



Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes by Lily B. Campbell

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conies of an inn yard or any other plain auditorium form, but as a highly ornamented Baroque development of two old theatrical forms—the mountebank platform and the booth-like backing, which were the basic forms of many different Renaissance theatres. Hence even in an inn yard or a bear-baiting arena, an elaborate façade must be imagined at the back of the projecting platform. Keeping in mind the full theatrical ways of western Europe, Hodges reconstructs many Elizabethan features with new evidence and new insight. He shows how the curtains were hung around the front of the projecting platform; how the windows and balconies and heavenly throne must have looked; how the ceiling was painted with stars and astrological symbols; how the portable arbors, tombs, thrones, city walls, and gates must have been used. He considered the many difficulties about an inner stage, some so serious that G. F. Reynolds has doubted its existence and pointed out that the Swan drawing shows no structural inner stage. Those difficulties would not have existed if a removable structure, like a booth with a small upper stage, had been used—a structure well known in many other theatrical forms. One excellent imaginative drawing shows how well such a structure would have worked for the tomb scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The final picture may never be created. Such a variety of guesses should remind us there is no such thing as an "authentic" reconstruction of the Elizabethan stage. But this restoration is far more convincing than any that have gone before. The book is a major landmark for the scholar, yet brief and fascinating enough for the casual reader. Its lively text, its full reproduction of

the historical evidence, and above all its brilliant drawings make it the one book on the Elizabethan theatre to put in the hands of the drama student.

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SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC HEROES.

By Lily B. Campbell. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1953; pp. viii+296. \$7.50.

Just fifty years ago A. C. Bradley published his *Shakespearean Tragedy*, dealing primarily with four of Shakespeare's major heroes: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. Since that time the book has been reprinted approximately every two years. In 1904 Lily B. Campbell was an undergraduate wondering at the "excitement" of her professors over the advent of Bradley. Roughly twenty-five years ago Miss Campbell published *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion*, dealing in part with the four heroes Bradley had considered earlier. Miss Campbell's work, recently reprinted, has been enlarged to include two critical essays on Bradley.

In view of the recurrent appearance of Bradley, Miss Campbell's "revisit" is of considerable interest. Incisively she takes the Oxford don to task for absurdities and inconsistencies in theories of tragedy which some still suppose were "brought down to the people from Sinai." When Bradley argues for legal and moral responsibility as a necessary condition for tragic acts, Miss Campbell insists that here is "a nineteenth-century mind imposing a moral pattern upon the work of a sixteenth-century mind."

Miss Campbell perceives that something is wrong with Bradley's concept of moral order in that he fails to affirm the medieval heritage of venial and mortal

sin, but nowhere does she point out that Bradley has failed to discern in Shakespeare's major tragedies an absolute moral order against which the concept of justice can be defined. Such a concept Bradley, in a footnote, is willing to concede for some Greek tragedy but not for Shakespearean tragedy. Hence, because Bradley insists we should not "judge," Miss Campbell charges Bradley with failure to distinguish between tragic heroes and hero-villains (between Hamlet and Macbeth, for example), with the resulting ambiguity that, as Bradley affirms, "tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery." But the crucial problem in establishing a criterion for moral judgment both Bradley and Miss Campbell overlook: that it is perfectly possible to believe in a system of unchanging ethical laws, to cultivate the belief that justice exists, and at the same time to recognize the inadequacy of all definitions to explain any part of it.

Again, Miss Campbell, convinced that "Shakespeare in all his tragedies was primarily concerned with passion rather than with action," emphasizes the fact that Bradley ignores in his treatment of tragic heroes the doctrine of passion overcoming reason. This may well be true. But is this not a subsidiary point in comparison with the comprehensive theories implicit in Bradleyan criticism? Indeed, in the enunciation of rules of a general kind it may yet be discovered that Bradley, though no infallible guide, is still no antiquated theorist. In fact, it might even be observed that Bradley, often unconsciously, is imposing a romantic bias on otherwise classical theories, theories that may yet be traced to the "discreet, unromantic" pages of Aristotle. If we look closely, may we not find in Bradley hints of

these ancient pronouncements: the universality of all great poetry, accounting for its permanent appeal; the primacy of action and the inter-relation of action and character; the need of organic form; and, finally, the significant doctrine of *catharsis* of pity and fear, accounting for the pleasure of tragedy?

That Bradley was attempting to orient his vision around the precepts of Aristotle seems not unlikely when we remember that the two great translators of Aristotle's *Poetics* taught at Oxford during Bradley's association with that institution. Bradley, Butcher, and Bywater—these three at the turn of the century were tremendously interested in Aristotle. Perhaps the wonder is not that Bradley has survived for fifty years but that Aristotle has survived for more than two thousand. We may then conclude that classicism in its truest sense is a body of principles implicit in all great literature, and that in art, as in life, it is the part of wisdom to "let the ages instruct the years."

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SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE 1951-1953. A photographic record with a critical analysis by Ivor Brown. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1953; pp. 18 with 84 plates. \$5.00.

As a photographic record of the 1951-1953 seasons at Stratford this volume is extremely welcome. It follows the same format as was used in the volume covering the seasons 1948-1950, containing a beautifully vivid record of the productions in the photographs of Angus McBean and a brief but comprehensive critical analysis of eighteen pages by Ivor Brown. Productions covered by this volume are: 1951—*Richard II*, *Henry IV*, Parts 1 and 2, *Henry V*, and