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ART AND ARTIFICE IN SHAKESPEARE

A STUDY IN
DRAMATIC CONTRAST AND
ILLUSION

BY
ELMER EDGAR STOLL

*'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.*

POPE

*A legitimate poem . . . the parts of which mutually
support and explain each other . . . the balance or
reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities.*

COLERIDGE

*For the effect of genius is not to persuade or con-
vince the audience, but rather to transport them out
of themselves . . . The object of poetry is to enthral.*

LONGINUS

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1933

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Preface

THIS book is not a reprint, with revision. But since it is, at many points, a development and organization of thoughts expressed before, I have had, as a matter of necessity, to recur to these. Of the relation of the present undertaking to the previous ones, I speak more definitely in Chapter I, p. 4; here I wish only to express my gratitude to the University of Minnesota Press for permission to make use of some material in my *Othello* (1915), *Hamlet* (1919), and *Poets and Playwrights* (1930); and the Macmillan Company, of New York, for similar permission with regard to my *Shakespeare Studies* (1927).

A still greater debt is, manifestly, owing to the publisher of the present volume, penned, on such a subject, by a foreigner. The University of Cambridge, happily, recognizes in the domain of scholarship no walls or frontiers; her Press is not reserved for her faculty or the nation; and it is a particular satisfaction to appear, under such auspices, on Shakespeare's own soil, where the dramatist has, despite my strictures, been more finely and sympathetically interpreted than anywhere else. It is there that men best speak his tongue, best hear his voice.

As an approach or introduction to the text stands an array of principles, or dogmas as I call them, from the

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PREFACE

pens of great critics. In my work I have not consciously followed them; some of them I had forgotten, others till of late I had not known; but if I should prove, after all, to have been faithful to them, I should then have the satisfaction of being, even in my heterodoxy, not unorthodox, and of not seeming to differ for heresy's sake.

Controversy in Shakespeare criticism, now after nearly two centuries of it, is, for one who would write for the mind as well as the emotions, fairly unavoidable; nevertheless I have endeavoured to avoid it save when needed to clear the way directly before me; and whatever value there may be in the book I have written lies, I think, in what is positive and constructive, poetical and dramatic, not "scientific" or "historical", as these words are, in connection with literature, abused. Here, again, it is in the light of the *Dogmata* that I would be judged—after that shed by the poet himself; and if in detecting and tracing his artifices I do not make the beauty of his art not only more credible but a little more apparent, I must, quite as much as my reader, account my labour to have been futile.

E. E. S.

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Dogmata Critica

The Importance of the Poet's Purpose

In everything the end aimed at is of prime importance.
 Aristotle, *Poetics*, VI, 11 (Bywater).

A perfect Judge will read each work of Wit
 With the same spirit that its author writ.
 Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, l. 233.

Was hat sich der Autor vorgesetzt? Ist dieser Vorsatz vernünftig und verständig? und inwiefern ist es gelungen, ihn auszuführen? Werden diese Fragen einsichtig und liebevoll beantwortet...

Goethe (echoing the Italian himself), *Manzonis Carmagnola* (*Werke*, Jubeläum, xxxvii, 180).

“To see the object as in itself it really is”, has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever.
 Pater, *Renaissance*, Preface.

Déterminer ce qu'un auteur a voulu faire, et comment il l'a fait, ce doit être le premier souci du critique.
 Sainte-Beuve.

On peut, donc, jusqu'à un certain point, voir dans une œuvre autre chose encore que ce qu'y a vu l'auteur, y démêler ce qu'il y a mis à son insu et ce à quoi il n'avait point songé expressément.
Causeries du lundi, “M. Taine”, 3me édition, XIII, 257.

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Le critique ne doit apprécier le résultat que suivant la nature de l'effort... Cela a été écrit déjà mille fois. Il faudra toujours le répéter. Maupassant, preface to *Pierre et Jean*.

Only, one *caveat* must be borne in mind when attempting to answer them [questions about the poet's purpose]: the poet's aim must be judged at the moment of the creative act, that is to say, by the art of the poem itself, and not by the vague ambitions which he imagines to be his real intentions before or after the creative act is achieved.

Spingarn, *Creative Criticism* (1931), p. 18.

Judge by results, I say; not by the results of reverie, which the poem merely sets going, and in which attention may ramble anywhere it pleases, for that is not criticism at all; but certainly by any result that may come of living in the art of the play and attending to everything it consists of... But, when I say a play exists in what it means to any one who will receive it, the implication is plain, that everything is excluded from that existence which is not given by the author's technique. The existence of a work of art is completed by the recipient's *attention* to what the author says to him; whatever may come in through *inattention* to that does not belong to the art at all.

Lascelles Abercrombie, *A Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting* (1930), pp. 21, 29.

It seems to me that we should be tolerant when poets are too childlike... But for infantilism in critics I do not see a word of defence or apology possible to be spoken... When they are so little developed, so shut up in their own view-point, that they do not know the difference between receiving a communication and making up a fairy-story, etc.

Eastman, *The Literary Mind* (1931), p. 121.

And it [the intellectual life] leads them to see that it is their business to learn the real truth about the important men, and

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things, and books, which interest the human mind. . . . To be satisfied with fine writing about the object of one's study, with having it praised or blamed in accordance with one's own likes or dislikes, with any conventional treatment of it whatever, is at this stage of growth seen to be futile.

Arnold, *A French Critic on Milton*.

What the Purpose Is

As Tragedy is an imitation of personages better than the ordinary man, we, in our way, should follow the example of good portrait-painters, who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and, at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is. Aristotle, *Poetics*, xv.

But from another point of view they [the impossibilities] are justifiable, if they serve the end of poetry itself. . . if they make the effect of some portion of the work more striking.

Ibid. xxv, 5.

For the effect of genius is not to persuade [or, convince] the audience, but rather to transport them out of themselves.

Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 1, 4 (Butler).

The object of poetry is to enthrall [emotional illusion].

Ibid. xv, 2.

Non enim res gestæ versibus comprehendendæ sunt, quod longe melius historici faciunt, sed per ambages deorumque misteria et fabulosum sententiarum tormentum præcipitandus est liber spiritus, ut potius furentis animi vaticinatio appareat quam religiosæ orationis sub testibus fides.

Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, 118

(quoted admiringly by Dryden and Coleridge).

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Imagination in a man or reasonable creature is supposed to participate of reason; and when that governs, as it does in the belief of fiction, reason is not destroyed, but misled, or blinded; that can prescribe to the reason, during the time of the representation, somewhat like a weak belief of what it sees and hears; and reason suffers itself to be so hoodwinked, that it may better enjoy the pleasures of the fiction.

Dryden, *Defence of Dramatic Poesy*.

'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.

Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, l. 245.

...yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest, and a semblance of truth, sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief, for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.

Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, chap. xiv.

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species— (having *this* object in common with it)—it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole* as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.

Ibid.

A legitimate poem...the parts of which mutually support and explain each other...

Ibid.

That synthetic and magical power...Imagination...reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities...and, while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature.

Ibid.

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[Of a landscape of Rubens, where the light falls from opposite sides] der kühne Griff des Meisters, wodurch er auf geniale Weise an den Tag legt, dass die Kunst der natürlichen Nothwendigkeit nicht durchaus unterworfen ist, sondern ihre eigenen Gesetze hat. . . in den höheren Regionen des künstlerischen Verfahrens, wodurch ein Bild zum eigentlichen Bilde wird, hat er [der Künstler] ein freieres Spiel, und er darf sogar zu Fiktionen schreiten, wie Rubens in dieser Landschaft mit dem doppelten Lichte getan.

Goethe, *Gespräche mit Eckermann*, April 18, 1827.

The transcript of his sense of fact rather than the fact, as being preferable, pleasanter, more beautiful to the writer himself.

Pater, *Essay on Style*.

L'art dramatique est l'ensemble des conventions universelles ou locales, éternelles ou temporaires, à l'aide desquelles, en représentant la vie humaine sur un théâtre, on donne à un public l'illusion de la vérité.

Sarcey, *Essai d'une Esthétique de Théâtre*.

The purpose of the novelist's ingenuity is always the same; it is to give to his subject the highest relief [not the closest verisimilitude] by which it is capable of profiting.

Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, p. 173.

A "living" character is not necessarily "true to life". It is a person whom we can see and hear, whether he be true or false to human nature as we know it. What the creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility; the dramatist need not understand people; but he must be exceptionally aware of them.

T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 188.