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A. J. A. Waldock

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A STUDY IN CRITICAL METHOD

by

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P R E F A C E

Many of Shakespeare's plays have puzzling features, but *Hamlet* is unique in that it provokes real uncertainty concerning the dramatist's main intention. Our efforts to discover what Shakespeare meant by it still go on. But if the accumulation of comment means anything, it means that we need no longer expect a solution in which all our perplexities will magically vanish. Some of the difficulties are in the play to stay.

My concern, in this attempt to estimate the present situation in *Hamlet* criticism, has been as much with procedures as with results. Nothing, plainly, can be more important in such a case than that we should be clear regarding the valid canons of critical method. That question is paramount.

Professor Sir Mungo MacCallum, though some of the points of view here taken are far from his own, will not refuse me the opportunity of paying homage to his Shakespeare teaching, which is of the kind that becomes part of one's life.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr R. G. Howarth, who kindly undertook to see this essay through the press.

A. J. A. W.

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