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Sommario/riassunto

Original in topic and approach, *Searching Shakespeare* presents a political-historical exploration of Shakespeare's drama, examining the plays in the context of current ideological concerns ? history, memory, marginality, and nationalism. Derek Cohen predicates his argument on the supposition that the individual, as much as the encompassing state, is subject to the shaping forces and machinery of the ideological surround. Shakespeare's plays, Cohen argues, consistently portray the clash between the passionate search for individuality and the quest for social harmony as irresolvable. The playwright's uncanny ability to carry the reader to the edge of imaginary experience ? far from the literal world that is made visible by the text ? offers an entry into the subtextual and ironic underside of the dramas. It is in this dark and strange world of slavery, mutilation, sexual jealousy, and suborned murder that the implicit political biases of the plays are most evident and it is here, too, that a modern political analysis reveals why Shakespeare portrayed the quest for individuation and self-expression as necessarily ending in tragedy.
