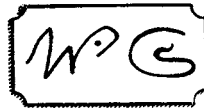


SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY & PRODUCTION

21

EDITED BY
KENNETH MUIR



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'OTHELLO': A RETROSPECT, 1900-67

BY

HELEN GARDNER

Much of the criticism of *Othello* in this century has been marked by an uneasiness which was first voiced by Bradley. This was partly a consequence of his endeavour to discover and define the 'substance' of a Shakespearian Tragedy. Unable to deny that *Othello* was a masterpiece, and that if we are to distinguish certain of Shakespeare's tragedies as 'the great tragedies' we must place *Othello* among them, he had in honesty to recognize that the vision of the world given by *Othello* did not conform to his conception of the vision of the world that the great tragedies present. It is really impossible to see in the destruction of Othello and Desdemona '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 Bradley made no attempt to persuade himself or us that at the end of *Othello* we are presented with a world that has, though at a fearful cost, purged itself of evil. On the contrary, he came very near to saying that the impression the course of the play makes on us is of a very different vision of the universe, suggesting that if there are powers outside the wills of men that shape human destinies then these powers are on the side of Iago. Shying away rapidly from this painful notion, he attempted to analyse why 'some readers', while acknowledging the play's power, and even owning that dramatically it is perhaps Shakespeare's greatest triumph, still 'regard it with a certain distaste', or 'hardly allow it a place in their minds beside *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*'. The distaste he ascribed to the repulsiveness of the subject of sexual jealousy 'treated with Elizabethan fulness and frankness', and to the violence and brutality to which his jealousy drives Othello. The reservation over the play's claim to supreme greatness he ascribed to the 'comparative confinement of the imaginative atmosphere'. '*Othello* has not... the power of dilating the imagination by vague suggestions of huge universal powers working in the world of individual fate and passion.' Compared with the other three 'great tragedies', 'it is, in a sense, less "symbolic"'. It leaves us with the impression that we are not 'in contact with the whole of Shakespeare'; and 'it is perhaps significant in this respect that the hero himself strikes us as having, probably, less of the poet's personality in him than many characters far inferior both as dramatic creations and as men.'

Whether or not Bradley had grounds for ascribing his reservations about *Othello* to other readers in his own day, his unwillingness to grant it supreme greatness has been echoed by critics of very varying schools of thought since he wrote. Many who thought of themselves as opposing Bradley, as well as those who recognized and developed his many brilliant insights, accepted his view that in *Othello* we are not in contact with 'the whole of Shakespeare', and his implication that the hero is not conceived from within. And many have shared his sense that the play lacks universal significance and a larger 'meaning' than any story of terrible individual catastrophe must suggest.

Granville-Barker went so far as to say 'It is a tragedy without meaning, and that is the ultimate horror of it'; and to declare 'It does not so much purge us as fill us with horror and anger'. It must be added that Granville-Barker did not find much 'meaning' in *King Lear*,

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thinking that the main tragic truth about life that it conveyed was its 'capricious cruelty'. He was, to some extent, reacting as a man of the theatre against Bradley's quasi-philosophic approach to the 'substance' of Shakespearian Tragedy. But those who have followed Bradley in an attempt to seek for the 'meaning' of Shakespeare's tragedies, and have gone beyond Bradley in attempting to show him as progressively exploring human destiny in them, have either tended to ignore *Othello* or to treat it with marked reserve. Thus G. Wilson Knight in his chapter on 'The *Othello* Music' in *The Wheel of Fire* (1930), when attempting to 'expose the underlying thought of the play' owned very honestly that 'Interpretation here is not easy, nor wholly satisfactory'.

As all within *Othello*—save the Iago-theme—is separated, differentiated, solidified, so the play itself seems at first to be divorced from wider issues, a lone thing of meaningless beauty in the Shakespearean universe, solitary, separate, unyielding and chaste as the moon. It is unapproachable, yields itself to no easy mating with our minds.

And in a later chapter, where he compares *Othello* with *Timon of Athens*, though he tries to generalize the play's meaning, it is with provisos:

Ultimately, in so far as *Othello* expresses a universal truth, it must be considered to suggest the inability of love's faith to weather the conditions of this world. . . This meaning is not obvious in *Othello*: but it is seen to be implicit on the analogy of other plays. This general theme, in *Othello* projected into definite persons and events, is the very theme to be expressed later in *Timon of Athens*. There a change has taken place. *Othello's* figures are first men and women, and only second symbols; the plot is first a story, second a philosophic argument. In *Timon of Athens* the reverse obtains. Timon is first a symbol, second a human being; the play is primarily an argument or parable, only secondarily forced, as it best may, to assume some correspondence with the forms and events of human affairs. . . *Othello* and *Timon of Athens* are together concerned with the recurrent Shakespeare 'hate-theme': the one is the most concretely projected into human symbols, the other the most universal and profound dramatic statement of this Shakespearean philosophy.

The comparison, as has more than once been pointed out, which equates Desdemona as a symbol with 'the men of Athens—that is mankind—' hardly does justice to what is the source of the keenest pain and the deepest consolation that *Othello* affords: that Desdemona, unlike Timon's friends, is not false and that at the close Othello knows this. Wilson Knight's obvious preference for the 'mighty parable of *Timon of Athens*' over the 'consummate artistry of *Othello*' echoes Bradley's statement that *Othello* is less 'symbolic' than the other tragedies; and his sense of the inadequacy of the 'universal truth' he finds in it to express the truth of the play Shakespeare actually wrote goes to confirm Granville-Barker's view that *Othello* is not a 'spiritual tragedy' and that it has no 'meaning', if by the 'meaning' of a tragedy we understand some statement about the nature of the universe and mankind's role in it which the tragedy expresses or symbolizes. Writers such as D. G. James in *The Dream of Learning* (1951), concerned to assert that the imagination is an 'instrument of truth', an exploration of the nature of reality, make a passing reference to Iago as 'the inexplicable but indisputable evil in our mortal nature'—for Iago can, in a way, be allegorized—and rapidly pass from *Hamlet* to *King Lear*, both of which appear to invite the kind of interpretation that *Othello* appears to resist. From *King Lear* they can move to the Last Plays which have proved so congenial to the taste of this century and

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so amenable to interpretative criticism. Meanwhile *Othello* remains awkwardly and obstinately there: between *Hamlet* and *King Lear* if we wish to trace Shakespeare's development as a tragic artist, and roughly contemporary with *Measure for Measure* if we are trying to plot the whole movement of his mind. Wilson Knight's complaint that 'its thought does not readily mesh with our thought' reflects a genuine dilemma for many twentieth-century critics, who find themselves confronted with a work of obviously supreme artistic power and beauty which does not satisfy their characteristic concerns and strongly resists their characteristic methods. From Johnson onwards the striking merit of *Othello* has always been recognized to lie in the individuality and vitality of the characters and the closeness of the interplay among them, the clarity and concentration of the plot. The persons of the drama are not reducible to symbols, and the play cannot be regarded as an attempt to objectify obscure and dark feelings that have not found full and clear expression, which it is left to the genius of the critic to expose. The 'admirable equilibrium' of the powers of Shakespeare's mind which Coleridge¹ saw in *Othello* defeats the interpreter seeking for a reality that the poet has been able to present only more or less adequately in symbolic form. A preference for *Timon of Athens*—a play rarely performed and thought by some scholars and critics to be more a draft than a finished play—over *Othello* is only an extreme example of a taste characteristic of this century for 'late works' over the works of an artist's maturity, and for 'giant art' rather than fully realized creations: the late quartets of Beethoven rather than the Rasoumovsky quartets, Michelangelo's *Pietà* in Florence rather than his *Pietà* in St Peter's.

Having confessed his reservations as to the 'meaning' and the stature of *Othello*, Bradley turned to analysis of the characters. Though much that he says is true, and one is struck by his care to take all the evidence into account, his studies of *Othello* and *Desdemona* lack conviction. He writes in a mixture of the fusty and of fustian of *Othello*'s romantic nobility and *Desdemona*'s sweetness. But his study of *Iago* is perhaps his masterpiece. His obvious fascination with *Iago* anticipates the fascination later critics have felt, and studies as various as William Empson's 'Honest in *Othello*'², Bernard Spivack's *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (1958), and W. H. Auden's 'The Joker in the Pack'³ develop, as Empson and Spivack freely own, from Bradley's insights. Empson, from Bradley's comment on 'Iago's superficial good-nature, the kind of good-nature that wins popularity and is often taken as a sign, not of a good digestion, but of a good heart', went on to a brilliant discussion of *Iago* as 'a critique on an unconscious pun' on the word 'honest'. Spivack, starting from Bradley's comment on the curious difference between the motives that *Iago* ascribes to himself, which are passionate motives, and the coldness with which he utters them, develops his conception of *Iago* as the stage figure of the Vice (enemy of Mankind, but compelled by the old homiletic tradition to declare himself evil and pay tribute to the virtues he exists to destroy) imperfectly naturalised as 'his Moorship's ancient'. Auden's picture of *Iago* as the 'practical joker' develops from Bradley's subtle recognition of a kind of complicity between Shakespeare the tragic poet and *Iago* 'the amateur of tragedy', as Hazlitt called him, the 'inarticulate poet' of Swinburne. He substitutes for the amoral artist of Bradley a bogeyman of our own day: the amoral experimental scientist. Bradley, with a flash of genius, pointed to 'the curious analogy between the early stages of dramatic composition and those soliloquies in which *Iago* broods over his plot, drawing at first only an outline, puzzled how to fix more than the main idea, and gradually seeing it develop and clarify as he works upon it or lets it work'.

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But Bradley saw, as some later critics have not,⁴ that 'the tragedian in real life was not the equal of the tragic poet. His psychology, as we shall see, was at fault at a critical point. . . and so his catastrophe came out wrong and his piece was ruined'. Bradley recognized that in the last two acts the situation moves beyond Iago's control and that his scurrying about in the dark is peripheral to us, absorbed in the fates of Othello and Desdemona.

However fascinating Iago may be, it is Othello's tragedy that we are asked to contemplate. For all his activity Iago is essentially parasitic on Othello. In the dramatic economy of the play he exists for Othello's sake, not Othello for his. But while (apart from a few aberrant voices taking Iago's claims to promotion as well-founded and thus accepting him as wronged, and others who curiously regard this congenital liar as in some way representing a 'true view of life') criticism in this century has on the whole agreed to see in him the spirit of negation and cynicism, an embodiment of 'the destructive element', there has been no such agreement over Othello. Influential voices, from T. S. Eliot in 1927 onwards,⁵ have qualified or flatly opposed the traditional view of Othello as, in Johnson's words, 'magnanimous, artless, and credulous, boundless in his confidence, ardent in his affection, inflexible in his resolution, and obdurate in his revenge'; and have contraverted Johnson's praise of 'the gradual progress which *Iago* makes in the Moor's conviction, and the circumstances which he employs to inflame him' as 'artfully natural'. A tendency to qualify the conception of Othello as a heroic figure, calling out a passionate sympathy which survives his appalling deed, reached its zenith in F. R. Leavis's famous onslaught on Bradley's Othello, which gave us, in place of Johnson's and Coleridge's Othello, an Othello whose pride, egoism, lack of self-knowledge and 'awareness', shown by his indulgence in inflated rhetoric, make him an easy prey to Iago (also scaled down), responding 'with a promptness that couldn't be improved upon' to 'Iago's "communications"'.⁶ Throughout this period the traditional view held its own and was finely stated, notably by Middleton Murry, Peter Alexander and J. I. M. Stewart. It laboured under difficulties since it was accused of sentimentality—a fatal charge among the young, anxious not to be taken in; though, since tragedy is concerned with human suffering, it might be thought that an excess of sympathy is a lesser defect in a critic than a lack of it. When in 1954 I was invited to give the annual Shakespeare Lecture by the British Academy and chose as my subject 'The Noble Moor',⁷ I thought of myself as fighting a stubborn rearguard action alongside such veterans as Dover Wilson, whose long introduction to his edition of the play in 1957 powerfully argued the traditional view. It now appears that I was conducting a forward skirmish, for two impressive studies of the play in this decade, John Bayley's in *The Characters of Love* in 1960, and John Holloway's in *The Story of the Night* in the following year, brilliantly restated that the central subject of Othello is love, and jealousy, which is a disease of love. Mr Bayley challenged the conception that 'awareness' is the prime human virtue, commenting on our modern undervaluing of achievement; and attacked the notion that Shakespeare was concerned with 'placing' his characters, declaring on the contrary that he endows all of them 'with the greatest possible freedom to be themselves'. Dr Holloway's chapter is a fine example of the value of an historical approach in clearing away obstacles to our discovering what a work of art 'offers for our experience' today. Both Mr Bayley and Dr Holloway were attacking some basic assumptions in Dr Leavis's criticism of the play; but Dr Holloway went further and in a long and closely argued appendix examined Dr Leavis's anti-Bradley essay, to vindicate Johnson's view that Othello was very far from

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'responding with promptness', and to show that in his polemic against Bradley's Othello Dr Leavis had neglected Shakespeare's.⁸

I think Dr Holloway perhaps was a little too ready to declare that certain Elizabethan conceptions are outmoded today, and I am far from sure that his 'modern reader' can be equated with all modern readers. The conflict of attitudes on such subjects as 'jealousy, fidelity, chastity, the quality of desire between a man and a woman, the illicit or degenerate forms of it, the rights that lovers have over each other, the proper response to amorous treachery' is one reason for the conflict of views about the play and its hero. We can all accept, because it is so wholly dead, the notion of Order and Hierarchy as a universal Law of Nature and the basis of a proper social order, and find that this gives us a perspective from which to interpret the History Plays. The notion that fidelity is something we look for in those we love, and something we bind ourselves to when we love another person, is very much more than an idea which once had validity but is now merely intellectually apprehensible. It is an idea which is still passionately held, though one would hardly guess so from reading much modern fiction. I am not sure that 'the notion of the equality of men and women in matters of love' is generally held by the 'modern reader'; and even a casual reading of police-court news at home or *faits divers* abroad can make us question the notion, to quote Empson, that 'the advent of contraceptives has taken a lot of strain off the topic' of adultery. But Dr Holloway's discussion of Othello as 'a prince by birth, and only one below a prince by his office' and of Elizabethan ideals of the conduct and speech required and expected of such a man most interestingly combines with Mr Bayley's stress on him as a man of achievement, a kind of hero that modern novelists and dramatists conspicuously find uninteresting.

Othello is Shakespeare's one full portrait of a professional soldier, a man to whom war is not 'the sport of kings' and involved in politics, but a complete way of life. He is a man of action and heroic in his deeds; but he is also a man on whom the safety of the civil order depends, capable not only of risking his own life and outfacing fear but also of assuming responsibility for the lives of others. Self-confidence and decisiveness are pre-requisites for success in such a career. Shakespeare has wonderfully depicted in him the blend of personal courage and authority that ideally belongs to the 'General Officer', and makes other men willing to follow him into 'the imminent deadly breach'. It is difficult for those whose responsibilities for the lives of others do not demand of them the capacity for swift decision and action⁹ to appreciate the qualities of those who have to act on disciplined instinct and make decisions in a flash: the surgeon confronted with something his diagnosis had not led him to expect, the general when the unexpected irrupts into his planned campaign. This demands a certain simplicity that the subtle and introspective are only too ready to equate with stupidity. They tend to dismiss those who act from the depth of their nature, and by an intuitive sense of the situation, as dull and uninteresting. But in addition to the stress of modern literature on the value of self-consciousness and self-criticism, the stigmatizing of Othello as 'unaware' had an obvious relation to the appalling catastrophe of the First World War, and the blow that the image of the professional soldier received from the senseless carnage in Flanders. It became axiomatic in the twenties and thirties that professional soldiers were stupid. Even Wyndham Lewis, who sympathized with the Lion against the Fox, saw Othello as a kind of dazed, unhappy bull with Iago as a clever matador dancing round him. In the revulsion against war it became very difficult to entertain the idea

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that Shakespeare's soldier heroes were heroes to him. 'Every man', said Johnson, 'thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.'¹⁰ As a great poetic dramatist Shakespeare heightened all the elements in the story he dramatized. His subject being sexual love and marriage, he heightened in every way the contrast of masculine and feminine, to show love as the discovery of union in opposites. Othello's absolute soldiership is the symbol of his entire masculinity. It is a symbol that has lost much of its force to many today, as has the concept of distinctively masculine virtues.

It could hardly be expected that *Othello* could escape a 'Christian interpretation' which neither Johnson nor Coleridge, whose personal commitment to Christian beliefs cannot be doubted, thought it proper to read into it. Johnson, who censured Pope for 'the illaudable singularity of treating suicide with respect', makes no comment on the suicide of Othello any more than he does on the suicides of Romeo and Juliet, or on the Roman deaths of Brutus, Antony and Cleopatra. He was content to accept these actions as 'natural', and as the end of the story in this world. Of all the suicides in Shakespeare, Othello's is the most defensible morally. It is not an escape from an intolerable life but an act of justice. Anticipating the inevitable verdict of the Venetian court and accepting it fully, he declares by his act his responsibility for what he has done, and stigmatizes himself as a criminal. As he sacrificed Desdemona to his ideal of faithfulness, now that he sees the truth he sacrifices himself, to 'die upon a kiss'. No other ending can leave them together; as they are truly together in the value they both set upon loyalty in love as a supreme virtue. I am sorry that Mr Bayley should write that Othello 'is sure his suicide will cut him off from the last hope of mercy', and add 'To ignore this is to ignore the convictions of religion'.¹¹ This is to read into Othello's final speech what is not there. His sense of eternal separation when he and Desdemona will 'meet at compt' comes earlier, when he sees himself as murderer and her as martyred victim. But in the last speech this sense of separation is lost in the final sense of union, typified by Othello's last words: 'a kiss'. Verdi, who had the advantage of writing for a stage that employed a final curtain, knew how *Othello* ended. He brought a hint of the great love-duet of the first act back as Othello entered the marriage-chamber where Desdemona lay sleeping; he brought it back in all its beauty and nobility at the close with the last phrase of his opera: *un altro bacio*. The play must disclose to us at the end that the world of Othello and Desdemona is not Iago's world. It could not do this if Othello, like Iago, were taken off, a prisoner, to face trial and execution. This would be intolerable, and dramatically inept. The play must end by justifying Othello's cry: 'My life upon her faith', and leave us the final image of Othello, Desdemona and Emilia for ever separated by death, for ever united in our imagination.

When Eliot said that he had 'never read a more convincing exposure of human weakness—of universal human weakness—than the last great speech of Othello', he was taking this speech as only the greatest example of something he deplored in other Elizabethan dramatists as well as in Shakespeare: self-dramatization by the heroes at the moment of death, the adoption of an 'aesthetic rather than a moral attitude'. He took Othello as the most striking example (which indeed he is) of a man on the brink of eternity 'endeavouring to escape reality' by '*cheering himself up*'. Eliot owns that Othello 'takes in the spectator'. He does not make clear whether he 'took in' his author also: whether Shakespeare is deliberately exposing self-deception and human weakness in his hero, or, himself deceived, is presenting such an attitude as 'noble' and only

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unconsciously revealing human weakness. I think the implication of the whole essay is that it is Shakespeare who is exposing his own false values, and that it is Shakespeare's inadequate view of life and death rather than Othello's that we should censure. Later critics who have fastened on this speech as an example of Othello's self-dramatization have shown less awareness than Eliot of Othello's likeness here to other tragic figures who, in place of humbly and penitently preparing themselves to meet their Judge, look back over their past lives and re-assert the values they have lived by. Hamlet is forced by the potent poison to leave his justification to Horatio; Lear is prevented by extremity of weakness and grief from speaking; but Antony who, like Eliot's Hamlet, has 'made a pretty considerable mess of things', even bungling his own suicide, and Coriolanus, whose end is singularly unheroic, also assert in the face of death that their life had glory. Othello is allowed to make at length his *apologia pro vita sua*; and if in so doing he 'cheers himself up' he cheers us up too. Because the deed of horror is deferred in this play until the final scene, and the spectacle of Desdemona dead before our eyes is so heart-rending, the self-assertion of the hero must be fuller than other rallyings of the hero's essential nature in catastrophe, reminding us of the twin values of love and loyalty by which he has tried to live.

Something of the same kind of failure to recognize dramatic values, and dramatic necessities lurks behind Wilson Knight's reservations over the 'Othello music'. Finding as characteristic of the play two worlds of imagery, Othello's and Iago's, and pointing to the central confusion, when Iago takes over at moments the language of Othello and Othello descends into the animal world of Iago, he discovers in Othello's characteristic speech something 'over-decorated, highly-coloured' and declares that 'there is something sentimental in it' and that 'at moments of great tension, the Othello style fails of a supreme effect'.¹² He takes as his example four lines from Othello's last speech and compares them with an outburst of grief from Macduff. This is again to ignore dramatic circumstance. Othello is attempting to present himself to the world's judgement. The last speech presents a parallel, in terrible circumstances, to the speech in which he defended himself before the Senate in the first act. It is by a mighty effort of self-control that Othello here achieves the 'restrained melodic beauty' which is compared unfavourably with an outburst of natural grief at hearing grievous news by a minor character. The discipline of a life that has been lived at danger-point and has taken its value from service to the state is behind the control with which Othello here attempts a summation of what we have seen, without extenuation and without indulgence in the hysterical self-loathing he has shown earlier in the scene.

A rather different assessment of the characteristic speech of Othello and Iago is given by Wolfgang Clemen.¹³ Commenting on the highly personal nature of Othello's imagery, drawn from a wide experience, and noting that he 'is almost always talking of himself, his life and his feelings', he sees Othello's imagery as serving to 'express his own emotions and his own nature'; adding 'with the innocence and frankness characteristic of strong natures who live within themselves he always takes *himself* as the point of departure'. Imagery, on the other hand, is not natural to Iago, who is always 'looking for comparisons'. He likes 'general statements' whereas Othello 'characteristically never discusses general human values'. What other writers have seen as Othello's 'egoism', lack of intellectual power, and 'sentimentality', Clemen sees as generous frankness, and sincerity and integrity of emotion: he 'does not measure his imagery by the effect which it is to have upon others; he speaks what is in his heart'. The strength of Clemen's book is that his concern with imagery goes along with a sense of dramatic reality and dramatic

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possibility. It is this that is lacking in Robert B. Heilman's very full study, *Magic in the Web* (1956), which presents an Othello as secretly unsure of himself, displaying 'immaturity, histrionism, and incompleteness of love', a 'romantic personality that has found a military outlet' in 'a stoicism that can develop into toughness and ruthlessness'.¹⁴ His 'military virtues . . . hardly equip him for a demanding intimate personal relationship'. It is difficult to see how any actor could present this 'secretly unsure' Othello as he declaims Othello's magnificently confident lines; or how, while enchanting the Senate (and the audience) with his account of his 'travel's history', he could manage to convey to them the immaturity of his romantic view of his experience.

These approaches to *Othello*, even when apparently most hostile to Bradley, are in the tradition of Bradley, who combined the search for meaning with acute psychological analysis, and with recognition of 'dominant imagery' in the plays he studied. Bradley's main weakness as a critic of tragedy lay in his defective feeling for the stage. He took insufficient account of the distinction between characterization in a novel and characterization in a play. The novelist creates characters that have come to life in our imagination; the dramatist creates characters that an actor is to bring to life on the stage. There is a penumbra of uncertainty surrounding dramatically conceived characters which calls upon the actor's imagination and gives scope for his art. They are always, even in soliloquy, presenting themselves to us, creating themselves as characters expressive of a personality which it is the actor's business to convey. To be dramatic, they must to some extent dramatize themselves, whether by hyperbole, or, as more often today, by understatement. In our actual encounters with other people—as distinct from our encounter with them in memory, imagination, and reflection—we are often surprised, and made aware of the mystery of human personality. In the same way, fully dramatic characters impress us with a present reality and 'tease us out of thought'. The acts and speeches of men, how they present themselves to the world, are the dramatist's main concern, not their motives. This does not mean that characterization and psychological consistency are less required of the dramatist than the novelist; only that they reveal themselves in rather different ways. Bradley's overmastering concern with 'why' conflicts with the dramatist's absorption in 'how'. To make discussion of motives our prime concern is to neglect the glory of drama, its power to present before our eyes and ears an image of human life that convinces us of its truth even while it surprises us. The anti-Bradleyans I have mentioned have switched their interest from 'Why does Iago act as he does?' to 'Why does Othello believe Iago?' They are unwilling to 'rest in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'; and to accept that with dramatic characters we must be 'content with half-knowledge'. For they come before us with a physical reality that is not wholly amenable to intellectual analysis, and while we dissect our 'meddling intellect' may well murder.

Further, unlike as they are to Bradley in their interpretation of Othello's character, the moralists who find the root of the tragedy in his 'pride', or his 'egoism', or 'immaturity' are, like Bradley, shrinking from the central subject, the tragic fact that *Othello* presents. It is more comforting to rise from reading¹⁵ *Othello* with the assurance that persons of 'greater awareness' can avoid tragic disaster than to see Othello as Raleigh saw him: suffering 'for his very virtues', a man 'carried off his feet, wave-drenched and blinded by the passion of love', and to feel in the 'compulsive course' of the play's swift onward movement the strength of 'the tides that bear