Some aspects of the influence of Machiavellianism on the Elizabethan drama


Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is, firstly, to describe in summary form the development of the Machiavellian phenomenon and the Italian influence in England during the sixteenth century; and secondly the main part of the thesis, to provide an examination of how certain aspects of the Machiavellian myth were translated into dramatic terms in the Elizabethan theatre (that is, for the present purposes the English theatre of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries). The variety of dramatic effects generated within this essentially simple and single dramatic myth is considered under several headings in the respective chapters of the main part of the thesis. The number of plays referred to in the thesis has been restricted in order that the argument may appear as clear, sharp and particular as possible, even at the risk of a certain loss of comprehensiveness. Apart from the occasional reference the works of Shakespeare have been deliberately excluded as being too massive and independent a body of work to be accommodated within the terms of a general view of lesser dramatists. Finally an attempt has been made to provide a reasonably complete bibliography of material useful for the study of Machiavellianism on the Elizabethan stage.

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