

Shakespearian Production

G. Wilson Knight



G. WILSON KNIGHT
COLLECTED WORKS

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G. WILSON KNIGHT
COLLECTED WORKS

VOLUME VI

SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION

With Especial Reference to the Tragedies

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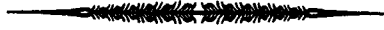
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The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this
reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original book
may be apparent.

SHAKESPEARIAN PRODUCTION

*with especial reference
to the Tragedies*



by
G. WILSON KNIGHT

LONDON
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Dedication 1964 edition

To
the memory of
HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE
producer actor and writer
and of
his disciple
in the art of acting
LESLIE HARRIS

Dedication 1968 paperback edition

For

Olive Hewetson

remembering *Timon of Athens* 1948

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Preface to the Third Edition [1963]

For this republication in a third edition of my *Principles of Shakespearian Production* I have again added material, so that the present volume entitled '*Shakespearian Production*' is composed of layers reflecting a wide span of variously settled and changing opinion. Chapters I to V made the original book. Chapter VI and the first part of IX under the title 'The Professional Stage' were in the second, Penguin, edition published in 1949. Chapters VII, VIII, X and the Appendixes are new. I do not reprint the essay 'Drama and the University' from my Penguin Appendix (first published in *The University of Leeds Review*, June 1949), but some quotations from it are included in Chapter VIII. The extent and nature of these additions appear to justify the new and more comprehensive title.

I have tidied up details of faulty expression in my old text, and made some deletions, but where new sections or thoughts are added to old material they are dated. I did not include my account of *Timon of Athens*, here presented in Chapter VII, in the Penguin edition mainly, so far as I recall, because I still at that time had hopes of being given the opportunity of repeating it on a larger and more public scale.

Following the productions recorded in my original preface (pp. 21-4 below) my Toronto work included *The Winter's Tale* in 1936, *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1937 and *Timon of Athens* in the early part of 1940, together with revivals of *Hamlet*, for which I was joint-producer with Miss Frances Tolhurst, in 1938 and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1939; also *The Tempest* in 1938, directed by Miss Josephine Koenig (see p. 274 below); the two revivals presented by, and the others in association with, the Shakespeare Society of Toronto. These various presentations, though performed in the University area and relying largely on the University

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for their audiences, were not in themselves university productions, nor was Hart House a University theatre, though both staff and students often took part. We drew widely on the acting strength of the city.

I am happy to hear from time to time good news from Mr. Raymond Card of the Shakespeare Society's activities, so recalling to memory my many friends in the Society, and their goodness to me. Among my Canadian correspondents I record my gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Stafford Johnston, Miss Josephine Koenig and Mr. Leonard Parker for sending to me particulars of the new Festival Theatre at Stratford, Ontario.

My war-time composite of Shakespearian excerpts and lecture-commentary, given first in 1940 in collaboration with Miss Nancy Price at the Tavistock Theatre, London, was repeated at various centres about England, at one of which Cyril Maude was chairman, and culminated in a week at the Westminster Theatre in the summer of 1941, under the title *This Sceptred Isle*. For this production, though I had no acting support beyond off-stage voices, the late Henry Ainley returned from retirement to read some of my commentaries, as indeed I had heard him read the commentary of Hardy's *Dynasts* in Granville Barker's production at the Kingsway Theatre in 1914. At one performance we had the additional honour of a contribution by Sir John Martin Harvey. Among the most appreciative of those who attended were Sir Nigel and Lady Playfair, whose son Lyon was the Osric of my 1935 London *Hamlet*; and also Violet Vanbrugh, whom I had so admired (p. 51) as Lady Macbeth with Tree in 1911. The support of my mother and my brother did much to ease the anxieties of this ambitious and difficult year.

A facsimile of my programme of *This Sceptred Isle* is given on p. 314, but since the matter lies outside its range it is not covered by my present study. An outline has been given in *The Sovereign Flower* (264-5) and full particulars may be seen among my 'Dramatic Papers', the collection of programmes, pictures and press notices so excellently compiled by The Shakespeare Memorial Library of the Reference Library at Birmingham. At both the British Museum and the Birmingham Reference Library I have also lodged, under the title *A Royal Propaganda*, a typescript account of my difficulties in arranging this Westminster Theatre production, wherein I pay my tribute to the help and encourage-

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ment of Miss Margot Davies, without which the endeavour could scarcely have seen fruition. To the Librarian Mr. V. H. Woods, and to the staff of the Birmingham Reference Library, I am very grateful.

Owing to the war I was unable to return to the University of Toronto. At Stowe, where I taught from 1941 until 1946, I had the opportunity of producing *Macbeth* and playing the parts of the Madman in Masfield's *Good Friday* and the Inquisitor in Shaw's *Saint Joan* in productions by Mr. A. A. Dams. For the first the setting was the School Chapel, admirable for the purpose; and the speaking and acting of the Madman's central speech I look back upon as among the most rewarding of my stage experiences.¹

At the University of Leeds, after being appointed there in 1946 at the instigation of Professor Bonamy Dobrée to inaugurate a course on World Drama and take an active interest in the Leeds University Union Theatre Group, I have been peculiarly fortunate. I remain deeply indebted to the Theatre Group, under whose auspices I produced Louis MacNeice's translation of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus in 1946 and Professor Kenneth Muir's translation of Racine's *Athalie* in 1947;² repeated *Timon of Athens* in 1948; and had the privilege of playing in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, produced respectively by Mr. Arthur Creedy and Mr. Frederick May, in 1955 and 1960. I am also indebted to the Staff Dramatic Society of the University, whose *King Lear*, presented in collaboration with the Theatre Group and produced by Mr. John Boorman in 1951, was an event with which I feel it an honour to have been associated. Of the forbearance, sympathy and encouragement of these three producers I am deeply sensible.

I record my gratitude for their gracious welcome of my attempts to the late Hon. and Revd. Canon H. J. Cody as University President and to the Revd. Canon F. H. Cosgrave as Provost of Trinity College, in the University of Toronto; and to Sir Charles Morris as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, and to Lady Morris; and to Professor Dobrée; and to all, Staff and Students, at both universities—and perhaps especially to so

¹ For my tribute to the Shakespearian quality, under performance, of this speech, see *The Golden Labyrinth*, 335.

² Subsequently included with other strongly dramatic translations in his *Jean Racine, Five Plays* (U.S.A., Mermaid Dramabook; London, MacGibbon & Kee).

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authoritative a Shakespearian as Prof. R. S. Knox of Toronto—who have accepted my histrionic inadequacies and encouraged my pretensions; among them the many students of the Leeds University Union Theatre Group of which for a number of years I had the honour to be President. I remember words of sympathy and kindness, when they were much needed, from the staff of Hart House Theatre, and from Miss Ruth Playter. I recognize the lift given to my stage activities by the dramatic critics of the Toronto press and of Leeds; and also by the critic of *The Times*, Mr. Ivor Brown of *The Observer*, and Mr. C. B. Purdom, all of whom lent me confidence during the run of *This Sceptred Isle*; and by the two distinguished Patrons of that adventure; and by Mr. Richard Courtney, Mr. Frederick May, Mr. Robin Skelton, Mr. Roy Walker and Mr. Kenneth Young, who have written generously of my stage work. I have been grateful for the authoritative encouragement, as from stage artists, of Mr. Edward Roberts and Miss Elise Bernard, now Mrs. Haldane, and of Mrs. Dora Mavor Moore; and for that, as from a poet, of Mr. Francis Berry; and as from a poetess, of Miss Dallas Kenmare; and also of Mr. Arnold Freeman, who has himself over a number of years achieved wonders of Shakespearian and other classical productions on the tiny stage of the Sheffield Educational Establishment, demonstrating how much may be accomplished by integrity of purpose when material resources are slight.

I remember, especially, what I owe to the late Margaret Lucas, who first suggested that I should put on a production of my own and became in 1932 my first Juliet; and also to the sympathy and insight of Mr. James Bridges, at that time. At Leeds the dramatic perception and daily care of Mrs. Olive Hewetson were continual supports. My deepest debt remains to the late Leslie Harris, once of Tree's company, who on the art of acting spoke with authority; and I am happy to include his name in my [1963] dedication.

My emphases here and in the following pages on my experiences as an actor may seem out of place in a book on production. But they form part of a necessary insistence that the driving force behind my stage adventures has been the instinct less of a scholar or even of a producer than, despite a host of deficiencies, of an actor. Now that the story is over, I wish to establish the record.

The extent to which my academic and stage theories have, during the last thirty years, affected our professional productions

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is discussed briefly in Chapter IX (pp. 258-9). Probably little theatres have been more widely affected than the professionals, and I should like to record that my 'ideal' *Macbeth* was honoured by being closely followed in a school production by Mr. Linden Huddlestone at Ecclesfield Grammar School in 1958. When in 1942 I myself produced *Macbeth* at Stowe School I was not able to engage in any elaborations, though the picking out of the three Apparitions by varied lights (pp. 143-4 below) may be regarded as a successful, if only provisional, expedient.

My pictures have been selected as illustrations of the facts or principles handled in my text. They are intended to suggest the whole dramatic person or, if a group, the whole scene, together with the relevances of either to the plays concerned.

It may seem that I should apologize for using so many pictures drawn from my own work, and I have avoided the repetition of my name in the captions. For many weeks I was planning and collecting a selection of possible pictures of well-known actors and productions, trying to wrench them to the service of my book; but somehow it would not come right. This is, after all, a personal study made largely from personal adventures, and the pictures used, constituting as they do visible records of the performances described in the text, give the book a dimension and a reality otherwise unattainable. Certainly I could wish that I had a higher proportion of group-scenes good enough for inclusion; but these, except under professional or school conditions where company, stage-space and photographer can be commandeered for two or three hours during or after a production's run, are usually impossible to arrange; when they were attempted, the attempts were often hurried and the results untidy. I am really fortunate to have found so many groups not unworthy of inclusion, though I regret that more of my stage associates at Toronto, whose kindnesses live in my memory, are not represented. I am fortunate in having been able to present among my captions the names of W. Lyndon Smith, who as Mercutio, Polonius, the Gravedigger, Iago, Kent and Enobarbus so empowered my productions; the late Robin Godfrey, whose sister Patricia was the Queen in my 1935 *Hamlet*, in London; and Miss Patricia Murphy.

For these pictures, various acknowledgments are due. First, I record my gratitude to Mr. A. J. Nathan for allowing me to use Buchel's portrait of Tree as Othello, which is possessed by Messrs.

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L. and H. Nathan, on whose premises it can be seen. Mr. Nathan allows me to say that he has a fair amount of documentary material relating to Tree and his productions. For the copying of the portrait I am indebted to Mr. George W. Nash of the Victoria and Albert Museum; and I have to thank Mr. Hesketh Pearson for lending me the photograph of Tree's Forum scene in *Julius Caesar*. For other pictures, acknowledgments are due to the following photographic artists: for 2, 7, 8, 16, E. Mackintosh, Toronto; 9, 10, Ashley & Crippen, Toronto (9 copied by the late Alan Dredge, Photo-General, Leeds); 28, Mr. Bashur-ud-Din; 29, 30, *The Yorkshire Post*. Since some of my pictures bear no stamp, I am unable to state their source. For Picture 31 I thank Dr. Devendra P. Varma who has directed notable Shakespeare productions at universities in Kathmandu (Nepal), Damascus and Cairo. I have for long been grateful to the Revd. Claude Sauerbrei for having in 1940 taken the *Timon* photograph [now 1968, Picture 32] which, though probably beyond my merits, I have come to regard as a visual symbol of my life-work. Since my approach to *Timon of Athens* is my main contribution to the staging of Shakespeare I have accorded it emphasis in my selection of pictures.¹

I have to thank Mr. Edward Gordon Craig and Messrs. William Heinemann Ltd. for being allowed to quote from *On the Art of the Theatre*; and the Executors of the late Louis MacNeice for the use of MacNeice's Epilogue to the *Agamemnon*, composed on the occasion of our Leeds production.

An invitation by Mr. Werner Burmeister of the Department of Extramural Studies in the University of London to speak on Beerbohm Tree in a recent course of lectures arranged by Mr. W. A. Armstrong of King's College led to an expansion of my section on Tree's artistry. To Mr. Armstrong I am indebted for help in the collection of information, also to Mr. Frank Cox, Mr. Laurence Kitchin, Professor W. Moelwyn Merchant, Mr. Hesketh Pearson and Mr. C. B. Purdom. I am grateful to Mr. Patrick Saul of the British Institute of Recorded Sound for playing for me records of Tree and Forbes-Robertson; to the National Film Archive for arranging a presentation of the 1913 film of

¹ The importance of *Timon of Athens* in our dramatic history is discussed in my 'Timon of Athens and its Dramatic Descendants', *A Review of English Literature*, II, 4; Oct., 1961; included in *Shakespeare and Religion*, 1967.

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Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet*; and to the British Broadcasting Corporation, and especially to Mr. George MacBeth, for my own broadcast of Shakespearian speeches (p. 278). Some of my impressions have been checked by Mr. Richard Courtney, Mr. Hans de Groot and Mr. Robert Speaight. Dr. Patricia M. Ball has once again helped me with my index.

With some exceptions the nature and ordering of my analyses makes the use of line-references superfluous. Where they are given they apply to the Oxford Shakespeare. I am distressed to find so many inaccuracies in my old quotations, for which I must sometimes have relied simply on memories of performance. For Tree's theatre, I vary the title 'Her Majesty's' and 'His Majesty's' according to the occasion being referred to. I follow his biographer, Mr. C. B. Purdom, in printing Granville Barker's name without a hyphen. I likewise preserve the old style, forced by some of my references, in 'J. Martin Harvey' and 'W. Bridges Adams', without hyphens.

In giving cross-references to my present volume I use the letter 'p'. For page-references to all other books, numerals only.

G.W.K.

Exeter, 1963.

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Preface to the First Edition [1936]

I n putting forward my views on Shakespearian production I am conscious of deep and various obligations. This book is the result of long attention to a subject which has been my main interest since childhood and which antedates by many years any of my writings. Therefore I first express gratitude for each and every performance I have witnessed. My criticisms in the following pages are levelled not against producers, but points of production. Especially I acknowledge the grounding and stimulus towards understanding received from frequent visits as a boy to His Majesty's Theatre under Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. If today we differ from his principles, we have nevertheless scrapped one great tradition without properly creating another. Tree was an artist and a great one. The richness and dignity which the Shakespearian play, especially Shakespearian tragedy, demands in presentation died with him. For at His Majesty's you attended always something beyond entertainment, of ceremonial grandeur and noble if extravagant artistry. I well remember Tree's marvellous make-up as Othello; and the Weird Sisters floating through smoky clouds at the opening of *Macbeth*; and—how appropriate this a symbol of his whole approach—the incense filling the theatre from the Forum scene of *Julius Caesar*. I had the privilege of seeing, and above all of hearing, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson in Shakespeare during his farewell season at Drury Lane in 1913; and *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* still lingers in my memory as the occasion for the most exquisite vocal cadences I am ever likely to hear. To these pre-war experiences I must add another of great importance: Mr. Granville Barker's delightful productions of *The Winter's Tale*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To them I owe my earliest insight into the possibilities of solidity and permanence in stage-properties and scenic

Preface to the First Edition [1936]

effects, and the freedom of invention attending a non-realistic interpretation. *Twelfth Night* was the best. Especially I recall the formal kneeling of Dennis Neilson-Terry as Sebastian before Olivia, and his lovely speaking of the lines 'If it be thus to dream . . .'; and the exquisite singing of Feste's final song by Mr. Hayden Coffin. The whole production dwells in my mind still as a single unique quality, indissoluble and unanalysable as the pungent sweetness of an aroma. I assume that my readers are acquainted with Mr. Granville Barker's notable *Prefaces*, to which I would refer any reader who is not. I remember, too, an admirable and somewhat similar arrangement of *The Taming of the Shrew*, with Martin Harvey as Petruchio, by Mr. William Poel.¹ Those were comparatively modernistic productions: but there were also indirect links with the more remote past. I paid a flying visit to Stratford, in 1914 or thereabouts, to see H. B. Irving in *Hamlet*, and I never nowadays sail up the Gulf of St. Lawrence without recalling the death of his brother Laurence Irving, whom I saw as Iago, with 'Tree, and in *Typhoon*, and felt at that time to be potentially the greatest of living actors. There was a glamour haloeing the Irvings, for in all my theatre-going adventures the figure of their father, partly through descriptions and imitations of him by my own, loomed as a felt presence, a kind of god-like and numinous force, its influence over the London stage not yet dissolved.² Such are my early obligations. Above all, I owe a debt of lasting gratitude to my own parents, who catered so continuously for a child's hobby of so unorthodox and expensive a variety.

Since the war my most profitable theatre-going has mainly concerned itself with the Shakespeare Festival Company under Mr. W. Bridges Adams. From this company I can hardly over-emphasize the advantages I have received. When I first saw the Shakespeare Festival Company I thought their performances almost perfect; nowadays I grow more critical. I conclude that they have themselves been training my faculties. Especially I admire the example set of almost military smartness, and feel that what knowledge I have of the possibilities of significant grouping owes

¹ That is my recollection, but I cannot find Poel's collaboration noted in either Maurice Willson Disher's *The Last Romantic* or Robert Speaight's *William Poel*. [1963]

² My father's theatre-going reminiscences were a continual enrichment to my awaking passion for the stage. [1963]

Preface to the First Edition [1936]

much to Mr. Bridges Adams' productions.¹ I regret not knowing more of the Old Vic., which is nearly always closed when I am in London; or of Mr. Nugent Monck's important work at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich.

My own experience of acting and producing dates from the year 1926. During my six years at Dean Close School, Cheltenham, I acted annually in the Cheltenham Branch of the British Empire Shakespeare Society's productions; and I am grateful for having been allowed to do so. At the school I was fortunate in being able to start regular work in Shakespeare production, first with junior forms and later with the Speech Day play.² During the last four years this experience has been greatly extended at Toronto.³ My own productions have been: *Romeo and Juliet*, 1932; *Hamlet*, 1933; *Othello*, 1934; *King Lear*, 1935;⁴ also *Henry VIII*, for the Shakespeare Society of Toronto, 1934; together with abbreviated versions, for the Shakespeare Society, of *Richard II* and *Richard III*. In these, with the exception of *Henry VIII*, where I played Buckingham and the Porter's assistant, I gained the additional valuable experience of acting the name-parts. I am indebted to the Shakespeare Society of Toronto for what experience I have gained under their auspices; and also to Mr. Brownlow Card, of Toronto, for experience under his. Toronto, and especially the University, is most fortunate in the location within the University of Hart House Theatre. My recent production of *Hamlet* at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, London, was an interesting and enjoyable experiment. I was particularly pleased with a letter received from such an authority as Mr. C. B. Purdom, whose writing I had admired, from which I have permission to quote this passage: 'I appreciate

¹ An appreciation of Mr. Bridges Adams' work at Stratford is given by Mr. A. K. Chesterton in the section 'Bridges Adams: Master of the Stage-Picture' in his history (1934) of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre entitled *Brave Enterprise*.

² I had earlier produced *As You Like It* in collaboration with Mr. C. A. P. Tuckwell, who has done so much to give the school a Shakespearian tradition. In my subsequent (two) Speech Day productions Mr. Alan Bromly laid the foundation of his stage career with notable performances of Puck and Feste. He also played Rosencrantz in my 1935 London *Hamlet*. Two other old Decanians took part in it: Mr. Francis Berry and Mr. Roscoe Railton. Yet another Old Decanian, Mr. Leonard Jayne, gave me valued advice and encouragement during *This Sceptred Isle* in 1941. [1963]

³ It was my good fortune to be appointed to the Staff of Trinity College in the University in 1931.

⁴ Produced after this preface was written, though I included a short description in my book (p. 121 below). I now make this insertion in my original preface. [1963]

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the difficulties under which you were working, but your performance of *Hamlet* certainly gave me an entirely new impression. You unfolded a spiritual significance revealed in no other production I have ever seen'.

To Madame Irving, of the Irving Academy, Cheltenham, and to Mr. B. A. Pittar, whom I first met during a delightful and profitable fortnight at Citizen House, Bath, I am grateful for valuable instruction and encouragement. To all who have in various ways made my Toronto productions possible I record my thanks. But my greatest debt by far is owed to Mr. Leslie Harris of Toronto, whose wide experience, skilful teaching, and continual encouragement have gone far to remedy the worst of my numerous faults in acting, and more than once recharged my attempts with confidence when that was most needed.

G.W.K.

Toronto and Cheltenham, 1935.

PART I



[1936]

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CHAPTER I

The Shakespearian Play



I

I have for some time been contending that a Shakespearian play is not purely and only a good story with entertainment and dramatic value linked to profound analysis of character¹ and a heart-thrilling rhetoric; but that, over and above all this, it presents a close mesh of imaginative and intellectual suggestion demanding a more exact study and sensitive appreciation than it has so far received. The persons in the play are vital and human, none more so; but the interaction of those persons within the dramatic texture of the whole, and that texture itself, the action, movement and purpose of the whole artistic pattern, must at each instant be kept in mind. From such a comprehension many old difficulties are quickly resolved: what was inexplicable is found necessary; what suspected as spurious, seen as crucial. The Graveyard scene in *Hamlet* has been called irrelevant; and modern scholarship still repudiates the Vision in *Cymbeline*—regularly omitted from stage productions—and considers *Henry VIII* a chaotic play of doubtful authorship. There is no longer need or excuse for such confusion: for the powerfully dramatic Vision fits as perfectly into the pattern of *Cymbeline* as the Graveyard scene into that of *Hamlet*; and *Henry VIII* is a carefully constructed and fine play whose pattern I have elsewhere analysed.

Whereas from the old and limited understanding there was

¹ My previous animadversions as to 'character' come under two distinct headings: (i) a refusal to analyse any person in the drama in isolation from the whole play and its various actions and effects; (ii) an antipathy to the term 'character' in the sense of 'fictional person' because of certain dangerous ethical associations. It is not always understood that neither of these objections precludes intense concern with the subtle psychology and richly human action of which the plays are made.

The Shakespearian Play

slight justification for the long and still living tradition of Shakespearian idolatry, from the new and comprehensive sight novel splendours of the intellect and themes of profundity and universal grandeur continually and pleasingly emerge. We ought not at all to be surprised at this; still less should we be offended. We are used to regarding great poetry as of universal importance, its meanings not limited to the partial and the ephemeral. Shakespeare has somehow stood alone, and for too long, as a solitary figure of irrelevant magnitude. True, we cannot interpret the whole of Shakespeare; nor of Dante; nor Byron.¹ But because we can never exhaust the meanings in a great poet, that gives us no authority to neglect what meanings patently are there. Faced with a plenitude of meanings, we have asserted none: it is an easy way out. We must no longer deny to Shakespeare a quality common to great literature: the quality of universal meanings in the particular event. Shakespeare has something to say to us not only about human life, but about death; not only about England, or Venice, but about the universe. Poetry is metaphoric, its essential purpose being to blend the human and the divine. So those poets who aim primarily to speak of God, do so in terms of man; and Shakespeare, speaking with the accents and intricacies of great poetry of man, speaks accordingly of God.

The Shakespearian play shows a texture of personal thinking close-inwoven with some objective and pre-existent story. Philosophy is entwined with action and event. Shakespeare's philosophy is infinitely variable, not static, as Dante's: *King Lear* may be Senecan, but *Macbeth* is Christian. His philosophy may vary within one play. We cannot find by abstraction Shakespeare's 'own' philosophy of life: his massed statement includes many philosophies, but is subject to none. *Macbeth* is a solid of which the length may be a Holinshed story but the height a Christian philosophy of grace and evil, and the breadth Shakespeare's own emotional experience. Criticism, aware of the two-dimensional nature of the philosophic intelligence, often asserts that such imaginative solids are uninterpretable. This is nevertheless an error, since a Shakespearian play, though it may be complex, is yet far less so than life itself, which the philosophic intelligence has invariably considered a fair quarry. To apply intelligence to the whole art-form is not the same as abstracting from it those

¹ Here Shelley in the first edition was replaced by Byron in my 1949 text.

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elements only that seem intelligible. There is no excuse for mental inaction. What happened was really this: criticism came to an impasse. Those elements in Shakespeare it was accustomed to analyse were, certainly, all but exhausted by analysis: as when tunnel-makers come to a nasty piece of rock. A little dynamite, however, may open out new progress. So, by attending as well to imagery and symbolism as to thought and action, to the rhythmic curves of poetry as well as to 'character', we touch the richer dimensional quality of the Shakespearian creation. That does not mean that we now attend only to those elements passed over before; rather that we attend afresh to the whole pattern. I have not, in my own interpretations, neglected to analyse persons or events: but I have taken them together with, and in terms of, the whole.

From such interpretations we become aware of the dominating Shakespearian themes; of love and hate, warriorship, kingship; ideas of state-order, conflicts of life-forces and death-forces; patterns of romance-fulfilment and the tragic sacrifice, and difficult visions that go farther yet. My two most important results I take to be: (i) the discovery of tempests and music as dominant contrasted symbolic impressions throughout the whole, or nearly the whole, of Shakespeare; and (ii) my reading of the Final Plays as visions of immortality crowning Shakespeare's work and to be given as serious attention in their peculiar quality as *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in theirs. Though general acceptance of my contentions is not as yet apparent, it will come; if not soon, then late. Critics are sometimes, quite naturally, alienated by novelty and tend to read into vividness of statement a rigidity and schematism which are not necessarily implicit. To safeguard my essay from misunderstanding I next shortly outline what I take to be the nature of a Shakespearian play, using a succession of simple headings: What it is; What it does; and How it does it. These are chosen to prepare the way directly for my ideas on production. The formulation of scientific stage principles follows logically from any understanding of Shakespeare's positive and challenging significance.

2. WHAT IT IS

A Shakespeare play is primarily an aural time-sequence, like music: a sequence of impressions, thoughts and images, carried across mainly by audible words allotted to various fictional persons.

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To these we must add sound-effects such as alarums, trumpets, thunder and music. Visual details concerning the action are not emphasized, as a rule, by stage-direction, except in the latest group of plays; and then only with moderation. It is true that the text is often itself richly descriptive; but these are pictures within the spoken word. That which builds the essential *Macbeth*, which persists common to various readings and stage-performances, is outwardly at least aural, not visual; though the aural can be received by the ear of imagination in silent reading.

But through this medium a varied content is delivered. There are conceptual thoughts, ideas. There are also mind-pictures. Shakespeare is crammed with visual impressions, a chain of them, blending one into another. We do not visualize them at all clearly at a first performance or a first reading, but they are there nevertheless at the back of the words, semi-consciously received. From this flux of ideas and images emerge greater units: the developing persons of the drama, the action and general movement, the marshalling of forces of one sort or another. The play is expressly dynamic, not static. This is true of all Shakespeare's plays, but of his tragedies especially. Compared with a drama of more classical tradition the Shakespearian tragedy is simply crammed with action. You get from it a sense of intense life in conflict, development, and movement. Whatever Shakespeare is doing, one thing is clear: he does it largely through the medium of action. If we grant that Shakespeare expresses profundities, then we must be prepared to see those profundities expressed in terms of intense dramatic activity. Each play is an onslaught on the mind. And action implies conflict. We watch fierce contestants, men or principles. The 'principles' of the middle scenes usually become opposing armies towards the end; the inner psychological disturbance tends to objectify itself as the play unfurls into open military opposition. Observe how often armies are brought on the stage, sometimes actually fighting; and how individual combats may be crucial to the plot, as in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. These are surface symptoms of what is always embedded deep in Shakespeare: the play's significant action.

The Shakespearian movement, whether of a whole play, or a scene, or a speech, undulates: it shows a rhythmic rise and fall. There are vast waves of action, and, within each, subtler minute crests and cusps, a ceaseless rippling variation.

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We may have a sense of speed-waves. The middle action of *Hamlet* starts with a long scene of ordinary conversation. The player's speech whips up the action for a while; then it falls back, but not right back, towards the poignant intensity of Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia. Then we have Hamlet's address to the players, working up shortly to the play-scene. From now on the speed increases rapidly. The King flies, Hamlet's answers snap back at Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; the King's agonized prayer swiftly follows, and Hamlet's entry; and Hamlet's interview with his mother. This interview starts with a rapid dialogue leading to Polonius' death. There is a pause, Hamlet settles down to his purpose, the movement is deliberate, but quickly gains speed as Hamlet loses control; he grows more wild and volleys abuse, the action gathers, rises to a climax; and the Ghost enters. The Ghost's appearance checks the whole movement that started with the Play scene. Hamlet is now limp, his bolt shot, the Queen too: the whole action is limp. The scene drags on like a wounded snake, with repetitions: an intentional anti-climax. Shakespeare's art functions in terms of rising action followed by a fall. He never fears an anti-climax. It is all done with curves, like a line of undulating hills. After a fall there is continuation: he never cuts off his action at a precipice.

The tragedies often rise to a crest of action about Act III, then, with variations, descend. Or so it seems to us today, but the military conflicts that the modern producer and audience find it so hard to take seriously were probably far more important to a contemporary, and as nerve-racking as the sound effects in Sherriff's *Journey's End* to us. *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Timon of Athens* show this central crest. *Othello*, *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* rise to a later climax but do not close till the action is completed and rounded off. We might contrast Marlowe's technique in *Doctor Faustus* where, except for the very short epilogue, the play is cut off abruptly at a violent climax: Marlowe is mainly interested in his heroes as individuals, Shakespeare in the hero's relation to life in general. We have a pattern of the turning wheel of events, the rhythm and leverage of life swinging over. We find it in individual speeches at a high moment; the words gather power, rise, maintain their height, then, wavering, sough back, as in the King's sleep-speech in *2 Henry IV* (III. i. 18-25), where the surges pile up steadily to the word 'clouds', and then fall

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back for the line following. This is a typical unit. So is Macbeth's 'If it were done . . .' soliloquy (1. vii. 1) which rises to a climax and sinks for the last four lines. We may remember that grand moment in *Richard II* when lyrical Richard, brought before Bolingbroke, starts humbly, then grows swiftly in spiritual stature, takes on the tragic purple of dethroned kingship, and sears his enemies with white-hot speech.

The play's whole development repays attention. Richard is first weak, spoilt, careless and cruel, like Marlowe's Edward II. But this, almost the whole of Marlowe's protagonist, is the merest beginning of Shakespeare's. Returning from Ireland he addresses the earth of England in words that recapture some of our sympathy and, above all, create in us a new sense of Richard's sacred office. His confidence in that blackens Bolingbroke with a single phrase. When disaster closes on him his tragic despair is so developed that he becomes before our eyes unearthly, prince of a new world, a saint in sorrow. And still he is England's king; never more so. His words to Northumberland pile phrase on damning phrase that leave his enemies spiritually crushed before they start to win. Then again he reverts to saintly meditation. They go to London. But watch what is happening: he is not falling, but rising. Step by step he climbs his miniature Calvary. At last he is to resign his crown. He does so, humbly. Northumberland would next have him read a record of his misdeeds. Now watch how the words gather strength:

K. RICHARD: Must I do so? and must I ravel out
My weav'd-up follies? Gentle Northumberland,
If thy offences were upon record
Would it not shame thee in so fair a troop
To read a lecture of them? If thou would'st,
There should'st thou find one heinous article
Containing the deposing of a king
And cracking the strong warrant of an oath,
Mark'd with a blot, damn'd in the book of Heaven!
Nay, all of you that stand and look upon me,
Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,
Though some of you with Pilate wash your hands
Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
And water cannot wash away your sin.

(IV. i. 228)