



Domination And Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare

Diane Dreher

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Shakespeare was clearly fascinated by the relationship between fathers and daughters, for this primal bond of domination and defiance structures twenty-one of his comedies, tragedies, and romances. In a conflict that is at once social and interpersonal, Shakespeare's fathers demand hierarchical obedience while their daughters affirm the new, more personal values upheld by Renaissance humanists and Puritans.

In her penetrating analysis of this compelling relationship, Diane Dreher examines the underlying psychological tensions as well as the changing concepts of marriage and the family during Shakespeare's time. She points to the pain and conflict caused by sex role polarization. Shakespeare's possessive fathers tyrannize over their daughters, unwilling to relinquish their "masculine" power and control and leaving these young women with only two alternatives: paternal domination or defiance and loss of love. The logic of Shakespeare's plays repudiates traditional stereotypes, showing how women like Ophelia and Desdemona are destroyed by conforming to the passive Renaissance ideal.

The book concludes with a consideration of Shakespeare's androgynous characters?dynamic women in doublet and hose, and fathers who become sensitive, caring, and empathetic. Shakespeare's balanced characters thus reconcile the polarities within themselves and bring greater harmony to their world.

Domination and Defiance is the first book on this most provocative relationship in Shakespeare. Shedding new light on the complex father-daughter bond, character, and motivation, it makes a major contribution to literary studies.

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