prehended only through a careful considera-

tion of its place in the total design. In

this connection, she poses other questions

that suggest the advisability of taking a

larger view of the problem. Is Hamlet’s ex-

pression of contempt for dumb shows sig-

nificant in a play that includes one? What

is intended by the frequent parallels, both

implicit and explicit, between the “puppets”

in the court entertainment and the char-

acters in Hamlet? Do the reiterated allu-

sions to “dumbness” throughout Hamlet

throw any light on the mute scene?

In a closely reasoned and remarkably

perceptive analysis, Miss Cox demonstrates

conclusively that Shakespeare did indeed

intend that the dumb show function as an

intrinsic component of the whole figurative

and structural pattern. The study offers a

new approach to the workings of the play

scene; but more important, the thesis puts

in fresh perspective the workings of the en-

tire drama and adds a new dimension to

Hamlet criticism. Professor Cox marshals

an impressive body of evidence to support

the proposition that the dumb show, which

occupies a central position in the structure

of the play, is also central to its meaning

and that the symbolic import of the mime

provides an essential clue to an understand-

ing of the tragedy. Her arguments not only

challenge cherished notions about the play

and its troubled and troubling hero, but

illuminate aspects of both that have long

disturbed critics. And her study of the use

of dramatic inset and the complex inter-

action of form and substance builds to a

provocative interpretation, in the final chap-

ter, of the meaning of Hamlet.

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