

HOLDING A MIRROR UP TO NATURE

Shakespeare has been dubbed the greatest psychologist of all time. This book seeks to prove that statement by comparing the playwright's fictional characters with real-life examples of violent individuals, from criminals to political actors. For Gilligan and Richards, the propensity to kill others, even (or especially) when it results in the killer's own death, is the most serious threat to the continued survival of humanity. In this volume, the authors show how humiliated men, with their desire for retribution and revenge, apocalyptic violence and political religions, justify and commit violence, and how love and restorative justice can prevent violence. Although our destructive power is far greater than anything that existed in his day, Shakespeare has much to teach us about the psychological and cultural roots of all violence. In this book the authors tell what Shakespeare shows, through the stories of his characters: what causes violence and what prevents it.

JAMES GILLIGAN, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at New York University, wrote *Violence* (1996), *Preventing Violence* (2001), and *Why Some Politicians Are More Dangerous than Others* (2011), a Times Literary Supplement "Book of the Year," and coauthored *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump* (2016), a *New York Times* best-seller. His advice has been sought by President Clinton, Tony Blair, Kofi Annan, the World Health Organization, and the World Court.

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Shame, Guilt, and Violence in Shakespeare

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For Carol Gilligan and Donald Levy

The poet, as such, does not think thoughts; he makes them; though it may be for us to think the thoughts which he has made. The meanings here discussed are not insisted on by the poetry; they emerge only to a sensitive and listening enquiry. They are rather suggested than said. But that is no reason why we, with due care, should not proceed to say them: it is our business to say them.

—G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York: Meridian, 1947), p. 366

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance – that you o’erstep not the modest of nature. For anything so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as ’twere the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III.ii.16–24

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