

Slowly developing since the 1980's, queer theory became a very important sphere of gender studies of the end of the 20th century and affected not only the very perception of gender categories, but also interpretations of these in texts. The thesis concentrates on queering of the dramatic works of William Shakespeare, describing relations which can be broadly characterized as homosexual - romantic or sexual attraction between members of the same sex, including homoerotic or homosocial aspect of these relationships. After establishing the textual grounds for these readings the text goes on to describe various stagings in theatre, television and film of Anglophone and Czech origin.

In order to achieve representative illustration of the problem the established division of Shakespeare's drama is maintained, dividing the plays into three categories – comedies, tragedies and historical plays. One play of each of these categories is then discussed further. These are *The Merchant of Venice* for comedies, *Othello* for tragedies, and *Richard II* as a representative of historical plays.

In the *Merchant of Venice* the discussed relationship is the one of Antonio and Bassanio, examining the possible motivation for Antonio's incredible generosity towards his young friend. The most famous homosexual interpretation of the relationship can be found in the 2004 film version by Michael Radford, but the tradition of this view of the play is much older, starting in the 1960's.

In *Othello* the queered relationship is the one of Iago towards Othello, which can be demonstrated on certain lines spoken by Iago and supported by his coldness towards his wife and misogynistic views in general. This interpretation of Iago is probably the oldest of those that will be dealt with, as its tradition reaches back to the 1938 Old Vic theatre production with Laurence Olivier as Iago. The prime of this interpretation found its summit in the 1980's with David Suchet's portrayal of Iago as a repressed homosexual and his subsequent essay dealing with the problematic.

The case is a bit different when it comes to *Richard II*, as the homoerotic aspects are not merely a modern construct based on psychoanalysis, or queer theory. Hints at the king's dubious sexual orientation were probably always an issue with *Richard II*, as well as Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, which was a chief source of inspiration for Shakespeare's text. The main figures related to homosexuality are Bushy, Bagot and Green, the king's favourites, contrasting with the overshadowed position of the queen. Richard is often presented as an immature and childish king, often displaying features of effeminacy, which does not necessarily imply homosexuality, but may support the argument for it. This tradition

is by far the oldest one, culminating in the 1996 television version with Fiona Shaw portraying the king.

The chief point of the thesis is to show the textual grounds for queer interpretations of these plays and argue for their validity, as the fact that the plays can be translated into contemporary contexts only proves the timeless quality of Shakespeare's work.