have been several major infusions of the (post-)Platonic brand of dualism into the mainstream currents of the history of monotheistic Judeo-Christian thought. The first significant influx of dualistic ideas into orthodoxy occurred in early CE Alex-

andria, where the Jewish diaspora and early Christians came into contact with Neoplatonism and the ancient Egyptian religion, yielding such disparate but fascinating results as Philo's writings, the Hermetica, and Gnostic texts. The second, without a doubt, took place during the Renaissance with the advent of Renaissance Neoplatonism. Renaissance Neoplatonism incorporated Platonic, Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Gnostic, and Cabalistic elements. All of these different strains of the tradition had a gendered spirit/matter dichotomy at the core and were ambivalent towards the material world, making possible both pro-cosmic and anti-cosmic sentiments. On the one hand, ascending towards the purity of spirit was the ideal, as matter was an encumbrance to the soul; on the other hand, the harmony of the cosmos and the microcosm was undeniable, and the Magus was invited to introduce this harmony into the dark other of matter by way of theurgy, alchemy, and/or Magia. Matter in the dualisms offered within Renaissance Neoplatonism was, then, particularly ambiguous. Simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic, enthusiastically pro-cosmic and world-weary, transcendental and "proactive," the Neoplatonism saturating the air that Shakespeare breathed could not quite make up its mind on what its proper attitude towards matter was.

2. HEAVENLY ORDER OR ITS SUBVERSION? THE IMPACT OF DUALISM ON POLITICS

The notion of divine man being both able and invited to replicate divine order onto baser matter was a staple of Renaissance Neoplatonism, and Neoplatonic concepts such as the great chain of being resonated well with royalist doctrines such as the divine right of kings, which has sometimes been presented as unproblematic. "It was a commonplace" in the Renaissance, Tillyard noted, "that order in the state duplicates the order of the macrocosm." (TILLYARD 1972: 96) Whenever any humans need to be othered in order to justify subduing them, they will almost inevitably be depicted in terms positioning them as "matter" in the hierarchical spirit/matter dichotomy. This was demonstrably the case with various "barbarians" that were being colonized by the burgeoning English Empire in Shakespeare's time. The Renaissance Magus, dominating and ordering the world of chaotic matter, easily transformed into the colonist, ruling and civilizing the carnal, wild, irrational brutes. (MITCHELL 2006: xvii; LAOUTARIS 2008: 96)

This is not to claim that this civilized/brutish dichotomy, based on spirit/matter dualism, did not begin to collapse soon after it was constructed. In his *Religio Medici*, Thomas Browne already warns us that, being carnal, "we are what we all abhorre, Antrophophagi and Cannibals, devourers not only of men, but of our selves." (LAOUTARIS 2008: 121) In a way, Prospero deconstructs the dichotomy – while in the process of constructing it – the moment he is forced to utter of Caliban "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine." Laoutaris observes that as "the boundaries between the beast and the natural historian become blurred, the neo-Platonic scaffolding that had shored up the colonial project begins to seem very weak indeed." (LAOUTARIS 2008: 129)

The next major phase of British imperial expansion, which heralded the onset of Modernity, both intensified and unsettled this opposition. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad portrays Kurtz as venturing into Africa's heart of darkness on a supposedly noble campaign to civilize people cast as primitive, irrational, and sensual, only to culminate in his infamous, utterly barbaric cry, "Exterminate all the brutes!" Conrad was arguably decon-

structing this dichotomy just as it was being (re)constructed – and its foundations lay in Neoplatonic spirit/matter dualism. (IGRUTINOVIĆ 2023: 1109)

As noted, it was a commonplace in Renaissance Neoplatonism that divine man has not only the right but the responsibility to impose divine order onto baser matter. However, dualistic metaphysical systems, though they can hold notions of corresponding macrocosm/microcosm harmonies, also have a tendency to ask further subversive questions such as ‘Is there order in the macrocosm? And if there is, is it being properly duplicated?’

The dualistic notion of a divine spark in each human potentially decenters the right to rule. Anti-cosmic dualisms – whose one true God is unknown and unknowable and infinitely removed from this world, which is instead ruled by a usurper far beneath the divine sparks he is keeping imprisoned – are more overtly politically subversive. In Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, we meet the absconding Duke, leaving his rule to another, lower entity. In *King Lear*, we hear that the ‘Prince of Darkness is a Gentleman’ and Macbeth’s castle is likened to Hell in the porter’s joke. In *Hamlet*, the serpent tellingly wears the crown, a Biblical image with a startling anti-cosmic twist. Anti-cosmic dualisms are also, however, less inclined to inspire their adherents to be actively involved in changing this irredeemable world – in which all actions sully us, as Hamlet learns – than pro-cosmisms, less squeamish and more optimistic about it. The appearance of the Ghost severely shakes previously established anti-cosmic dualities, as he forbids Hamlet to contrive against his mother, which shows that matter might be frail and easily seduced, but is not intrinsically evil. (IGRUTINOVIĆ 2007: 89)

Pro-cosmic dualisms, such as the more optimistic strains of Renaissance Neoplatonism, urged the subject to engage with the lower, chaotic matter or this world and order it lovingly from above – which could entail getting involved in politics and even political violence to set right the time that is out of joint. Another option was attempting to persuade lower matter into correctly mirroring higher nature by ‘showing a mirror up to nature’ through theatrical, artistic work. Hamlet, Prospero, and Paulina are all able to use the dramatic arts to bring forth the truth and set right the universes in which they operated. This theurgical twist on the theater that Shakespeare offered has arguably contributed to an apotheosis of artistic pursuits as not merely esthetical but also profoundly ethical. (IGRUTINOVIĆ 2015: 138)

It can be argued that it was above all the Neoplatonic idea of an inner, spiritual self – essentially a universal divine spark shared by all – that, once absorbed by humanist thinkers, laid groundwork for modern notions of democracy and equality. This same dualistic outlook may also have inspired greater religious tolerance, since variations in external ritual were increasingly regarded as secondary. During the Renaissance, this Neoplatonic current encouraged renewed study of Judaism after a long era of Christian anti-Semitism, with figures such as Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino playing visible roles in early ecumenical efforts.

3. OTHERING MATTER, OTHERING MOTHERING: THE IMPACT OF DUALISM ON CONCEPTIONS OF GENDER

As Dymphna Callaghan surmises based on her studies into Elizabethan and Jacobean performance, Desdemona was most probably depicted in “whiteface,” as women’s

characters were customarily represented by “excessive whiteness,” while the deliberately named Bianca must have been even more heavily made up to connote what she terms “the transgressive ultra-white femininity.” Cosmetics for women, which consisted primarily of whitening their faces, were in themselves a whorish enterprise, linking women with deceiving devils and enchanting witches. Depicting Desdemona on stage in whiteface already, to a degree, comprises calumny.

Interestingly enough, Othello was also depicted on stage using the despicable art of “face-painting,” as the actor playing his role would have been a white male wearing “blackface.” (CALLAGHAN 2000: 81-88) Thus both Othello and Desdemona were represented by white males, one painted black, the other white, to denote the different ways in which these two characters are othered. As Karen Newman observes in her ““And Wash the Ethiop White”: Femininity and the Monstrous in *Othello*,” the other “is constituted discursively in the play as both woman and black.” (SMITH 2004: 227) Both femininity and blackness are constructed in relation to matter and thus discursively othered.

The influence of gendered spirit/matter dualism has not been merely literary. Women have always been, in Iris Marion Young’s phrase, “asymmetrically associated with sex, birth, age, and flesh,” (YOUNG 2005: 14) and Neoplatonic matter easily became another concept to link them with in popular imagination. As this matter was dark, irrational, and disturbingly chaotic, this is how women began to be perceived as well – and no longer as “merely” weaker and otherwise inferior.

As Coudert notes, it is in the early modern period that this phenomenon became pronounced:

The connection of women with the body and matter and men with the soul or spirit goes back to Aristotle and appears as a constant theme in the literature of the Middle Ages, but in the early modern period this dichotomy was drawn in starker terms than ever before as the genders became increasingly polarized. (HANEGRAAFF & KRIPAL 2008: 271)

It is quite conceivable that the resurgence of post-Platonic dualistic concepts contributed to the growing polarization of the genders, with an intensifying expectation that males conform to the notion of active, fixed, forming and ordering rational spirit, and females to the notion of passive, pliable, but also disturbingly fluid and irrational matter.

For many European countries, notably including England, the metaphysical shift towards a gendered spirit/matter dichotomy as a basis for determining proper gender identities and relations was partly introduced through strains of Protestantism. The notions of Calvin and Zwingli, who were themselves influenced by Renaissance Neoplatonism, and had some distinctly dualistic features, (KRISTELLER 1961: 63) made their way into the practical, everyday religiosity of women and men.

Late medieval Christianity had been “interpreted and performed in very bodily ways,” and Catholic women, including Englishwomen, had long been taught to identify with the Virgin Mary while pregnant, in labor, or nursing their infants – all states and actions depicted in positive bodily images by medieval Catholicism. When some Puritans went so far in their iconoclastic zeal as to begin resembling anti-cosmic heresies of old – denying Christ’s human body, denying the reality of the Eucharist, saying Mary was “an empty sack of saffron” – the bodies of ordinary men and especially women were demoted as a result. Pregnant and laboring women were forbidden to pray to the Virgin Mary and

instructed instead to remember Eve's sin and pray to Christ. Christ himself was masculinized as a figure, his medieval representation as a mother of all overflowing with milk being inconceivable in the Reformation. (FISSELL 2006: 10-55)

The womb, which had been considered wondrous and miraculous, was now represented as monstrous. Women were, like Coriolanus (but with a diametrically opposite meaning), having their "nothings monster'd." Pamphlets about monstrous births resulting from lustful, uncontrolled wombs, went hand in hand with those about murdering mothers and witches. (FISSELL 2006: 10-55) Interestingly, midwives were often accused of practicing witchcraft at a time when control over the birthing process was increasingly being taken over by male doctors. (LAOUTARIS 2008: 269)

Gendered spirit/matter dualism built into the incipient obstetrics of early modern times and manifested in treating the laboring woman as a material object to be managed (YOUNG 2005: 55-61) – and a potentially recalcitrant and perilous object at that – continues to plague the Western world. In its benign form, the laboring woman is construed as being heroically defended against her body – chaotic, irrational, dangerous and inimical both to her child and to her own true "self" – via elective caesarians or "active birth management" which contains various, usually unnecessary, and almost invariably unpleasant interventions. In its less benevolent aspects, it is manifested in punishing the woman's body for its demonstrated sexuality, which is sometimes even explicitly stated, as was the case with symphysiotomy in Ireland, openly practiced in order to discourage women from having further sexual relations.

The man – and especially woman – of orthodoxy were humbled, but whole. The man – and even woman – of dualism could hope to achieve godlike status and become one with the deity, but only provided that said man – and especially woman – be willing to forfeit the gross material body. It is little wonder that many women feel impelled to construct their identities in stark opposition to their bodies, especially in contexts involving pregnancy, birth, and childrearing, which seem to designate them as animalistic and carnal.

Queen Elizabeth herself might have contributed to some double binds in an effort to legitimize her rule as the first female monarch of England. She famously elided the dualistic emergent early modern concept of interiority as essential and real with the distinctly non-dualistic medieval concept of the king's "body politic" as opposed to his "body natural," (KANTOROWITZ 1997: 144-145) with some strange and disturbing results, noted by Stephen Cohen in his "(Post) modern Elizabeth: Gender, politics, and the emergence of modern subjectivity." By divorcing identity from biology, Cohen claims, she invited uncertainty as to what her gender was – "an anxiety that produced a growing obsession with Elizabeth's sexuality." (GRADY 2002: 24-29) Ben Jonson is quoted as saying that "She hath a membrana which rendereth her incapable of man," whereas she is elsewhere accused of being given to an "unspeakable and incredible variety of lust." (BURGESS 1970: 69) The somehow essentially masculine, but distinctly female-bodied Virgin Queen – an "unnatural" figure either way – ended up occupying both extremes of the virgin/whore dichotomy.

The virgin/whore dichotomy, rooted in dualistic metaphysics, splits womanhood into two archetypes: the idealized, spiritual virgin on the one hand, and the carnal,

fallen whore on the other. This framework has had two major effects. First, it cast women as frail, irrational, and flesh-bound. Second, it produced aberrations such as the Victorian image of the woman as an asexual, childlike, morally pure “angel in the house”. In turn, men were barbarized and seen as lustful beings incapable of self-control. Like most gender stereotypes, this division generated different but equally damaging consequences, some of which endure today, including the normalization and proliferation of rape culture.

The virgin/whore dichotomy is a direct consequence of the cultural proliferation of Renaissance love theory, based on the duality between heavenly Aphrodite *Ourania*, leading the enamored subject to lofty spiritual spheres, and earthly Aphrodite *Pandemos*, patroness of marriage and procreation, leading him at best to entrapment in worldly, bodily affairs. At worst, the unhappy lover will die and be dragged into the hell of feminine prime matter. (FICINO 2006) The Renaissance theory of erotic love, heavily saturated with the distinctive brand of Neoplatonic spirit/matter dualism, expounded primarily by Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno, simultaneously legitimized romantic love and split its object into, on the one hand, an idealized representation of the divine, and, on the other, the despicable body of the actual human being in question. Both Ficino and Bruno warn the lover never to confuse this heroic passion for the Neoplatonic One – luring him through the guise of Aphrodite *Ourania* or mercilessly chaste goddess Dian – with carnal lust for a mere woman’s body and to keep heroically burning with the ever-unquenchable desire to ascend to the divine. (IGRUTINović 2014: 306) Shakespeare’s tragedies and problem plays are case studies in what happens when a male hero fails to heed these warnings and instead pursues sexual consummation of his erotic passion with an actual body of an actual woman. The comedies and romances, granted, tend to climax in weddings – which can easily be interpreted as symbolic of spiritual ascent and successful henosis. Bassanio’s successful quest for heavenly Portia is a pertinent example. These marriages, though, it should be pointed out, are certainly never sexually consummated within the world of the play. There are no happily consummated and enduring marriages between Shakespeare’s heroes – only between his most troubling villains.

In the darker comedies and the tragedies, the heroes also pursue Dian, as they all fall deeply and almost mystically in love with a chaste lady, whom they cast in the role of an exalted anagogic figure, and certainly not a potential prosaic spouse and mother to their future children. However, then they make the grievous error – more terrible than Actaeon’s – of pursuing her sexually. All the fallen heroes – would-be heroic lovers – of the problem plays and tragedies can be caught in the act of hunting Dian at some point. They are then ‘bed-tricked’, either in actual fact or symbolically, and are consequently trapped in an undesired marriage at best, or die in horrible ways at worst. The Eros of spirit/matter dualism does not resonate well with happy, healthy marriages. (IGRUTINović 2014: 307)

Many notions derived from dualistic concepts (such as, for instance, the notion of ecstatic and all-consuming erotic love) are difficult or impossible to integrate into our cultural practices (such as the choice model of marriage), but are also difficult to eradicate, which is why it is important to at least raise awareness of their originating context (dualistic metaphysics inimical to procreation and marriage) and the implications stem-

ming from that context (death and union with divinity is the true consummation of dualistic Eros, and not “happily ever after” with a spouse). Many fascinating ramifications of dualistic metaphysics can be found everywhere in our current narratives, like narratives pertaining to pro-ana internet spaces (exhorting their adherents to control their gross carnal desires, get rid of loathsome fluid flesh, and reach the ideal – which is being reduced to “pure” solid bones); aspects of some trans narratives (positing an essential gendered identity inimical to the inconsequential body) and feminist anti-natalist narratives, to name a few. Some feminists attempted to solve the conundrum of association with procreation and its resulting demotion of women in a manner similar to what anti-cosmic dualisms offered their female adherents. Women were warned that having children will ruin their chances of amounting to anything in those spheres that really matter – which are a historical continuation of those spheres traditionally allotted to male spirit: spiritual, then intellectual, and finally professional pursuits.

Women might agree to the othering of both their bodies and their children in an effort to redeem their “true inner selves,” confronting what appears to be a single choice: how to respond to being identified with the material and the carnal. Those who embrace this identification may, in turn, gravitate toward practices such as eco-feminism, Neopaganism, or Wicca, sometimes culminating in symbolic acts like giving birth in a pool while invoking various goddesses. Recognizing, or at least becoming aware of these dichotomies and their historical origins, can serve as an initial step toward escaping the multiple double binds in which women are often caught.

4. A POST-PLATONIC WORLD

It is frequently stated that we live in a post-Christian world, but it is becoming increasingly clear that, in many ways, this world is instead post-Platonic. Perhaps the reason we have lost sight of this is our tendency to mystify the occult on the one hand, and sanitize the origins of modern philosophy and science on the other.

Platonism has admittedly long been unrecognized as “the foundation of much of modern philosophical thought,” and the syllabi of many university courses in the history of philosophy generally start with Descartes, (HUTTON & HEDLEY 2008: 2-3) not even taking into consideration that Descartes himself was heavily indebted to the Platonic tradition in his metaphysics. In this, he was not alone: Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant, to name a few, were all demonstrably influenced by it. (KRISTELLER 1961: 68) German Idealism was perhaps the clearest continuation of such “pure” Neoplatonism as was expounded by Plotinus and Proclus – a conclusion, for instance, not resisted by Schelling and Hegel.

Platonic notions were built into the foundations of modern science as well. As Clucas argues, “Neoplatonic metaphysics played a significant, albeit unrecognized, role in the development of modern science.” (CLUCAS 2006: 3) Furthermore, Mitchell claims that “the new scientific age began not with a rejection of magic, but with a revival of interest in occult theory and practical magic.” (CLUCAS 2006: 5) Dualistic metaphysics were also used to justify technology subduing nature, and the “occult traditions themselves were annexed to allow the development of technology. The Magus metamorphosed into the engineer,” once more conquering the world of matter, only by different means. (MITCHELL 2006: xvii)

It is via poetic channels that Neoplatonist ideas seem to have spread best. Ideas generally tend to travel better through artistic expression than by any other means of transportation, spreading like airborne viruses where dry philosophies remain quarantined in various ivory towers. Neoplatonism in Renaissance England, as one very significant example, has been shown to have been a poetic rather than a philosophical phenomenon, (JAYNE 1952: 238) and it was conceivably owing to this fact that it was so ubiquitous.

Shakespeare's work, in particular, has served as a powerful conduit for concepts extant in the early modern period. It is not difficult to understand why. There is hardly a thought that was thinkable in Shakespeare's time that remained unexpressed by one of Shakespeare's characters. Shakespeare's works were subsequently read by such disparate but influential figures as Coleridge, Freud, Jung, T. S. Eliot, and Joyce, who then further disseminated, in their own writings, the concepts they had absorbed from them. This has enabled the chain of dualistic thought patterns to remain unbroken for millennia.

In our post-Platonic world, we no longer speak of "spirit" and "matter," just as we no longer uphold Plato's Ideas. Yet our contemporary ideologies, with their own dichotomies, continue to echo this ancient split, simply under new terminology. The dark otherness of matter, though rarely acknowledged outright, remains deeply embedded in the very foundations of our civilization.

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OVO STVORENJE MRAKA: ŠEKSPIROVI DUALIZMI I NJIHOVE IMPLIKACIJE

Rezime

Mnogi od naših savremenih kulturnih obrazaca su oblikovani u Šekspirovo doba – koje se danas upravo iz tog razloga naziva ranim modernim dobom – a Šekspirova dela svakako su poslužila kao jedan od kanala. Koncept koji se pokazao izuzetno uticajnim, a leži u osnovi renesansnog neoplatonizma, jeste dualizam duha i materije, gotovo uvek rodno određen i hijerarhizovan. U ovom radu će se nastojati da se definišu najvažniji aspekti Šekspirovog stvaralaštva koji sa odjekuju sa dualističkim tradicijama prisutnim u renesansnom neoplatonizmu, da se analiziraju njihova moguća značenja u kontekstima koje nude ti religijski i filozofski sistemi, te da se otkriju njihove dalje implikacije za razumevanje kako Šekspira, tako i određenih aspekata takozvane zapadne kulture, naročito u domenu politike, roda i seksualnosti. Nada je da će rad pokazati da su neoplatonistički pojam materije i dualizam duha i materije igrali oblikotvornu ulogu ne samo za Šekspira i njegovo doba, već za epohe koje su usledile, uključujući i našu. Ova saznanja otvaraju mogućnosti za dalja istraživanja ne samo u oblasti književne kritike, već i političkih studija i studija kulture.

Ključne reči: Šekspir, dualizam duha i materije, politika, seksualnost i rod