

When Honour's at the Stake (Routledge Revivals)

By Norman Council


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Renaissance ideas of honour had a profound influence on the English people who formed Shakespeare's audiences. In *When Honour's at the Stake*, first published in 1973, Norman Council describes the increasing importance of these ideas to the themes and structure of a number of Shakespeare's major plays.

The validity of the most widely approved code of honour was being challenged on a variety of fronts, yet both personal standards of behaviour and public affairs were habitually understood in terms of honour. A series of tragedies are given their basic form by dramatizing the pernicious effects of man's disobedience to the various demands of honour; in *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* honour is among the principal motives of tragedy. In this way, the modern reader's comprehension of the plays can be greatly enhanced by reference to Elizabethan honour codes.

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