

ABSTRACT

“MULTIPLE UNITY” AND THE DRAMATIST’S OBJECTIVES IN *TAMBURLAINE*, *EDWARD II*, *HENRY V*, AND *CORIOLANUS*

Scholars like Madelaine Doran, Joel Altman and R. M. Frye have examined the plays of the English Renaissance emphasizing the cultural habit of mind that valued rhetorical inquiry through the presentation of multiple perspectives. This thesis attempts to develop this argument further by applying Heinrich Wölfflin’s theory of “multiple unity” to four plays of the period: Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II* and William Shakespeare’s *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*. It is my argument that through the application of “multiple unity” as a theoretical framework we can more accurately speculate on the playwright’s objectives in these four plays, seeing them as fictional realizations of questions embedded in a form that can be read and reread many ways. What emerges from this study is a realization that a larger pattern is at work in these plays: one that evidences a deep interconnectedness and complexity not apparent in the modern sense of theatre.

Kate Campbell Fourchy
May 2003