

## **Title of Proposed Project**

A Norton Critical Edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

## **Abstract**

My critical edition of Shakespeare's most famous play, under contract with W. V. Norton & Co., will feature a newly edited text based on the second Quarto (1604/5), full textual collations, explanatory notes, an introduction, as well as selections from primary sources and critical and theatrical materials. It will also feature a section called *The Actors' Gallery*, which will present famous actors and actresses reflecting on their roles and on the play (e.g., Sarah Bernhardt, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, Kenneth Branagh, Ethan Hawke). This *Hamlet* will be an edition for undergraduates, primarily, but it will also contain materials of interest to graduate students and scholars. Over the summer of 2010 I plan to complete the Introduction and Bibliography. I hope to submit the finished manuscript to Norton in Fall, 2010.

## **Description**

**1. Objective of Proposed Work** Editing *Hamlet* is one of the most challenging assignments in early modern scholarship. The play is wonderfully complicated itself and survives in no fewer than three early printed texts (Quarto 1, Quarto 2, and the First Folio), each differing significantly from the others. Editors must decide which text to use and which passages should admit influence from the other texts. This is a constant balancing act that involves working out the relations between the early texts and attempting to distinguish between authorial, theatrical, and printing interventions. No two editors perfectly agree on the thousands of decisions required on issues ranging from the words themselves, to the speakers, punctuation, and stage business.

After three years of study and consultation I have committed to Quarto 2 as the main text, and proceeded conservatively through its 4056 lines. Last summer I completed the text, reviewed it critically, took into detailed account four centuries of editorial scholarship, and wrote the explanatory notes. To complete the edition, this summer I need to write an introduction, provisionally entitled **Imagining Hamlet**; I plan to write a comprehensive account of the play under these headings: *Theatrical Imaginings*, *Contextual Imaginings*, *Critical Imaginings*, *Editorial Imaginings*, *Global Imaginings*, and *Afterlife Imaginings*. I also need to compile a bibliography that includes print and digital materials—the many available electronic archives, databases, and resources. No other edition of *Hamlet* provides such an introduction and such a bibliography.

**2. Significance of Proposed Work** Norton Critical Editions differ from other editions of Shakespeare in that they provide newly edited texts along with a wealth of cultural and critical materials. Unlike other reputable Shakespeare editions available, say those published by Bantam, Folger, or Signet, my edition of *Hamlet* will offer the text and selected passages from the other early print versions. It will also feature sources and extracts from contemporary writings that shed light on the play. The Norton Critical Edition places the text in critical context as well, providing a large sampling of analyses and responses to the play. I have now identified 20 such voices, beginning with the Poet Laureate John Dryden (1679), working through Ernest Jones' Freudian account (1922, which influenced Sir Laurence Olivier), to some recent work—Margreta de Grazia's brilliantly iconoclastic "*Hamlet*" *without Hamlet*" (2007) and Tony Howard's surprising study, *Women as Hamlet* (2007). There is also a strong international presence here, including the French Voltaire, who thought the play "barbaric" in parts, the German

Goethe, who influentially characterized Hamlet as too delicate for revenge, and the Russian Tolstoy, who read all of Shakespeare in German, English and Russian and liked none of it, including *Hamlet*.

I have foraged widely for fresh and interesting critical reactions to *Hamlet*, checking places not normally visited by scholars of English literature. One discovery I plan to publish is a letter by Abraham Lincoln, which expresses his preference for Claudius's soliloquy, "Oh, my offense is rank" over Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech. Readers will find it interesting that the anguish of a King with a guilty conscience should so move one of our greatest presidents. There will also be illustrations from the theatre: the eighteenth-century giant, David Garrick, the Victorian Hamlet, Forbes-Robertson, the iconoclastic American star, John Barrymore, the famous female Hamlet, Sarah Bernhardt. And there will be some illustrations of art inspired by the play, including Delacroix's famous lithographs and Millais' pre-Raphaelite painting of Ophelia's death.

Two other sections I plan will set this edition of *Hamlet* apart and offer unrivalled ancillary materials for the classroom and for the scholar. As I mentioned earlier, *The Actors' Gallery*, will gather in one place the reflections of famous performers on their parts and on the play: the gentlemanly Edwin Booth (brother of Lincoln's assassin, by the way), for example, the intelligent and musical Sir John Gielgud, the virile and dynamic Richard Burton, the recent, counter-cultural Ethan Hawke, and many others. Actors who bring the role to life in the theatre are interesting in themselves but even more so when gathered here together in seminar, as it were. Their strenuous disagreements provide

many lessons about the text in the theatre, especially about its flexibility and wide range of possible significations.

Another section, entitled *Afterlives*, will feature artistic adaptations of *Hamlet*. Here I plan to excerpt Mark Twain's humorous review of the play along with Tom Stoppard's irreverent exploration, both *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. I will also present James Joyce's complicated speculations in *Ulysses*, a selection from John Updike's novelistic prequel, *Claudius and Gertrude*, and one from Jasper Fforde's richly comic resurrection of Hamlet in a futuristic science fiction novel, *Something Rotten*. I am in the final stages of negotiation for the rights to reprint scenes from Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* (1979), a disturbing post-modern collage, and Jawad al-Asadi's *Forget Hamlet* (1994), a transposition of the play to the Arab world.

This will be a *Hamlet* unlike any other on the market and will certainly enhance the reputation of Loyola College/University. Norton Critical editions appear widely in secondary schools, colleges, and universities in the United States and there are considerable sales abroad.

**3. Plan to Accomplish Proposed Work** My first task this summer, to write a comprehensive introduction to the play, is eminently feasible. In the concentrated span of three months I can review all the materials I have collected and begin to attempt a synthesis. I also plan to write in final consultation with the great traditions of scholarship on the play, available at the Folger Library in Washington DC. I hope to visit the Folger weekly for 10 weeks to consult scholarship on the play including editions and commentary. At other times I plan to use online data bases available to the public or through Loyola's Library: *Early English Books Online*, which has digital reproductions

of over 129,000 early modern texts; *Hamletworks*, which presents the work-in-progress of the Variorum edition; the British Library's *Shakespeare in Quarto*, which offers images of the early Shakespeare printings; *Literature Online* and *JSTOR*, which provide searchable data base of criticism on Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

The compiling of the Bibliography will require energy and discrimination. As one scholar remarked many years ago, "If one set out to read all the criticism on *Hamlet*, one would have time for nothing else, not even the reading of *Hamlet*." Much criticism has been published since that remark and more appears every day in print and in cyber space. Students need a well-informed guide to reliable resources and helpful materials. After years of study and collecting notes on the criticism I am ready to provide such a guide.

After I complete the Introduction and Bibliography I plan to check the entire manuscript in the Fall of 2010 and submit it to Norton, well ahead of the originally contracted schedule.

**4. Broader Context of Proposed Work** This project is the culmination of many years' work. I have been publishing on Shakespeare for several decades and started editing Elizabethan texts with Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (Manchester, 2000). Since then I have edited his *The Case is Altered* for the forthcoming *Cambridge Edition of Ben Jonson*, and co-edited Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Barnes & Noble, 2007) and his *The Comedy of Errors* (Barnes & Noble, forthcoming). The immediate predecessor for this *Hamlet* project is my Norton Critical Edition of *Macbeth*, which appeared in 2004 and has been very well received. When Norton offered me the chance to edit *Hamlet*, I was glad to apply this experience to the greatest and most famous Shakespearean play.

I have always completed the work Loyola College has funded through summer grants and sabbaticals in a timely fashion. Previous summer grants bore fruit in the timely publications of *Macbeth* (Norton, 2004) and *Early Modern Catholicism* (Oxford, 2007).

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