

failure theory which is its logical inversion. At its best, tragedy is an attempt to transcend our own prison. of deified ideology by exposing its conflict with our common need and suggesting a new and eternal formula in 'the art of our necessities.'

NOTES

- 1) A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, MacMillan: 1952), p. 38.
- 2) H. H. Furness, ed., *Hamlet, A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, vol. II, pp. 152-155.
- 3) J. D. Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge University Press: 1960).
- 4) In this respect, P. A. Jorgensen's *Lear's Self-Discovery* (Univ. of California Press: 1967) is illuminating. Tracing Shakespeare's pursuit of *nosce teipsum*, he analyzes the old king's false image of himself. Concerned with the individual morality, however, he does not seem to regard Lear's newly-gained half-insight as part of the clouded awakening of his world at large.
- 5) Ruth Nevo, *Tragic Form in Shakespeare* (Princeton University Press: 1972), pp. 187-188.
- 6) Part of my tentative analysis of this deception has been published in "The Counterfeit Presentment --An Analysis of the Sun-god Imagery in *Hamlet*--", *Studies in the Humanities* (Bulletin of the Faculty of Literature, Fukuoka Women's College) Vol. 38 (Fukuoka, Japan: 1974), pp. 1-28.
- 7) My view about the interesting process through which the lovers' heavenly love comes to end in that catastrophe in the nunnery scene is presented in an essay written in Japanese, "*Hamlet: the Moral Structure, 3, Madness and Plot*", *Studies in Humanities* Vol. 37 (Fukuoka, Japan: 1973), pp. 1-39.

the audience without showing his own identity. That he shows no fear at all of the danger which his self-disclosure would certainly incur evidences this. The king, on the other hand, does not refer to his nephew as heaven's minister when he wishes to be reconciled with heaven. If heavenly justice were a conscientious metaphor for the justness of Hamlet's enmity against him, his prayer would involve the inescapable question of how to deal with his nephew's vengeance. Claudius says that his foul crime smells to heaven. He means it. He never imagines that it should ever rise to men's eyes. Both parties remain confident of their secrets.

These are some of numberless interrelated problems to solve. I do not propose to explicate the super-subtle structure of the play here. Nor is it in my power. I just propose a way of approach, a way to notice our own blindness, a basic way to comprehend Shakespeare's art, which I think is justified by small discoveries I have made. Shakespeare's expression is an integration of interrelated strata of meanings, some meant some unmeant by the speaker. That is how the dramatist makes his character exist as a dramatic entity. To be oneself and to belong to a society are not two separate things. That is why the greatest soul or the most delicate spirit destroys himself by greatly or delicately observing what he believes to be his duty for welfare. That is also why he dies ignorant of his predicament in spite of his acutest pains. After his silence, the rest is ours to ponder.

The impression of fatality in Shakespeare's tragedies is both real and deceptive. For the inevitable sequence is a revelation of an unrecognized evil choice. *Hamlet* is often talked about as a dramatized question, the uncertainty being assumed to be the esthetic objective of the art. This is a conclusion as unhappy as the artistic

commits a treachery upon him. We must find out the discourse of reason on her part. At least, this is clear to us: Hamlet criticizes her act by supposing that she lacks his sensibility, whereas Gertrudes defends him by supposing that he shares her grief.

Ophelia is another case. Would any girl who believes that a young noble soul is losing his reason for his unexpectedly faithful love for her because she has repelled him indict him with a false imputation of infidelity, be astonished at his anger her action causes, believe that it is his madness that does it, pray heaven to restore him, and weep that she has lost the joy of his sweet vows? Practically that is how the poor lady has been understood to be behaving in the nunnery scene. So long as we take the scene for another revelation of the evil of the Danish court as it is reflected on the sensitive mind of the honest prince, we must accept the unbelievable deformity of a girl. But, if what truly matters to Hamlet is whether Ophelia is capable of true love or not, the obvious contradiction between Hamlet's picture of Ophelia and her self-expression will lead us to the right track to discover the dramatic integrity of the miserable woman whose social status is represented by her function as her father's treasure-decoy to be loosed and marketed at his will and by her lover's self-righteous change of attitude from religious idolatry to down-to-earth contempt. Unnoticed, she lives her life in the prison of Denmark.⁷⁾

Perhaps the most interesting riddle in *Hamlet* is found in the play-within-the-play scene. It is generally believed that, in order to unmask his treacherous uncle, Hamlet discloses his knowledge of his crime. However, Hamlet's behavior after the play is given over and Claudius' self-disclosure in the prayer scene both deny this assumption. The prince gloats over his success as an actor, which only means that he has carried out his original design to cause an intended response in

possibly recognize the hidden alternative which the tragic sequence implies.

Our particular predicament with *Hamlet* is that the prince's breaths cram the air. The young man of loving nature, a delicate and tender prince, is so badly shocked by what seems to him to be his mother's incestuous lust. That, however, is his private interpretation, which he never communicates to others and which apparently none of the other characters shares.

A person's self-expression is the dramatist's only means to characterize him as one concrete factor of his drama. His judgement is always justified within itself. Outside it, however, it does not, unless supported by its good consequence. Hamlet's judgement is ironically supported by the Ghost's judgement and he is impressed by his own prophetic soul, but the king and the prince, though of greatly different dispositions, belong to one fatal deception.⁶⁾

With too ready sympathy with Hamlet and the Ghost, we accept their image of a pernicious woman of lawless lust, and, since she actually does not appear so evil and cunning, we make a compromise by building a woman of frail morality and weak character virtually unconscious of what she does. In that process we somehow disregard the tremendous significance of Gertrude's reference to Hamlet's father's death and her overhasty marriage as the absolute causes of her son's melancholy. The fact is that she shares Hamlet's sensibility as expressed in his 'too too solid flesh' soliloquy and believes her marriage to have been too hasty. The point is: it is not a lack of moral sense that makes the woman, who, according to the testimony of the king, lives now upon her love for her son, accept the hand of her dead husband's brother. We must not remain satisfied with the image of a monster of allegedly female psychology who loves her son and

deadly nature of his position. (It may not be a mere accident that his ghost does not appear.) They also share the common blindness of the society and each dies a victim of it, but they do not transform their sense of wrong into a wish for a retaliation in kind. They are a clear indicator of the moral premise, if there ever is one, of the dramatic construction.

The secret of Shakespeare's tragedy lies in his way to let the evil potential of man triumphantly victimize him, both socially and personally. The way Lear banishes Cordelia tells how he wrongs himself. Othello's murder of his wife reveals how a man's vengeance murders his better property. And in each case, the evil-doer does not know he misunderstands. Technically, Shakespeare's tragedy is grounded on the difficulty of seeing what passes show.

We know Cordelia is a devoted daughter because we overhear her whispering to herself. If Lear heard that much from her, he would love her the more and tolerate her small fault because then he would know that the specified form is unimportant. We know Othello is wrong because we overhear Desdemona promising Cassio to ask her dear husband's favor for him. If Othello overheard the talk, he would remain enamored by her amiability for ever. But they are required to interpret a form of conduct and wrongly judge the heart behind it.

It is probably our too ready accusation of Lear that has blinded us to the structure and significance of the love-test scene. We have committed the same error about Lear as Lear's about Cordelia. Shakespeare's art requires our intellectual vigilance. We must not base our judgement upon any one character's judgement. We are required to interpret for ourselves from conflicting informations given by various characters. We must share their predicament before we can

Our moral uncertainty about *Hamlet* results from our common expectation to define the prince either as a dutiful observer of justice or as an evil seeker of vendetta. This sort of definition, however, is absolutely harmful with Shakespeare, if it is meant to determine the artistically sanctioned moral premise of the dramatic world. The Shakespearean questioning begins with asking *why* the dutiful observer of justice *is* the evil seeker of vendetta. This is not a case of ambivalence, either. We are not watching a conflict between two equally inevitable but mutually contradictory demands comprehended by the characters as such. There is only one demand which proves self-contradictory and self-destructive. The alternative is hidden to the last.

Shakespeare's dramaturgy is based on the clash among people who act according to their common birth. The goddess 'Nature' of Edmund is nothing but the reality of Gloucester's physical being. Othello's pride is the other side of Iago's jealousy. The benevolent Duncan's peace requires the faithful Macbeth's violence. They, however, do not recognize their predicament because they are unable to reduce their mutual contradiction to their common background which deceives them in various ways according to their positions in it.

A self-destructive demand dramatically presented presupposes a better alternative, which does not belong to the evil potential of the society. In *King Lear* Cordelia, for all her unconsciousness of its significance, stands for one, and in *Othello* Desdemona does. Their common trait is a complete lack of hate and revengefulness. In *Macbeth* Duncan represents meekness, though he is unconscious of the

woman is not allowed to take any active part in the social settlement. Thus, in one sense, Lady Macbeth understands the cold reality of feudal hierarchy more clearly than her husband, but in another she is more blind to the strength of human sympathy. Or her sympathy is confined in her love for her manly husband. So, his hesitation looks cowardly, unmanly, and unreasonable. And she resents her womanhood and tries to lead the situation by being manly herself. She is also discouraged from the logical action resulting from her manly attempt when the old man reminds her of her own father, a feeling which would destroy a warrior the moment he feels it. She cannot render that inconvenient reaction of hers into an insight into human nature. Not knowing that just the same immediacy of sympathetic response checks her husband, she urges him to do the man's job. Bound by their marital immediacy, and unable to trace the Witches' power to his own belief in what he is, Macbeth has to acquiesce. When he says nearly disapprovingly that his wife has nothing womanly about her, he is in fact shocked to find his reality mirrored in the woman.

The secrecy in which they act indicates their humanity. When the structure of the feudal settlement exposes its nature in the shape of a little murder, the actors' fear of their own act reveals the deception of the settlement. But they are too native to their mode of being to discover that the Weird Sisters deceive only through men's self-deception.

It is meaningless to say that Macbeth is ambitious. We may exclaim, 'Does this seem ambitious in Macbeth?' Like Caesar, he goes his almost predetermined way to the dead-end. Another way remains unnoticed.

which their existence is grounded. Simplified, the Sisters' prediction means that it is possible to take another man's seat by the help of death. It requires the seeming supernatural to teach this bit of eternal truth to the faithful soldier imprisoned in his status. Now the principle of jealous competition and that of jealous defence, which are one, take on two supernatural shapes of opposite laws.

Forced to believe in the unexpected invitation, Macbeth has to consider what part he should take to fulfil the promise, and, since the physical reality of the principle of mutual exclusion never ceases to exist, he must admit the necessity of one simple act. Then he is confronted by the double nature of the crown as the most desirable in the world and the most sacred to his conscience. He cannot explain why the happiest prospect is the most dreadful idea. The brave man who can kill numberless enemies before breakfast is terrified by the idea of killing a man who is the only obstacle to his promised success. Because Duncan is not an enemy whom his conscience bids him to kill, he recognizes the horror of blood and bloodshed amplified by his conscience, whereas in the battlefields the same horror is an unnecessary and harmful scruple and is called cowardice by the same conscience. What finally discourages Macbeth is not any belief in either one of the two laws but his personal tie with the kind king. The simple sense of mutual trust proves stronger than the temptation of the crown.

The tragic irony of the fate of Macbeth and his wife lies in the process in which Lady Macbeth continues to believe in what has made her soldier-husband great. She has little personal sympathy with the old king because she has never tasted the trustful solidarity between a good king and a faithful subject, and her success in life solely depends on her dear husband's ability to get higher in rank because a

death, unless the rebel wins against the restriction. Hence the bloody battle in which we find Macbeth.

It damages the whole concept of the drama if we explain Macbeth's disloyalty by supposing that he has had some such ambition somewhere in him. Inside the society to which he belongs, the crown is hopelessly inaccessible and inviolable and, because it is the highest good to be achieved, it represents both physically and symbolically the jealous solidarity of the feudal system. That Macbeth is a fearless soldier fighting for the cause of his side shows his unquestioned faith in the solidarity of his camp and in the king's right as the possessor of all his subjects' possessions put together. It is only when the Witches draw the utterly unexpected picture of him sitting on the throne that he recognizes such a possibility for the first time. The new idea surprises him off guard. He has to adjust himself to it in some way or other.

It is mistaken, too, to say that Macbeth should not have believed the sisters. It is meaningless to compare him with Banquo in terms of their relative morality. Banquo is also terribly shaken and cannot say that there is no such thing. He also sees the 'two happy prologues' to Macbeth's 'swelling act' and reasons that if his own offsprings should be kings Macbeth should not be one and that therefore either he or himself must die. Banquo expects and understands everything Macbeth does because their reasonings are identical. The prediction annoys them not because it is ridiculous but it makes possible what is impossible. Macbeth wearing the crown is in itself a nice and becoming picture. The Witches undermine their sense of inviolable law by suggesting another invisible presiding will.

What the two feudal lords cannot recognize is that the 'two happy prologues' are so many instances of the bloody competitions on

not their virtue, and when the virtue of love is tried they fail and do practically the same thing that the professed seekers of self-interests do, although their subjective nobility must demand sympathy.

Lear's disinheritance of Cordelia, Gloucester's disinheritance of Edgar, and Brabantio's disowning of Desdemona, altogether give a penetrating light about the dramatic structure of Macbeth's murder of Duncan. In each case, there exists an inviolable social hierarchy with its code of conduct the authority of which conflicts with human nature. In the first scene where Macbeth's valiant feats are narrated, we perceive the unrecognized but obvious enough identity between him and his enemy. If Macbeth fights for his master with a belief that Duncan has the right to possess the land he possesses, his opponent believes in his own or another man's right to possess the same. The struggle exposes more than anything the dominance of the possessive motive, which makes it necessary for the honest soldier to forget the taste of fear so as to maintain his existence. The predicament is common to both parties. The irony is that one of the two must perish.

The brave one does not seek honor for nothing. Macbeth's present status has resulted from his past service for the cause of the specific hierarchy represented by Duncan, and he has to prove himself worthy of his title. And if he excels others in his service, he may be rewarded by a greater position with greater wealth, provided that the possible position is unoccupied, which is impossible in this competitive society. Death must come before Macbeth advances. The renowned fighter is surprised at the news of his advancement not because he does not deserve it but because it cannot be his. Duncan's hierarchy is a system of mutual restraint among potential competitors. Any violation will be punished by disinheritance in banishment or

little dreams that for all his capacity for love and nobility the renowned, useful soldier belongs inevitably to that which did not believe in her honest love when she gave herself joyfully. They both embody their common predicament according to their respective positions in their society. Their predicament is common because they share the same humanity in spite of it. It remains a predicament because they cannot recognize their common share of it, although the striking contrast between vengeance and mercy explains the whole story to us. The disaster is not accidental nor reducible to personal idiosyncrasies.

3

Iago is often regarded as a monster come from nowhere. His evils are said to be motiveless, just as Lear's attachment to the love-show seems inexplicably unreasonable. They are monstrous and unreasonable, to be sure. But they are explicable. Iago belongs as Othello and Desdemona belong. His evil is Othello's honor seen from the other side. Iago's resentment of Othello's preferment of Cassio exposes the reality of the military discipline. He has worked at the risk of his life in order to get higher in rank. In spite of its professed solidarity, an army is a field of jealous competitions. Hence Othello's pride and Iago's disappointment. Cassio's grief at his lost reputation and his desire to restore his position give us a good view angle from which to understand the two men of seemingly different worlds. Iago stands for the aspect of appetite of the people who have chosen this desperate job to earn livelihood, whereas Othello represents the ideology of the successful. Their relationship is identical with that between Lear and his greedy daughters. Desdemona and Cordelia represent an antithesis, which is barely shared by Othello and Lear who have been fortunate enough not to notice their frailty and limitation. But their fortune is

rior unable to respect the housed confinement of married life as a liberation from the painful prison of life-or-death rivalry. Since he has no ultimate faith in love, Iago whose meanness has never allowed him to taste love's bliss can easily convince him of the unreal unreality of love. Othello finally fails to define himself as a lover and dismisses the testimony of his own happiness. He now has to admit that he knows little about women.

Othello's rejection of his wife is, as Emilia with her material interests unconsciously emphasizes, a flagrant disregard of her sacrifice for his sake. This unkindness is the ultimate revelation of the soldier's deception. Othello's revengeful anger derives from his sense of his merit that deserves every bit of her devotion. This pride, which calls for jealousy and vengeance, differentiates him from Desdemona, who declares that she would continue to love him even if he threw her away undeservingly and left her to utter misery which would surely be her fate now that she has deserted everything for love. When Othello behaves like a contemptuous guest of a strumpet, Desdemona suffers all that would be suffered by the chaste strumpet she might turn to be hereafter.

By calling her with the despicable name of strumpet, Othello reveals yet another aspect of the same deception of the desire-ridden, money-dominated, and gentlemanly-faced society. By hatefully acting the role of a brothel visitor, he reveals both his purity and his fallacy. To him, the role is metaphorical. He does not know that it is the logical, inevitable self-exposition of what he has honestly and bravely stood for. He little dreams that the contemptible contemptuousness of a strumpet's guest exactly reflects and represents the ignorant self-righteousness of the wronged wife's husband. Just in the same way, Desdemona, wondering why she is slandered and despised as she is,

his rare possession to take care of, not as his 'captain' to rule him. The division of the public face and the inward self which was revealed in his account of their love's witchcraft takes the shape of the division between the public life and the domestic life.

Because Desdemona's attitude to life does not well harmonize with Othello's discipline, he loves her dearly. It is a response of his whole being, but it is not an intellectual activity. When his wife pleads for Cassio, Othello only finds himself greatly impressed by her capacity of that excess in love. His trial comes when he is forced to ask himself why Desdemona loves him at all, why she vexes him for Cassio. This is a question his mentality cannot adequately solve. He will never understand that love in its sexual expression can be the holliest of all human motives. The tragedy would not take place if he were aware of his wife's limitless inclination of devotion of which he is one of the beneficiaries. For all his appreciation of her tenderness, for all his belief in his happiness, Othello cannot understand that, if he has a precious pearl richer than all the sea's worth, it is because his rare fortune of being loved by a woman whose purity rejects social shams that make men miserable exposes for him the bliss of sex and the treasure of life.

Othello's honesty responds harmoniously to the frankness of Desdemona's pity and admiration. But he responds on the condition that his soldier's pride is not questioned but sympathized with. And actually Desdemona does not question it but sympathizes with it. Neither knows what their mutual appeal really means. Their difference is: to the wife, love is the sole principle of life, and to the husband it is the domestic part of life. Hence the extreme difference in their attitude when they happen to find infidelity in each other.

The cruel requirement of military life has made the honest war-

uttered by the spared ones! These are the people who usually speak of death as if it were a trifle. But then listen to the heartless way they talk about the drowned ones whose fate could well have been theirs!

When Desdemona fell in love with Othello, it was not her intention to refuse her father. In the same way, now she least imagines that she is opposing her husband's authority when she pleads for Cassio. She believes that she is doing good to her husband by being good to his lieutenant. She keeps her faith in love by requiring her husband to keep his faith in friendship. She is not aware that soldiership demands cruel discipline. She just feels uncomfortable and pitiful. And, whereas her compassion for the heroic Othello was expressed by her giving herself to him, she now trusts on her husband's power to express her compassion for the miserable fellow. In this ironical sequence lies the secret of the whole tragedy. Her petition worries the protector of the threatened island. To Othello, her intervention is vexatious, not reasonable at all. He talks about the public necessity of Cassio's punishment, although he can appreciate her petition as a strictly personal act of tenderest good-will.

From the beginning, Othello's attitude to Desdemona is that of a protector. Ruth Nevo rightly points out a misplaced courtship manner in his words when he asks the senators to let her have her wish, although the ironical implication of this attitude of his is much more thorough-going than the critic seems to think.⁵⁾ While loving her dearly, Othello regards their love as decisively inferior to and less important than the demand of his trade. Consequently, his manner shows a tone of private favor. He does not know what makes him so kind to his wife. He does not know how divided and contradictory he is. He can conceal his division from himself by treating his wife as

man. But she never realizes that her kind of love is a thorough negation of her husband's kind of life. What is most ironical, she is passionately determined to accompany him to the field of war so as to do her womanly duty the better. Nothing but love's self-surrender leads her on.

By marrying the Moor, Desdemona loses everything except her loving soul. Her loss is represented by her parting with her rich and powerful father who will not allow *his* daughter to marry a man of Othello's inferior status. Brabantio frankly stands for the Venetian self-interested mentality. Venice cannot defend itself without the foreign general imported by its money, and its way of life made possible by the same money makes it despise what does not belong to its way of thinking, feeling, courting, spending, speaking, and being colored. By rejecting her father who rejects her way of loving, Desdemona rejects all that the glory of the commercial center lies in. It is her father who refuses her love for Othello first. Not that she unkindly denies her indebtedness to him. Her selflessness justifies and guides her sexual desire. There the purity of a living woman, not the purity of snow-white chastity, shines--the purity which her father's care and wealth have kept in peace and untried.

By marrying the Moor, however, Desdemona throws herself into the active reality of the Venetian settlement which is beautifully painted up back in the city. Its glory and flourish are maintained at the cost of blood. Cyprus symbolizes the dominance of greedy rivalry over humble friendship, while the ocean with its irresistible tempest that can destroy both of the warring fleets symbolizes the fear of death, the frailty of men, the pettiness of their quarrel, and the necessity of their recognition of the value of life. Listen to the ungrounded expectation of the valiant general's survival! Listen to the cries of joy

settlement, so the princess' sincerity inevitably exposes the eternal war between love and desire. Not one of the persons concerned knows so much. Not even Lear with his Cordelia dead in his arms. Only the dramatic inevitability reveals it, provided that we speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

2

Othello comes to love Desdemona most dearly because in her tears he finds tender sympathy for the first time in his life. His happy gratitude manifests itself in his desertion of the soldier's unhoused, free condition of which he proudly speaks. That is to say, love to him is something priceless, something above anything in the life of war. Obviously, his loving acceptance of Desdemona's pity reflects an acute defect of his past life, a vital need unfulfilled in the battlefields. The Moor of Venice, however, understands it quite the other way:

She loved me for the danger I had pass'd,
And I loved her that she did pity them. (1.3. 168-169)

Unconscious of his contradiction, the proud and honest soldier believes that Desdemona loves him exactly for that which he has been proud of. To him, his past life is himself. His soldier's mentality forbids him to notice the essential difference between his pride in his dangerous experiences and his unrecognized sense of his sufferings. He does not know that his pride is a telltale mask of his self-pity.

The nature of Desdemona's love is expressed in the 'strange' and 'pitiful' impression Othello's story gives her. She is fearfully shocked at the misery and danger that have tormented the black man and she both pities and admires him because he has bravely borne himself amidst the helpless state ever since his childhood. It is not the man of war that she loves. She wishes to devote herself for the unfortunate heroic

sions. Misinterpretations ensue. Cordelia fails to appreciate the king's show according to his innocent idealism. And the daughter's sincerity appears to be treasonous waywardness in the king's eye. But the odds are heavy on Lear whose belief is grounded on his ignorance about the nature of his own position. The royal status makes him this blind.

Thus, fundamentally, the play is about what the kingly authority is and what a king ought to be. Every inch a king, Lear embodies the question. While the question can be commonly shared by kings of various kinds, in *King Lear* it is experienced by an old man with an old man's psychology. The elder daughters reduce his rashness to his age. They do not truly understand that it is his royal status that induces it and justifies it. A character is not a set of idiosyncrasies to ridicule or admire. His characterization is the play's thematic structure itself. His self-expression is the dramatist's only means to show what he is. His judgement is his only means to show what the other persons are to him and what he is to them. By his folly, King Lear reveals the unrecognized fallacy of his esthetics and the unrecognized deception of his power as well as the unrecognized purity of his heart. When he looks like a slave of his personal passion, he is a slave of his social status.

The terrible part of it all is that none of the characters can discern the basic evil of their social organization determining their respective ways and views of life. As Lear does not suspect the overwhelming political significance of his banishment of Cordelia, so the daughter never imagines what a great social implication her 'nothing' has. The authority fails to convince, and the silence fails, too. For Lear forgets that his possession is his authority and Cordelia forgets that any specific form can be expressive of inward truth, good or bad. As the king's generosity inevitably expresses the sham of the social

so is his kingly design of a love-test ceremony, which is to embody the ideal picture of a generous benefactor and faithful beneficiaries. When he later says to his unkind daughters that he gave them all, he naively means it and cannot account for their failure to love their lover. This is also why Lear takes it so much to heart when Cordelia refuses to give the mere nothing of loving words which he requires for the far-reaching territory he gives her. Apart from the king's self-acknowledged good-will, however, a giver's generosity is in fact an appeal to the receiver's desire, and his innocent pride in his own generosity in fact conceals the arrogance of the possessor. The ironical concord struck between Lear and the elder daughters is grounded on their common attachment to the material value of the donation. Only Cordelia who says 'nothing' to obtain a stretch of rich land stands aloof. Like her father, she can give everything for nothing, but, unlike the king, she has nothing but her own self with which to love people around her.

Words of love often turn excessive. Such excess is loved not because its face value matters but because it conveys a moral truth for which matter-of-factness is felt insufficient. So Lear loves the elder daughters' excess. But when the excess requires her to make a senseless deformity of love, Cordelia chooses to express love by silence, saying that a promise should be practicable. Precisely because she most highly values the beautiful human relationship which Lear finds in the form of the love-test, Cordelia refuses to obey the form. Ironically, her disobedience is understood by her elder sisters who observe the form just to procure what their observance promises. What is important is the fact that neither Lear nor Cordelia proposes any doctrine of love and duty which the other cannot accept. They share one heart. Cordelia's predicament is Lear's predicament seen from the other side. Only their sights are different according to their positions and posses-

unsaid.

Lear is an old man and may have the common infirmity of old age, but then he is a king professedly and magnanimously performing the king's last function, which makes his experience something few can share. Therefore, we are required to do to Lear what we blame him for not doing to Cordelia. The king hears his hitherto beloved daughter refuse to love him heartily once in possession of an independent household and her share of land. He proves as upright as any conscientious ruler when he banishes his own daughter who is inhuman. His logical rectitude, made passionate by his unexpected surprise, suggests the intellectual and moral importance he has attached to his ceremony. Our recognition of his silliness derives from our obvious advantage of hearing Cordelia's asides, but our blindness to our advantage prevents us from rising above the recognition. Suppose we were on Lear's throne. How could we determinedly declare that Cordelia is a devoted daughter when she says 'nothing' and the rest? The very fabulous nature of Lear's reaction is an indication of the shocking fallibility of interpreting activity. Potentially, man's cognitive faculty is that frail.

This consideration compels us to distinguish Lear's justice from his judgement. While an interpretation can be mistaken by nature, a punishment is a final interpretation brought into action. The misfortune of the wrongheaded king-father is that he happens to be possessed of the royal authority of rewarding and punishing. It makes him mould his misjudgement into an irretrievably cruel act. With a thoroughgoing irony on the artist's part, Lear begins to discover that he has committed an error only when he suffers the horrible cruelty of the royal power now in other men's possession.

If the kingly authority to do justice is part of Lear's predicament,

that Shakespeare's art finds Lear's action absolutely convincing and real.

I sympathize with the second-type attempts, which argue that the love-test is not used merely to prepare for the sensational disorder it causes but is made psychologically proper. How an old monarch about to resign his long-held office and power must be subject to emotional instability! How necessary the grand show of love-declaration is to cover the misery of crawling towards death! How Cordelia's 'Nothing' and 'truth,' though honestly proper to her character, should hurt her old father! How blind, how silly, but how understandable! Here, however, lies a hidden trap to catch our psychologist. For the whole laborious psychology can be quite irrelevant to the central question of the play except in its physical effect. It can be as unrelated to the later development as any fabulous tale employed to set an action into motion. It can be actually accidental and additionally didactic rather than structurally logical and thematically inevitable.

A meaningful approach ought to unfold the theme and the structure of the whole as it is manifest in each part. All the more so, in every light of reason, with an episode that opens a play. To me it seems strange that, while there are so many attempts to justify the stupid personal action which, with or without Cordelia, will cause social disorder, there should be less attention paid to the thematic importance of Lear's unhappy ceremony as a regal action which may justify its position in the play.⁽⁴⁾ It will not need the authority of Aristotle to say that a drama is not a series of accidents but a single, compact sequence of interdependent actions of interacting characters giving a definite vision of their situation. The characters are so many aspects of the same theme, and the whole consequence defines them. Nothing happens accidentally. Lear's ceremony expresses the old king's whole being, and Cordelia does not speak what she might well leave

Before discussing *Hamlet*, it may be both convenient and adequate to begin with a few plays of Shakespeare which are generally believed to be less or differently problematic and discover there a basic structural principle which enables us to comprehend the details as well as the whole tragic vista in a systematic way. And I begin with the love-test scene of *King Lear*.

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The opening scene of *King Lear* which leads to Cordelia's banishment and Lear's ensuing misfortune has seemed to be strangely unconvincing, and scholarly efforts have been made either to prove that scruples about the unconvincing have little to do with the theater as Shakespeare and his audience understood it or to show what a convincing psychological study is made of the fabulous tale about a king who gives all to his evil-hearted daughters.

The first-type solution simply denies the existence of the question which many a sensitive mind has conceived and is less convincing than the play itself. For the impression of the old king's unbelievably silly error is a requisite part of our awareness of his utter disintegration and painful reorganization to come. And I can hardly accept the commonplace that teaches us to swallow the absurd and the grand at the same time so as to appreciate the dramatist. It is much more reasonable to say that Shakespeare somehow began with an intractably poor tale but achieved a fair success in the end. I cannot imagine, however, why the playwright should make such an unconvincing introduction to the grandest action of the imperial theme experienced on the cruelest wheel of fire. He must be mad, or, if he follows a convention, it is a mad convention, indeed. And, if the idea of convention comes to interfere with our sensibility, we may more plausibly suppose

of judgement and its tragic result is obvious enough and reasonable enough, even though we are fully aware of the evil of an Iago or an Edmund. In the case of the Prince of Denmark, however, we do not seem able to justify his cruel fortune by pinpointing a fatal action for which he is morally responsible. His murder of Polonius, which causes Laertes to contrive against him, is an unfortunate accident, a mere mistake ungrounded on judgement, and certainly not a contrived plot. We feel that Hamlet is a victim of bad luck. We feel uncertain because he does not deserve his terrible experience while the dire atmosphere of which he is part remains hopelessly oppressive. As a result, the experiencing character begins to attract more attention than the structural principle of the plot. A Laertes would make his case reasonably simple, we assume. Hamlet's uncommon personality becomes the object of our esthetic rather than moral concern while consciously or unconsciously we accept the revenge plot as granted either in Coleridge's moral fashion ⁽²⁾ or in D. Wilson's theatrical fashion ⁽³⁾.

The above, then, is a rough outline of what this chameleon of a play has generally been to us. However, I have come to the conclusion that the problem of Hamlet or of *Hamlet* differs little from those that Shakespeare's other tragedies raise. Their apparent difference is outward. It almost seems to me that we have not structurally comprehended either Othello or Macbeth just as we have not Hamlet. At the root of Shakespeare's dramaturgy lies a moral system which is also a penetrating insight into man alive and which invariably presents itself in the form of an ultimate challenge to the self-awareness of men who judge others. His art allows neither uncertainty nor ambivalence. Its highest achievement lies in its thorough analysis of those moral problems which make calamity of life and make sickly the native hue of man.

A PREMISE FOR *HAMLET* INTERPRETATION

by Kei Maruta

INTRODUCTION

The unique position of *Hamlet* in the history of Shakespeare criticism, I am disposed to believe, is reducible to the strange combination of its tragic fatalism and the moral uncertainty ganerally felt through and after its experience. The problem it poises finds an exclamatory expression in A. C. Bradley's 'the riddle of life.' ⁽¹⁾ All through the play Hamlet continues to be faced by his reluctance or by needs to stir himself up. He is never at one with his duty in spite of his belief in it. On the other hand, he does not seem to have any freedom of choice. The only possible alternative would be the ignoble 'procrastination' endlessly prolonged. With his father's request and his uncle's repeated treachery, his vacillation and delay are but passing phases of the inexorable development of the revenge plot.

Moral uncertainty in the above sense is a different notion from moral ambivalence. The latter may result from an error of judgement committed by a virtuous man. Othello makes a gross mistake which it is impossible to justify, but then we know his honest and sincere personality and we refrain from punishing him in our mind though we never doubt his folly. King Lear believes his angelic daughter to be inhuman, and that silly error of his justifies his painful fortune to follow, but his great capacity of mind revealed through his pangs on the wheel of fire demands our sympathy and admiration and the sharp edge of our blame is blunted. In these cases, ambivalent though we may be, we do not feel uncertain. The logical sequence of the error