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A. C. Bradley as a Critic of Shakespearean Tragedy

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A. C. BRADLEY AS A CRITIC OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

by

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LIFE

John Britton was born in Burlington, New Jersey, on December 8, 1929.

He was graduated from Burlington High School, Burlington, New Jersey, June, 1947, and from the University of Pennsylvania, June, 1951, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

From September, 1951, to July, 1959, the author was a seminarian in the Society of Jesus. He pursued the Jesuit course of studies at Wernersville, Pennsylvania, from September, 1951, to July, 1954, at the Novitiate of St. Isaac Jogues. During the summer of 1954 he took education courses at Plattsburg College, Plattsburg, New York. From September, 1954, to June, 1957, he studied at West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana, and in June, 1957, he was granted the degree of Licentiate in Philosophy. While at West Baden College, the author began graduate studies in English with Loyola University, Chicago, and in June, 1957, he became a full-time graduate student at Loyola. During the summer of 1958 he took courses in English at Columbia University in New York City.

Mr. Britton has published three articles: "'Pied Beauty' and the Glory of God," Renascence, XI (1958-1959), 72-75; "Browning's 'Bishop Bloughram's Apology,' 702-709," Explicator, XVII (1958-

1959), Item 50; "Cummings' 'pity this busy monster, manunkind,'" Explicator, XVIII (1959-1960), Item 5.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I dreamed last night that Shakespeare's ghost
Sat for a Civil Service post.
The English paper of the year
Contained a question on King Lear,
Which Shakespeare answered very badly
Because he had not read his Bradley.

--Guy Boas, quoted by I. J. Semper in Hamlet Without Tears (Dubuque, Iowa, 1946), p. 50.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. C. Bradley's most famous work, Shakespearean Tragedy, first appeared in 1904. Now, more than fifty years later, this book, together with some of Bradley's other works, is still talked about and argued about in college classrooms and learned and critical journals. In view of this continuing interest in Bradley's criticism, it is surprising that no full-length examination of the subject has ever been made. It is the intention of the present study to confine itself to certain definite aspects of Bradley's criticism of Shakespearean tragedy, and even in this relatively restricted field, which precludes detailed discussion of many of Bradley's writings (except, of course, as they bear upon the subject in hand), there have been no full studies. Mr. Thomas Charbeneau, S.J., wrote a master's thesis for Loyola University, Chicago, in 1954, "Bradley's Theory of Tragedy: Analysis and Critique," in which he states that his specific purpose is "to analyze Bradley's theory of tragedy, especially as he applies it to Othello, and then to criticize his theory in the light of Scholastic-Aristotelian principles." His major conclusion is that Bradley's theory of tragedy is false, because it logically

leads to a denial of free will.[1] The purpose, subject matter, and general approach of the present study differ very much from Mr. Charbeneau's, nor can this writer agree with some of Mr. Charbeneau's premises and conclusions.[2]

It is the purpose of this dissertation to investigate A. C. Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy and his method of criticizing a particular tragedy; to note and discuss what the more important critics since Bradley have said on his treatment of these two subjects; and to suggest a possible judgment as to Bradley's value as a critic of Shakespearean tragedy. The emphasis throughout will be on making Bradley's own ideas and practices as clear as possible, especially through close attention to his various writings.

In this introductory chapter we shall sketch briefly Bradley's career and the general view which critics have taken of his work.

Andrew Cecil Bradley was born in 1851 to a notable clerical family.[3] He took his degree at Oxford, where, after a short interval, he was elected a Fellow of Balliol in 1874. He remained

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[1]Pp. 9-10 of the unpublished thesis at Loyola University, Chicago.

[2]The particulars of the disagreement will be considered later.

[3]For biographical details on Bradley see J. W. Mackail, "Andrew Cecil Bradley, 1851-1935," Proceedings of the British Academy XXI (1935), 385-392; M. Roy Ridley, "Andrew Cecil Bradley," DNB Supplement, 1931-1940 (London, 1949), pp. 98-100.

there for nine years, lecturing and tutoring in English, first, then in moral philosophy and Aristotle's Politics. In 1882 he was named as first occupant of a chair of English studies at University College, Liverpool; then Glasgow University, eight years later, called him to a similar chair. In 1901 Oxford named him to the important post of Professor of Poetry, and from 1901 to 1906 Bradley delivered there several of his best-known and most influential lectures. According to the University's statutes, Bradley could not be reappointed to his post for a second five-year term. Cambridge offered him a chair, but he preferred to spend the rest of his life in London working at his own studies. In 1906 he played an important part in founding the English Association, and in 1907 he delivered the Gifford lectures (on religion) at Glasgow.

By this time he had begun to publish. His most important works were Shakespearean Tragedy (1904, 1905), Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1909), The Uses of Poetry (1912; an English Association pamphlet), A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam" (3rd edition, 1915), A Miscellany (1929), and, posthumously, Ideals of Religion (1940).[4] The First World Was was a great strain on Bradley, and thereafter he became increasingly inactive. For many years he

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[4]For details of publication concerning these works and for a number of lesser works not included above, see the Bibliography; several of the individual essays which make up such volumes as A Miscellany were first published separately elsewhere, but only those essays are listed separately in the Bibliography which were never collected.

gradually declined until his death in 1935.

While Professor Bradley was at the height of his powers, he was evidently a most attractive lecturer. Dr. Hereward Price, now professor emeritus of English literature at Michigan University, was at Oxford during part of the time that Bradley held the Poetry chair, and he has told the present writer what an unforgettable experience it was to hear Bradley speak. He was a slight man, according to Dr. Price, but he had a tremendous presence when lecturing; one sensed his kindliness as well as his great knowledge. Dr. Price remembers being present at Bradley's famous lecture on Falstaff. It began in the late afternoon and continued into the dusk, and his audience had only one fear, that he would stop. Dr. Price also tells how, on an earlier occasion in Glasgow, his university audience was so moved that they threw down their pens and simply listened to him in awe, so remarkable was his lecture.

The review of Shakespearean Tragedy which appeared in the Times Literary Supplement for February 10, 1905, confirms these impressions with regard to the lectures which comprise that book. While Mr. Bradley was still giving this series, states the review, word of the very unusual impression they were making in Oxford spread beyond university circles, and those who had not been able to hear the lectures were eager to read them.[5]

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[5]This review may conveniently be found in collected form in John Bailey, Poets and Poetry: Being Articles Reprinted from the Literary Supplement of "The Times" (London, 1911), pp. 55-62.

This TLS review may serve us as a point de départ for a rapid glance at what has been the general opinion among critics, from 1905 to the present, of Andrew Bradley as a critic of Shakespearean tragedy. The word "general" should be emphasized, since particular points of criticism will be discussed later. What we want at present is a general picture of the critical reaction to Bradley.

It may be said at once that any black-and-white charting of Bradley's reputation among critics would be so over-simplified as to be false. There is a temptation to see an initial period of absolute enthusiasm for Bradley's ideas, followed by a sharp reaction against Bradley, culminating in a pleasantly Hegelian synthesis wherein everyone agrees that Bradley had some good and some bad points. Thus G. B. Harrison and Kenneth Muir slightly overstate the unanimity of critical approbation for Bradley in the years immediately following 1904. Professor Harrison says that Bradley's lectures, when they appeared in print, "were regarded as the last and final word, the highest pitch of Shakespearean criticism";[6] and Muir says that Shakespearean Tragedy was "to be for a whole generation the truest and most profound book ever written on Shakespeare."[7] These remarks are not wrong in their general drift, or on a popular level, for Shakespearean Tragedy

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[6]Shakespeare's Tragedies (London, 1951), p. 9.

[7]"Fifty Years of Shakespeare Criticism: 1900-1950," Shakespeare Survey, IV (1951), 3.

was very well received, but to speak of its being regarded as "the last and final word" "for a whole generation" is to obscure the fact that almost at once there was some outright opposition to Bradley's methods of criticism, while some of Bradley's earliest admirers dis not hesitate to point out weaknesses in his work. The TLS review of 1905, for example, says that Shakespearean Tragedy is a great achievement and adds many other highly laudatory remarks, but it disagrees on certain specific points with Bradley, and it calls his apparent desire to make all of Shakespeare's details fit together exactly "a vain occupation."[8]

Bradley's critical fortunes may be indicated most readily by a chronological listing, which will also give us the chance to see if there is any rigid pattern discernible. Only the most important or significant discussions are noted.[9]

1905--the TLS review already summarized.

1906--C. H. Hanford reviews Shakespearean Tragedy most favorably, with a very few reservations.

1907--Walter Raleigh (without naming Bradley) rejects the philosophical approach to Shakespeare and says that attempts to find a theoretic basis for Shakespearean tragedy have all been fruitless.

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[8]Bailey, pp. 55, 59.

[9]For publication details on these works, see the Bibliography; where there is a slight discrepancy in dates, the date given in this list is that of the first appearance of the article or book. Most of these critical works will be taken up in some detail later.

1907--A. B. Walkley agrees that Bradley is Coleridge's best successor, but feels that all through Shakespearean Tragedy there runs a mistaken critical method--that of assuming that the characters are to be argued about as real persons.

1909--Charles Johnson gives a completely favorable report on Bradley, seeing his work as the peak of Shakespeare criticism.

1910--E. E. Stoll, in a violent essay, demands the use of the historical method in Shakespeare criticism; he has some kind remarks for Bradley but completely rejects many of his methods.

1916--D. N. Smith sees Shakespearean Tragedy as the last of its kind.

1919--Schücking insists on the use of the historical approach to Shakespeare; he thinks Shakespearean Tragedy an excellent book but deplores some of Bradley's methods.

1920--T. S. Eliot, in an article on Swinburne, implies that Bradley was not so much interested in his nominal subject matter as he was in matters not quite to the point.

1923--C. H. Herford sees a compromise in sight between Bradleyan critics and the "historical" party.

1927--E. E. Stoll continues to detail his general and particular objections to Bradley's criticism.

1928--Brockington, in the Shakespeare Review, proclaims Bradley a great critic, greater even than Coleridge.

1928--G. Wilson Knight sets forth his principles of

Shakespeare interpretation; he asks that Bradley's method in Shakespearean Tragedy be extended to all the plays of Shakespeare.

(1928--Legouis attacks Stoll as an extremist.)

(1930--Lascelles Abercrombie, in an address to the British Academy, says that anti-Romantic Shakespeare criticism has resulted in errors worse than those of the Romantics.)

1931--Babcock says that one of his purposes in Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry is to support Bradley's views on Morgann's greatness as a critic of Shakespeare.

1932--Ralli says that Bradley is the greatest living Shakespeare critic and one of the very greatest in history.

1933--L. C. Knights makes a famous attack on Bradleyan criticism.

1933--Logan Pearsall Smith says that, of all the wise books about Shakespeare, he would first choose Shakespearean Tragedy; it is a masterpiece of English criticism.

1934--J. Isaacs, in A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, calls Bradley's criticism magnificent and dangerously sidetracking.

1935--C. Spurgeon says that the images of evil in the plays support and reinforce Bradley's statement about good and evil in Shakespearean tragedy.

1937--F. R. Leavis delivers a scathing attack on Bradley in Scrutiny.

1947--L. B. Campbell says some nice things about Shakespearean Tragedy, then vigorously attacks several points in the

first chapter.

1948--Charlton proclaims himself a devout Bradleyite.

1948--Paul Siegel writes "In Defence of Bradley" against various critics.

1949--L. B. Campbell makes another attack on Shakespearean Tragedy.

1949--John Middleton Murry publishes a remarkable panegyric on Bradley; he calls Shakespearean Tragedy the greatest single work of criticism in the English language.

1951--TLS editorial, on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of Bradley's birth, says that Bradley's star has pretty well faded, though he can still offer us much on the meaning of poetry.

1951--Kenneth Muir sees a swing back towards Bradley.

1953 (date of English edition)--Henri Fluchère, ignoring Bradley altogether, says that Shakespeare criticism made no serious progress from Coleridge's time to that of the new "evaluation" centered at Cambridge.

1955--Herbert Weisinger says that Bradley's approach still seems the most fruitful for the understanding of tragedy.

1956--D. Traversi feels that Bradley's type of criticism is played out, but he complains that modern Shakespeare criticism is fragmentary and incomplete compared to Bradley's work.

1958--F. E. Halliday, in the revised edition of Shakespeare and His Critics, says there is a swing back towards Bradley;

he feels that a synthesis of the old and the new in Shakespeare criticism is needed.

1958--Barbara Hardy seeks to prove that Coleridge is the father not of Bradley but of Stoll, L. C. Knights, etc.; Bradley tells us about human character, but Coleridge tells us about the play.

1959--L. C. Knights, in a letter to this writer and in a published essay, sees some good points about Bradley's work but continues to assert that it is often misleading in emphasis and direction and is inadequate in its methodology.

Three facts should be clear from the foregoing. First, there is no hard-and-fast pattern in the sequence of critical opinion on Bradley. Critics in 1923, 1951, and 1958 have thought that they could see a general movement in Bradley's direction, but each time new attacks, or at least statements of fundamental disagreement, have followed. Second, there is still no agreement among critics as to the value of Bradley's criticism. Third, Bradley's importance as a Shakespeare critic (which says nothing of his value) is signified as much by the continuing controversies as by explicit acknowledgment, although as a matter of fact few even of Bradley's adversaries deny his importance.

It is in the hope of throwing some light on these controverted matters that the following chapters are presented.

CHAPTER II

SOME FUNDAMENTAL CRITICAL TENETS

In the Introduction to Critics and Criticism, Professor Ronald Crane argues convincingly that the only satisfactory approach to the multiplicity of critics and critical systems is to recognize that there are many distinct valid or partially valid critical methods and to insist, consequently, upon "ascertaining, in methodological terms, what a given critic is doing, and why, before attempting either to state the meaning or judge the truth or falsity of his conclusions or to compare his doctrines with those of other critics."[10] It follows that before entering into the particulars of Bradley's criticism we should examine his answers to those fundamental questions which suggest themselves concerning any critic--What does he think a poem is? What is his idea of the function of criticism? How does he think a critic ought best to proceed? The complete answer to these queries can only be in terms of the detailed study which will constitute Chapters III and IV, but Dr. Bradley does give us some direct information which will serve as a useful preliminary.

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[10] Critics and Criticism, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 2.

A poem, he believes, is not one fixed thing. It probably never was so even to the poet, and now that he is dead there are as many poems as readers. Poetry is a process or activity of the mind or soul.[11] An actual poem is the succession of experiences--sound, images, thoughts, emotions--through which we pass when we are reading as poetically as possible, and this imaginative experience will obviously differ with every reader and every reading.[12]

Poetry is an end in itself and also a means. It has its own intrinsic value, a value it would have even if it were quite useless. The primary purpose of poetry is nothing but itself, and a poem's poetic value is this intrinsic worth alone.[13] But a poem also may serve as a means to other ends. Poetry is only one of the activities of the soul, to which it contributes in two ways: it contributes itself (with its own intrinsic worth) and it may contribute to other activities of the soul--the virtues, religion, philosophy, e.g.[14] Poetry will achieve its own aim, however, most surely when it seeks its end without deliberately attempting

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[11] The Uses of Poetry (London, 1912), p. 3.

[12] "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, 2nd ed. (London, 1909), p. 4; Bradley adds a note (p. 28) that he did not intend this as a formal or complete definition of poetry.

[13] Uses of Poetry, p. 2; "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Oxford Lectures, p. 4.

[14] Uses of Poetry, p. 4; "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Oxford Lectures, pp. 4-5.

to reach to the attainment of philosophic truth or moral progress. This belief is held the more firmly because of the further belief that the unity of human nature in its several activities is so intimate and pervasive that no one of them can operate without transmitting its influence to the rest. What the imagination loves as poetry, reason may love as philosophy, and the pursuit of poetry for its own sake is also the pursuit of truth and goodness.[15]

Since Bradley regards poetry as primarily an activity of the soul, it is understandable that he places primary importance on the impressions which the individual receives as he goes through the experience of reading a poem. Again and again Bradley will seek to isolate the poetic experience in terms of the exact impressions received. Of course the reader must do his part. He must be alert and attentive as he reads, and he must do all he can to understand what the author's intention was, but it is, finally, the <u>experience</u> which matters. Suppose, for example, that a particular problem arises--a question, let us say, as to the nature of the ultimate power in the tragic world of Shakespeare. Any answer we may give must correspond with our imaginative and emotional experience in reading the tragedies. We must do our best by study and effort to make this experience true to Shakespeare, but, after that is done, it is the experience which is the matter

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[15] <u>Oxford Lectures</u>, pp. 394-395.

to be interpreted, difficult though it often is to isolate that experience in its purity. The experience is also the test by which the interpretation must be tried: does the explanation correspond with the imaginative impressions we receive?[16]

Thus the part of the reader is a very active and important one. Poetry cannot be received, merely; it must be re-created in the activity of the reader,[17] who, as we have indicated, must put forth a positive effort to make his experience true to the author. If, for example, a reader is indifferent or hostile to the ideas of a poem, he ought to be able not merely to accept the beauty of the style but, for the time being, to adopt these ideas and identify himself with them. If he does not, he cannot be said to have appreciated the poem, or even, in the full sense, to have read it.[18]

The critic's role will be to aid the reader in the activity of re-creation. Poetic activity varies according to poetic capacity,[19] and the good critic can be of use to the reader in developing in him an enriched, more adequate, and more enjoyable re-creation of the poem.[20]

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[16] Shakespearean Tragedy, 2nd ed. (London, 1905), p. 24; see also, among many other instances, the note on p. 30, which concludes, "The reader should examine himself closely on this matter."

[17] Uses of Poetry, p. 4.

[18] "The Reaction against Tennyson," A Miscellany (London, 1929), p. 12.

[19] Uses of Poetry, p. 4.

[20] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 2.

Most of Bradley's remarks on the function and methodology of the good critic are made specifically in terms of Shakespearean criticism. His strongest insistence is that the critic interpret Shakespeare from within rather than according to some external norm. On at least four quite separate occasions he warns against judging Shakespeare according to some standard either made by ourselves or derived from dramas and a theater of quite other kinds than Shakespeare's. Bradley's admiration for Maurice Morgann is based on the fact, as Bradley saw it, that Morgann dropped the critical superstitions of the past which had resulted in Shakespeare's being judged from the outside and being condemned for things the intention of which the older critics had not even tried to understand. Morgann substitutes for this the sympathetic imagination which follows Shakespeare into the minutest details of his composition. Morgann's attempts to interpret the process of Shakespeare's imagination from within were followed up by most of the Romantic critics, but some of the criticism even of Coleridge and Hazlitt, Bradley feels, is vitiated by the fact that they have not on all occasions passed from their own minds into Shakespeare's mind. The Shakespeare critic must take care not to be like the sightseer who promenades a picture-gallery, seeing in this picture a likeness to a cousin or in that, the very image of a place he knows. We must, as critics, fight against our tendency to see the work of art as simply a copy or reminder of something already in our heads, or at least as little removed as possible from the familiar. Rather, we must enter into Shakespeare's intention

through the use of the sympathetic imagination.[21]

Bradley believes that perhaps the chief difficulty in interpreting Shakespeare is to know when the dramatist has an intention which we ought to be able to divine and when, rather, he made a slip, was hurried in adapting an old play and so did not make everything conform to one conception, or simply refused to bother about minor details. The critic can err in either direction: it is quite possible to look for subtlety in the wrong places in Shakespeare, but in the right places is is not possible to find too much.[22] In general, Bradley seems to feel that there is a definite answer to be found to the great questions in Shakespeare criticism--questions which are of central importance in a play. His statement in regard to Iago is significant for the whole Bradley's criticism. "The question Why? is <u>the</u> question about Iago, just as the question Why did Hamlet delay? is <u>the</u> question about Hamlet." Iago and Hamlet do not themselves give the answer. "But Shakespeare knew the answer, and if these characters are great creations and not blunders we ought to be able to find it too."[23]

These, after all, are important questions, but why should the critic trouble himself about lesser puzzles whose solution would

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[21]"Poetry for Poetry's Sake," <u>Oxford Lectures</u>, p. 10; <u>Shakespearean Tragedy</u>, p. 57; "The Rejection of Falstaff," <u>Oxford Lectures</u>, pp. 274-275; "Eighteenth Century Estimates of Shakespeare," <u>Scottish Historical Review</u>, I (1904), 294-295.

[22]<u>Shakespearean Tragedy</u>, pp. 77-78.

[23]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 222.

bring little poetical profit? To go no further, some people are bothered by puzzles in a poem they love and cannot be content to let them go unexplored. The critic should be satisfied if his attentions to such matters help them to read the poem without a check or save them the difficulties he himself has gone through.[24]

The Shakespeare critic will find the many studies in literary history, biography, and the like, more or less necessary depending on what his aim is in a particular piece of criticism. They will certainly be useful, and some things are indispensable--familiarity with the literature of Shakespeare's time, for instance[25]--but where, as in Shakespearean Tragedy, the critic's central interest is to increase the understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare's tragedies as dramas and to so apprehend the action and characters that they will in the reader's imagination be more like what they were in Shakespeare's, then the most indispensable tools for both critic and reader will be close familiarity with the plays, strength and justice of perception, and the habit of reading with an eager mind. The right way to read the dramatist Shakespeare is to read a play more or less as if one were an actor who had to study all the parts, desiring to realize fully and exactly what inner movements produce these particular words and deeds at this

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[24]A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam," 3rd ed. (London, 1915), p. xiii.

[25]"Eighteenth Century Estimates," Scottish Historical Review, I, 293.

particular moment. The prime requisite for such a reading, therefore, is a vivid and intent imagination, though that alone is scarcely adequate; it is necessary, especially to a proper conception of the whole, also to analyze and dissect and compare. But when the critic does this, when, for example, he separates action from the characters or style from versification, he must keep always in mind the one poetic experience of which they are but aspects, for the true critic is always aiming at a richer, truer, more intense repetition of that indivisible experience.[26]

Most of those critics who have commented on these fundamental ideas of Bradley's have done so in terms of concrete instances which have occurred in his theoretical and practical criticism. We shall therefore reserve their comments and our own until later.

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[26]"Poetry for Poetry's Sake," Oxford Lectures, pp. 15-17; Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 1-2.

CHAPTER III

BRADLEY'S THEORY OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

It will already have become apparent that Professor Bradley's criticism of Shakespearean tragedy is not confined to his best-known volume, Shakespearean Tragedy. The tragedies are the central theme in four other works: the little known booklet, The Nature of Tragedy: With Special Reference to Shakespeare (Warrington, 1889);[27] the lecture-essays delivered at Oxford in 1902 and 1905, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy" and "Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra," both published in Oxford Lectures on Poetry; and "Coriolanus," which was given before the British Academy in 1912 and later collected in A Miscellany. In addition, in some eighteen of Bradley's many other books and essays may be found either remarks explicitly on Shakespearean tragedy or remarks which help us to understand Bradley's criticism of that subject.

In seeking to determine, specifically, Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy, we might expect to find it complete in The

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[27] "Printed for the Warrington Literary and Philosophical Society. A Paper Read Before the Society on the 19th February, 1889." There is a copy at the Folger Library, but I have come across no other copies, nor have I ever seen it referred to in print.

Nature of Tragedy, but this early pamphlet is a relatively brief treatment of the subject considered later in the first chapter of Shakespearean Tragedy, which chapter, in its turn, is incomplete unless closely correlated with the rest of the book. But there is good evidence that Shakespearean Tragedy itself did not satisfy Bradley as a statement of his ideas on tragic theory. In 1905, when a second printing of the book was needed, Bradley made some changes through the body of the book and added a preliminary "Note to Second and Subsequent Impressions," to the effect that though he has corrected a few outright mistakes he has confined himself otherwise to indicating in brackets here and there "my desire to modify or develop at some future time statements which seem to me doubtful or open to misunderstanding." This modification or development was never accomplished. One of the most important of these bracketed notes, for one seeking to determine Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy, occurs at the end of the first chapter. It calls attention to the fact that the author, for various reasons, has not treated fully the question of why we feel not only pain but also reconciliation and sometimes even exultation at the death of the tragic hero. Now this was an important matter to Bradley and a part of his theory of tragedy, but he "cannot at present make good this defect," and therefore directs the reader to particularized examples of the feeling of reconciliation through the rest of Shakespearean Tragedy and to his treatment of the subject in "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy." Bradley him-

self, then, did not regard the first chapter of Shakespearean Tragedy, or even the work as a whole, as a completely satisfactory statement of his ideas on a basic theory of Shakespearean tragedy.

Since Dr. Bradley's works are so numerous, and since he did not regard any one of them as a final, altogether complete presentation of his opinions, the present writer believes that Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy may most profitably be approached through a study of the theory's several elements as they occur through the corpus of Bradley's work. We shall investigate these components and whether they are derived from earlier criticism, we shall ask whether they form a coherent theory of Shakespearean tragedy, and we shall at least begin to consider whether the theory (consistent or not) is true to Shakespeare.

Bradley's Aim and Method

The theoretician must first state for himself his aim in theorizing. In The Nature of Tragedy Bradley says that he is trying to find the answer to a question which he puts in a double form: "What general fact is it that in the varying stories of Hamlet, Othello, and the rest Shakespeare represents? What is the aspect of nature to which in these plays he holds up the mirror, and which, when we see it in his mirror, produces in us that peculiar and unmistakable impression which we call the tragical feeling?"[28] In Shakespearean Tragedy he attempts to state the same

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[28] P. 4. The references to the mirror are an echo from Brad-

aim in yet different words: "What is the substance of a Shakespearean tragedy, taken in abstraction both from its form and from the differences in point of substance between one tragedy and another?" "What is the nature of the tragic aspect of life as represented by Shakespeare?" And he says it is still the same question if we ask, "What is Shakespeare's tragic conception, or conception of tragedy?"[29] Perhaps, Bradley says, Shakespeare himself never asked such a question, and it is even less likely that he formulated a precise tragic theory, yet in writing tragedy, Shakespeare did represent one aspect of life in a certain way, and a thorough examination of his plays ought to enable us to describe what he has represented and how. You may call such a description, indifferently, an account of the substance of Shakespearean tragedy or of Shakespeare's view of tragedy or the tragic fact.[30]

How do we go about answering the question? Bradley proposes in Shakespearean Tragedy that we simply begin to collect facts from the tragedies themselves, thus gradually building up an idea of the more abstract concept, "Shakespearean tragedy."[31] This

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ley's definition, on p. 3, of the end of drama in general; he quotes Hamlet on "the end of playing" and says that the dramatist has reached his object when he has faithfully represented some aspect of the world as it is, only more clearly than we usually see it and with sharper lights and shadows.

[29]Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 5.

[30]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[31]Ibid., p. 7.

is straightforward enough, but it ought to be compared to The Nature of Tragedy. The questions by which the author states his aim are almost the same in the two books, and I have no doubt that Bradley looked upon them as all different ways of putting one question. He did not, however, repeat in the questions of the later work anything about "that peculiar and unmistakable impression which we call the tragical feeling." In The Nature of Tragedy he uses that expression and follows it up by an analysis of what he means by it. We hardly mean by "tragedy," he says, what the newspapers mean when they use the word. The tragic impression is unique. It is "the highest and best worth having of all the feelings that poetry, whether in life or in art, can give"; a thing is not really tragic, in the proper sense of the word, unless there is awakened in us "that complex feeling which at once thrills and solemnizes, and which Shakespeare leaves us with if we have understood him as we read." "Let us turn to Shakespeare's tragedies and ask what he regards as tragical, and what it is that while we read him stirs in us this unique feeling."[32] And Bradley proceeds to conduct the remainder of the discussion, through the rest of the booklet, in terms of the elements of the tragical feeling: that is an essential of tragedy which gives rise to fear and pity, awe, or solemnity and acquiescence, which together constitute the tragic impression.

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[32]Nature of Tragedy, pp. 4-6.

Bradley's preoccupation with the impression, the imaginative and emotional experience, has already been noted as one of his basic critical attitudes. The fact that the tragic feeling is not given the same initial prominence in Shakespearean Tragedy as it was in The Nature of Tragedy should not mislead us, for there are several appeals made to it through the rest of the book, some in the first chapter. The most telling example has been cited--the flat statement that the experience is the matter to be interpreted[33]--but another excellent illustration is that the fourth and fifth sections of the first chapter (pp. 24-39) are altogether built around the problem of what is or is not true to our impressions in reading Shakespearean tragedy. Several instances also occur in the essay on Hegel's theory of tragedy, primarily in the sections in which Bradley adds his own thoughts to those of Hegel.[34]

The precise philosophical origin of this point of view might be disputed. Hegel alludes once to impressions of reconciliation at the end of tragedy,[35] but he does not at all develop the matter of the experience or impression as such. Bradley's point of view suggests a Cartesian-Kantian origin, in general, because of the inwardly-directed epistemological standpoint. In the field of Shakespeare criticism, at all events, it seems plain that it is

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[33] See pp. 13-14 above.

[34] Oxford Lectures, pp. 82-85, 88, 91 (e.g.).

[35] The Philosophy of Fine Art, tr. Osmaston (London, 1920), IV, 300.

Maurice Morgann who first spoke out about the significance to be attached to the impression received in reading Shakespeare's plays. In his very important Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff (London, 1777) Morgann attempts to show that Falstaff is not really a coward. He reasons that, "In Dramatic composition the Impression is the Fact . . . . I presume to declare it, as my opinion, the Cowardice is not the Impression, which the whole character of Falstaff is calculated to make on the minds of an unprejudiced audience; tho' there be, I confess, a great deal of something in the composition likely enough to puzzle, and consequently to mislead the Understanding.--The reader will perceive that I distinguish between mental Impressions, and the Understanding." Morgann insists he wishes to avoid anything that looks like subtlety. The distinction is one we are all familiar with, he says. There are none who have not been conscious of certain feelings or sensations of mind which do not seem to have passed through the understanding. He speculates briefly on how this comes about but comes to no conclusion, and at any rate it is only the fact that he is concerned with, and "the fact is undoubtedly so." It is equally a fact, which all must admit, that these feelings and the understanding are frequently at variance. The feelings, or impression, "often arise from the most minute circumstances, and frequently from such as the Understanding cannot estimate, or even recognize; whereas the Understanding delights in abstraction, and in general propositions; which, however true considered as such,

are very seldom, I had like to have said never, perfectly applicable to any particular case. And hence, among other causes, it is, that we often condemn or applaud characters and actions on the credit of some logical process, while our hearts revolt, and would fain lead us to a very different conclusion." The understanding tends to take note of actions only, and from them to infer motives and character, but the special sense of which we have been speaking apprehends certain first principles of character and judges actions from them. The impression as such is incommunicable, but such was Shakespeare's genius, Morgann suggests, that he has contrived to make secret impressions upon us of Falstaff's courage in spite of certain actions on Falstaff's part which the understanding censures as cowardly. The truth of the matter will be found in the impression.[36]

Bradley nowhere mentions Morgann in connection with the importance of the impression, but he admired Morgann very much and declared that "there is no better piece of Shakespearian criticism in the world" than the essay on Falstaff.[37] D. N. Smith has said that Morgann's belief that "the impression is the fact" is the

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[36]Pp. 3-7, 9. Morgann's statements about apprehending certain first principles of character are closely connected with the "sympathetic" philosophy of the eighteenth century critics, which we shall consider when we come to treat of Bradley's attitude toward the characters in the tragedies.

[37]"Eighteenth Century Estimates," Scottish Historical Review, I, 291.

keynote of Morgann's criticism,[38] and we cannot be far wrong in concluding that Bradley's thinking on this subject was strongly influenced by Morgann's position.

Stoll and Schücking have been the critics who have most strongly objected to Bradley's stand. Mr. Stoll has more than once censured Bradley for taking as his "supreme authority" in Shakespearean Tragedy the reader's experience. This practice of calling upon the reader to examine his own impression to determine the truth of the matter leads, according to Mr. Stoll, to conclusions on Bradley's part about Shakespeare's tragedies which are incorrect in a double way--they are neglectful of the practical and conventional aspects of the Elizabethan dramaturgy and they overwhelm Shakespeare's concrete, dualistic way of thinking with different modern concepts and ways of thought. "The critics have examined themselves, and only their genius has made their irrelevant report worth the making."[39] Levin Schücking also objects to the argument that a play makes a distinct impression, and the impression is the play; the impression will vary from reader to reader, he says, and only subjective criticism can result.[40] Both

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[38] D. Nichol Smith, Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare (Glasgow, 1903), p. xxxviii.

[39] E. E. Stoll, "Anachronism in Shakespeare Criticism," MP, VII (1910), 558. See also the same author's Shakespeare Studies (N.Y., 1927), p. 259.

[40] Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays (N.Y., 1922), p. 7. The first German edition appeared in 1919.

Stoll and Schücking advocate the sole use of the historical method. The only way to discover the truth about a Shakespearean play, they maintain, is to find out, as nearly as possible, what the author and his contemporaries would have thought about any particular question. "To criticize," says Mr. Stoll, "is not merely or primarily to analyze one's own impression of a work of art, as the impressionistic critics aver, but to ascertain, if possible, the author's intention, and to gauge and measure the forces and tendencies of his time."[41] "We can arrive at that," says Mr. Schücking, referring to the most probably true interpretation of Shakespeare, "only by asking ourselves: What was the probable attitude of Shakespeare's contemporaries to such questions?"[42]

Besides those who have objected to certain aspects of the Stoll-Schücking school of Shakespeare criticism, or to some of its conclusions,[43] there have been critics who have defended in particular Bradley's high regard for the aesthetic impression. John Middleton Murry praises him because "for one quality at least--and that quality the rarest and most essential in literary criticism--

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[41]"Anachronism," MP, VII, 557.

[42]Schücking, p. 8.

[43]Among many, see esp. Émile Legouis, "La Réaction contre la Critique romantique de Shakespeare," Essays and Studies, XIII (1928), 74-87; Lascelles Abercrombie, "A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting," Aspects of Shakespeare: Being British Academy Lectures (London, 1933), pp. 227-254; Robert Ornstein, "Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," SQ, X (1959), 3-9.

Bradley was indeed pre-eminent. That quality is the capacity for a total experience of the work criticised, and for retaining that experience throughout the subsequent work of analysis and comparison. In this respect, all other English critics without exception appear in comparison with Bradley fragmentary, or partial, or casual, or capricious."[44] In a recent number of the Shakespeare Quarterly Robert Ornstein, while he does not mention Bradley and would probably not consider himself one of Bradley's followers, suggests that scholarship can make the interpretation of Shakespeare more exact but it cannot make it a science based upon factual information. "The dichotomy of scholarly fact and aesthetic impression is finally misleading because the refined, disciplined aesthetic impression is the fact upon which the interpretation of Shakespeare must ultimately rest; that is to say, all scholarly evidence outside the text of a play is related to it by inferences which must themselves be supported by aesthetic impressions."[45] The attempt of the historical critics to recapture Shakespeare's own artistic intention, so far as it is possible, should be the goal of any responsible criticism, but that intention is fully realized only in the play. "A study of Renaissance thought may guide

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[44]"Andrew Bradley," Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits (London, 1949), p. 111.

[45]"Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," SQ, X (1959), 8.

[46]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

us to what is central in Shakespeare's drama; it may tell us why Shakespeare's vision of life is what it is. But we can apprehend his vision only as aesthetic experience."[46] This is exactly Bradley's position. As we have seen, he believed in historical studies in so far as they helped us to know Shakespeare's mind, for he wanted the reader to enter into Shakespeare's own creative intuition of the plays as deeply as possible, but in the end it is the impression, the aesthetic experience, which is the matter to be interpreted and to which the reader and critic must remain true.

The Tragic Hero and the Relationship of Character to Action

As Bradley begins to collect his facts towards a theory, he deals first with the person of the tragic hero.[47] A Shakespearean tragedy, he says, is primarily the story of one person, the hero, a man of high estate who endures suffering and calamity of a striking kind which ends in his death. The adversities are usually in strong contrast with previous happiness or glory, and the contrast is emphasized by the fact that the hero falls from such a high position in life. Each of Shakespeare's tragic heroes is a figure of state, and his fate affects a whole nation. We might be talking thus far about the medieval concept of tragedy, and Shakespeare's idea of the tragic fact does include the medieval idea while going beyond it. The medieval tragedy, or fall from great-

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[47] We have here taken the order which Bradley follows in Shakespearean Tragedy.

ness, is largely a passive affair and is not "tragic" in the best sense of the word, Bradley believes, because the calamities are sent by a superior power or they just happen. Job's sufferings are terrible, but they are not tragic. In Shakespearean tragedy, which is true tragedy, the calamities proceed mainly from human actions, especially the actions of the hero, who always contributes in some degree to the disaster in which he perishes.[48]

This aspect of tragedy shows men as agents. A Shakespearean tragedy's "story" or "action" does not consist of human actions alone, but they are the predominating factor. And these deeds are, for the most part, actions in the full sense of the word--characteristic deeds: acts or omissions fully expressive of the doer. "The centre of the tragedy, therefore, may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action."[49] Or, as Bradley expressed it once when comparing Shakespeare and Browning, Shakespeare's subject "is not a soul, nor even souls: it is the action of souls, or souls coming into action."[50]

It is in such a composite subject, Bradley believes, that

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[48] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 7-12; see also Nature of Tragedy, p. 7.

[49] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 12.

[50] "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth," Oxford Lectures, p. 199; the date of the original lecture was 1905. Bradley goes on to say that, actually, Shakespeare's subject is even more, it is the clash of souls in conflict; we shall shortly consider this matter of "conflict" separately.

Shakespeare's main interest lay. It is a great mistake to say that Shakespeare was primarily concerned with mere character or with psychology, for he was par excellence a dramatist. You might argue, Bradley concedes, that here and there he plays on character in order to indulge his own love of poetry or general reflections, but it would be very difficult, especially in the later tragedies, to point out passages where he lets such character-interest exist apart from the action. He has still less use for mere plot, for the kind of interest which you get in The Woman in White. You rarely feel in any great strength the excitement of following ingenious complications, for plot-interest as such, while it is not absent from Shakespeare's plays, is subordinated to other elements in such a way that we are rarely conscious of it apart. "What we do feel strongly, as a tragedy advances to its close, is that the calamities and catastrophe follow inevitably from the deeds of men, and that the main source of these deeds is character." To say that in Shakespeare's tragedies "character is destiny" is an exaggeration, and such a dictum can be misleading; "but it is the exaggeration of a vital truth."[51]

What is the distinction between "plot" and "action" as Bradley uses the terms in the above discussion? When he begins to speak about Shakespeare's interest in plot alone as opposed to character alone, he starts off by saying, "But for the opposite

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[51] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 12-13; see Oxford Lectures, p. 82, for an earlier view.

extreme, for the abstraction of mere 'plot' (which is a very different thing from the tragic 'action') . . . ."[52] Therefore Bradley intends to distinguish between the two, clearly enough, but he explains himself no further. It is unfortunate that he does not, since this element in Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy--the question of the relationship between character and action--has been a point of lively controversy. If we inquire into the possible origins of Bradley's ideas on this larger subject of action and character, we may be better able to form an opinion on the more particular problem of Bradley's terminology.

Aristotle's, of course, is the first significant discussion of some of the points that Bradley has covered. Aristotle holds that the objects of imitation in poetry are men in action (II),[53] while epic poetry and tragedy alike are imitations in verse of characters of a higher type (V). The famous definition of tragedy (VI) opens with the statement that tragedy is "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude," and in the same chapter the philosopher draws certain initial deductions from this first part of his definition. Tragedy is the imitation of an action, but an action implies personal agents who have distinctive qualities both of character and thought, "for it

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[52] Ibid., p. 12.

[53] The Roman numerals refer to the classical chapter divisions in Aristotle's Poetics. The translation is that contained in S. H. Butcher's Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed. (London, 1911).

is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these--thought and character--are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends." Now follow some terminological definitions: plot is defined as the arrangement of the incidents; character is that "in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents"; thought is required whenever a statement is proved or general truth enunciated. Every tragedy has six parts, the most important of which is the structure of the incidents--i.e., the plot. Tragedy is not an imitation of men as such but of action and of life. Life consists in action and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. If character is that in virtue of which we ascribe qualities to an agent, if it is that which determines men's qualities, then it cannot, in a tragedy, be anything but subordinate to plot, for tragedy imitates action, not men or their qualities. Another consideration leading to the same conclusion is that you cannot have a tragedy, Aristotle says, without action; there could be a tragedy without character. "The Plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy; Character holds the second place. . . . Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action."(VI)

It is S. H. Butcher's opinion that the word "action" in the Poetics must be understood in a wide meaning. The plot contains the kernel of the action which tragedy must represent, but that action includes the mental processes and the motives which underlie and result in the deeds, incidents, and situations which con-

stitute the outward events. Butcher also believes that Aristotle intends to present two aspects of the relation of action to character. The first, which Aristotle stresses, is that character is defined and revealed through the action of the drama; the plot as a whole woght to be present to the dramatist first, so that the characters will grow out of the dramatic situation in conformity with the end of the whole. The second, which Butcher says is "lightly touched" by Aristotle, is that it is only action which arises directly from character and reflects character which satisfies the higher dramatic conditions. Butcher himself believes the relationship to be very close, and goes so far as to cite Heraclitus to the effect that "man's character is his destiny." "To this vital relation between action and character," Butcher concludes, "is due the artistically compacted plot, the central unity of a tragedy."[54]

The first edition of Butcher's notable work appeared in 1895, and the present writer suggests that Bradley was influenced by Butcher as well as by Aristotle. Bradley's Nature of Tragedy (1889) contains no discussion of connections between action and character, while, as we have noted, such discussions do occur in Shakespearean Tragedy (1904) and "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth" (1905). It may not be a mere coincidence, either, that

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[54] Ibid., pp. 337, 352-355; the reader is referred to the chapter, "Plot and Character in Tragedy," of which these pages are a part.

Bradley also mentions the dictum of Heraclitus.[55]

Hegel says little on the subject, beyond endorsing Aristotle's argument that, although opinion and character are the sources of tragic action, what is more important is the end, and it cannot be said that individuals act in order to display their diverse characters as such.[56]

Since the Romantic critics have so much to say about Shakespeare's characters, it might be supposed that many of them would have discussed action and character. There appear to be only a very few cases, however. Thomas Whately, conscious that he was writing what would probably have been the first book to study several of Shakespeare's characters in detail,[57] attempts in his Introduction to show that the characters deserve far more critical attention than they have hitherto received. One of his arguments is that without distinction and preservation of character, a play is only a tale, not an action. You may (whether you ought or not) dispense with the unities, but variety and truth of character are essential. If you consider drama as a representation, the most

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[55] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 13.

[56] Philosophy of Fine Art, IV, 275.

[57] But he died in 1772 with only two essays completed; these were not published till 1785, by which time Richardson's essays had appeared (Morgann's also, but he wrote only on the one character).

essential part of the drama is the characterization.[58] Coleridge goes much further. He declares that it is one of the characteristics of Shakespeare's dramas that the dramatic interest in independent of the plot. "The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not vice versa, as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more." Take away from Much Ado About Nothing, for example, all that is not indispensable to the plot and you will have little that is worth while remaining.[59] Gustav Freytag teaches that the progress of the human race since the time of the Greeks is shown more distinctly by the advances which the Germanic peoples (and of course he includes Shakespeare in this category!) have made in the fashioning of dramatic characters than in the construction of dramatic action. He holds that if the characters are well done, there is hope for a play, even if the plotting is poor, but when there is only a small capability for sharp defining of character, a work may be created, but never one of any significance.[60] Freytag also believes that

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[58]Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare, 3rd ed., ed. Richard Whately (London, 1839), pp. 17-20, 25. By "drama as a representation" (p. 25) Whately probably means "as a representation of life."

[59]Notes and Lectures on Shakspere, ed. T. Ashe (London, 1893), pp. 239-240. This is the edition Bradley used and indicates the Coleridge criticism with which he was familiar.

[60]Technique of the Drama, tr. E. J. MacEwan (Chicago, 1895), pp. 246-247. Bradley acknowledges indebtedness to Freytag for part of the analysis in Chapter II of Shakespearean Tragedy and recommends his book highly (see the first footnote in that chapter). Professor Hereward Price, who sat under Bradley at Oxford, has suggested to me that Freytag was a major influence on Bradley.

the Germanic poets often work successfully from characters to action. The poet conceives of the characters in various relations with other men, so, really, he is working at once with character and action (though the action is not yet the final and fully connected action).[61]

Of these several critics it would appear that Bradley follows most closely Aristotle and Butcher's interpretation of Aristotle. Bradley thinks of plot as the story alone, and he opposes "mere plot" to "mere character." But when he talks about "action" in the context of the relation of character to action, he seems to include in the term an implicit reference to character. Aristotle looks on plot as the arrangement of the incidents, and one of his remarks about action is that it springs from character and thought ("character and thought" here more or less equal "character" as modern critics use the term). Butcher says that "action" definitely includes the mental processes and motives which underlie the action, and these certainly, we may add, pertain to character. When Bradley says that the center of the tragedy may be said to lie equally in action issuing from character or in character issuing in action, one may not be sure that he is reflecting Aristotle's intention, but he is very close to Butcher's understanding of Aristotle. What Bradley certainly does not reflect is Aristotle's insistence on the primacy of the plot. The statement about action and character does not say anything about plot (and this

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[61] Ibid., pp. 266-267.

should be remembered in view of subsequent criticism of Bradley), for action and plot are differentiated in both Bradley and Aristotle, but Bradley does feel that, if you must talk about mere plot or mere character, Shakespeare is even less interested in dealing with the former than the latter. If Bradley does not follow Aristotle in favoring plot, neither can he be said to follow Whately or Coleridge or Freytag in their championship of character. He has no intention of calling Shakespeare's plots "mere canvas." The farthest he goes in championing character on the theoretical level (as opposed to whatever may be his practice in actually criticizing a play) is his statement that "character is destiny," while an exaggeration, is the exaggeration of a vital truth. But this is not a statement for character and against plot; it is a projection of his feeling that Shakespeare's main interest was in characteristic deeds which inevitably lead to the calamities and catastrophe of tragedy.

Of the critics who have commented upon Bradley's treatment of character and action, some appear to be more influenced by what they take to be his practice than by anything definite that they can point to in his theory. C. J. Sisson says that it is strange that Bradley "of all men, steeped as he was in the Greeks and in Aristotle, should have so far exalted character above plot and action."[62] Sisson makes this remark in a context which has to do

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[62] Shakespeare (London, 1955), p. 21.

with Bradley's tendency to attribute reality to the characters beyond the plays; he does not indicate that Bradley's theoretical position is somewhat different, nor that Bradley's theoretical position is, in itself, not so completely divorced from Aristotle as Sisson seems to think Bradley's practical criticism is. Stoll too does not directly comment on Bradley's theoretical statements. He argues quite strongly that Shakespeare put plot over character in importance, but he defines plot, in this sense, as situation, "and a situation is a character in contrast, and perhaps also in conflict, with other characters or with circumstances."[63] This is not far from Bradley's understanding of the close inter-connection between character and action. Again, it is Bradley's practical criticism that Stoll is really objecting to when he talks about mistakenly over-emphasizing character.

L. C. Knights is the best known of the critics who take issue with Bradley on the theoretical level. In 1933 he published How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?, a monograph which became famous for its attack on the more conservative "vested interests" of Shakespeare criticism.[64] Since he felt that it was largely Bradley's influence that he was combatting, he took care to disagree

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[63] Art and Artifice in Shakespeare (London, 1933), p. 1; the discussion continues on pp. 2 and 3.

[64] Professor Knights first gave this as a paper before the Shakespeare Association in 1932. He has recently recalled some of the circumstances in "The Question of Character in Shakespeare," More Talking of Shakespeare, ed. John Garrett (London, 1959), pp. 55-69.

with Bradley on several points, most of them centered on what he took to be the prime error--the criticism of the characters as though they were real people. Of particular interest at the moment is his statement that "It is assumed throughout the book [Shakespearean Tragedy] that the most profitable discussion of Shakespeare's tragedies is in terms of the characters of which they are composed--'The centre of the tragedy may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action.'"[65] Knights has taken this latter statement as proof that all Bradley is really concerned with is character. We may say that, at the least, such was certainly not Bradley's own understanding of this statement. Knights goes on to complain that "In the mass of Shakespeare criticism there is not one hint that 'character'--like 'plot,' 'rhythm,' 'construction' and all our other critical counters--is merely an abstraction from the total response in the mind of the reader or spectator, brought into being by written or spoken words, and that our duty as critics is to examine first the words of which the play is composed, then the total effect which this combination of words produces in our mind. (The two are of course inseparable.)"[66] Is this not in reality very close to Bradley's own ideas? We have seen that Bradley too is deeply concerned with the impression

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[65] How Many Children (London, 1933), p. 5. This essay has been reprinted by Knights in his Explorations (N.Y., 1947).

[66] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

which the plays produce in our mind, and we remember his insistence that the critic must at all times keep in mind the whole, the one, poetic experience.[67] In regard to this latter point, there is something in his "Poetry for Poetry's Sake" which is very much to the point: "To consider separately the action or the characters of a play, and separately its style or versification, is both legitimate and valuable, so long as we remember what we are doing. But the true critic in speaking of these apart does not really think of them apart; the whole, the poetic experience, of which they are but aspects, is always in his mind; and he is always aiming at a richer, truer, more intense repetition of that experience." When certain questions come up, Bradley continues, you must think of these components individually, and the great danger for the critic then is to imagine that what he retains of the characters or the action (to take an instance) is the poem itself. This heresy is seldom put into words, Bradley says, but he imagines it as being put thus: "'Surely the action and the characters of Hamlet are in the play; and surely I can retain these, though I have forgotten all the words. I admit that I do not possess the whole poem, but I possess a part, and the most important part.'" And Bradley says he would reply that, provided we are concerned with no question of principle, he can accept what has been said except for the last phrase, which does raise such a question. If we are speaking loosely, he can agree that the ac-

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[67] See above, pp. 13-14, 18.

tion and characters, as the speaker conceives them, are in the poem, together with much more.

> Even then, however, you must not claim to possess all of this kind that is in the poem; for in forgetting the words you must have lost innumerable details of the action and the characters. And, when the question of value is raised, I must insist that the action and characters, as you conceive them, are not in Hamlet at all. If they are, point them out. You cannot do it. What you find at any moment of that succession of experiences called Hamlet is words. In these words, to speak loosely again, the action and characters (more of them than you can conceive apart) are focussed; but your experience is not a combination of them, as ideas, on the one side, with certain sounds on the other; it is an experience of something in which the two are indissolubly fused. If you deny this, to be sure I can make no answer, or can only answer that I have reason to believe that you cannot read poetically, or else are misinterpreting your experience. But if you do not deny this, then you will admit that the action and the characters of the poem, as you separately imagine them, are no part of it, but a product of it in your reflective imagination, a faint analogue of one aspect of it taken in detachment from the whole.

In a poem as long as Hamlet, however, Bradley admits ("I would even insist") that you must interrupt the poetic experience now and then to form one of these "products" which is outside the poem, and even to dwell on the product, in order to enrich the poetic experience itself. But the critic should be conscious of what he is doing.[68]

Are not most of these ideas very close to those of which Knights complains there is "not a hint" in Shakespeare criticism? In his 1959 essay, "The Question of Character in Shakespeare," Professor Knights does not express his opposition to Bradley in

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[68] Oxford Lectures, pp. 16-18.

the strong language he had used earlier, but he does feel that Shakespearean Tragedy endorsed a character-criticism that got out of hand. (One may suspect that just here is the basis of his dislike of Bradley's theoretical as well as practical criticism.) Of the character-in-action formula, Knights says in this later essay that it is at its best a narrowly focused approach to the tragedies and one that is likely to lead the critic to ignore some important matters that are there in the plays. "In short, Shakespearian tragedy, any Shakespearian tragedy, is saying so much more than can be expressed in Bradleyan terms."[69] This is one of the questions the reader should have in mind when we examine some of Bradley's criticism of particular tragedies in the following chapter.

Another question that should be kept in mind in suggested by Huntington Brown. In an attempt to summarize the character-action dispute, he sets up two contrasting groups, those who believe that action is everywhere the expression and measure of character in the tragedies and those who hold that action and character are often in contrast in Shakespeare.[70] This greatly over-simplifies the nature of the quarrel and the positions on either side, for we have seen that the controversy has been entered into for various

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[69] More Talking of Shakespeare, pp. 57-58.

[70] "Enter the Shakespearean Tragic Hero," Essays in Criticism, III (1953), 301.

reasons and has been discussed in different ways. But Mr. Brown's statement of the anti-Bradleyan position serves to remind us that those who accept Bradley's theoretical stand must beware of a temptation which lies in wait for them when they come to interpret a particular play. Bradley says that he has arrived at his ideas on Shakespearean tragic theory from the plays themselves. Having, then, arrived at this action-character formula (though "formula" is not a term expressive of Bradley's intention) from an observation of the whole of Shakespearean tragedy, there may be a temptation, when it is necessary to deal with a particular case, to insist on a close inter-relationship between character and action where, for one reason or another, the case does not follow the usual pattern. Whether this ever happens will be a problem for us in Chapter IV.

Some Elements of the Action which are Other than Characteristic

Bradley urges that the ideas which we have formed about the central importance of deeds flowing from character will be more clearly seen as true if we ask "what elements are to be found in the 'story' or 'action,' occasionally or frequently, beside the characteristic deeds, and the sufferings and circumstances, of the persons."[71] Such an inquiry would indicate some of the qualifications which need to be made in the general character-action theory.

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[71] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 13.

There are three of these additional elements which Bradley points out for discussion: abnormal conditions of mind, the supernatural element, chance or accident. Do we have reason to alter any conclusions we have reached because of the presence of such "uncharacteristic" elements in the action? In regard to the first of these factors, abnormal conditions of mind, Bradley finds no difficulty. Deeds issuing from insanity, somnambulism, and the like are not deeds in the proper sense--deeds expressive of character; but Shakespeare never represents these abnormal states as the origin of deeds of any dramatic importance. The word "origin" is to be stressed (in The Nature of Tragedy it is underlined), for it is Bradley's point that Lear's madness and Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking (to take two of the examples Bradley uses) are the results of actions and conflicts that were characteristic deeds--deeds springing from responsible human agency; the madness and the sleep-walking are not in themselves the sources of any further deeds of moment. The tragic conflict as such always arises from sane, aware human nature, since that alone is capable of action in the full sense of the word.[72]

In The Nature of Tragedy Bradley uses much the same argument in regard to the question of supernatural agency. He argues that Shakespeare never represents the element of the supernatural as the cause of the tragic action.[73] In Shakespearean Tragedy he

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[72]Nature of Tragedy, p. 8; Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 13-14.

[73]Nature of Tragedy, p. 9.

modifies his statement; the supernatural does contribute to the action and is in some instances an indispensable part of it, so that to claim that the sole motivating force in Shakespeare's tragic world is human character, with circumstances, would be a serious error. But it is important, he says, to realize that the supernatural always is placed by Shakespeare in the closest relationship with character and that its influence is never compulsive. We never feel that the visitation of ghosts or witches takes away from the hero his capacity or responsibility for dealing with his problem.[74]

Finally, there is the matter of chance or accident. Bradley defines this as "any occurrence (not supernatural, of course) which enters the dramatic sequence neither from the agency of a character, nor from the obvious surrounding circumstances." And he adds in a footnote that he thinks he would even include under "accident" the deed of a very minor person whose character had not been indicated.[75] In most of Shakespeare's tragedies, Bradley asserts, chance or accident is permitted a recognizable influence at some point in the action. Any very large admission of chance would tend to weaken or destroy the causal connection of character, deed, and catastrophe, but to exclude them altogether from tragedy would be untrue to life; accident or chance is a prominent fact of human life, and it is a tragic fact that men

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[74] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[75] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 14-15.

cannot foresee or control the chain of events which they themselves start. Three considerations must enter into the discussion. Shakespeare uses the element of accident very sparingly. Further, it is often possible to see the dramatic intention of the accident and to see that there is some connection between accident and a particular character, which means that this is not an accident in the full sense of the word. (Thus it is in Romeo's character that he should act without consideration and with fatal haste.[76]) Lastly, almost all of the important accidents occur only after the action is well on its way and the impression of the causal sequence firmly established.[77]

Bradley draws the general conclusion that all three of the elements--abnormal conditions of mind, the supernatural, and accident or chance--are part of the action but are subordinated to the one dominant factor, deeds which issue from character.[78] Most of this section is original with Bradley, to the extent at least that within Shakespearean criticism no one before him seems to have grouped the several problems together into the one general question which is posed in connection with the action-character discussion. Bradley has of course been influenced in his solution, especially in regard to the matter of abnormal conditions of mind, by a commonplace of Aristotelian and Thomistic thought--the idea

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[76]Bradley uses this illustration in Nature of Tragedy, p. 10.

[77]Ibid.; Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 14-16.

[78]Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 16.

that only those actions may properly be called human which proceed from free will, so that if you do something when you are sleep-walking, or insane, you are not performing a human act and are not responsible.[79] Bradley feels that such situation simply are not tragic; "the action in tragedy must spring from human agency; or, if we like to use that ambiguous word, it must arise from human freedom."[80]

A vigorous attack on Bradley's ideas about the "additional factors" has been made by Lily B. Campbell, who charges Bradley with errors concerning each of the three factors and with arguing in a circle throughout his analysis. She stresses the latter point at the end of her essay: "I must in closing again point out that Bradley constantly argues in a circle that these conditions could not have determined the actions of the tragic heroes because then they would not be tragic characters according to his premised definition."[81] Look at the first instance, Miss Campbell says. Bradley sets up his own definition of tragedy as centering in action issuing from character or character issuing in action. He

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[79]Aristotle, Nic. Eth., III, 1; St. Thomas, S. T., I-II, 1, 1.

[80]Nature of Tragedy, p. 9.

[81]Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes . . . with Appendices on Bradley's Interpretation of Shakespearean Tragedy, [revised ed.], (N.Y., 1952), p. 266. The material we are studying first appeared as "Bradley Revisited: Forty Years After," SP, XLIV (1947), 174-194; but page references in this paper are to the revised edition of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes, where it is reprinted as Appendix A. Despite the title of the article, the investigation in this particular essay is confined to Bradley's treatment of the "additional factors."

defines such action (again the definition is his own) as deeds expressive of character, excluding all deeds done when in an abnormal state of mind. After having laid down these premises by definition, he proves that Hamlet (for example) was not mad because then he would cease to be a tragic character. "In other words, he by definition makes a tragic hero set the tragic circle in motion while he is morally responsible and then proves that he must have been morally responsible when he set the forces of destruction at work or else he could not have been a tragic hero."[82]

We might observe that Mr. Bradley does not intend to lay down a definition of tragedy. He is collecting facts and impressions, and then comparing them with other facts to see if the conclusions reached about one set of facts or impressions must be modified in regard to the new set of facts. He reaches a general conclusion about the inter-relationship of action and character and goes on to test the conclusion by bringing in the new considerations about abnormal conditions of mind, etc. As a matter of fact, as we have seen, the new facts do modify our previous statement to a certain extent, though not fundamentally. As for the statement that Bradley, all through his arguments on the three additional factors, "constantly argues in a circle that these conditions could not not have determined the actions of the tragic heroes because then they would not be tragic characters according to his premised definition," we suggest that Bradley, in all three instances,

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[82] Ibid., pp. 245-246.

offers particular examples from which he has drawn his general statements. If he says that certain conditions are not treated as the sources of real tragic action, then presumably he believes that this was the way Shakespeare's mind worked. It is a question not so much of logic as of facts, for Bradley is presenting a series of facts from which he draws certain conclusions; he is not really proceeding in the formal fashion that Miss Campbell suggests. The case of Hamlet is a particular one, and the reader must judge whether Bradley does not observe the facts correctly, whether he makes incorrect conclusions from the facts, or whether (more basically) his ideas about tragic responsibility are not those of Shakespeare. In her particular remarks on abnormal conditions of mind, Miss Campbell says that it is "a prime illustration of a nineteenth-century mind imposing a moral pattern upon the work of a sixteenth-century mind" that Bradley chooses to discuss problems of moral responsibility rather than the "all-important reasons which made these abnormal mental conditions an essential part of the moral pattern of tragedy."[83] The question is, perhaps, whether Shakespeare may be supposed to have been working with the same Aristotelian-Scholastic ideas on moral responsibility with which Bradley is working. If he was, then Bradley's discussions ought not to be dismissed as beside the point. Whether Bradley should <u>also</u> have discussed Miss Campbell's topic, the place of madness, etc., in the Elizabethan tragedy, is another question which is part of the larger question as to what degree of

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[83] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 244.

completeness Bradley's criticism of Shakespearean tragedy may claim to have. Miss Campbell would answer that a system which would argue against including Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking or Lear's insanity as a part of the moral pattern of the tragedies is too narrow.[84]

The other arguments which Miss Campbell adduces are largely a matter of particular cases in which she feels that Bradley's conclusions are either incorrect or else not adequate; he main complaint is that Bradley is ignorant of or ignores Elizabethan attitudes (particularly on the popular level) toward ghosts, revenge, hallucinations, etc., and here, of course, she makes common cause with the large number of Bradley's critics who are unhappy about his attitude or practice with regard to the facts of Shakespeare's milieu.[85]

Action as Conflict

Before leaving the problem of the "action" in a Shakespearean tragedy, Bradley asks whether it would help us to understand it still better by talking of it in terms of a conflict. To make the question a precise one (for Shakespearean tragedy is obviously

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[84] Ibid., p. 245.

[85] For two very brief discussions of Miss Campbell's arguments against Bradley, see Paul Siegel, "In Defence of Bradley," CE, IX (1948), 253 n. and Herbert Weisinger, "The Study of Shakespearean Tragedy since Bradley," SQ, VI (1955), 390. The reader is again referred to Ornstein's article, "Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," for a discussion of methodology.

full of conflict), we shall ask, "Who are the combatants in a Shakespearean tragedy?"[86]

The obvious answer is to divide the characters of any one tragedy into two antagonistic groups, the hero and his party versus their adversaries. You will not have any great difficulty doing this with most of the tragedies, but, Bradley suggests, in some important cases it seems a merely external way of looking at things. Hamlet and the King are in conflict with each other, but at least equally engrossing is the conflict within Hamlet. And so for most of Shakespeare's tragedies. "The truth is, that the type of tragedy in which the hero opposes to a hostile force an undivided soul, is not the Shakespearean type." It is frequently just in connection with this inner conflict of the hero that Shakespeare shows his greatness, and it is in the later and most mature tragedies that he emphasizes inner contention. Bradley connects the idea of conflict in tragedy with his earlier ideas on character and action in a brilliant synthesizing conclusion: "[T]he notion of tragedy as a conflict emphasises the fact that action is the centre of the story, while the concentration of interest, in the greater plays, on the inward struggle emphasises the fact that

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[86] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 16. We continue to follow the order of topics in the first chapter of Shakespearean Tragedy. Bradley's discussions of the matters we now enter upon--conflict, waste, catastrophe, etc.--are arranged according to different plans in Nature of Tragedy, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," and Shakespearean Tragedy. Where possible we follow the plan of the first chapter of Shakespearean Tragedy, since that is the fullest and latest of the three.

this action is essentially the expression of character."[87]

Bradley himself suggests that when a modern critic talks of tragedy in terms of "conflict" he is probably doing so, ultimately, because of the prominence which Hegel gives to that concept in his theory of tragedy. The debt is acknowledged by Bradley, but it is important to notice also that he feels obliged to depart from Hegel in certain respects, or to adapt or add to his theory, because Hegel's theory is rooted in the Greek tragedy and does not perfectly apply to Shakespearean tragedy in all respects.[88] Bradley takes the same attitude in his lecture, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy."[89] However much he admires Hegel's ideas on tragedy (and he thinks them the most important since Aristotle's[90]), he definitely regards them as imperfect. This should be remembered, because some critics, aware of the stong Hegelian influence which appears in Bradley's writings, tend to overlook the originality with which Bradley treats Hegel's concepts. Thus J. Isaacs speaks slightingly of "Bradley's magnificent, influential and dangerously side-tracking studies, written, as it were, in the margin of Hegel."[91] We have already seen an outstanding example of an

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[87] Ibid., pp. 17-19.

[88] Ibid., p. 16.

[89] Oxford Lectures, esp. pp. 81, 85-86, 92.

[90] Ibid., p. 69; Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 16.

[91] "Shakespearian Criticism: From Coleridge to the Present Day," A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, edd. Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison (Cambridge, Eng., 1934), p. 302.

original application of a Hegelian idea in Bradley's connection of conflict with the relationship of action and character.

Critics in general have not discussed Bradley's initial remarks on conflict, but we should note one observation made in a doctoral dissertation by Dr. Ligeia Gallagher. She complains that Bradley, having separated the "inner" and the "outward" conflict, does not put them together again--that is, he fails to indicate their inter-connection and the fact that the struggle is a unity. She feels that this is a further indication of Bradley's tendency to divorce the individual from his society in a way that Shakespeare did not intend.[92] Such a criticism is related to the charge that Bradley too often fails to appreciate the ideas of the Elizabethan age.

The Tragic Hero and His Conflict: The Tragedy of Waste

Action in a Shakespearean tragedy, then, may profitably be considered as conflict, and Bradley enters now into an investigation of the conflict of the tragic hero. He asks first whether the central figures of the action, or conflict, have any common qualities which seem to be necessary to the tragic effect. We have already seen that a Shakespearean hero is exceptional in the sense that he is of high estate and public importance, and his sufferings and deeds are well out of the ordinary. But in addi-

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92"Shakespeare and the Aristotelian Ethical Tradition," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Stanford University, Palo Alto, 1956), p. 137.

tion we may say that his nature is exceptional and in some way raises him above the ordinary man. The hero is made of the same stuff as ourselves--he is not an eccentric or a paragon--but he is raised, by an intensification of the life he shares with us, far above us. Some of the heroes have genius, some are built on a grand scale in which passion or desire or will attains a terrible force. Almost all of them exhibit what Bradley says is, for Shakespeare, the fundamental tragic trait: "a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind."[93] This one-sidedness, or single-mindedness, is fatal to the hero but it carries with it, at the same time, "a touch of greatness," so that if you add to it "nobility of mind, or genius, or immense force, we realise the full power and reach of the soul."[94] The fact that the tragic conflict arises from and involves human agency makes us feel sympathy and pity, and perhaps fear, but it is a realization of the magnitude of the conflict and the splendor of the souls who wage it that adds to the tragic effect the element of awe.[95]

In the tragic conflict the hero's tragic trait, which is also

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[93] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 20.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Nature of Tragedy, pp. 5, 11-12; Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 20.

his greatness, is fatal to the hero because he meets certain circumstances which require something he cannot give, though a lesser man might. "He errs, by action or omission; and his error, joining with other causes, brings on him ruin. This is always so with Shakespeare."[96] The imperfection or error of the hero is of different kinds, ranging from Romeo's excess and precipitancy to Richard III's villainy. In The Nature of Tragedy Bradley suggests that one might even speak of two types of Shakespearean tragedy, depending on whether the origin of the conflict lies in a defect or in a crime. In the case of the former the tragic feeling of pity is much greater.[97] In Shakespearean Tragedy Bradley does not make such a sharp distinction, but he does say that it is important to realize that Shakespeare admits such men as Richard III and Macbeth as heroes. The spectator desires their downfall, and this is not a tragic emotion; the playwright compensates for this in Richard's case by endowing the king with astonishing power and a courage that arouses admiration, in Macbeth's case by showing in him a similar though less exceptional greatness and a conscience which so fills the hero with torment that a feeling of sympathy and awe is excited in the spectators in a manner at least calculated to balance the desire for Macbeth's downfall.[98]

Shakespeare's tragic heroes need not be "good," though they

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[96] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 21.

[97] Nature of Tragedy, pp. 22-25.

[98] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 22.

generally are, but they must have sufficient greatness that in their error and fall we are made strikingly aware of the possibilities of human nature. That is why, Bradley says, a Shakespearean tragedy is never depressing--man may be shown as wretched and his lot heartrending, but he is not shown in the tragedies as small nor his lot as contemptible. It is also because of this greatness of the tragic hero that the center of the tragic impression is the feeling of waste. The beauty and greatness of the hero are thrown away.

> We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyond the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of man, we see power, intelligence, life and glory, which astound us and seem to call for our worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves, often with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end. Tragedy is the typical form of this mystery, because that greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us, and it makes us realise so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity.[99]

Bradley felt strongly about these ideas and they are repeated and expanded in several of his essays and lectures. We have noted his belief that Shakespeare did not require "good" heroes. The quotation marks around "good" are Bradley's own, and his meaning is explained elsewhere: Shakespeare did not require morally good heroes, but he does show in all of his heroes some goodness which

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[99]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

may be defined as "anything that has spiritual value." Thus Macbeth may not be morally good, but he has much of goodness in this wider sense--bravery, conscience, determination.[100] If all other factors were equal, we could say that the tragedy in which the hero is also morally good is more tragic, because the more spiritual value, the more tragedy in its waste; but the essential point, we should realize, is not moral goodness or likeableness in the hero but power.[101] The power may be intellectual or moral or simply will power; the tragedy lies in its waste.[102]

Bradley, we have seen, felt that Shakespearean tragedy is never depressing because the heroes, though they fall, have sufficient greatness to make us aware of the possibilities of human nature. He explains in The Nature of Tragedy that we must see the powers of man's nature for good or evil on the grand scale--"the fulness of human life"--if we are to feel the tragedy of human life strongly. In the life of an average man or woman, we would not be aware of the sense of the sublime.[103] Lady Macbeth is appalling to us, but she has greatness because of her courage and force of will; she is appalling but sublime.[104] One of the rea-

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[100] "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," Oxford Lectures, pp. 86-88.

[101] Ibid., p. 89; Nature of Tragedy, pp. 13-14.

[102] Nature of Tragedy, p. 14.

[103] Ibid., p. 13.

[104] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 368, 371, 373.

sons why Bradley showed such interest in Falstaff and Falstaff-criticism seems to have been his admiration of "Falstaff's freedom of soul, a freedom illusory only in part, and attainable only by a mind which received from Shakespeare's own the inexplicable touch of infinity which he bestowed on Hamlet and Macbeth and Cleopatra . . . ."[105] In connection with a character's greatness, then, Bradley has referred to the idea of the sublime and the idea of the infinite. We must come back to the latter again, but for the present it is instructive to note a link between the two ideas: in his essay, "The Sublime," Bradley defines sublimity as the image of the boundlessness of the infinite.[106] It does not matter to the imagination that a character is good or bad in the usual sense. Socrates and Satan are the same to the imagination if they are each treated sublimely, for then each becomes infinite, and the imagination feels in each its own infinity.[107]

At the close of a lecture on the age of Hegel and Wordsworth, Bradley gives some indication of why he attaches so much importance to the idea of being made aware of man's possibilities and greatness. Perhaps we must admit, he says, that Hegel and Wordsworth over-estimated man's capacities. "And yet, if I may descend to personal opinions, I believe in that Age. Every time, no doubt, has the defects of its qualities; but those periods in which, and

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[105]"The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures, p. 273.

[106]"The Sublime," Oxford Lectures, p. 62.

[107]Ibid., p. 63.

those men in whom, the mind is strongly felt to be great, see more and see deeper, I believe, than others. Their time was such a period, and ours is not. And when the greatness of the mind is strongly felt, it is great and works wonders. Their time did so, and ours does not."[108] It is no wonder that Bradley, feeling thus, concerned himself with similar ideas in Shakespearean tragedy.

The reader will have been aware that the predominant influence in Bradley's analysis of the hero's exceptional nature and greatness is that of Hegel. In The Philosophy of Fine Art we find mention of strife and injurious one-sidedness in the hero and the idea that you must compensate for the criminal acts of some modern "heroes" by emphasizing their unusual greatness and power;[109] and of course the concept of the infinite and the optimistic attitude towards the possibilities of the human mind underlie all of Hegel's thinking, as Bradley indicates. But more important, in a way, than these similarities are the changes which Bradley has made to fit Hegel's theory to Shakespearean tragedy. Hegel is much more at home in dealing with the Greek tragedy, since it fits in better with his system; he analyzes it at length and forms his theory around it. Then when he comes to modern

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[108]"English Poetry and German Philosophy in the Age of Wordsworth," Miscellany, pp. 137-138. See p. 119 of the same essay, where he speaks specifically of Hegel; see also "Shelley and Arnold's Critique of His Poetry," Miscellany, p. 160.

[109]IV, 298, 311.

tragedy, he does not so much theorize as describe the differences between it and ancient tragedy, usually to the disadvantage of the modern.

The tragic conflict, says Hegel, is a conflict of the forces which form the ethical substance of man (family and state, love and honor, etc.--all universal). Both sides in the conflict are "right"--that is, each of the ethical powers represented has a valid place in the universe--but the right on one side is pushed so far that it becomes a violation of the other legitimate power. It then falls under condemnation because it is out of harmony with the universe. There is in the hero no half-heartedness and little or no inner conflict (in the sense of a struggle with his conscience), for he acts with the force of the ethical substantive power. The conflict, and the tragedy, come to an end when the ethical whole asserts itself and the imbalance is removed, not necessarily, in ancient tragedy at least, with the death of the hero.[110]

In pointing out how this may be adapted to Shakespearean tragedy, Bradley omits references to ethical or substantive powers and suggests the more general idea that tragedy portrays a division of spirit involving conflict and waste. There is spiritual value on both sides, so that the tragic conflict is one of good with good ("good" in the wide sense). Given the proper conditions

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[110] Ibid., IV, 295-301; "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," Oxford Lectures, pp. 69-74 and the Note on pp. 93-95.

any spiritual conflict involving spiritual waste is tragic. With this wider theory, we have no difficulty in accounting for Macbeth as the central figure in a tragedy, for he too has spiritual values which are wasted.[111]

Is this feeling that the center of the tragic impression is waste original with Bradley? Dowden speaks of Hamlet's wasting himself,[112] and F. H. Bradley, A. C.'s famous brother, uses the word "waste" on one occasion in connection with evil;[113] but A. C. Bradley's use of the concept is, so far as the present writer can tell, original with him. As for the power and forcefulness with which the characters act, it is interesting to note that Freytag, before Bradley, exclaims in awe at "the tremendous impelling force which operates in his [Shakespeare's] chief characters. The power with which they storm upward toward their fate, as far as the climax of the drama, is irresistible--in almost every one a vigorous life and strong energy of passion."[114] The idea is an attractive one to the Romantic imagination.

Critics since Bradley have objected to both his doctrine of waste and his talk of the greatness and power of the tragic hero. G. R. Elliott objects that the idea of tragedy as the waste of

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[111]"Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," Oxford Lectures, pp. 85-90.

[112]Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, 9th ed. (London, 1889), p. 130.

[113]Appearance and Reality (London, 1899), p. 200.

[114]Freytag, p. 258.

human values is too vague and naive from the Elizabethan standpoint. Bradley fails to see that "waste" is only supremely tragic when it is due to pride; indeed, Professor Elliott thinks that this defect is the fundamental one in Bradley's theory of tragedy, and that any other defects follow from it. Bradley is understanding the tragedies from a nineteenth-century, humanitarian point of view instead of from Shakespeare's Renaissance and Christian view.[115] Harold S. Wilson, speaking specifically of Hamlet, says that "waste" is not so much to the point--for Hamlet dies nobly and even Gertrude and Laertes are raised somewhat in their deaths--as is the suffering incident upon human wilfulness and blindness.[116] Mr. Wilson's criticism is perhaps not very far from Bradley's own, especially if we take into consideration Bradley's ideas on reconciliation, which we have not yet touched on.

As early as 1906 C. H. Herford, reviewing Shakespearean Tragedy, noted that Bradley tends to treat characters as good who have great power. He excuses this by saying that Bradley "is one of those who escape the illusions of the lower ethics because they are so completely penetrated and possessed by the higher."[117] Bradley would have done well to have made his idea of "good" as clear in Shakespearean Tragedy as he did in his lectures on Hegel's

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[115] Flaming Minister: A Study of "Othello" (Durham, N.C., 1953), p. xxii n.; Dramatic Providence in "Macbeth" (Princeton, 1958), p. 19.

[116] On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy (Toronto, 1957), p. 46.

[117] MLR, I (1905-1906), 131.

theory of tragedy. Even taking this into consideration, however, would not answer some of Miss Campbell's objections. She says that Bradley's moral world is moral chaos, a morality without morals, unacceptable to the Elizabethans or to anyone else. To Bradley it is only the greatness, the heroic size, of the tragic character that is important. Bradley seems to say, Miss Campbell thinks, that the tragic flaw is really the source of the hero's greatness, "but when the flaw itself is the source of greatness, and when the character is judged by the sheer massiveness of the flaw, then there is nothing but moral chaos."[118] Franklin Dickey, who studied under Miss Campbell, says that for the last fifty years Shakespeare critics have very often held the Hegelian or Nietzschean idea that a great passion transcends ordinary morality. He feels that Hegel's doctrines pervade academic criticism to a large extent,[119] and, in the particular case of Bradley, result in the tacit acceptance of "Hegel's ethical postulate that freedom of the will is achieved only through intense passion."[120] Perhaps Mr. Dickey has a true insight here, but it would be helpful if he would give us an article in which he argues his point in

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[118] L. B. Campbell, pp. 274-275, 281, 285-286. This is part of Appendix B, "Concerning Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy," which originally appeared in the Huntington Library Quarterly, XIII (1949-1950), 1-18.

[119] In this connection see O. J. Campbell's "Shakespeare and the 'New' Critics," John Quincy Adams Memorial Studies, edd. McManaway et al. (Washington, D.C., 1948), pp. 81-96.

[120] Not Wisely But Too Well (San Marino, Calif., 1957), p. 4; Mr. Dickey has since reaffirmed this conviction in a personal talk with me at the Folger Library.

more detail.

The Ultimate Nature of the Tragic World

In this tragic world of conflict and waste, where man is so evidently not in final control, what is the nature of the ultimate power? This is Bradley's final problem, and it leads him, at the same time, to an investigation of the conflict as it ends in catastrophe and of "feelings of reconciliation" as the tragedy closes. At this point, as we noted before,[121] Bradley insists on the importance of being true to the impressions we receive from the tragedies themselves. "Any answer we give to the question proposed ought to correspond with, or to represent in terms of the understanding, our imaginative and emotional experience in reading the tragedies."[122]

We will agree, says Bradley, before going any further, that Shakespeare does not deal with the problem in "religious" terms, so neither should we. The Elizabethan drama was almost entirely secular, and although Shakespeare may have one or another of his characters speak of God or the gods or hell or heaven, these ideas do not influence his representation of life in the tragedies, nor are they used to indicate any sort of solution to the problem of the ultimate power in the tragic world.[123] "[T]he special sig-

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[121]See pp. 13-14 above.

[122]Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 24.

[123]Ibid., p. 25.

nificance of Shakespeare's tragedies in literary history lies in this: that they contain the first profound representation of life in modern poetry which is independent of any set of religious ideas. . . . Shakespeare was the first great writer who painted life simply as it is seen on the earth, and yet gave it the same tremendous significance that it has to religion. In doing so he, perhaps, did a greater thing than poetry had ever done before, and he produced the most universal of all modern poems; universal in the sense that no set of religious ideas forms a help or a hindrance to the appropriation of his meaning."[124]

Any reader who is in touch with Shakespeare's mind will, Bradley believes, grant two facts by way of a starting point in our inquiry: Shakespeare represents the tragic fact as something "piteous, fearful and mysterious," and, secondly, such a representation does not leave us rebellious or in despair. It follows from this that the two chief explanations of Shakespeare's tragic world, that it is a "moral order" or that it is governed simply by "fate," are not adequate, for either one, taken by itself, exaggerates either the aspect of action or that of suffering in a Shakespearean tragedy. Saying that the tragic world is simply a moral order puts the emphasis on the close connection of character, will, deed, and catastrophe; it shows the hero as failing to conform to the moral order and so drawing upon himself a just doom.

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[124] Nature of Tragedy, pp. 25-26. See also "Shelley's View of Poetry," Oxford Lectures, p. 173: "Homer and Shakespeare show no moral aim and no system of opinion."

To say that the tragic world is simply ruled by fate is to emphasize, in isolation, accident, forces from without, circumstances, and blind struggling against doom. The two views, says Bradley, contradict each other, so that no third view can unite them, but by examining each of them, or rather the facts of the impressions which give rise to each, we may hope to find a view which will to some extent combine each one's true elements.[125]

Bradley points out the several impressions which give rise to the idea of fatality. It is an essential part of the full tragic effect that we feel at times that the hero is a doomed man, in some sense, and that his fault is far from accounting for all he suffers at the hands of a relentless power above him. Men and women in the Shakespearean world act, but what they achieve is not what they intended. Meaning well sometimes, they act in the dark and in a pitiful ignorance of themselves and the world around them. They accomplish their own destruction, which is the last thing they intended. To this is added the impression that the hero is sometimes terribly unlucky. Even in Shakespeare there is not a little of this feeling. Again, the hero no doubt acts according to his character, but how is it that he must meet just that set of circumstances which present him the one problem which is fatal to him of all men? It seems, finally, that a man's very virtues help to destroy him; his greatness is intertwined with his tragic weakness or defect.

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[125]Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 25-27.

What impressions of fate do we not find in the tragedies? There is little or no trace, Bradley feels, of any crude fatalism. There is no indication that the sufferings and death of the hero had all been arbitrarily fixed beforehand, nor is there any feeling of spitefulness on the part of the superior power. There are no "family" tragedies in the Greek sense. If by "fate" you would to so far as to mean to imply that the order of things in the tragic world is a blank necessity, completely regardless of human good and of the difference between good and evil, then many readers would not only reject such an idea, but, on the contrary, would maintain that the impressions we receive indicate a moral order and a moral necessity at work.[126]

Bradley rejects at once the idea that "poetic justice" is exhibited in Shakespeare's tragedies; neither in life nor in the plays is there any indication that prosperity and adversity are handed out by the ultimate power in proportion to the merits of the agents. But Bradley goes further: he disapproves of using "justice" or "merit" or "desert" at all. In tragedy, the consequences of an action cannot be limited to what would be expected to follow "justly" from them. To talk of Lear's "meriting" his sufferings is to do violence to what is meant by "merit." And, in the second place, ideas of justice and desert are untrue in every case to our imaginative experience. When we are deep in a tragedy, even that of Richard III, we feel horror, pity, repulsion

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[126] Ibid., pp. 27-31.

--but we do not judge. That is something we do later.

Setting aside, then, notions of justice and merit, let us speak of good and evil, understood in a wide sense to include not only moral good and evil (though that is the primary meaning) but everything else in man which is considered excellent or not. What impressions arising from the plays give cause for judging that the ultimate power is "moral" in the sense of an order which shows itself to be akin to good and alien from evil? Most important is the fact that the main source of the convulsion is always evil in the fullest sense. Romeo and Juliet go to their death not only because of personal faults or flaws but because of the hatred between their houses. We can draw the obvious inference that if it is chiefly evil which sets the world-order in commotion, then that order is no more indifferent or friendly to evil than is the body to poison. Indeed, it must be bent on nothing short of perfection, for the faults of even the comparatively innocent hero (Brutus is the example given in The Nature of Tragedy[127]) "contribute decisively" to the conflict. Another factor to consider is that evil is always shown in the tragedies as something negative, destructive, barren. When the evil man becomes wholly evil, so that the good qualities are destroyed, the man also is destroyed. Those who are left may not be as great or brillian as the hero, but they have won our confidence. Again the inference is clear: if existence in an order depends on good, then the soul of the order must

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[127]P. 20.

be akin to good.[128]

It is impossible, Bradley says, to deny that there is much truth in this view of the tragic world, yet it too must be modified if it is to include all of the facts and to correspond completely with the impressions they produce. If we are faithful to the facts as presented in Shakespeare's tragedies, we must conclude that the evil and the tragic heroes are not outside the system, they are a part of it. The moral order produces Iago as well as Desdemona, and we have no warrent from the tragedies to say that it is responsible for the good in Desdemona but not for the evil in Iago. "It is not poisoned, it poisons itself." Similarly, it is not true to our feelings to assert that Hamlet merely fails to meet the demands of the moral order or that Antony merely sins against it, for this is to regard the tragic characters as outside the order and struggling against it as against something outside themselves.

> What we feel corresponds quite as much to the idea that they are <u>its</u> parts, expressions, products; that in their defect or evil <u>it</u> is untrue to its soul of goodness, and falls into conflict and collision with itself; that, in making them suffer and waste themselves, <u>it</u> suffers and wastes itself; and that when, to save its life and regain peace from this intestinal struggle, it casts them out, it has lost a part of its own substance,--a part more dangerous and unquiet, but far more valuable and nearer to its heart, than that which remains,--a Fortinbras, a Malcolm, an Octavius. There is no tragedy in its expulsion of evil: the tragedy is that this involves the waste of good.[129]

Thus we are left, Bradley concludes, with an idea of the

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[128] <u>Shakespearean Tragedy</u>, pp. 31-36.
[129] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 37.

ultimate power whose two sides we cannot separate or reconcile. Shakespeare gives us no answer, no final solution; he was writing tragedy, "and tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery. . . . We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. And this fact or appearance is tragedy."[130]

Professor Bradley, in a note added at the end of Lecture I in the second edition of Shakespearean Tragedy, indicates that there is one element, feelings of reconciliation and even exultation, which he has not dealt with adequately in this first lecture, and he directs us elsewhere. Actually there is some pertinent matter even in the first lecture, for he refers to "faint and scattered intimations" from the tragedies that the agony of the chief characters "counts as nothing against the heroism and love which appear in it and thrill our hearts."[131] In "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy" Bradley points out, in his "restatement" of Hegelian theory on the catastrophe, that a Shakespearean catastrophe has a double aspect, negative and affirmative. On the one hand we see

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[130] Ibid., pp. 38-39. The Nature of Tragedy, pp. 15-21, takes a different approach to the catastrophe, fate, etc. Most of the conclusions are similar, but one important difference is that Bradley, in this earlier discussion of tragedy, is more inclined to favor the moral order as a satisfactory solution; there is little talk of the moral order producing evil as well as good.

[131] Ibid.

the violent annulling of the conflict by a power which is superior, irresistible, overwhelming, a power which blots out whatever is incompatible with its nature. But we do not feel depression or rebellion (which are not tragic emotions); we are rather aware of feelings of reconciliation in some form because of the affirmative aspect of the catastrophe. We ought to describe the catastrophe therefore as "the violent self-restitution of the divided spiritual unity." The superior power and the hero are of one substance. They are its conflicting forces. "This is no occasion to ask how in particular, and in what various ways in various works, we feel the effect of this affirmative aspect in the catastrophe. But it corresponds at least with that strange double impression which is produced by the hero's death. He dies, and our hearts die with him; and yet his death matters nothing to us, or we even exult. He is dead; and he has no more to do with death than the power which killed him and with which he is one."[132] Or, as Bradley puts it in his analysis of Antony and Cleopatra, the elect spirit of a Shakespearean tragedy, even though in error, "rises by its greatness into ideal union with the power that overwhelms it."[133]

The occasion "to ask how in particular" about the affirmative

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[132] Oxford Lectures, pp. 90-91. In Nature of Tragedy (pp. 5, 15) Bradley speaks of feelings of "solemnity and acquiescence" rather than feelings of "reconciliation and even exultation."

[133] "Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra," Oxford Lectures, p. 292.

aspect of the catastrophe was found by Bradley in his particular studies of Hamlet and King Lear in Shakespearean Tragedy,[134] but they add little to the theoretical position as we have stated it. Most interesting of the lot is the statement (made in connection with Cordelia's death) that the feeling of reconciliation which we experience implies certain ideas which are not made explicit in the tragedy. It seems to imply, Bradley says, that the tragic world is not the final reality, and that if we could see the tragic facts in their proper perspective in the whole, we would find them "not abolished, of course, but so transmuted that they had ceased to be strictly tragic,--find, perhaps, the sufferings and the death counting for little or nothing, the greatness of the soul for much or all, and the heroic spirit, in spite of failure, nearer to the heart of things than the smaller, more circumspect, and perhaps even 'better' beings who survived the catastrophe."[135]

Many of these ideas on good and evil, suffering, and the infinite are found in Bradley's non-Shakespearean writings and are evidently a part of his own philosophy of life. He did not believe that we could ever explain why so much evil and pain exist in the world,[136] but he did hold that suffering and even wrong have a place in the world. He once compared war to tragedy: war

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[134] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 171-174, 271-279, 303-304, 322-330 (esp. 323-326). Of these pages only 171-174 have to do with Hamlet; the rest are concerned with Lear.

[135] Ibid., pp. 323-325.

[136] Ideals of Religion (London, 1940), p. 283.

and tragic actions and sufferings would have to be called evil if we had to classify everything as good and evil, but "if the disappearance of either meant the disappearance, or even a lowering, of those noble and glorious energies of the soul which appear in both and are in part the cause of both, the life of perpetual peace would be a poor thing, superficially less terrible perhaps than the present life, but much less great and good."[137] Bradley finds in Hegel and Wordsworth an idea which he seems to endorse: "Without evils, then, no moral goodness."[138] Wordsworth perceived, as Shelley did not, that evil is not here for nothing and that, in fact, "the greatness of the mind is seen most in its power to win good out of evil."[139] Nor can there be the least doubt that Dr. Bradley accepted personally the ideas of the infinite which he used in his critical writings. All through Ideals of Religion, which is a very personal book, Bradley uses and discusses the notion of the infinite and its all-inclusiveness, the idea that one mind is at the basis of all reality and that all things are manifestations of that mind in different degrees;[140] but it is a re-

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137"International Morality," The International Crisis, [ed. not listed], (London, 1915), pp. 64-65; the opinion is the more striking for its having been expressed during the First World War. See also Ideals of Religion, p. 285.

138"English Poetry and German Philosophy," Miscellany, pp. 135-136.

139"Shelley and Arnold's Critique of His Poetry," Miscellany, p. 155.

140See esp. the last three chapters, "Truth and Reality," "Man as Finite Infinite," and "Good and Evil." See also "Inspiration," Miscellany, pp. 225-244.

mark made in passing which indicates how deeply rooted was his acceptance of the Hegelian infinite. In the "Biographical Sketch" with which Bradley prefaced his edition of Richard Nettleship's Philosophical Remains, he tells of a letter from Nettleship (with whom he had been very close). "The last of his letters to me was written the night before he started for Switzerland, never to return; it was meant to be read only if he chanced to be the first to die; and almost its final words were these: 'Don't bother about death; it doesn't count.' Not for him, doubtless, or for that which includes both him and all who loved him or felt his influence; but to them, and, as they believe, to others, his death counts only too much."[141] When a man uses a Hegelian concept to express himself at such an intimate moment, there can be little doubt about the sincerity with which he holds it.

It would be idle to dispute the obvious, even fundamental, Hegelian influence running all through Bradley's treatment of the catastrophe, reconciliation, and the nature of the ultimate power. Again, however, as in the case of the conflict, it would appear that Bradley has made some significant changes from pure Hegelianism. Bradley himself says that Hegel puts too much stress on the aspect of reconciliation in Greek tragedy and too little in modern tragedy.[142] But the present writer believes that there is

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[141] Philosophical Remains of Richard Lewis Nettleship, 2nd ed. (London, 1901), pp. lvii-lviii.

[142] "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," Oxford Lectures, pp. 82-84.

a more fundamental difference: Bradley adds to the rather cold Hegelian presentation of catastrophe and reconciliation a warmth which results in a subtle change of tone. Hegel speaks of Eternal Justice restoring the wholeness of the ethical substance through the "downfall of the individuality which disturbs its repose. . . . That which is abrogated in the tragedy is merely the onesided particularity which was unable to accommodate itself to this harmony . . . ."[143] "In tragedy then that which is eternally substantive is triumphantly vindicated under the mode of reconciliation. It simply removes from the contentions of personality the false one-sidedness, and exhibits instead that which is the object of its volition, namely, positive reality, no longer under an asserted mediation of opposed factors, but as the real support of consistency."[144] Bradley does not contradict any of this, of course, but he talks about it in a humane manner, so to speak. He mentions feelings of "exultation," of the hero's "nearness to the heart of things"; he emphasizes the idea that the whole is of one substance with the hero and that it also suffers and is torn in the hero's conflict and catastrophe. Bradley intended to adapt Hegel to fit Shakespeare. In doing so (and it would appear that the same was true in his use of Hegelian ideas in his private life) he seems to have altered the tone of Hegelian philosophy to

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[143]Hegel, IV, 298.

[144]Ibid., IV, 301; see also 321.

a warmer, more personal one.[145]

In taking a philosophical approach to Shakespeare, Bradley is reflecting not only Hegel's criticism but that of many of the German and English Shakespeare critics before him. It was, so to speak, in the air. Mrs. Montagu, Gervinus, and Ulrici, to name only a disparate few, had concerned themselves with Shakespeare as a great moral philosopher, and in Bradley's own day Moulton took the position that "poetry is simply creative philosophy."[146] Bradley does not take the approach that these critics did--he does not set out to discuss in specific terms Shakespeare's moral greatness or even to discover his "moral system"--but he may well have been influenced by their treatment of Shakespeare. A much more direct influence is likely to have been that of Professor Dowden, who taught that "Tragedy as conceived by Shakspere is concerned with the ruin or the restoration of the soul, and of the life of men. In other words its subject is the struggle of good and evil in the world."[147] Dowden also believed that, although Shakespeare

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[145]For a judgment on the fidelity of Bradley's explicit adaptations to the system in which they are rooted, see Theodore M. Steele, "Hegel's Influence on Shakespearean Criticism," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Columbia University, N.Y., 1949). Dr. Steele concludes that Bradley's "modifications and extensions of Hegel's thought are . . . based on a firm understanding of Hegel's intent and concepts" (pp. 177-178).

[146]Richard G. Moulton, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Thinker (N.Y., 1907), p. 2. This is a revised re-issue of a book which had appeared in 1903 under the title, The Moral System of Shakespeare.

[147]Dowden, Shakspere: A Critical Study, p. 224.

deals with evil extensively, he nowhere proposes to explain the why of evil or why things are as they are in the world. "It is and remains a mystery."[148] Bradley echoes both of these sentiments.

Critics since Bradley have divided in their reaction to the final part of Bradley's theory. A few have been enthusiastic about the general drift of Bradley's conclusions. Augustus Ralli, in his History of Shakespearian Criticism, claims that Bradley had, by means of Shakespeare, "advanced one of the most practical existing arguments in favour of the moral government of the universe." Shakespeare was the world's greatest genius, and Bradley has filled us with hope by showing that Shakespeare believed in a moral order.[149] C. F. Johnson says that the first chapter of Shakespearean Tragedy furnishes a reasonable philosophy of life to the perplexed. The "profound conclusions" which Bradley reaches may not have been consciously formulated by Shakespeare, but there can be no doubt that they are deducible from his tragedies.[150]

Other critics who have endorsed Bradley's formulations have been more particular. Willard Farnham and C. H. Herford agree that Bradley is correct about the final impressions made on us by a Shakespearean tragedy; it is just when he deals with the feeling of exultation, says Herford, that Bradley seems to come so near to

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[148] Ibid., p. 226.

[149] (London, 1932), II, 201-202.

[150] Shakespeare and His Critics (Boston, 1909), p. 323.

Shakespeare.[151] Caroline Spurgeon, in her important book on imagery, finds that the pictures of evil shown by Shakespeare's images support and reinforce Bradley's "mastery summary." "In the pictures of dirt and foulness, and most especially of sickness and disease we see this same conception of something produced by the body itself, which is indeed in a sense part of it, against which, at the same time, if it is to survive, it has to struggle and fight; in which 'intestinal struggle', as Bradley rightly calls it, it casts out, not only the poison or foulness which is killing it, but also a precious part of its own substance."[152] Maud Bodkin, in a most interesting application of Bradley's work, draws from both Shakespearean Tragedy and the Oxford Lectures Bradley's ideas on the spiritual power and its relationship to the characters. She then attempts to translate these ideas into psychological terms and relate them to Jung's collective unconscious, archetypal patterns, and primitive ritual.[153]

The critics who have objected to Bradley's ideas on the close of Shakespearean tragedy have sometimes denied Bradley's concept of reconciliation. Stoll is the most important of this group, and

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[151] Herford, rev. of Shakespearean Tragedy, MLR, I, 131; Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy, corrected ed. (N.Y., 1956), pp. 444-446.

[152] Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge, Eng., 1935), pp. 166-167.

[153] Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London, 1934), pp. 20-21, 280-281; see also pp. 332-334.

the most bitingly articulate. He describes "the Hegelians, Professors Dowden and Bradley, who heard in King Lear and Othello a transcendental note of reconciliation and a faint far-off hymn of triumph, a Stimme von Oben or chorus mysticus, so to speak, at the end. So a play is interpreted in the rebound or by its echo."[154] He sneers at the "misty transcendental world of Morgann, Bradley, and Charlton"[155] and completely denies that there is any consolation whatsoever at the end of the tragedies, only sorrow or resignation or despair.[156]

But the chief objection among critics to Bradley's picture of the tragic world-order has been that it leaves out Christianity and the influence of Christian ideas on Shakespeare. The reader will remember that Dr. Bradley, after posing the question of the nature of the ultimate power, stipulated that the answer must not be given in religious language because God, heaven, hell, and such concepts are only used by Shakespeare incidentally, as it were, and never enter into his representation of life or shed light on the mysteries of tragedy. This has been vigorously denied by many critics. G. R. Elliott says that Bradley is simply wrong in his notion that Christian ideas are no more than "dramatic" in the tragedies; on the contrary, the very casualness with which Hamlet

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[154] Shakespeare Studies, p. 182.

[155] "Recent Shakespeare Criticism," Shakespeare-Jahrbuch, LXXIV (1938), 58.

[156] Shakespeare Studies, pp. 182-183; Art and Artifice, p. 164; Shakespeare and Other Masters (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 59.

(for example) alludes to Christian beliefs testifies to their currency, and we find Christian concepts running all through Renaissance literature in general and Shakespeare in particular.[157] Harold Wilson says that Bradley's argument is not cogent, for it may be readily granted that Elizabethan drama was almost wholly secular without going to the extreme of denying Christian influence. Mr. Wilson would seem to think that he and Bradley are using "secular" in the same way, but Bradley means by the term that there was no Christian influence, or very little in any really meaningful way, while Mr. Wilson seems to mean a theater which does not treat God or heaven or hell as part of the explicit subject matter. At any rate, Mr. Wilson goes on to say that Shakespeare's characteristic way of thought was Christian, and in Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth the Christian point of view profoundly influences the representation of life; Christianity "is of the essence of their purport and effect."[158] Paul Siegel suggests four major alterations that must be made in Bradley's picture of Shakespeare's tragic world, and he sums up the four by saying that, in other words, Bradley's view must be altered to make the world-order explicitly Christian, "its laws ordained by God, the evil within it the consequence of man's fall constantly

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[157] Flaming Minister, pp. xxvi-xxvii. Professor Elliott is a strong champion of the importance of Christian ideas in Shakespeare and is currently engaged in bringing out a book on each of the tragedies treated by Bradley in Shakespearean Tragedy, each book to emphasize Christian influence and meanings.

[158] H. S. Wilson, pp. 5-8.

threatening to overthrow the entire hierarchy of nature." Christian humanism is the very basis of Shakespearean tragedy.[159] There is no point in continuing to list critics who stress the importance of Christian ideas; they are many, and they insist that an interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedies which does not recognize in them a basic Christian influence must be seriously in error.[160]

Some Concluding Remarks

We have discussed the derivation of each of the elements of Bradley's theory and the extent to which each was modified by him. The present writer suggests it as his own opinion that the theory is a unique combination of Aristotelian, Hegelian, and Romantic ideas on tragedy in general and Shakespearean tragedy in particular. As a whole, it is a highly original piece of work.

But does it form a single coherent theory of tragedy? The materials for an answer to this question have been set out for the reader's judgment. The present writer believes that the theory

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[159] Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise (N.Y., 1957), pp. 81-82.

[160] For a good survey of the various non-Christian approaches to Shakespearean tragedy see the first three sections of Roy W. Battenhouse, "Shakespearean Tragedy: A Christian Interpretation," The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. N. A. Scott, Jr. (N.Y., 1957), pp. 56-98. For a view of Shakespeare's tragedies which is even more rigidly exclusive of Christian ideas than Bradley's, see Santayana, "The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare," Essays in Literary Criticism of George Santayana, ed. I. Singer (N.Y., 1956), pp. 137-148.

does cohere if you are willing to accept Bradley's presuppositions at certain points--that is, the theory flows from one element to the next with no inherent contradictions, but you must grant Bradley his own terms in order for it to do so. Since one of the basic premises of the theory is that the experience or impression is the thing interpreted and the test of any statement, it follows that you must at several points allow Bradley's impression to be correct. Granted that, the theory is well-developed, logical, and a whole.

If you do not grant that Bradley's impression is correct, you raise the question of whether, or to what extent, the theory is true to Shakespeare. This is a question better left to be discussed as a part of the larger question of Bradley's over-all value as a critic of Shakespearean tragedy, after we have examined his practical criticism. But we might give it as a personal opinion that the theory goes badly astray when Bradley begins to follow out his impression that Christian ideas cannot be used to discuss the nature of the catastrophe and the ultimate power. That one decision determines the character of the whole final section of the theory, the most important section, so that if Bradley's impression is in this case wrong, the whole last part of his theory is seriously weakened. The ideas he does use, almost certainly because he thought naturally in Hegelian terms, are not ideas that would have been familiar to Shakespeare at first glance. Whether they are nevertheless more appropriate to convey Shake-

speare's theory of tragedy than Christian ideas must be a matter for the reader, with the help of the historical critics, to decide, but it should be pointed out that the two concepts of the world are incompatible. If Hegelian ideas are adequate to express Shakespeare's thought, then Christian ideas are inadequate for that purpose; but the reverse is also true.

CHAPTER IV

BRADLEY'S METHOD OF CRITICIZING A PARTICULAR TRAGEDY

A study of A. C. Bradley's criticism of Shakespearean tragedy must include not only Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy but his method of criticizing a particular play. Each of these is clarified by an investigation of the other. No one will doubt that the study which we have made of what Bradley took to be Shakespeare's basic idea of tragedy will help us better to understand and evaluate Bradley's criticism of the particular tragedy, Macbeth, which we are going to examine; but it is also true that we shall understand some of the implications of Bradley's theory better after seeing how he works with an individual example. Moreover, the topics discussed by Bradley in his particular critiques are not always those covered by his statements on theory, for the question, "What is Shakespeare's conception of tragedy?", can only account for part of the matter to be commented on with regard to a tragedy like Macbeth. We must now revert to the larger view indicated in the Introduction of Shakespearean Tragedy: "to increase our understanding and enjoyment of these works as dramas; to learn to apprehend the action and some of the personages of each with a somewhat greater truth and intensity, so

that they may assume in our imaginations a shape a little less unlike the shape they wore in the imagination of their creator."[161] Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy is undoubtedly basic to his commentary on Macbeth, but the two are by no means coterminous.

In our examination of Bradley's criticism of Macbeth we shall be more interested in methods and types of criticism than in particulars--that is, to take an example, although we shall certainly discuss what Bradley says about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, there will be no attempt to discuss or even to note every one of his thoughts about them; we shall be more concerned with the general trend of these thoughts, with the way in which he approaches the two characters, and the extent to which he deals with them. Our attention will be confined to those remarks about the play which are made in Shakespearean Tragedy. In that volume there are three places where Macbeth is the subject of criticism, and we shall consider them in consecutive order: the first two chapters and the first part of the third; the two lectures specifically on Macbeth, which are the last two in the book; and the seven special Notes on the play in the Appendix. Bradley's analyses of the other three tragedies in Shakespearean Tragedy will be used for purposes of comparison and clarification.

Macbeth Material in the First Part of Shakespearean Tragedy

In the Preface to Shakespearean Tragedy Professor Bradley

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[161] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 1.

says that, while readers who prefer to begin at once on the discussions of the individual plays may do so, "I should, of course, wish them [the lectures] to be read in their order, and a knowledge of the first two is assumed in the remainder." This is a reminder from the author himself that the reader who turns only to Lectures IX and X for an analysis of Macbeth will be missing much that the author says about that play. Besides the general and very basic discussions about Shakespeare's idea of tragedy, such a reader would miss scattered specific applications to Macbeth in the first lecture; in the second lecture he would miss a valuable discussion of the construction of Macbeth; and he would not be aware of some remarks in the first part of the third chapter on the play's place among the tragedies and its style and versification. In other words, he would not have a true picture of Bradley's criticism of Macbeth.

The specific references in the first lecture are, as we said, scattered, and we shall note only the more important. Bradley puts Macbeth among the plays in which, in the usual way of the tragedies, the hero alone can be said to have top billing. He does not feel that Lady Macbeth shares our attention in the way that Juliet and Cleopatra do (they of course are figures in love tragedies, which explains the difference).[162] In the discussion of the "additional factors" in tragedy, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking is used as an example of an action performed in an abnormal state

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[162] Ibid., p. 7.

of mind which has no influence whatever on the action of the play which follows it. Similarly, in regard to the question of the influence of the supernatural, it is noted that Macbeth is not pushed into an act; the supernatural rather gives a distinct form to forces already at work within him.[163] When talking of action as conflict, Bradley stresses that even in a play like Macbeth the interest of the outward conflict cannot be said to exceed that of the conflict within the hero's soul. It is easy to see that the play is a struggle between the hero and heroine on one side and the representatives of Duncan on the other, but that is too external a way of looking at it. It is a conflict of spiritual forces, an immense ambition in Macbeth against loyalty and patriotism in Macduff and Malcolm, but these same powers or principles equally collide within Macbeth himself. Neither the inner or the outward conflict by itself could make the tragedy which is Macbeth.[164] In the latter part of the first chapter Bradley points out that Shakespeare does have such characters as Macbeth in the hero's role, which Aristotle apparently would not permit. To compensate for the spectator's desire for Macbeth's downfall, the playwright must build up emotions which are proper to tragedy, so he makes Macbeth a hero built on the grand scale, a man driven by a consuming ambition and endowed with a conscience which is terrifying. The case of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is one which seems

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[163] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[164] Ibid., pp. 17-19.

to give a handle to those who believe that we ought to talk of the tragedies in terms of "justice" and "merit," but Bradley believes that even in a play like Macbeth we do not judge during our actual experience of the play, and the use of such terms is untrue to our imaginative impressions. We do not judge Macbeth during the play and we do not think of him as simply attacking the moral order; rather, we realize that he is a part of the whole which overwhelms him.[165]

"Construction in Shakespeare's Tragedies," the second lecture in Shakespearean Tragedy, is a detailed analysis of the structure of the four great tragedies (with some references to the other tragedies also). The Shakespearean tragedy, says Bradley, falls roughly into three parts, the exposition, the growth and vicissitudes of the conflict, and the issue of the conflict in catastrophe.[166] Macbeth follows Shakespeare's usual plan in tragedy by opening with an arresting scene full of action and interest that is followed at once by a much quieter narrative. The contrast in this play is very bold but quite successful. The first scene is only eleven lines long, but it captures the attention and imagination at once and secures for the next scene an attention it could not hope to get by itself. Shakespeare also utilizes the opening scenes to make us at once conscious of some influence that is to bring evil to the hero. In Macbeth the first thing we see are the

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[165] Ibid., pp. 20, 22, 32-33, 37.

[166] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

Witches, and Macbeth's first words, although he cannot realize it, are an echo of the Witches' "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." The exposition in Macbeth is short because the situation from which the conflict is to arise is relatively simple; in Hamlet, for example, where the situation is more complex, the exposition is longer.[167]

The outward conflict in Macbeth can be well defined, and the hero himself, however influenced by others, supplies the main driving force of the action throughout the play. The result is that the play shows a much simpler constructional plan than, for instance, Othello or King Lear. The upward movement is extraordinarily rapid and the crisis arrives early, then Macbeth's cause turns slowly downward and finally hastens to ruin. Shakespeare's greatest problem in constructing Macbeth was, as in each of the tragedies except Othello, to sustain interest in the troublesome time between the crisis and the final catastrophe. Some of the greatest of the tragedies have a tendency to drag at about the fourth act, Bradley says, and there is a sort of pause in the action. This is often signified by the fact that the hero is absent from the stage for a considerable time while the counteraction is rising. In Macbeth the hero is out for about four hundred and fifty lines. Julius Caesar never manages, even in the catastrophe, to reach the height of interest of the greatest scenes that came before Act IV, and Bradley says that "perhaps"

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[167] Ibid., pp. 43, 45-46.

this is also our impression in regard to Macbeth.[168]

Shakespeare sees the difficulty and employs various means to overcome it. The pause after the crisis in Macbeth is considerably deferred by following up the crisis at once with the murder of Banquo and the banquet-scene, and this carries us through to the end of the third act despite the relatively early crisis. At this point, at the beginning of Act IV, the playwright employs a device which he also uses in some of the other tragedies: he reminds us of the state of affairs in which the play began. In Macbeth we are shown the Witches once more, and they give the hero a fresh set of prophecies. This serves to arouse our interest in a new movement which we feel is beginning, and there is the additional fact that this scene in Macbeth is stimulating from a purely theatrical point of view. Shakespeare is also likely to sustain interest at about this point by making clear certain inner changes which have taken place in the hero. As Macbeth's fortunes begin to decline we are made aware of his increasing irritability and savagery. Two other expedients, found in Macbeth in a single scene, are to introduce some new emotion, usually pathetic, and to introduce some element of humor. The scene in Act IV between Lady Macduff and her young son exemplifies each of these devices.[169]

In the catastrophe itself we often find a battle, but in Macbeth we may suspect that Shakespeare has an intention besides that

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[168] Ibid., pp. 47-48, 52, 56-58.

[169] Ibid., pp. 59-62.

of pleasing his fellows (who evidently loved stage fights). The fact that Macbeth dies in battle gives to the structure a sort of final rise, and we are enabled to mingle sympathy and admiration with a desire for his defeat. In his actual death we are helped to regard Macbeth as a hero.[170]

In these remarks on the construction of Shakespeare's tragedies Bradley acknowledges himself to be indebted to Gustav Freytag.[171] This is most noticeably the case in regard to the discussion of the problems Shakespeare encountered between the climax and the catastrophe. Freytag notes the problem and some of Shakespeare's attempted solutions, but Bradley's handling of the matter is more systematic and thorough than Freytag's and more interesting.[172]

Before Bradley begins his main critique of the four plays, he discusses briefly, at the end of the second chapter and the beginning of the third, some of the defects in the tragedies, the place of the tragedies in Shakespeare's literary career, and changes in style and versification from the earlier to the later tragedies. In regard to the latter two subjects we need do no more than note that Bradley does discuss such matters, even if quite briefly, but one of his remarks about possible defects in Shakespeare applies especially to Macbeth and has been picked up

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[170] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[171] Ibid., p. 40, n. 1.

[172] Freytag, pp. 185-189.

by two later critics. Bradley considers it a "real defect" for Shakespeare to string together a number of scenes, some quite short, in which the characters are frequently changed. There are examples of this in the last act of Macbeth and in the middle part of Antony and Cleopatra. Bradley believes that Shakespeare used the method as the easiest way out of a difficulty, especially when he had a lot of rather undramatic material that he wanted to work in, and Bradley realizes that Shakespeare's stage made such writing possible. "But, considered abstractly, it is a defective method"; it is too much like a mere narrative, and too choppy a narrative at that.[173] F. E. Halliday says that Bradley's criticism was "handicapped by the static spectacular method of producing the plays at this period, and this accounts for his complaint that too often Shakespeare strings together a number of short scenes . . . ."[174] And C. J. Sisson finds that Bradley was "moving in a world remote from the stage for which Shakespeare wrote" when he calls the short scenes in Shakespeare a defect.[175] A lack of interest or lack of knowledge on Bradley's part toward things Elizabethan does often seem to explain why Bradley takes a certain position, but the critical problem here is a different one. Bradley appears to be fully aware that Shakespeare's stage made such

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[173] Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 71-72.

[174] Shakespeare and His Critics, rev. ed. (London, 1958), pp. 30-31.

[175] Sisson, p. 21. Mr. Sisson is also speaking of Bradley's criticism of the soliloquies.

writing possible, but he still feels that, "considered abstractly," such writing is defective. The problem is, perhaps, whether such "abstract" criticism is possible. The present writer feels that it is, and that it is not a final stamp of approval on a practice to show that "everybody was doing it then." Perhaps it is possible to ask, "Should they have been?" Bradley stresses the impression always, and the present writer has always felt in reading Antony and Cleopatra, at least, that the construction is faulty. It is a thought that obtrudes itself into the experience of the play, no matter how aware one may be of the differences between Shakespeare's stage and our own.

The Central Critique of Macbeth

Lectures IX and X in Shakespearean Tragedy are wholly devoted to Macbeth and form Bradley's central criticism of that play. The first of these lectures opens with a short introduction in which Bradley makes some remarks on when the play was written, its style, its popularity, and the specific impression it makes as compared to the other tragedies. Bradley usually begins his criticism of a tragedy (including Antony and Cleopatra in Oxford Lectures and Coriolanus in A Miscellany) with some such preface as this. The keynote is a series of comparisons of the play which is to be discussed with some of the other Shakespearean tragedies in an attempt to indicate to the reader, without any exhaustive analysis, some of the ways in which this tragedy stands out from the others. It

is an effective and valuable introduction. Bradley often ends these brief introductory passages with a "capsule comment" about the play. Of Macbeth he says, after pointing out that it is the shortest by far of the four great tragedies, "our experience in traversing it is so crowded and intense that it leaves an impression not of brevity but of speed. It is the most vehement, the most concentrated, perhaps we may say the most tremendous, of the tragedies."

Following this we have the first of the principal topics (set off by Bradley with a "1"), atmosphere and irony in Macbeth. "A Shakespearean tragedy, as a rule, has a special tone or atmosphere of its own, quite perceptible, however difficult to describe. The effect of this atmosphere is marked with unusual strength in Macbeth."[176] Examining the several ingredients which make up the general effect, Bradley distinguishes five in particular: darkness and blackness; flashes of light and color, especially the color of blood; vivid, violent imagery; horror and supernatural dread; and irony. Almost all of the scenes which come to mind when we think of Macbeth take place at night or in some dark place. Bradley points out the numerous indications that this is so, but he adds that the darkness is not the cold dim gloom of Lear; "it is really the impression of a black night broken by flashes of light and colour, sometimes vivid and even glaring." There are thunderstorms, a vision of a glittering dagger, torches and flames

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[176] Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 333.

--and especially the color-imagery of blood. Again and again (and Bradley indicates just where) the image of blood is put before the spectator, not just by the events but by full descriptions and the use of the word and its idea in dialogue and metaphor. The imagery in general is almost throughout of a violence and magnitude that is characteristic of the play.

All of these agencies combine with the appearances of the Witches and the Ghost to produce an effect of horror and supernatural dread, and to this effect contribute several other aspects of the play which Bradley enumerates in detail--the word-pictures drawn by the Witches, Duncan's horses tearing at each other in frenzy, the voice which Macbeth hears, Lady Macbeth's re-enactment of the crime while she sleepwalks, and many other such instances. The effect thus obtained is strengthened by the use of irony; in no other play, says Bradley, does Shakespeare employ this device so extensively. Macbeth unconsciously echoes the Witches' words when we first see him; Lady Macbeth says lightly that "A little water clears us of this deed," but she comes to the sleepwalking scene; Banquo is urged by Macbeth, "Fail not our feast," as Banquo rides away to his death, and the murdered man keeps his pledge, "My lord, I will not," by returning to the banquet as a ghost. Bradley discusses these and other examples of irony on the part of the author and concludes that it cannot be an accident that Shakespeare so often uses a device which emphasizes an atmosphere of supernatural dread and of hidden forces at work. Bradley adds in

a footnote that the fact that some of these cases of irony would escape an audience ignorant of the story and watching the play for the first time is one more indication that Shakespeare did not write only with immediate stage purposes in mind.[177]

The interest which Bradley shows in the atmosphere of a play is not confined to Macbeth, since it is, after all, very much in accord with his general attempt to isolate the unique poetic experience. In the chapters on Othello he discusses the atmosphere of fatality and of oppressive confinement to a narrow world.[178] In the lectures on King Lear occurs the analysis of why the play conveys feelings of vastness and universality.[179] In this latter, the part in which Bradley touches on the monster and animal imagery is especially noteworthy.[180]

Professor G. Wilson Knight says that it was Bradley who "first subjected the atmospheric, what I have called the 'spatial,' qualities of the Shakespearian play to a considered, if rudimentary comment."[181] E. E. Stoll will have none of this sort of thing. No one, he says, is justified in receiving a "mass of vague suggestion" from an opera of Mozart's, though if it were one of Wagner's, that would be a different matter. Critics like Swinburne

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[177] Ibid., pp. 333-340 and n. 1 on p. 340.

[178] Ibid., pp. 180-182, 185.

[179] Ibid., pp. 261-270.

[180] Ibid., pp. 265-268.

[181] The Wheel of Fire, 4th ed. (London, 1949), p. v.

and Bradley, "who have the poet's gift," consistently cover the "bold and rugged Elizabethan outlines" of Shakespeare's plays with "atmosphere, and depth of light and shade. It is called interpretation--it is assimilation, rather . . . ."[182] The present writer feels that is most unfair in this instance to couple Bradley with Swinburne. If a critic does not agree with Bradley's remarks on the atmosphere of the plays, he ought to consider that Bradley builds up his arguments in each case by a painstaking series of references to the text, so that he deserves to be argued against carefully and in some detail.

The second main section of Lecture IX is a ten-page debate on the proper interpretation to be given to the Witches and the Witch-scenes. Bradley is concerned to refute two opposite errors, and it would appear that he takes up the matter at such length simply because he cannot agree with what some critics had previously said. It is a perversion of the truth, on one hand, Bradley feels, to hold that the Witches are intended as goddesses or even as fates, or that they control what Macbeth does. There is no indication in the play that the Witches are not human or that Macbeth is not a free agent. On the other hand, Bradley feels that it is inadequate to the truth to say, as some do, that the Witches are merely symbolic representations of desires which have been hidden within the hero's mind and now rise into his consciousness. This is too narrow and is untrue to Shakespeare's presentation. Bradley

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[182] Stoll, "Anachronism," MP, VII, 570.

argues in some detail against both of these critical extremes, but it is not surprising that he is more exercised over the first deviation and spends more time on it; we have seen in Chapter III how consistently he argues that there is no case in the tragedies in which the hero is not responsible for his own actions. The truth about the Witches lies in the middle, Bradley concludes. What the Witches say is fatal to Macbeth only because there is something in him which is eager to hear them, but at the same time the Witches signify forces constantly at work in the world surrounding the hero which entangle him at once when he surrenders to their voice.

The last section of Lecture IX and the first part of Lecture X are devoted to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and this is followed by a section on Banquo and by scattered remarks on a few of the minor characters.[183] There are other topics, which we shall consider briefly later, but what we want to emphasize now is that from this point on in his two chapters on Macbeth Bradley is mostly concerned with the characters. Either one of the sections on the Macbeths is by itself longer than the sections on other subjects, and when the remarks on Banquo and the others are added to the two main character studies, it will be seen that character-criticism accounts for a good proportion of Bradley's central critique. This is also true of the six lectures (III through VIII) which

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[183]The reader should understand that the "sections" or "parts" which are referred to are marked off with numbers by Bradley himself within each of the lectures.

deal particularly with the other three plays in Shakespearean Tragedy. In fact, one is less conscious of the amount of character-criticism in Macbeth than in the other three, since Macbeth has only two main characters who are really important (a fact to which Bradley calls our attention[184]), while in King Lear there are twelve different characters whom Bradley talks about. The lengthiest studies, each extending over several sections, are those of Hamlet and Iago.

"From this murky background," begins the last section of Lecture IX, "stand out the two great terrible figures, who dwarf all the remaining characters of the drama. Both are sublime, and both inspire, far more than the other tragic heroes, the feeling of awe." The atmosphere of the play surrounds them and, so to speak, penetrates them.

The two are alike in some ways. They are both fired with ambition, they are proud, commanding, even peremptory. They love each other and suffer together. But they are also shown as unlike, and much of the play's action is built upon the contrast between them, for their different ways of approaching the idea of the murder and the different effects the deed has on them are dramatically significant. After the deed Macbeth becomes gradually more prominent, until he is unmistakeably the leading figure of the play, and he is also shown throughout as having the more complex personality of the two. He is brave, a successful general, and

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[184]Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 387-388.

terribly ambitious, but what makes the character extraordinary is his "one marked peculiarity, the true apprehension of which is the key to Shakespeare's conception." This bold man of action has, within certain limits, the imagination of a poet. Because of it he is liable to supernatural fears, and through it, especially, are channeled promptings of conscience and honor. Instead of his conscience speaking to him in terms of moral ideas and commands, it presents him with alarming and horrifying thoughts and images. His imagination is the best part of him, and it tries to stop him from what he is doing; it is his deepest self speaking, but in vain. We must not, of course, exaggerate Macbeth's imagination into an equal with that of Hamlet; it is excitable and intense, but narrow. Macbeth does not meditate on universals in the way that Hamlet does, nor does he show any sign of unusual sensitivity to glory or beauty in the world or in a soul. And as the play progresses, his imagination becomes less active, he becomes increasingly brutal and domineering, and we feel for him less sympathy or admiration, although our attention is held by the very change which takes place. This portrait of Macbeth is perhaps the most remarkable exhibition in Shakespeare of development of character.

Bradley devotes the first section of Lecture X to Lady Macbeth, whom he regards as one of the most awe-inspiring figures that Shakespeare drew, at least in the first part of the play. What is remarkable about her is her amazing power of will. She

determines that a thing will be and lets nothing stand in her way. She is a simpler person than her husband and thinks him weak (in which she is mistaken); to her there is no separation between will and deed, and she brushes aside all of her husband's qualms of conscience and intimations of honor in her firm aim at the crown. "Moral distinctions do not in this exultation exist for her; or rather they are inverted: 'good' means to her the crown and whatever is required to obtain it, 'evil' whatever stands in the way of its attainment." Her courage and force of will are her greatness, and it is a mistake to regard her as especially intellectual. The limitations of her mind are most apparent in the area where Macbeth is so strong, for she has little imagination. This quality, or lack of it, which makes her strong for immediate action, is fatal to her, for she has not been able to foresee what the consequences of the murder must be to her husband and to herself. She attains the crown and finds it insecure, and she discovers that her husband is in misery and is likely to betray their secret to the world. She shows the old strength of will in the banquet scene, but after that we see her again only in the sleepwalking scene, where the terrible ravages of nature are shown--but note, it is her nature, not her will, that gives way. In Lady Macbeth's misery there is no trace of contrition. "Doubtless she would have given the world to undo what she had done; and the thought of it killed her; but, regarding her from the tragic point of view, we may truly say that she was too great to repent."

In the character-criticism of Macbeth there are certain unusual elements which we have not yet noted and which ought to command our attention, for they have been widely discussed. Most striking, perhaps, are the occasions when Bradley speculates on matters which are not actually within the text of the play. He not only says, for example, that Macbeth is exceedingly ambitious, but he adds that he "must have been so by temper" and that this tendency "must have been greatly strengthened by his marriage."[185] He makes various suggestions as to what Macbeth's "customary demeanour" was outside of the extraordinary situations in which we see him, and he wonders, in a similar vein, about the "habitual relations" between Macbeth and his wife.[186] These examples (and there are others) have to do with what we suppose things were like before the play began, but sometimes Bradley speculates on events within the play about which the text affords no real information. We are sure, he says, that Lady Macbeth has never betrayed her husband or herself by the slightest word or look, save in sleep when she could not help herself.[187] Reasons are weighed about why Macbeth does not consult his Lady in the actual working out of Banquo's assassination; as time passes in the play, "we imagine the bond between them slackened, and Lady Macbeth left

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[185] Ibid., p. 351.

[186] Ibid., pp. 351, 377.

[187] Ibid., p. 368.

much alone. She sinks slowly downward."[188] We are even, in a sense, asked to think about what would have happened in the future if events had turned out otherwise in the play: Bradley says that the defeat of Macbeth's better feelings in their struggle with ambition leaves the hero completely wretched, and he would have remained so even if he had been successful in attaining a position of external security; no possible experience could bring Macbeth to make his peace with evil.[189]

Two other practices of Bradley's which are unusual are connected with the above. He often compares the characters in Macbeth to those in other plays--Macbeth's love for his wife was probably never unselfish, never the love of Brutus for Portia[190] --and this occasionally takes the form of supposing what one character would have done in another's place. Toward the end of a few remarks on Macduff's boy, Bradley says, "Nor am I sure that, if the son of Coriolanus had been murdered, his last words to his mother would have been, 'Run away, I pray you.'"[191] Bradley also gives the impression at times, while criticizing Macbeth, that we cannot always quite trust what the characters tell us about themselves or about others. Lady Macbeth says to her husband that he is too full of the milk of human kindness, but, besides the fact

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[188] Ibid., p. 375.

[189] Ibid., pp. 352, 365.

[190] Ibid., p. 364, n. 1.

[191] Ibid., p. 395.

that it is a remark made in impatience, we must take into consideration that she does not fully understand him.[192] Lady Macbeth explains that she herself would have murdered Duncan if he had not resembled her father; Bradley, however, adds that "in reality [sic], quite apart from this recollection of her father, she could never have done the murder if her husband had failed."[193]

An examination of the lectures on Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear shows that the particular elements of Bradley's character-criticism which we found striking in Macbeth are by no means limited to that play. There are several clear examples of the critic's going beyond the material provided him by the text, most notably, perhaps (and certainly most lengthily), in the several pages which he spends on the problem of what Hamlet was like before his father's death.[194] We are treated to thoughts about Cordelia's youth and asked to wonder whether Edmund might not have been "a very different man" if he had been whole brother to Edgar instead of a bastard and had been at home during the years when he was "out."[195] A good example of Bradley's way of reasoning in these matters is provided by his statement that probably one of the reasons why Hamlet delayed from the beginning was that he had "a repugnance to the idea of falling suddenly on a man who could

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[192] Ibid., p. 351.

[193] Ibid., p. 370.

[194] Ibid., pp. 108-117.

[195] Ibid., pp. 302, 317.

not defend himself. This, so far as we can see, was the only plan that Hamlet ever contemplated. There is no positive evidence in the play that he ever regarded it with the aversion that any brave and honourable man, one must suppose, would feel for it; but, as Hamlet certainly was brave and honourable, we may presume that he did so."[196]

Instances of comparisons between figures in different plays are also common. Desdemona and Cordelia are each compared to a host of other Shakespearean females, for example, and we are told that "Edmund is apparently a good deal younger than Iago."[197] There are conjectures about what Cordelia would have done in Desdemona's place about the lost handkerchief and in the final crisis.[198] In commenting on the passages between Lear and Cordelia in the opening scene, Bradley says, "Blank astonishment, anger, wounded love, contend within him; but for the moment he restrains himself and asks,

But goes thy heart with this?

Imagine Imogen's reply! But Cordelia answers . . . ."[199] Nor are examples lacking of the tendency not always to believe what a

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[196] Ibid., p. 101.

[197] Ibid., pp. 203-206, 300, 316. "With the tenderness of Viola or Desdemona she unites something of the resolution, power, and dignity of Hermione, and reminds us sometimes of Helena, sometimes of Isabella, though she has none of the traits which prevent Isabella from winning our hearts" (p. 316).

[198] Ibid., pp. 205-206.

[199] Ibid., p. 320.

character says. In Hamlet, Bradley doubts very much that the Queen is telling the truth when she tells her husband that Hamlet "weeps for what is done," after the killing of Polonius; he argues at some length that Gertrude's statement "is almost certainly untrue though it may be to her credit."[200] In the commentary on Othello Bradley warns the reader not to believe "a syllable that Iago utters on any subject, including himself, until one has tested his statement by comparing it with known facts and with other statements of his own or of other people, and by considering whether he had in the particular circumstances any reason for telling a lie or for telling the truth." Bradley applies this especially to the soliloquies of Iago in which he talks of his motives for his evil-doing.[201] In King Lear Bradley refuses to believe Kent's statement that he is forty-eight years old; after examining all the evidence, including the impressions which we receive from various incidents, the critic suggests "three-score and upward" as a likely answer.[202]

Why does Professor Bradley choose to deal with the characters at such length and in a way which, whether it is or is not acceptable criticism, must be acknowledged to have something of the unusual about it at times? Part of the answer, at least, lies in

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[200] Ibid., p. 104, n. 1.

[201] Ibid., pp. 211-213, 222-226, 234-235.

[202] Ibid., pp. 308-309.

the treatment of Shakespeare's characters by critics before Bradley.

It is difficult to say just when Shakespeare critics began to take a special interest in the characters. Pope, for example, cannot be said to have paid particular attention to them, but in the Preface to his famous edition of the plays he does sound a note that is often echoed thereafter: "His Characters are so much Nature her self, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as Copies of her. Those of other Poets have a constant resemblance, which shews that they receiv'd them from one another, and were but multiplyers of the same image . . . . But every single character in Shakespear is as much an Individual as those in Life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike . . . ."[203] This idea that Shakespeare's characters are absolutely true to life (or true to Nature, as it was often expressed) is found all through the criticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Samuel Johnson admired Shakespeare's chief characters because they are men, not the unlikely and exaggerated "heroes" of other dramatists, and he summed up his estimate of Shakespeare's truth to nature in a beautifully phrased pronouncement: "This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirrour of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him,

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[203] "Preface to Edition of Shakespeare, 1725," Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, ed. D. N. Smith (Glasgow, 1903), p. 48.

may here be cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions."[204] Mrs. Montagu, writing at about the same time as Johnson, allows that Shakespeare has "many and great faults," but characterization is not one of them; in the delineation of character, she insists, Shakespeare surpasses all other playwrights "and even Homer himself," because Shakespeare is able to give an air of reality to everything by drawing his portraits directly from life.[205]

But Pope was not content with saying that the characters are completely true to nature. This is so true, he added, and Shakespeare has so far rendered each of the characters unique, that "had all the Speeches been printed without the very names of the Persons, I believe one might have apply'd them with certainty to every speaker."[206] Johnson is not quite willing to go that far, but he grants that it would be difficult to find any speech that could be properly transferred from the character now speaking it to another claimant.[207] And Hazlitt has no reservations at all about Pope's statement; he quotes at length from Pope on the won-

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[204]From the 1765 Preface to the Edition of Shakespeare, Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. W. Raleigh (London, 1925), pp. 11-14.

[205]An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear (London, 1769), pp. 17-18, 20-21.

[206]Pope, p. 48.

[207]Johnson, pp. 13-14.

derful lifelikeness and uniqueness of Shakespeare's characters, and, after completing his quotation with Pope's assertion that he could assign every speech, says that it is his intention in the book, Characters of Shakespear's Plays, to illustrate Pope's remarks in a more particular manner by a reference to each play.[208]

But could one say that the characters are historically true to life? John Dennis, who wrote before Pope, bemoaned the fact that Shakespeare, though a great natural genius, lacked learning and poetical art. For want of these, he said, "our Author has sometimes made gross Mistakes in the Characters which he has drawn from History." Dennis cites the case of Menenius in Coriolanus: Shakespeare has made a Roman senator a buffoon, "which is a great Absurdity."[209] This was answered directly by Dr. Johnson with his usual good common sense some time later,[210] and in the nineteenth century some critics went quite far in their claims for the historical authenticity of the characters. A. W. von Schlegel declared that Shakespeare's talent for characterization was so great that he not only depicted with complete truthfulness kings and beggars and wise men and idiots, but he was able to portray with the greatest accuracy the spirit of the ancient Romans, the peoples of Southern Europe (in some of the comedies), the cultivated

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[208](London, 1817), pp. vii-viii.

[209]An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear (London, 1712), pp. 3-4.

[210]Johnson, p. 15.

society of his own day and the barbarism of Norman times.[211] Gervinus agreed. Through Shakespeare's plays, he said, we get a glimpse into the Roman aristocracy, the Roman republic, the world of the Middle Ages, and England in earlier and contemporary times.[212]

From saying that Shakespeare's characters are thoroughly true to life in every respect and emphasizing their number and diversity, it is not much of a jump to saying that we can learn a good deal by studying them. Mrs. Montagu and Professor Gervinus emphasize that Shakespeare is not only a great genius but a great moral philosopher,[213] but other critics give reasons for studying Shakespeare which are more specifically concerned with the characters themselves. Thomas Whately says that it is his design, in studying in detail the "masterly copies from nature" that Shakespeare has drawn, to help his readers to acquire a turn for observing character, for such a turn of mind is agreeable and useful in forming our judgments of characters both in dramatic representations and in real life.[214] William Richardson proposes an even more valuable good to be aimed at as the goal of such studies. He takes the position that man have always sought to study human

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[211] Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, tr. J. Black, 2nd ed. (London, 1886), p. 363.

[212] Shakespeare Commentaries, tr. F. E. Bunnètt, rev. ed. (London, 1875), p. 2.

[213] Ibid., pp. 2-3; Montagu, pp. 20, 59.

[214] Whately, pp. 25-26.

nature, since we cannot improve ourselves without knowing ourselves, but it is very difficult to pursue such an investigation either by reflection on our own feelings or observation of the conduct of others. There are so many limitations involved, and the operations of the mind and the passions are so complex. It would be of great advantage, therefore, if the position of the mind, in any given circumstances, could be fixed until it could be carefully studied for philosophical purposes, and the causes, operations, and effects in each case ascertained with precision. To accomplish these ends, dramatists and their works might be expected to be quite helpgul, since it is their aim to excel in imitating the passions. Shakespeare has never been surpassed in this imitation. He "unites the two essential powers of dramatic invention, that of forming characters; and that of imitating, in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed." Where Corneille, for example, describes, Shakespeare imitates directly from life. "It is, therefore, my intention to examine some of his remarkable characters, and to analyze their component parts. An exercise no less adapted to improve the heart, than to inform the understanding. My intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct."[215]

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[215] Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters, 5th ed. (London, 1797), pp. 1-33, 394-395; see esp. pp. 20, 30-31, 33, 394-395. This fifth edition is a cumulation of several essays, the first group of which appeared in 1774 under the title of A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters.

Mrs. Jameson indicates a similar intention in the Introduction to her Shakespeare's Heroines. This truly fascinating Introduction is in the form of a dialogue between Alda, who really speaks for Mrs. Jameson, and Medon, a gentleman friend. Alda reveals that her object in writing is "to illustrate the various modifications of which the female character is susceptible, with their causes and results." Medon presses her to explain why she has chosen to do this by writing of Shakespeare's heroines rather than by taking examples from real life or from history. Alda develops her objections to both of these apparently more logical courses and concludes with the statement that the riddles left unsolved by other means she found solved in Shakespeare. "All I sought I found there; his characters combine history and real life; they are complete individuals, whose hearts and souls are laid open before us . . . ." You can do with these characters what you cannot do with real people--unfold the whole character, strip it of its pretensions and disguises, and examine and analyze it at leisure, all without offense to anyone or pain to yourself. Medon's approving reply to this argument deserves to be recorded: "In this respect they may be compared to those exquisite anatomical preparations of wax, which those who could not without disgust and horror dissect a real specimen, may study, and learn the mysteries of our frame, and all the internal workings of the wondrous machine of life."[216]

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[216] 2nd ed. (London, 1883), pp. 1-38, esp. 4-5, 11-14. Mrs.

The critics whom we have been noticing felt that they understood the method by which Shakespeare had constructed these completely lifelike characters so worthy of study. Aristotle had said in the Poetics, Chapter XVII, that the poet, in working out his play, should place the scene before his eyes, look at everything with the utmost intentness, and even imagine the gestures which are to be used. This way he is most likely to avoid inconsistencies in his play and be convincing, "for those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent . . . . Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper self." The critics in the latter part of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth were very much interested in and influenced by contemporary theories of sympathy and psychologizing,[217] and it is probable that Richardson is reflecting Hume and Adam Smith, not Aristotle, when he emphasizes the sympathetic accord between Shakespeare and his characters. Perfect imitation of nature can never be achieved, Richardson says, unless the dramatic poet in some measure becomes the person to be repre-

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Jameson's volume first appeared in 1832; note the subtitle, "Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical."

[217]Robert W. Babcock, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1931), pp. 155-182; Sister Mary M. O'Donnell, "The Genesis of a Fallacy in Romantic Shakespearean Criticism," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo., 1940), entire, but esp. xv-xvi, 104-106; Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience (London, 1957), p. 168.

sented. The poet must retire from himself and clothe his own person in the character. Shakespeare did this to a marvelous extent, for his was an unlimited genius. He was able to enter easily into every condition of human nature and reproduce it exactly in his characters. "Shakespeare, inventing the characters of Hamlet, Macbeth, or Othello, actually felt the passions, and contending emotions ascribed to them."[218]

The feeling that this was the way in which Shakespeare had created his characters combined with the sympathetic and psychological tendencies of the times to produce a criticism that attempted to get inside the characters, to treat them as real people, and which took it for granted that Shakespeare had drawn each of them as a complete and consistent portrait. This led to various results which differed among different critics, though there is much overlapping and inter-connection. Several critics, emphasizing the aspect of reality and completeness, took the attitude that if something in a character seems inconsistent or unreal or simply very puzzling, it is because we have not looked closely enough at the character or have failed to put ourselves in harmony with Shakespeare. Maurice Morgann, as we have seen,[219] said that we must trust our mental impressions to guide us to a true comprehension of Shakespeare's intention; we must approach Falstaff through our feelings rather than our understanding when the sole

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[218] Richardson, pp. 20-22, 30-31.

[219] Pp. 25-26 above.

use of the latter would lead us into difficulties; we must make a detailed study, sometimes, to get at the truth of a single point in one of Shakespeare's characters.[220] Coleridge says that Shakespeare's characters, "like those in real life," are very often misunderstood. The reader must take some pains to arrive at the truth about a character, and until you weigh all of the statements about a character carefully, including the character's own remarks about himself, you cannot hope to have discovered the poet's true idea.[221] R. G. Moulton, to choose a critic nearer Bradley's day, believed that the true interpretation of a character is simply that one which most fully includes all the details connected with him. When a hypothetical interpretation meets unintelligible details, it must be enlarged to take them in, and unless a conception of the personage has been formed which takes in all the details, the character cannot be said to have been interpreted as yet. Criticism allows itself to speak of "inconsistencies of character" and "incredible incidents" but that is because the inductor has not been sufficiently patient or observant. Moulton speaks in passing of the critic's "seeking to read into harmony" what look to be inconsistencies.[222] Professor Moulton seems to take it for granted that everything in the characters is deliberate

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[220]Morgann, pp. 4-6, 9, 12-13.

[221]Lectures and Notes, p. 241.

[222]"Some Canons of Character-Interpretation," Transactions of the New Shakspere Society, No. 11 (1887), 123-126.

and therefore can be worked out into a consistent explanation. He, along with other critics in this category, do not seem to entertain the possibility of radical inconsistency in a Shakespearean character.[223]

Many critics, emphasizing the reality of the characters and attempting, so to speak, to get inside them in order fully to understand them, ended up by treating the characters as though they had lives outside the limits of the text. Morgann, for example, suggests that Falstaff's wit and humor probably led him very early into society and made him so acceptable there that he never felt the need to acquire other virtues. Morgann tends not to believe Hal when he says that Falstaff's ring is copper, not gold--"the ring, I believe, was really gold; tho' probably a little too much alloyed with baser metal"--and he has no doubt at all about the arms on the ring: they are genuine and authentic proof of an ancient gentility.[224] Mrs. Jameson, writing on Shakespeare's heroines, speculates on what the married life of Beatrice and Benedick will be like and on the qualities in Hermione's character which would account for her sixteen-year self-seclusion. "In such a mind as hers, the sense of a cruel injury, inflicted by one she had loved and trusted, without awakening any violent anger or

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[223]C. H. Herford would include in this group the Ulrici-Gervinus school who look for the "unifying idea" of each character. A Sketch of Recent Shakesperean Investigation, 1893-1923 (London, 1923), p. 48.

[224]Morgann, pp. 17-18, 51-52.

any desire of vengeance, would sink deep--almost incurably and lastingly deep." And so forth, at some length.[225] Edward Dowden discusses Hamlet before the play opens, "a ponderer on the things of life and death, who has never formed a resolution or executed a deed."[226] Moulton, who wants to make Shakespeare criticism scientific, tells us that Ophelia is really endowed with a moral and intellectual nature of a superior order, since she attracted Hamlet, who is so towering in his intellectual power; the reason why Ophelia leaves on some readers an impression of weakness or negativeness is because we only get a chance to see her in unusual circumstances, situations in which she is forced to stultify herself.[227] Gustav Freytag believes that Shakespeare's characters are representative of a peculiarly Teutonic method of creation. The Germanic dramatist makes each individual in his play a masterpiece of art, considering the entire life of the figure, including that part which lies outside the play, and making of the character an esteemed friend.[228]

This extra-textual life of the character leads eventually to a work like Mary Cowden Clarke's popular The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines, where the main interest is frankly outside the

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[225]Jameson, pp. 87, 188-189. Mrs. Jameson is also much given to comparing and contrasting the heroines.

[226]Dowden, Shakspere: A Critical Study, pp. 132-133.

[227]Moulton, Transactions, No. 11, 129.

[228]Freytag, pp. 254-255.

plays.[229] Such a work, of course, is not subject to the criticism of the Shakespeare scholar, since it is only intended as a product of the imagination, but it is of interest as the logical culmination of a trend.

It is not difficult now to see that Bradley's character-criticism is to a large extent influenced by and explained by these practices of his predecessors which we have been examining. The examples which we took from his lectures on Macbeth and the other three tragedies[230] indicate that his basic attitudes toward Shakespeare characters have been formed by his Romantic and pre-Romantic forebears. We are in a position also to understand why Bradley spends so much time on the characters and is so convinced that there must be an answer to the major problems, at least, of character-interpretation.[231]

It is important, however, to point out what Bradley does not do, or does not accept. He says that it is "hopelessly un-Shakespearean" to suppose that Shakespeare had an historical mind and labored to make his Romans perfectly Roman or the characters of Lear and Cymbeline authentic early Britons.[232] The crowds in Coriolanus are the English mob which Shakespeare was familiar

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[229]New ed., 5 vols. (N.Y., 1891).

[230]See pp. 104-108 above.

[231]See p. 16 above.

[232]Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 187.

with.[233] He also denies that all of the characters speak in a way that is perfectly unique. On the one hand, he says, there are passages in the early plays and even in Hamlet where the characters, we feel, speak as they do simply because Shakespeare wanted to write beautiful poetry; on the other hand, there are passages and even whole characters which are not intensely imagined and whose speeches are not distinguishable from the speeches of other characters.[234] It is interesting to note that Bradley objects to the fact that certain critics have presumed to describe Lady Macbeth's physical appearance; such critics know more than Shakespeare, he says, for the author tells us nothing at all about such matters.[235] It seems safe to say that Bradley felt that his own excursions outside the text were always founded on something within the text itself.

Critics since Bradley have had a great deal to say about his character-criticism and the methods he used in it. In general, comment has been quite hostile, and when F. E. Halliday writes that "Bradleyism was discreditied, almost a term of derision,"[236] he is using "Bradleyism," as some other critics do, to denote a criticism mistakenly concerned with the psychological interpretation of flesh-and-blood characters. E. C. Pettet, for example,

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[233]"Coriolanus," Miscellany, p. 84.

[234]Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 74, 387-388.

[235]Ibid., p. 379, n. 1.

[236]Halliday, Shakespeare and His Critics, rev. ed., p. 36.

speaks of "the Bradleyan vice of 'anterior' speculation" and "the Bradleian [sic] habit of detailed psychological interpretation."[237] There is no point in listing all of the critics who have attacked Bradley's character-criticism, but it is interesting to note a few of the areas of attack. Some commentators, like L. C. Knights, stress the fact that a preoccupation with the characters is harmful to an understanding, or even a correct appreciation, of the play as a whole.[238] Others feel that Bradley solves all the difficulties in a play or character in a way that is artistic but not true to Shakespeare.[239] Many, of course, note and object to the discussions of events in the characters' lives outside the play; Schücking compares such criticism to looking under the frame of a picture for a continuation of the scene on the canvas, and A. B. Walkley says it is like the actor who thought the right way to play Othello was to black himself all over.[240] Raleigh, though he never mentions Bradley by name, objects to asking idle questions about the characters--Why does Cordelia answer her father as she does in the first scene?--and to asking what one character would have done in another's place.[241] Some critics object to

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[237] Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (London, 1949), pp. 87, 192.

[238] Knights, How Many Children, pp. 5-11.

[239] A. J. A. Waldock, Hamlet (Cambridge, Eng., 1931), p. 49.

[240] Schücking, p. 158, n. 1; Walkley, "Professor Bradley's Hamlet," Drama and Life (London, 1907), p. 155.

[241] Sir Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare (N.Y., 1907), pp. 135,

Bradley's occasional attempts to play detective: John Dover Wilson cites Bradley's treatment of Banquo as accessory after the fact as an example of Bradley at his weakest, treating Shakespeare as if he were an historian and drawing deductions in a way not suited to Elizabethan drama and never intended by the author.[242] L. B. Campbell is one of several who attack Bradley for his not believing what the characters say of themselves when there is no reason apparent in the play for them to be telling a lie.[243] Mr. Leavis, to close the bill of indictment, finds Bradley's critical remarks on the characters of Othello particularly damning because they are constantly accompanied by references to the text--Bradley is not merely wrong, he is perversely wrong.[244]

It would be incorrect to suppose that, although the majority of critics have objected strongly to Bradley's character-criticism, there have not been those who have defended it, if only by implication. T. B. Tomlinson points out that Shakespeare, as an enquiring Renaissance Man, would be strongly interested in character, and that in Hamlet and Macbeth he dwells on character in a way that Aristotle would seem not to have condoned; and Granville-Barker

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156. Raleigh probably avoids naming Bradley in his book out of a sense of delicacy; he was Bradley's immediate successor in some of the academic posts he held.

[242] J. D. Wilson, ed. Macbeth (Cambridge, Eng., 1947), p. xv.

[243] L. B. Campbell, p. 269.

[244] "Diabolic Intellect and the Noble Hero," Scrutiny, VI (1937), p. 262. This article has since been collected by Leavis in his The Common Pursuit (N.Y., 1952), pp. 136-159.

says that Othello and all of the later tragedies are tragedies of character.[245] Mary Lascelles, although she has her reservations about Bradley, insists that the study of the characters in their relations with one another is the right approach to an interpretation of the plays because it is Shakespeare's chief concern; we should not allow ourselves to be frightened away from the correct approach just because some critics have misused it.[246] Some approval is a bit naive, as when C. H. Herford says that Bradley's criticism owes much of its mastery to his "quick human sympathy" with the characters, whom he treats as men and women;[247] and there is an occasional writer who bestows on Bradley's reputation the kiss of death: "Being a 'Bradleyite' . . . I think of Shakespeare's characters as real people. . . . This approach has made it seem reasonable for me to write in imaginary scenes and conversations that are not in the plays themselves."[248] But support comes from a much more sophisticated source. T. S. Eliot gives respectful attention to Morgann's essay on Falstaff; to consider not only the actions of characters within the play but to infer from that behavior what their general character is and how they

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[245]Tomlinson, "Action and Soliloquy in Macbeth," Essays in Criticism, VIII (1958), 147; Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, Fourth Series (London, 1945), p. vi.

[246]Shakespeare's Measure for Measure (London, 1953), pp. 141-142.

[247]Review of Shakespearean Tragedy, MLR, I, 131.

[248]Blanche Coles, Shakespeare's Four Giants (Rindge, N.H., 1957), p. 13.

would act in other circumstances is, says Mr. Eliot, "a perfectly legitimate form of criticism, though liable to abuses; at its best, it can add very much to our enjoyment of the moments of the characters' life which are given in the scene, if we feel this richness of reality in them . . . ."[249]

The present writer is of the opinion that much of the adverse criticism of Bradley's character-criticism is justified and, indeed, necessary as a corrective to positive errors, particularly of method; but this writer cannot forget the genuine enlightenment which he found in Bradley's studies of the characters. The points in the character-studies where Bradley takes a course considered unacceptable by most modern critics are, after all, obvious to most modern readers, and the flaws, though perhaps of a marked nature, should not be permitted to obscure the frequent passages which contain something of value. The present writer, for example, finds the lengthy discussions of Hamlet's personality tiring, but he cannot deny that the study of Hamlet's relationship with his mother seems to be genuinely revealing of something which Shakespeare has put into the play. It does not appear, either, to be necessarily a bad practice to compare characters from different plays or to suppose them in one another's place. If this is done with restraint, it can point up aspects of the character that might not otherwise be noticed. Perhaps what many critics find

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249"Shakespearian Criticism," A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, edd. Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison (Cambridge, Eng., 1934), p. 297.

disturbing in Bradley's treatment of the characters, though they do not say so, is a certain sentimentality which is now felt to be rather embarrassing and out of place in a work of scholarly criticism.

When we embarked on our study of character-criticism in Macbeth and elsewhere in the tragedies, we said that there were still a few topics which we had not yet noted in Bradley's central handling of Macbeth.[250] We have already referred to one of these, and the lot need be no more than itemized in order to show what Bradley did include in these two chapters. In Lecture X the discussions of Lady Macbeth and of Banquo are followed by some remarks on Shakespeare's handling of the minor characters in this play and why it is that they are not particularly individualized. Next there is a consideration of the function within the whole of three scenes which Bradley feels are of great importance in securing variety of tone and emotion: the Porter-scene, the conversation between Lady Macduff and her boy, and the scene in which Macduff hears of the murder of his wife and children. Some critics or play-producers, Bradley notes, think that some or all of these scenes are out of place or unworthy of Shakespeare, and it is Bradley's concern to point out the place they have according to the author's intention. Lastly, Bradley discusses the passages in Macbeth which are in prose rather than verse; he expands this

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[250] See p. 100 above.

to include a partial survey of the prose passages in the other tragedies and suggests that one of the important uses of prose in Shakespeare's tragedies is to indicate an abnormal state of mind.

The Special Notes on Macbeth

At the end of Shakespearean Tragedy there are ninety-three pages of special Notes, Notes A to FF, seven of which, Notes Z to FF, are concerned with Macbeth. Some of these, such as the discussions on the date of Macbeth and on suspected interpolations in the play, are the sort of thin that one would expect to see handled in any really extended treatment of the play and are to be found regularly, for example, in the notes of modern editors of Macbeth. These discussions are often dull, and that is no doubt one of the reasons why Bradley has put them into the form of separate Notes. Others of the Notes are less fortunate, especially in their titles: "When was the murder of Duncan first plotted?" "Did Lady Macbeth really faint?"; and these are paralleled by some of the titles elsewhere: "Did Emilia suspect Iago?" and, most notable perhaps, "Where was Hamlet at the time of his father's death?" ("Where was Hamlet when the lights went out?" asks one irreverent critic.[251]) As the titles suggest, these are often excursions into super-subtlety or extra-textual territory, but it

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[251]This is reported, without an identification of the critic, by Peter Alexander, Hamlet Father and Son (London, 1955), p. 49.

should count for something that they are put at the back of the book. It should be considered too that a few of these problems are brought on through taking the actor's point of view--how should the actress portraying Lady Macbeth play the passage in which she says she feels faint? Is it the real thing or should she give some indication that it is faked?

The best-known of the Notes is, in a sense, one that does not exist. In 1933 L. C. Knights published an essay which became well known, How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? In the intervening years the title-phrase has become connected with Bradley to the extent that we find some competent Shakespeare critics speaking as though Bradley had actually asked this question in this form and, foolishly, given it serious attention. In response to an inquiry, Professor Knights reports (in a letter dated 17 March 1959) that the title-phrase is one that he picked up from F. R. Leavis, who used to use it when he was making fun of current irrelevancies in Shakespeare criticism, such as the solemn discussion of the double time scheme in Othello or Bradley's famous question about Hamlet's whereabouts at the time of his father's murder. Knights was invited to address the Shakespeare Association in 1932 and chose as the title of his speech the phrase of Leavis'. "I am afraid," says Professor Knights, referring again to the title, "that Bradley was of course the main butt of our jocularity."[252] But in the essay itself, though there are dis-

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[252]Part of the information conveyed in this letter has since

paraging remarks about Shakespearean Tragedy and its Notes, there is no actual discussion of Lady Macbeth's children nor any statement directly linking Bradley with the title-phrase. It is clear enough from the essay itself, even without Professor Knights' letter, that the title is a sprightly piece of mockery which cleverly parodies the type of Shakespeare criticism Leavis and Knights objected to.

Subsequent critics have seen, of course, that the title-phrase is aimed especially at Bradley, and the phrase has come to typify the sort of question that Bradley does sometimes take up. Thus Pettet explains that by the term "the Bradleyan vice of 'anterior' speculation" he means to describe "the critical game of constructing a world outside the given material of the play--'How many children had Lady Macbeth?'"[253] Note that an uninformed reader might suppose from this that Bradley himself had asked this question. In a recent article in Essays in Criticism, Barbara Hardy begins by saying, "My thesis is a simple one: I believe that Coleridge, contrary to the usual assumptions, would never have asked, 'How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?' He is really the father not of Bradley but of Stoll, Wilson Knight, L. C. Knights . . . ."[254] Again, the link between the phrase and Bradley is

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been repeated by Knights at the beginning of his 1959 essay, "The Question of Character in Shakespeare."

[253]Pettet, p. 192.

[254]"'I Have a Smack of Hamlet': Coleridge and Shakespeare's Characters," EIC, VIII (1958), 238.

made explicit, and again the uninformed reader might be led into thinking that Bradley is being, as it were, quoted.

It is because a further step exists that this subject is of interest. C. J. Sisson, in his booklet on Shakespeare for the Writers and Their Work series, analyses some of the good and bad points of Shakespearean Tragedy. In general he thinks it a classic. "Nevertheless," he says, "to consider Cordelia in Desdemona's situation, as Bradley does, is the negation of true dramatic criticism. And it verges upon superstition to consider closely 'How many children had Lady Macbeth', as L. C. Knights saw in his rebellious essay upon the same subject."[255] Now it is still possible that Sisson is using the phrase in a general sense, realizing that it is not literally Bradley's, but the general reader is here very likely to be misled, since it is a fact that Bradley does consider Cordelia in Desdemona's place. When we come to the final example, there is no longer any doubt but that the critic believes Bradley to have written a foolish note on Lady Macbeth: Kenneth Muir, in his article, "Fifty Years of Shakespeare Criticism: 1900-1950," says that "the notorious note on 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' is one of the examples of Bradley's weaker side."[256]

It is nothing of the sort. We have seen that Bradley has many weaknesses, but his Note on the subject of Macbeth's children is not weak, nor would it be "notorious" if critical confusion had

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[255]Sisson, p. 21.

[256]Shakespeare Survey, IV, 3.

not arisen in the manner indicated. In point of fact, that part of Note EE which deals with the question is quite sane if somewhat pedestrian, and that is the only place where the subject arises. Note EE is entitled "Duration of the action in Macbeth. Macbeth's age. 'He has no children.'" and it considers three separate minor questions which sometimes arise about the play. In the third section of the Note, the section entitled "'He has no children,'" Bradley discusses matters which the editors and commentators before him had brought up in regard to I.vii.54 ("I have given suck") and IV.iii.216 ("He has no children"). Nothing could be more natural than that Bradley should choose to discuss the question; it is still noted in the modern editions--the New Arden and the New Cambridge, for example.

Bradley begins by making the very definite statement, "Whether Macbeth had children or (as seems usually to be considered) had none, is quite immaterial." It is clear, he continues, that Macbeth plans to establish his own dynasty, but beyond that "nothing else matters." He mentions a few of the theories which earlier writers had "gravely assumed" and concludes, "It may be that Macbeth had many children or that he had none. We cannot say, and it does not concern the play." What could be more proper as a critical attitude? There follows a more-or-less traditional discussion of IV.iii.216 which need not concern us, except that we should be aware that nearly every editor or close commentator acknowledges a problem here (to whom does Macduff refer when he says

"he"?). Shakespeare certainly had a definite meaning in mind in this case, and Bradley wonders whether there is enough evidence to indicate what it is.

Bradley nowhere has a literal discussion of "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" On the contrary, he says that such a question simply does not concern the play. Professor Knights did not intend by his famous title to suggest that Bradley had such an actual discussion, nor does his essay make a direct connection between the title-phrase and Bradley. This connection has been made by later critics, some correctly, one or two, at least, by falling into the error we have pointed out.

Some Concluding Remarks

We have been at some pains in this chapter to set forth in detail the subjects which Bradley covers in his criticism of Macbeth and the prominence which he gives these several topics. It should be clear, for one thing, that a false picture of Bradley's practical criticism of a play would be obtained if only the two central lectures were read. In the last two lectures, on Macbeth, Bradley discusses several matters other than that of the characters--the introductory remarks on the play as distinct from the other plays, atmosphere and irony, the use and effect of the witch-scenes, the lack of individualization among the minor characters and what may be behind this, the function of three particular scenes in the play, and the use of prose in certain passages--but

the discussions of the characters are so relatively prominent and striking that they would dominate one's idea of Bradley's criticism of Macbeth if only the two lectures were taken into consideration. If in addition to the matter of these two lectures it is realized that there are several specific references in Chapter I to Macbeth as a tragedy, a detailed analysis of the structure of the play in Chapter II, and several remarks on the mature style of the play and some of its possible defects in the first section of Chapter III, besides the rather technical problems discussed in some of the Notes at the back of the book, then a much better impression of the balance of Bradley's criticism of a particular play should be obtained. Bradley's criticism of Macbeth shows that he is far more than a mere character-monger.

As to the character-criticism itself, we have seen that it tends to get out of hand, and this should perhaps cause us to reflect on the validity of Bradley's theory, discussed in Chapter III, that the center of a Shakespearean tragedy may with equal truth be said to lie in action issuing from character or in character issuing in action. If one takes this position, is it inevitable that one will talk about the lives of the characters outside of the play or tend to sentimentalize them? This writer does not think so. Bradley's idea of the close inter-relationship of character and action is perhaps a temptation to him, rather, to seek motives where none are made really explicit, as in the case of Cordelia's actions in Lear. The discussions of Hamlet-before-

the-play or Cordelia-as-a-child appear to stem not from anything in Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy but from that Romantic tradition of Shakespearean criticism which Bradley for the most part admired and which he brought to a culmination.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapters we have examined some of Andrew Bradley's critical foundations, his theory of Shakespearean tragedy, and the methods he uses in criticizing a particular play. What can we say, as a result of this investigation, of Bradley's over-all value as a critic of Shakespearean tragedy?

At the beginning of Chapter II we had occasion to refer to Professor Ronald Crane's belief that there are many distinct valid or partially valid critical methods; but this is not to say, Professor Crand continues, that all criticism is of equal value. There are criteria by which the relative value of different criticisms may be judged. Any critic, for example, must have sensibility and knowledge--they are not enough by themselves, but they are necessary. "But the criticism of criticism can go farther than this and . . . raise questions about the comparative efficacy of methods themselves." Every critical system will have its characteristic limitations and powers, and we can, furthermore, distinguish between a criticism which allows us to take in a reasonable number of the phenomena connected with a piece of literature and a criticism which forces us to leave out of account some of the

important aspects of the object being examined.[257]

We may say, first of all, that Dr. Bradley does have sensibility and knowledge. Both are evident in his work, and the former is perhaps reflected in his fine prose style, such a relief after reading Moulton or Swinburne (to cite two stylistic extremes).[258]

The only lack of knowledge with which Bradley has been charged may serve to introduce a consideration of possible "characteristic limitations" in his criticism of Shakespearean tragedy. We have seen that several critics feel that Bradley does not pay sufficient attention to the facts of Shakespeare's milieu, and that some of these critics believe that this is due to a lack of knowledge. In some cases this may be true. Only since Bradley's time, for example, has it come to be recognized that the popular stage for which Shakespeare wrote was in a state of transition between two radically different dramatic conventions, and that, as a result, Shakespeare's plays often have within themselves a profound heterogeneity.[259] The present writer believes that a knowledge of such facts might well have caused Bradley to have revised, for

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[257] Critics and Criticism, pp. 9-10; The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry (Toronto, 1953), p. 140.

[258] This is not to say that Bradley does not occasionally lapse into a purple passage--e.g., his remarks on Hamlet-criticism and the rise of Romanticism (Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 92).

[259] Bernard Spivack, Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil (N.Y., 1958), pp. vii-viii. See also pp. 28 and 451-452 of this excellent book.

instance, his discussion of Iago and the assumption that underlies that discussion--the idea that there must be a consistent answer to the problems concerning Iago, if only we look closely enough. Bradley was quite willing to admit inconsistencies in minor details, but we have seen that in what he thought to be crucial questions--Hamlet's delay or Iago's motives --he could not believe that seeming inconsistencies or improbabilities might be radical.

But for the most part it is not a lack of knowledge that we must contend with in connection with Bradley and history, but a lack of attention. In theory Bradley provides for an inspection of the historical information which is necessary for a proper understanding of the author's mind, but even in his theoretical statement and certainly in his practice he slights the importance of a deep foundation in Shakespeare's milieu. He is much more concerned with developing within the reader-critic the faculty of the sympathetic imagination which is to be exercised directly on the play and the impression received from the play. He wants the impression to be a correct one and true to the author, granted, and that is why he pays some attention to the milieu, but when we find him assigning to Christian influence only a verbal or token significance in the plays, we must conclude that there has not been sufficient attention.

But, it might be objected, Bradley was true to his impression of the tragedies, and he did not believe that Christianity was an important factor in that impression. This, to the present writer,

brings out the weakness of too exclusive a reliance on the impression. It is Bradley's impression that the Shakespearean tragic world is explicable (so far as it admits of explanation) in Hegelian, not Christian, terms. E. E. Stoll makes a very good point when he quotes Sainte-Beuve to the effect that one may see in a work something other than what the author saw, something which he put there unconsciously, but that is quite a different thing from finding what the author himself whould not have understood if it were brought to his notice.[260] An example which fits Stoll's idea is Bradley's statement that Lady Macbeth was "too great to repent,"[261] and examples might be multiplied. The present writer believes that Shakespeare would not have understood the latter part of Bradley's explanation of the Shakespearean tragic world.

Another characteristic limitation, of course, is to be found in certain aspects of Bradley's character-criticism. It cannot be denied that Bradley often treats the characters as flesh-and-blood people. In doing so he almost certainly thought himself justified by previous critical practices, by indications within the text itself, and by what he may have believed about Shakespeare's methods of creative composition. We have said that some of the vagaries of the character-criticism may be accounted for by a lack of historical information about the transitional nature of

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260 Shakespeare and Other Masters, p. 150; the quotation is identified by Stoll as being from the Causeries, 3rd ed., XIII, 257-258.

261 Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 379.

Shakespeare's theater, but this does not cover the fact that Bradley on the characters is sometimes verbose and sometimes annoyingly sentimental.

What are the "characteristic powers" of Bradley's criticism? One is, by way of paradox, his fidelity to the impression. He is peculiarly apt at making each of the great tragedies a unique experience. Partly by a constant comparing and contrasting of the plays with each other, partly by a very close attention to the text, partly by a sort of genius for the "feeling" of a play, Bradley is able to convey to the reader a sense of being within the play. The reader never feels the least doubt that Bradley had these experiences and that he is indeed being faithful to them. He never shows the slightest awareness that his Hegelianism, so much a part of his own life and way of thought, may be shaping his experiences in a way that is not true to Shakespeare, but this very sureness helps to generate in him a thrust and enthusiasm for his subject which is a great help to him in his avowed objective, to send the reader of his criticism back to the plays themselves with a renewed interest. This writer feels strongly that this is a good thing in a critic, and he agrees with Robert Langbaum: "Bradley has the virtue of accounting for Shakespeare's greatness and for our continued interest in him. (Stoll leaves me wondering why in the world we still read Shakespeare, unless it is because we misread him.)"[262]

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[262] The Poetry of Experience, p. 167.

Another of the strengths of Bradley's criticism is its willingness to handle theoretical and philosphical questions. This particular approach to Shakespeare is not popular today, but it is not a bad idea to ask what the tragedies have in common or whether their author seems to have had certain attitudes, in his works, toward fundamental questions about life. The latter part of Bradley's treatment of these questions may not be true to the plays, but that does not exclude frequent valuable observations made by the way. And the first part of the consideration of Shakespeare's theory of tragedy is successful in two ways: it is largely successful in its treatment of Shakespeare's tragic heroes and the relationshop that the playwright usually observes between action and character; and it is, along with the latter part of the theoretical considerations, a fascinating and unique combination of Aristotelian, Hegelian, and Romantic ideas. It is an absorbing and highly original study in its own right.

Bradley's interest in the characters is a further power of his criticism, for, although its excesses are annoying and a weakness, it places an emphasis where, so the present writer believes, Shakespeare also placed an emphasis. Both Bradley and Shakespeare are fascinated by character, and very much of what Bradley has to say about the characters seems to help us to see things about them which Shakespeare intended us to see.

This will remind us of what was said at the end of Chapter IV about the necessity for seeing Bradley's character-criticism

in a proper perspective as a part of his total criticism, and that necessity, in its turn, leads us to one of the strongest of Bradley's characteristics as a critic of Shakespearean tragedy. Professor Crane suggests that we distinguish between a criticism which permits "a reasonably many-sided or comprehensive discussion of literary phenomena" and those criticisms which "content themselves with partial views, while pretending to omit nothing essential."[263] L. C. Knights, we remember, felt that any Shakespearean tragedy says much more than can be expressed in Bradleyan terms.[264] He says this because of his conviction that Bradley's criticism is preoccupied with character, and Shakespeare, Knights says, is "exploring the world and defining the values by which men live" in his greater plays.[265] But in actuality, as we have attempted to show in Chapters III and IV, Bradley's theory of Shakespearean tragedy does not, by itself, seem to lead to any exclusive concentration on character or even to account for those parts of Bradley's character-criticism which we most object to; and the criticism of the particular plays, if one takes into account all that is said about any one play, is far from being exclusively a criticism of character. Taken as a whole, Bradley's discussion of Shakespearean tragedy is surprisingly broad and

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[263] Critics and Criticism, p. 10.

[264] See p. 44 above.

[265] "The Question of Character in Shakespeare," More Talking, p. 58.

varied, and this in spite of the fact that his most notable criticism, Shakespearean Tragedy, deliberately omits a consideration of the "poetry" of the tragedies, along with certain other topics, in order to concentrate on the works as dramas. Mr. Charbeneau, S.J., says that "the philosophy behind Shakespearean Tragedy is undoubtedly the main reason for the enduring quality of the work. No other reason can be assigned . . . ."[266] The present writer disagrees very strongly with this and suggests that it is not only the individual parts of Bradley's Shakespearean criticism (and these would include many elements other than the "philosophy") but the varied sweep of the whole which is so attractive. Bradley was a critic who had thought out a philosophy of aesthetics and of tragedy; he was concerned with structure as well as with character, with significance of the parts as well as with the meaning of the whole; he loved Shakespeare but discussed his faults. He does omit certain considerations, and we have mentioned what they are, but on the whole his criticism meets very well the test of significant many-sidedness.

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[266]Charbeneau, p. 3. Mr. Charbeneau then goes on to attack Bradley's philosophy because it "leads logically to a denial of free will" (p. 10); Mr. Charbeneau may be correct about this if he refers to the Hegelian background, but he fails to consider Bradley's evident concern for the hero's responsibility. Mr. Charbeneau is perhaps unfortunate in his determination to criticize Bradley's theory "in the light of Scholastic-Aristotelian principles" (p. 9), for in practice this sometimes leads him to adopt what appears to be an aprioristic approach to Bradley's work. He also fails to see in Bradley's theory any really important differences from Hegel's criticism, nor does he take into proper account the Aristotelian and Romantic elements in it.

Various critics have attempted to "defend" Bradley, but the present writer has been more impressed by the number of contemporary critics who, after finishing a survey of some aspect of Shakespearean criticism, whether the characters, or Hamlet, or the tragedies as a whole, conclude by saying that no one since Bradley has done as comprehensive a job on the topic.[267] Modern writers on Shakespeare tend to be fragmentary in their approach to the broader areas of investigation, and while it would perhaps be impossible today to hope for a work that would cover the entire field of Shakespearean studies in a comprehensive manner, we may yet hope for a modern investigation of the tragedies or the comedies that will be as broad and as deep as was Bradley's criticism of Shakespearean tragedy.

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[267]Among others, see Clifford Leech, "Studies in Hamlet, 1901-1955," Shakespeare Survey, IX (1956), 3; Derek Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare (Garden City, N.Y., 1956), p. 3; Muir, Shakespeare Survey, IV, 4; Weisinger, p. 396.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by John Britton has been read and approved by five members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 5, 1960
Date

Paul A. Hummert
Signature of Adviser PH