SHAKESPEARE

and

The Renaissance Crisis
THE THREE REVOLUTIONS

1. The geographical revolution – 1492
   Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci

2. The religious revolution – 1517
   Martin Luther and John Calvin

3. The cosmological revolution – 1543
   Nicholas Copernicus and Giordano Bruno
THE GEOGRAPHICAL REVOLUTION

The traditional picture of the world

The three continents – Europe, Africa, Asia

Jerusalem at the center of the world

Island earth
Medieval OT map
THE GEOGRAPHICAL REVOLUTION

The disjunction between the old world and the new

Contrasts between the two worlds – politics, economics, religion

The impact of the discovery
THE RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, 1517

John Calvin’s view of human nature – the effects of the Fall

The religious turmoil in the sixteenth century – catholic versus protestant

The fragmentation of the Christian church
St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre
Mary Tudor

Elizabeth I
The Spanish Armada
THE COSMOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

Copernicus’ *Revolution of the Celestial Orbs*, 1543

The heliocentric theory

The earth and its inhabitants banished to the wings
The Ptolemaic System
The Copernican System
THE COSMOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

Bruno’s theory of the infinite universe – is there a system?

What is man in the midst of infinity? – collective disorientation

Donne’s “First Anniversary” 1611
HAMLET

Richard Burbage
David Garrick
Edwin Booth
Henry Irving
John Gielgud
Laurence Olivier
Richard Burton
Kenneth Branaugh
Ethan Hawke
THE MYSTERY OF HAMLET

The inscrutability of the play

The inscrutability of its hero

Why doesn’t Hamlet act sooner?

Delacroix
THE HAMLET STORY

Earlier versions of the story

Claudius’s bodyguard protects him

Hamlet’s madness a ruse
THE THEOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Catholic versus Protestant versions of the afterlife

The nature of the ghost – angel or demon?

Hamlet’s Protestantism

Necessity of testing the ghost’s veracity

Claudius at prayer, the murder of Polonius

Fuseli
THE MORAL SOLUTION

Hamlet has moral scruples about revenge

Romans, xii. 19

Pagan origins of the revenge code

Hamlet as a Christian hero with a heathen duty
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Freud’s interpretation of Oedipus the King

Freud’s interpretation of Hamlet

The Oedipus complex
Chiptooth Agonistes
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Freud’s interpretation of Oedipus the King

Freud’s interpretation of Hamlet

The Oedipus complex
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Ernest Jones’ elaboration

Hamlet’s hidden reason for inaction

His obsessive concern with Gertrude’s re-marriage

Claudius as Hamlet’s alter ego

Arguments for and against the Oedipal reading
THE AESTHETIC SOLUTION

Hamlet is a bad play – Voltaire, T. S. Eliot

Literature should make sense – Aristotle’s Poetics

Reality is intelligible

Challenges to this view
HAMLET AND THE RENAISSANCE CRISIS

The play as an image of intellectual disorientation

The disruption of the parental relationship

The disruption of the political process

The disruption of social relationships

The disruption of romantic relationships

Delacroix
THE PROBLEMS OF HAMLET

The problem of the text

Which is the “real” Hamlet?

First Quarto 1603
Second Quarto 1605
First Folio 1623
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THE PROBLEMS OF HAMLET

The problem of the political system

The problem of Ophelia’s death

The problem of Fortinbras

The problem of Hamlet’s madness
THE WORLD OF HAMLET

The opening dialogue

Confusing the audience

Hamlet and the multiform cloud
THE SPECTATOR’S EXPERIENCE

The theories of Polonius, Claudius, Gertrude about Hamlet’s madness

The spectator’s theories about Hamlet’s character

Hamlet’s resistance to comprehension
THE PLAY AS A MIRROR

Claudius, Gertrude, and Polonius see their own concerns reflected in “The Murder of Gonzago”

Each spectator sees his or her own concerns reflected in Hamlet

The importance of the mirror’s opacity