King Richard the Second. Neither was it casual, but a Play bespoken by Merrick. And not so only, but when he was told by one of the Players that the Play was old, and that they should have loss in playing it because few would come to it, there were forty Shillings extraordinary given to play it, and so thereupon played it was. So earnest he was to satisfy his eyes with the sight of that Tragedy, which he thought soon after his Lordship should bring from the Stage to the State, but that God turned it upon their heads." Camden, too, wrote in his *Annals* that the Play was old, "Merrick was accused that he had with money procured an old out-worn Play of the tragical deposing of King Richard the Second to be acted on the public Stage before his companions." *King Richard the Second* would have been old in 1601 and no longer attractive, for the fashion had changed. The King's deposition was omitted from it when it was printed in 1597. Though the Queen did not resemble the pathetic King drawn in the second part of that History she was accused of yielding to favourites, and the Essex Revolt was a plot to dethrone her and put her under restraint on the ground of senile decay. This was why in her last days (according to Sir John Harington in *Nugæ Antiquæ*, printed in 1769) she said, "I know I am not mad: you must not think to make Queen Jane of me," remembering how Queen Joanna of Castile was supplanted on the ground of Insanity. It seems certain that she described Shakespeare's Play when she saw William Lambarde's *Pandecta Rotulorum* at Greenwich in 1601. "I am Richard the Second: know ye not that?" she said (according to Lambarde); and when he replied, referring to Essex, "Such a wicked imagination was determined and attempted by a most unkind gentleman, the most adorned creature that ever your Majesty made," she rejoined, "He that forgets God will also forget his benefactor. The Tragedy was played forty times in open streets and houses."

If Shakespeare took any part in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* when it was performed on that February afternoon in the Globe, before Southampton and Rutland and hundreds of gentlemen who had sworn to rebel with them, he was like one of the Players in *Hamlet*. But there was no mention of his name in the Records.

Another true Tragedy in which he must have taken a particular interest was the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. If he was living then in Stratford-on-Avon he was in the midst of that Plot. Clopton House, which Sir Everard Digby hired for it, was near Stratford, and so was Norbrook, the moated grange where John Grant, another of the Conspirators, lived, and the fugitives rode through Stratford to Huddington, still hoping to raise the Standard of Rebellion in Warwickshire.

There were about a dozen Conspirators in the beginning of the Gunpowder Plot, all of them gentlemen except Catesby's servant, Bates, nearly all of them kinsmen or connected by marriage and linked with Warwickshire, and all, except perhaps Bates, men who (like several of the prominent Jesuits, Fathers Campion and Parsons and Garnet, for instance) had been Protestants and had been reconciled to the Catholic Church. They may have been driven by the zeal of new converts, but most of them had been mainly remarkable as reckless adventurers. A painting by Van den Passe called "Concilium Septem Nobilium Anglorum Conjurantium" shows all the first leaders as men with twisted moustaches and short beards and long hair and rich clothes and high steeple-crowned hats.

Two at least of the Gunpowder Plotters, Catesby and Tresham, had ridden in the Essex Revolt with many other Catholics. Cecil had taunted Essex himself with being a Catholic, saying, "Your Religion appears by Blunt, Davis and Tresham, your chiefest counsellors for the present, and by promising Toleration hereafter." But this was probably false, though the Earl's wife (who was Walsingham's daughter and Philip Sidney's widow) became a Catholic afterwards, like his sister Penelope, who had been Sidney's first love and the Stella of the Astrophel Poems. Bacon wrote of him in his *Declaration of the Treasons of Robert, Earl of Essex:* "knowing there were no such strong and drawing cards of popularity as Religion, he had not neglected, both at this time and long time before, in a profane policy to serve his turn, for his own greatness, of both sorts of factions, both of Catholics and Puritans." And, like the Essex Revolt, the Gunpowder Plot was a crazy blow by desperate gentlemen.

Shakespeare saw these things, not as we see them deliberately obscured by the Records, but enacted around him. It may be that he thought of such men as Catesby, who after leading wild lives sacrificed all, when he wrote in his *Sonnets*,

> To this I witness call the fools of time,
> Which die for goodness who have lived for crime.

When he wrote his feigned Tragedies he must have remembered the real ones in which they were set. Harington wrote of Essex in his *Nugæ Antiquæ*: "My Lord of Essex shifteth from sorrow and repentance to rage and rebellion so suddenly as well proveth him devoid of good reason as right mind. . . . The Queen well knoweth how to humble his haughty spirit: his haughty spirit knoweth not how to yield; and the man's soul seemeth tossed to and fro like the waves of a troubled sea." In all Shakespeare's last Tragedies haughty spirits were broken and souls were tossed to and fro.

In the Plays printed as Tragedies by Heminge and Condell, except the two Juvenile Poems *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* and the unfinished Tragi-comedy *Cymbeline*, heroic hearts fall. Excessive strength is the theme of each of these Tragedies. Each of them dealt with a man of whom it might be said in the words of the twenty-third Sonnet that he was like

> Some fierce thing, replete with too much rage,
> Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart.

Even in *Julius Cæsar*, which is apart from all the rest of these Tragedies and links them with the Chronicle Pageant, Cæsar's strength is excessive and dooms him in the everyday World. Macbeth is overborne by ambition and distracted by the sight of the Weird Sisters and the sudden temptation linked with their prophecy. Hamlet is too great for his time, and he is half crazed by his beloved father's appeal and the agony of condemning his mother. King Lear is too great to be a King, and he turns against his daughter Cordelia because he loves her too well. For the same reason Othello, who is too great to live with Venetians, kills Desdemona. Antony is strong enough to conquer the World

and then to cast it away and count it well lost. Coriolanus and Timon are doomed to misery because they are too great. In all these Plays the crows peck the eagles. And we can say of each of the victims as Cassius said of Cæsar,

> He doth bestride the narrow World
> Like a Colossus.

There is no weakness in any of them except the excessive strength that weakened his heart. All of them are on the brink of Insanity, even Cæsar, for he has the Falling Sickness (like Othello) and yields to an impossible dream. And this Insanity is the dotage of strength.

In the Tragedies ascribed now to Lucius Annæus Seneca Madness was inspired by the Gods or by ghosts who were in search of revenge. It resembled Possession by Evil Spirits and made its victims subordinate: Juno rules Hercules in the *Hercules Furens.* Shakespeare copied this in three of these Tragedies, changing the stories in an attempt to show Brutus, Macbeth and Hamlet dominated by Spirits.

Plutarch did not assert that Cæsar's ghost came to Brutus. The Life of Julius Cæsar in North's version of Plutarch says: "Above all, the ghost that appeared unto Brutus showed plainly that the Gods were offended with the murder of Cæsar. . . . He saw a horrible vision of a man of a wonderful greatness and dreadful look which at the first made him marvellously afraid. But when he saw that it did him no hurt but stood by his bedside and said nothing, at length he asked it what it was. The image answered him, 'I am thy Ill Angel, Brutus, and thou shalt see me by the City of Phillipes.' Then Brutus replied again and said, 'Well, I shall see thee then.'" And the same story is told in the Life of Brutus. In *Julius Cæsar* Brutus sees the same Evil Spirit though the Stage-direction says, "Enter the Ghost of Cæsar." But in the next Act he exclaims,

> O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!
> Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
> In our own proper entrails,

and he says to Volumnius,

> The ghost of Cæsar hath appeared to me
> Two several times by night.

Plutarch's Ill Angel was transformed to resemble the ghost seen in Seneca's *Troades*,

> Emicuit ingens umbra Thessalici ducis.

Antony had prophesied this in the Third Act,

> And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for Revenge,
> With Ate by his side, come hot from Hell,
> Shall in these confines with a Monarch's voice
> Cry " Havoc " and let slip the dogs of war.

In the same way though Shakespeare found the Weird Sisters in Holinshed's version of the tale of Macbeth he gave them more prominence (though probably less than is held now by the Witches) and he added the ghost of Banquo and changed the story of Hamlet told by Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest, introducing a spectre which was intended to be as dominant as the ghost of Achilles.

In the rest of the Tragedies, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*, there is no echo of the Senecan Madness. Edmund says in *King Lear*: " This is the excellent foppery of the World, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on." In these Tragedies Seneca's " divine thrusting on " is replaced by the passions in the hearts of the victims.

This change in the Tragedies seems one of the signs that the first three should be dated the first. I think that when Shakespeare devoted himself to Tragical work he turned to Seneca's Tragedies, guided perhaps by the fact that Ben Jonson set that example. Those Tragedies were not meant for the Stage: they were frames for rhetorical and long recitations. Their influence checked the action of *Hamlet* while the hero declaimed the platitudes of a

borrowed philosophy; but it fades from these Tragedies as if Shakespeare outgrew his master and saw that philosophical arguments can only impede a story of Passion and that victims dominated by ghosts must be subordinate. He may have found too that Cæsar's ghost had little effect, since Brutus was Stoical enough to defy it, and that Banquo's had less, since Macbeth was already doomed when it came, and that Hamlet persisted in disobeying his father's.

In these Tragedies all the suffering men are old or have begun to be elderly, except Brutus whose age could not be changed and Hamlet who could not have been made older without leaving the King's and Queen's reciprocal love senile. Macbeth's way of life

Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,

and Othello is declined into the vale of years and Antony's hair is grey. The love in these last Tragedies is a comradeship closer because the lovers are clinging in the shadow of Death, and it is no longer the chief thing in the story, except in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but blended with other passions as strong in elderly people.

Harington wrote in a letter in his *Nugæ Antiquæ* that when the old Queen had listened to some fanciful verses in her last year she said, "When thou dost feel creeping Time at thy gate, these fooleries will please thee less. I am past my relish for such matters." And it may be that Shakespeare had lost his relish for fooleries. Old Age began soon in those days: Cardinal Wolsey, who had been called the old Cardinal for several years, died aged fifty-four; King Henry the Eighth, the old King, died aged fifty-eight; old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster, died aged about sixty, and Kent in *King Lear* was described as an ancient ruffian when he was aged forty-eight. Besides, Shakespeare was writing for Players who had ceased to be young; Burbage, for instance, could succeed as Othello, but Romeo was out of his reach.

We do not know when *Julius Cæsar* was written, and there is no sign that it was printed before 1623. But John Weever wrote in *The Mirror of Martyrs*, printed in 1601,

The many-headed multitude was drawn
By Brutus' speech that Cæsar was ambitious:
When eloquent Mark Antony had shown
His virtues, who but Brutus then was vicious?

Since Weever's Poem was a protest against Shakespeare's treatment of Oldcastle in *King Henry the Fourth*, and since we have no reason to think that any other English dramatist wrote a contest in eloquence between Brutus and Antony, we can infer that a form of *Julius Cæsar* was known in 1601. In the next year Henslowe employed Drayton and others to write a Play called *Cæsar's Fall*, but if it was ever written it has been lost. This task may be a sign that Henslowe's rivals had recently found a Play about Cæsar profitable. It was the custom to mirror current affairs, as when Ben Jonson used Simon Forman's fame in *The Alchemist* and mentioned him in *The Devil is an Ass* and linked *Catiline* with the Gunpowder Plot, making, for instance, Cicero say,

I told too, in the Senate, that their purpose
Was on the Fifth (the Kalends of November)
To have slaughtered this whole order.

The Players may well have been content to produce Plays about Cæsar at a time when so many Conspirators in England and France had sought the renown of Tyrannicide; but even if we could be sure that *Julius Cæsar* was produced at this time this would not prove that Shakespeare had not dealt with this subject when he was young.

The theme had been popular long before this not only in France and Italy but also in England. For instance, *Machyn's Diary* seems to show that a Play called *Julius Cæsar* was acted at Court in 1562, and *The Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Theatres*, printed in 1580, said, "And if they write of histories that are known, as the Life of Pompey, the martial affairs of Cæsar and other worthies, they give them a new face to turn them like counterfeits to show themselves on the Stage," and a Play called *The Tragedy of Cæsar and Pompey* was mentioned in Gosson's *Plays Confuted in Four Actions* in 1581.

Sir Sidney Lee writes of this Play that "the metrical

features hover between early regularity and late irregularity," and says that this is one of the traits which "suggest a date of composition at the midmost point of the dramatist's career," the Autumn of 1600. But since I do not believe that any author ever wrote in his early way and his later one at the same time I take this as showing that in this Play, as we have it, Shakespeare rewrote earlier work.

It may be that Shakespeare wrote a short Play dealing with Cæsar's Fall and another dealing with the Revenge of Cæsar's Ghost when he was beginning and connected them about 1594 and rewrote them in a deliberate imitation of Seneca's rhetorical contests when he turned to his Tragedies about 1600. These could be called the *First and Second Parts of Julius Cæsar*, and may have been still acted separately, for they are balanced and the chief Scene in each is a rhetorical contest.

The Scene which was most admired in those days is the dialogue between Brutus and Cassius in the fourth Act. Leonard Digges, for instance, wrote in his verses printed in Benson's edition of Shakespeare's Poems in 1640:

> Impossible with some new strain to outdo
> Passions of Juliet and her Romeo,
> Or till I hear a Scene more nobly take
> Than when thy half-sword parleying Romans spake. . . .
> So I have seen when Cæsar would appear,
> And on the Stage at half-sword parley were
> Brutus and Cassius, O, how the audience
> Were ravished! with what wonder went they thence!

And when this Tragedy is seen on the Stage its climax is not the killing of Cæsar but Antony's triumph when he overcomes Brutus in eloquence.

That contest was not recorded by Plutarch. In the Life of Julius Cæsar he mentioned only Brutus' speech: "The next morning, Brutus and his confederates came into the market-place to speak unto the people, who gave them such audience that it seemed they neither greatly approved nor allowed the fact, for by their great silence they showed that they were sorry for Cæsar's death, and also that they

did reverence Brutus." In the Life of Marcus Antonius he only mentioned his speech: "And therefore when Cæsar's body was brought to the place where it should be buried, he made a funeral oration in commendation of Cæsar, in accordance with the ancient custom of praising noble men at their funerals. . . . In fine, to conclude the oration, he unfolded before the whole assembly the bloody garments of the dead, thrust through in many places with their swords, and called them malefactors, cruel and cursed murderers. With these words he put the people into such a fury that they presently took Cæsar's body and burnt it in the market-place." And in the Life of Marcus Brutus the two speeches made at different times are briefly recorded.

Shakespeare may have founded Antony's speech on those given in these Lives and (as Sir Israel Gollancz has suggested) he may have used Hamblet's Oration in the sixth chapter of Belleforest's *History of Hamblet* when he wished to provide Brutus with eloquence.

Mr. Bradley says in his *Shakesperean Tragedy*, "But for the name given to this Play, presumably to attract the public, no careful reader would hesitate to call Brutus the hero." But this belief (which seems to have been first suggested by Schlegel) is disproved by the fact that the sympathy of the men of that time could not have been attracted by Brutus. Even Schlegel admitted that Cassius was drawn superior to Brutus in discernment and strength of will, and it is plain that Mark Antony was intended to win the audience in the same way as he won the crowd in the Forum. Schlegel and his followers saw a Hamlet in Brutus and this won their hearts, but Shakespeare was not writing for them.

There are two pictures of Brutus to be seen in this Play. The first was a vain dupe, a sham Stoic, and a mouther of platitudes, who was meant to excite the hatred of the audience and leave their sympathy with Cæsar unchecked. For instance, in the third Scene of the fourth Act Brutus asserts that he has no news of his wife and Messala says,

> Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell:
> For certain she is dead, and by strange manner.

Brutus replies,

> Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala:
> With meditating that she must die once
> I have the patience to endure it now.

Messala says,

> Even so great men great losses should endure,

and Cassius adds,

> I have as much of art in this as you,
> But yet my nature would not bear it so.

Then Brutus puts the matter out of his mind, saying,

> Well, to our work alive. What do you think
> Of marching to Philippi presently?

His attitude here is an affectation of Stoicism, which Cassius supports, for they had both known of Portia's death before Messala arrived.

The second Brutus is noble: even Antony says of him at the end of the Play,

> This was the noblest Roman of them all:
> All the conspirators, save only he,
> Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;
> He only, in a general honest thought
> And common good to all, made one of them.

In saying this Antony undoes his own work in the Forum, for he justifies Brutus.

It may be that when Shakespeare wrote the first forms of this Roman Pageant he followed the traditional view told, for instance, in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*:

> To Rome again repaireth Julius,
> With his triumphe laurial full high,
> But on a time Brutus and Cassius,
> That ever had to his estate envy,
> Full privily hath made conspiracy
> Against this Julius in subtle wise,
> And cast the place in which he should die
> With daggers bright, as I shall you devise,

This Julius to the Capitol went
Upon a day, as he was wont to goon,
And in the Capitol anon him hent
This false Brutus and his other foon.

This would explain why the Senate-house is confused with the Capitol in this Play, as we have it, as it was in the one mentioned in *Hamlet* as performed at the University long ago when Polonius was young. Chaucer's sympathy was all given to Cæsar, as Suffolk's was when he said in the *Second Part of King Henry the Sixth* :

Great men oft die by vile Bezonians ;
A Roman sworder and banditto slave
Murdered sweet Tully ; Brutus' bastard hand
Stabbed Julius Cæsar.

and as the Queen's was when she said in the *Third Part* of that Pageant :

O traitors ! murderers !
They, that stabbed Cæsar, shed no blood at all,
Did not offend nor were not worthy blame
If this foul deed were by to equal it.

In this Play, as we have it, Brutus' rebellion is justified, even by Antony, because Cæsar had ended as a tyrant in dotage. And if we could be sure that this form was written in 1601, in the days when "the tyrant's reign" was still in the list of the afflictions of Life cited by Hamlet, we could infer that it extenuated the Essex Revolt. Essex was in Brutus' place, striking against the old Queen who had overwhelmed him with benefits and alleging her tyrannous dotage as his only excuse. Marullus' speech in the first Act, beginning "Wherefore rejoice ?" may be a sign that this Play was written after Essex had failed. The men who heard it may have remembered the recent Prologue in *King Henry the Fifth* :

The Mayor and all his brethren in best sort,
Like to the Senators of the antique Rome,
With the Plebeians swarming at their heels,
Go forth and fetch their conquering Cæsar in.

If they remembered this and the fact that this Company of Players had risked and incurred the Queen's displeasure by acting *King Richard the Second* for the Essex Conspirators, they may well have thought of their former favourite, Essex, who was doomed by trusting their love, when they heard Marullus say:

> O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
> Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
> Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
> To towers and windows, yea, to chimney tops,
> Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
> The livelong day with patient expectation
> To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome: . . .
> And do you now strew flowers in his way
> That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
> Be gone!
> Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
> Pray to the Gods to intermit the plague
> That needs must light on this ingratitude.

In this Play the ingratitude of Brutus is partly exonerated because it is surpassed by the ingratitude of the Romans to Pompey and then to Cæsar and then to Brutus himself when he had slain his benefactor for them. Essex had struck because he had trusted the Londoners, but when he rode up the Strand and Fleet Street to Ludgate and then to Cheapside, there was nobody to answer his call. Bacon wrote in his *Account of The Treasons*: "There was not in so populous a city one man from the chiefest citizen to the meanest artificer or prentice that armed with him; so as being extremely appalled, as divers that happened to see him there might visibly perceive in his face and countenance, and almost molten with sweat, though without any cause of bodily labour, but only by the perplexity and horror of his mind, he came to Smith's house the Sheriff."

This probable connexion between *Julius Cæsar* and the Essex Revolt is, I think, one of the examples that prove that if we wish to understand Shakespeare's Plays and to guess when they were written we must remember the historical facts. The theatres were centres of gossip, and the

Corporation of London stated in 1597 that they were the ordinary places for masterless men and contrivers of Treason. And most of the Plotters of those days were well known to all in the little City of London. For instance, young Chidiock Tichborne, who joined the Babington Plot of 1586 (as he confessed) "for the love of Antony Babington," said as he stood under the Gallows, "Before this thing chanced we lived together in most flourishing estate. Of whom went report in the Strand, Fleet Street and elsewhere in London but of Babington and Tichborne?" And Babington haunted the theatres, according to a Ballad called *Antony Babington's Complaint*,

> To be a good lawyer my mind would not frame,
> I addicted was so to pleasure and given so to game,
> But to the Theatre and Curtain would often resort,
> Where I met companions fitting my disport.

The Queen was glorious and loved when Shakespeare was young, and if he wrote juvenile forms of *Julius Cæsar* when the Babington Plot was recent it would have been a natural thing to follow Chaucer in making Brutus detestable. But when she beheaded Essex she lost the love of the Londoners: though they had not helped him they mourned for him, and after this they were silent when they saw her go by. She mourned for him too, though when the news of his death was brought to her while she played the Spinet she continued playing to show how little she cared, for in her last days when she was haunted by visions and told one of her ladies that she saw her own body "exceedingly lean and fearful in a light of fire," one of her courtiers recorded of her: "She sleepeth not by day, as she used; neither taketh she rest by night: her delight is to sit in the dark and (sometimes with shedding tears) to bewail Essex." If Shakespeare wrote this Play, as we have it, when Essex was mourned even by the Queen it would have been natural to extenuate the conduct of Brutus. Besides, he may have remembered how he had admired Southampton when they were young and how Essex had befriended the Players.

When in the third Act he made Antony say that Cæsar fell

Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood

he took this from the words in the Life of Julius Cæsar in which North misinterpreted or tried to improve Amyot's version, "he was driven, either casually, or purposedly by the counsel of the Conspirators, against the base whereupon Pompey's image stood, which ran all of a gore blood till he was slain." But this and the speech about Pompey in the first Act may be signs that the two parts of this Play were intended to be Scenes of a Roman Chronicle Pageant beginning with the favourite theme of Cæsar and Pompey, in which Cleopatra might have ensnared Cæsar when she was young and Antony when she was wrinkled with time. Henslowe's Diary proves that a Play called *Cæsar and Pompey* was performed by the Admiral's Men in 1594 and one called the *Second Part of Cæsar* in 1595, and since we know that the Chamberlain's Servants were acting with the Admiral's Men at Newington Butts in 1594 it is possible that these Plays were by Shakespeare. The Scene in the fifth Act when Brutus ran on his sword may have suggested the greater one when Antony copied him.

The two pictures of Brutus and the different manners seem signs that this Play was founded on an earlier version, and this, I think, would be proved if we could be sure that it was planned as a Tragedy, for otherwise we would have to conclude that when he set out to write a *Tragedy of Julius Cæsar* he wrote one in which Cæsar was drawn without sympathy and killed incidentally and overshadowed by an eloquent follower and an eloquent foe. But this proof is lost if (as I think) this Play is a rhetorical Pageant in two Scenes or Parts, for in that case it would have been named in the same way as *King Henry the Fourth* was.

Mr. Dowden says of this Play in his *Shakespeare Primer*, "There is no tempestuousness of passion, and no artistic mystery." This separates it from the rest of the Tragedies. Most of the Characters are drawn without sympathy, and this may be one of the signs that this Play, as we have it, was written at about the same time as a version of *Troilus and Cressida*. The tepidity of the picture of Cæsar may be

partly due to the fact that Plutarch wrote of Cæsar with caution because the subject was dangerous. After comparing him with Alexander he said: "You look here, Reader, to see to which of the two I should give precedency; but since the World hath been too little for the one and the other, I should go too far if I plainly spake what I thought." And this Play may have been weakened also because Shakespeare founded it on three different Lives in Plutarch instead of only using one as in *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. But it seems to me that the tepidity and weakness are also signs that Shakespeare wrote this Play first when he was too young to do justice to its theme and rewrote it when he was writing still with dexterous Stage-craft, instead of emotion, and externally and feeling his way to his own Tragical method.

A version of *Hamlet* would have been timely too when Essex had shown Hamlet's hesitation and frenzy. It is a curious coincidence that Essex had been in Hamlet's place in another way if there was any truth in the story that Leicester, his mother's second husband, poisoned her first one, the first Earl of Essex. Without concluding that Shakespeare deliberately drew Essex as Brutus and Hamlet we may imagine that he had him in mind when he dealt with characters whose fate was like his. This would help to explain the connection between Brutus and Hamlet which is commonly recognized. That connection would be further explained if Shakespeare's attempt to turn the *Pageant of Julius Cæsar* into *The Tragedy of Brutus* convinced him that it was impossible to make Brutus a hero and led him to write a version of *Hamlet* in which another student of Philosophy grappled vainly with the everyday World. That version of *Hamlet* may have been the one represented in the Quarto of 1603. If that form was rewritten in 1603 or 1604 to please Queen Anne of Denmark and her brother Duke Ulric, who was in England during part of those years, as it was printed in the Quarto of 1604, and if a form of *Macbeth* had been written meanwhile in 1603 in honour of King James' Accession, this would explain why Heminge and Condell printed *Hamlet* after *Macbeth*. If Shakespeare had needed a motto for *Hamlet* he could have found one in Brutus' words,

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.

Macbeth does not seem to have been printed before the Folio of 1623, and so we cannot be certain when Shakespeare's work on it ended. It is much shorter than the rest of the Tragedies, and this supports the impression that an opening Act was obliterated like the beginning of *The Rape of Lucrece.*

There are two Macbeths here, as in other Plays there are two Othellos, two Shylocks, two Angelos and several Hamlets. The first Macbeth is the one who says at the end of the fourth Scene of the first Act :

The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires:
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

The second Macbeth is described by his wife immediately afterwards in the fifth Scene :

Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full of the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win.

The first Macbeth is akin to Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* and the second to Hamlet, and these passages are as widely apart, one is juvenile and the other mature.

There are two Lady Macbeths also. One is akin to Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*: this is the one of whom Malcolm is thinking at the end when he says,

Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen.

The other is the woman who says, "All the perfumes of Arabia

will not sweeten this little hand." She does not want the Crown for herself (as in Holinshed's version)—she only thinks of her husband : she overcomes the weakness which holds him from the attempt he had suggested to her, but she only does this because she wishes him to be great. Though she still says in the first Act,

> Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

she has no part in the bloodshed, except when she smears the servants with blood, and her own nature shrinks from it : she says,

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty !

like Juno, who in the *Hercules Furens* said,

> Me, me, Sorores, mente dejectam mea
> Versate primam, facere si quicquam apparo
> Dignam noverca.

The first Lady Macbeth was like one of Chaucer's wicked elderly Queens,

> O Sultaness, root of Iniquity,
> Virago thou !

The second was one of the women stronger than men who lived in those times ; she might have been copied from the popular notion of the Duchess of Northumberland of King Edward the Sixth's reign who was believed to have forced her wavering husband to execute Somerset and to strike for the Throne. The first could never have known the second's unavailing remorse.

This Tragedy has a radical weakness : Macbeth as he is drawn in it now could no more have murdered his benefactor asleep and trusting to him than his wife could have smeared the sleeping servants with blood. There is a similar defect in its manner : shambling Blank Verses and passages of

juvenile fustian survive from an early form of the Play, staining its beauty.

Mr. Andrew Lang, in his *Social History of England in the Seventeenth Century*, said in a note on the passage in Kemp's *Nine Days' Wonder* about "the penny poet whose first making was a miserable stolen story of Mac Doel—or Mac-Dobeth or Mac-Somewhat," "it may not be beyond the reach of conjecture that Shakespeare's Company about 1600 had put a *Macbeth* on the Stage as a feeler in James's interest; for Kemp's Shake-rags is much in the style of Greene's Shake-scene." But if this passage can be taken as proving anything of the kind it would show that Shakespeare had borrowed or had stolen this theme when he was beginning to write. There may have been an older Play on this subject; but in any case Holinshed's Chronicle, the book which Shakespeare used, was available when he was beginning.

Mr. Saintsbury says in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*: "Those who (if there be any such) believe that Shakespeare wrote the whole of *Macbeth* and that he wrote it about 1605, must have curious standards of criticism. To believe that he wrote the whole of it is quite easy—indeed, the present writer has little or no doubt on the matter; but the belief is only possible on the supposition that it was written at rather different times."

I think that Shakespeare worked on this Play three times at least, first in the early days when he wrote *Titus Andronicus* and again when he reshaped that crude form in honour of King James' Accession and again about 1610, and that some one changed it later by shortening it and turning the Weird Sisters to Witches.

Some students who think that this Play was written about 1605 support that opinion by finding in the Porter's words, "here's an equivocator . . . who committed treason enough for God's sake"—an allusion to Father Henry Garnet's defence. But the theory of Equivocation was old: the early Greek Fathers of the Church had upheld it and Saint Augustine had dissented from them. It had been often debated, for instance at Father William Weston's trial in 1587, and Father Robert Southwell's in 1595, and Father John Gerard's examination in 1597. It held that a man might be justified

in deceiving, as by an evasion or an ambiguous answer, when some greater mischief would be wrought by the truth. Father Weston recorded in his *Account of His Life*: "To all these interrogations I replied with brevity and ease, confessing all such things as might be revealed without injury to others, denying those which they had no right to press on me, and which I could not without sin betray to them." And Father Garnet said at his trial: "As I say it is never lawful to equivocate in matters of Faith, so also in matters of human conversation it may not be used promiscually or at our pleasure, as in matters of contract, or matters of testimony, or before a competent Judge, or to the prejudice of any third person, in which case we judge it altogether unlawful." In his defence he attempted to explain the distinctions of Scholastic Philosophy which were meant to decide whether there were times when the truth could be hidden without the malice of lying.

There are scores of equivocations in Shakespeare's Plays; as in *Macbeth* when Macduff says,

> The tyrant has not battered at their peace?

and Ross answers,

> No, they were well at peace when I did leave them,

and when the Apparitions deceived Macbeth, as he recognized at the end when he said,

> And be those juggling friends no more believed
> That palter with us in a double sense,

and there are virtuous lies, as when in *Othello* Desdemona answers Emilia's question, "Who hath done this deed?" by saying, "Nobody, I myself."

Even if we could conclude that the Porter's speech had any connection with the Gunpowder Plot this would not prove that *Macbeth* was first written in 1606, since it could have been added in a revision about that time, which may have caused the reference in *The Puritan, or the Widow of Watling Street*, printed in 1607, "instead of a Jester, we'll have a fellow in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table."

Coleridge rejected the Porter's speech because he disliked it. He said in his *Notes on Some Other Plays*: "This low soliloquy of the Porter and his few speeches afterwards, I believe to have been written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent; and finding it take, he, with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed, just interpolated the words 'I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.'" But this was one of Coleridge's lapses from a rational criticism. This phrase is certainly Shakespeare's—he wrote in *Hamlet* of "the primrose path of dalliance," and in *All's Well that Ends Well* of "the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire"—but so is all the rest of the speech. Lady Macbeth remembers the knocking when she walks in her sleep; she says, "To bed, to bed, there is knocking at the gate," in the same way as she recalls her words of Macbeth,

> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Than wishest should be undone

and his words

> If 'twere done when 'tis done,

when she says "What's done cannot be undone; to bed, to bed." It may be that one of her sayings in this scene, "Hell is murky," is a similar echo, and that he said in the third Act,

> Light thickens, and the crow
> Makes wing to the murky wood,

and not to "the rooky wood." And it may be that the Porter appeared in the first form of this Tragedy, for the Porter of Hell was one of the Characters of the Mystery Plays, and these were more likely to be in Shakespeare's mind in his Youth than in the days when they were things of the Past.

King James showed Shakespeare's Company favour (perhaps partly because they had acted *King Richard the Second* for the Essex Conspirators), and gave them the title of the King's Servants or His Majesty's Servants in May, 1603, naming Shakespeare second among them. In November,

1603, they were summoned to act at Wilton House while the King planned one of his Tragi-comedies there, the trick of bringing Markham and Cobham and Grey to the Block at Winchester and sparing their lives at the last moment. *Macbeth* was a Play suited to please him since he claimed to be descended from Banquo, and it may well have been performed for him then, for it would have been natural to pay such a compliment on an early occasion. This would support the Folio Order, but it cannot be proved, and it matters the less because we have evidence that one of the chief things in this Play was changed after 1610.

Simon Forman, the Wizard, wrote in the Book of Plays and Notes thereof in his Diary : " In Mackbeth at the Globe, 1610, the twentieth of April, Saturday, there was to be observed first how Mackbeth and Bancko, two noblemen of Scotland, riding through a wood, there stood before them three women Fairies or Nymphs." This agrees with Holinshed's statement : " suddenly in the midst of a land there met them three women in strange and ferly apparel, resembling creatures of an elder world, whom when they attentively beheld, wondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said, 'All hail ! Macbeth, Thane of Glamis' . . . the second of them said, 'Hail ! Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor.' But the third said, 'All hail ! Macbeth, that shalt hereafter be King of Scotland.' . . . This was reputed at the first some vain fantastical illusion by Macbeth and Banquo . . . but afterwards the common opinion was that these women were either the Weird Sisters, that is (as you would say) the Goddesses of Destiny, or else some Nymphs or Fairies, endued with knowledge of Prophecy by their Necromantical Science, because everything came to pass as they had spoken." Gawin Douglas had already translated the Latin Parcæ by " Weird Sisters," and he and Holinshed used " weird " as a noun meaning " doom," as it had done in its older English form " wirde," and the Anglo-Saxon one " wyrde."

Simon Forman was then earning his livelihood by practising Witchcraft as he had done for many years : one of the entries in his Diary reads : " This I made the Devil write with his own hands in Lambeth Fields, 1596." For three years before 1610 he had been busy weaving spells and making drugs at

the bidding of the young Countess of Essex, the wife of the third Earl, to help her to win Robert Carr's love. In this year she grew desperate and employed him to make drugs which she could give to her husband. He would have shared the doom of the other Wizards or poisoners who were executed for dealing with her if he had not died before the Poison Plot was betrayed. The year after he saw *Macbeth* acted he died in fulfilment of one of his own prophecies while he was crossing the River, returning to his home at Lambeth. "Being in the middle of the Thames," Antony à Wood writes, "he presently fell down, and once said 'an impost' and so died, whereupon a most sad storm of wind immediately followed." Simon Forman knew all about Witches, and if he had seen three represented on the Stage in *Macbeth* he would not have called them "Fairies or Nymphs." So the entry in his Diary proves that in 1610 Shakespeare was still following Holinshed's version and making Macbeth and Banquo encounter the three Fates or three Nymphs or Fairies. Otherwise the chief Wizard in England would have watched the Stage-Witches in the same way as the Essex Conspirators saw *King Richard the Second.*

King James was also an expert in the matter of Witchcraft: he had proclaimed his belief in the Black Art in his *Demonology*, printed in 1599, and he repealed an old Statute (5 Eliz. c. 16) against "conjuration, witchcraft and dealing with evil and wicked spirits, treasure-seeking or the intent to provoke any person to unlawful love" in the Twelfth Public Act of His First Parliament, early in 1604, re-enacting it with new penalties. There had been many charges of Witchcraft in Queen Elizabeth's Reign, for instance, the cases of the Witches of Saint Osees or Saint Osyths in 1582 and of the Witches of Warbois in 1589, but they increased rapidly because he supported them. In 1612 twenty women were arrested for Witchcraft in Lancashire and twelve of them hanged, according to Thomas Pott's *Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster*, printed in 1613.

This increasing belief in Witchcraft helps to explain why some one changed the Weird Sisters to Witches in or after 1610. There are many signs of this change. Macbeth says to the Weird Sisters,

In the name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show ?

Banquo says of them,

The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And these are of them : whither are they vanished ?

and Macbeth answers :

Into the air, and what seemed corporal melted
As breath into the wind.

Then Banquo rejoins :

Were such things here as we do speak about ?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner ?

In all this Macbeth and Banquo hesitate as in Holinshed's version where "this was reputed at the first some vain fantastical illusion" by them, and share the doubts of Horatio who says to the Ghost in *Hamlet*,

Stay, illusion,
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me !

and of Brutus, who says when his Ill Angel comes to his tent in *Julius Cæsar*,

I think it is a weakness of my eyes
That shapes this monstrous apparition.
It comes upon me. Art thou any thing ?
Art thou some god, some angel or some devil ? . . .
Now I have taken heart thou vanisheth.

And though Macbeth does not doubt that he sees Banquo's Ghost he recognizes that it is unreal, saying to it,

Hence horrible shadow,
Unreal mockery hence.

If the Weird Sisters were still unreal they could not throw the ingredients into the cauldron. Though they still called

themselves the Weird Sisters (or according to the First Folio version, the Weyward Sisters) when they sang,

> The Weird Sisters, hand in hand
> Posters of the sea and land,
> Thus do go about, about,

they were changed to mere Witches when Macbeth said,

> You seem to understand me
> By each at once her choppy fingers laying
> Upon her skinny lips : you should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.

These Witches were not impalpable Spirits, but bearded old women who were accustomed to ride on broomsticks at night, and only their beards made Macbeth think them unnatural.

Two Songs are named in the Witch Scenes : the Stage Directions say in the third Act " Music and a song with 'Come away, Come away,' " and in the fourth Act " Music and a Song, 'Black Spirits.' " It so happens that both these Songs are to be found in Thomas Middleton's Play, *The Witch*.

Swinburne wrote of *Macbeth* with his usual eloquence in his *Essay on Thomas Middleton* : " That the editors to whom we owe the miserably defaced and villainously garbled text which is all that has reached us of *Macbeth*, not content with the mutilation of the greater Poet had recourse to the interpolation of a few superfluous or incongruous lines or fragments from the lyric portions of the lesser Poet's work—that the Players who mangled Shakespeare were the pilferers who plundered Middleton—must be obvious to all but those (if any such yet exist anywhere) who are capable of believing the unspeakably impudent assertion of those mendacious malefactors that they have left us a pure and perfect edition of Shakespeare. These passages are all thoroughly in keeping with the general tone of the lesser Poet's work : it would be tautology to add that they are no less utterly out of keeping with the general tone of the other. But in their own way nothing can be finer : they have a tragic liveliness in ghastli-

ness, a grotesque animation of horror, which no other poet has ever conceived or conveyed to us. The difference between Michel Angelo and Goya, Tintoretto and Gustave Doré, does not quite efface the right of the minor artists to existence or remembrance."

Since Simon Forman's notes show that the Weird Sisters were changed to Witches in or after 1610, we can guess that this was done because the audience preferred solid Witches to impalpable Spirits. If Shakespeare did it, he wrote for once in a manner which has been taken as Middleton's, and may have acknowledged the debt to him by employing two of his Songs. If Middleton did it, he wrote for once with a strength greatly beyond his usual scope, and the use of those Songs would have been an obvious way of claiming the credit.

Middleton's *Witch* seems to have been copied from Jonson's *Masque of the Queens*, which was acted at Whitehall in February, 1609–1610, and printed in 1616. Ben Jonson wrote in the Introduction to it: "Because Her Majesty (best knowing that a principal part of life in these *spectacles* lay in their variety) had commanded me to think on some new dance, that might precede hers, and have the place of a foil or false Masque: I was careful to decline, not only from others but mine own steps in that kind, since the last year I had an anti-masque of boys, and therefore now devised that twelve women in the habit of Hags or Witches, sustaining the persons of Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, etc., the opposites to good Fame, should fill that part, not as a Masque, but a spectacle of strangeness." He added that the Scene was "an ugly Hell, which flaming beneath, smoked unto the top of the roof. . . . These Witches with a kind of hollow and infernal Music came forth from thence. First one, then two and three and more, till their number increased to eleven, all differently attired, some with rats on their heads, some on their shoulders, others with ointment-pots at their girdles; all with spindles, timbrels, rattles or other venefical instruments, making a confused noise with strange gestures. The device of their attire was Master Jones his, with the invention and architecture of the whole Scene and Machine. Only I prescribed them their properties of vipers, snakes, bones, herbs, roots

and other ensigns of their Magic, out of the authority of ancient and later writers, wherein the faults are mine, if there be any found, and for that cause I confess them."

I do not think that Ben Jonson would have written in this way if similar Witches using similar language had already sung and danced in Macbeth, so this statement seems to me to support Forman's assertion that the Weird Sisters were still Fairies or Nymphs in 1610.

Jonson's Witches begin,

> Sisters stay, we want our Dame,
> Call upon her by her name,
> And the charm we use to say,
> That she quickly anoint and come away.

In his marginal comments he writes : " Among our vulgar Witches the honour of Dame (for I so translate it) is given with a kind of pre-eminence to some special one at their meetings. . . . When they are to be transported from place to place they use to anoint themselves and sometimes the things they ride." When one of his witches proclaims,

> I had a dagger, what did I with that ?
> Killed an infant to have his fat,

he explains " their killing of infants is common, both for confection of their ointment (whereto one ingredient is the fat boiled, as I have showed before out of Paracelsus and Porta), as also out of a lust to do murder." And when another sings,

> I went to the Toad breeds under the wall ;
> I charmed him out and he came at my call.
> I scratched out the eyes of the Owl before,
> I tore the Bat's wings, what would you more ?

he explains : " These also both by the confessions of Witches and testimony of Writers are of principal use in their Witchcraft." His Dame is not Hecate, for in her Invocation she says,

> You that have seen me ride when Hecate
> Durst not take chariot,

and in his marginal note (which is fortified, like the rest, with many Classical references) he says that Hecate "was believed to govern in Witchcraft, and is remembered in all their invocations." His *Spectacle* ends with the Witches singing,

> About, about, and about,
> Till the mists arise and the lights fly out :
> The images neither be seen nor felt,
> The woollen burn, and the waxen melt ;
> Sprinkle your liquors upon the ground,
> And into the air, around, around.

"At which with a strange and sudden music they fell into a Magical dance." And his last note of them says, "The manner also of their dancing is confused, and to be done with great religion : Boden adds that they use brooms in their hands, with which we armed our Witches, and here we leave them."

Instead of concluding that Jonson took his Witches from Shakespeare for a Court Entertainment, as he must have done if *Macbeth* had been acted with the Witches in it some years before, and lavished his learning to prove that all Shakespeare's details were justified by Classical writers, I infer that the Witches seen in *Macbeth* came from his *Spectacle*. Middleton introduced Hecate in control of his Witches, probably imitating Jonson in this, and since Hecate had nothing to do with English or Scottish Witchcraft the same use of her seems one of the signs that the Witches in *Macbeth* were derived from Ben Jonson's *Masque of the Queens*.

It does not seem probable that Shakespeare would have paid him the compliment of such imitation after 1610 or that the Players would have employed Middleton to imitate Jonson while Jonson was still working for them. It may be that Ben Jonson altered Macbeth after 1610 (and probably after 1616) for a performance at Court to suit the King's taste, and shortened it and introduced his own Witches instead of the Weird Sisters or Destinies. He may have introduced the three Apparitions to utter words which the Weird Sisters had spoken in a second appearance, and he may have modelled the Show of the Eight Kings on his Masques. This is one of the three of Shakespeare's Tragedies which

he mentioned by name (and only when he wished to find fault with them) for, according to Dryden, " in reading some bombastic speeches of Macbeth, which are not to be understood, he used to say it was horror." Since he had so little respect for Shakespeare's methods he would not have hesitated to alter the Play according to his notions of art.

Middleton was modest by nature and did not exhibit the boldness or the strength of this change anywhere else. The resemblance between these Witches and his may be due to the fact that they all sprang from the Spectacle in the *Masque of the Queens*. The two Songs used in both Plays may have been borrowed from *The Witch* for *Macbeth* or repeated in it, for it does not seem to have been printed before 1778, and in either case they may have been written by Jonson, who may have helped Middleton in *The Witch*, as he did in *The Widow*, which was printed in 1652.

This change dominates the mood of the Play. Macbeth's doings are altered as Hamlet's would be if instead of the Ghost he saw a solid Devil adorned with horns and a tail. It may be that Shakespeare could no more have imagined solid Witches when he dealt with the Other World than Ben Jonson could have drawn a shadowy Ghost. And it may be that *Macbeth* owes much of its success on the Stage to an alteration which wrenched it from Shakespeare's Country to the everyday World.

One effect of this change is that Macbeth is overcome by the Devil. The Weird Sisters were merely prophetic, and even if they uttered the words now assigned to the Apparitions they only equivocated like the Greek Oracles. The Witches are openly in league with the Devil and the prophecy " Thou shalt be King hereafter " has become a temptation. Neither the Weird Sisters nor the Witches foretold that Macbeth would murder the King. According to Holinshed he thought at first that the prophecy meant that he would succeed to the Throne " by the Divine Providence," and even when he began to think of Rebellion was more moved by his wife ; " the words of the Weird Sisters also greatly encouraged him thereto ; but especially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of Queen." The real temptation

did not come from the Weird Sisters, but from the King's uninvited visit to Inverness, of which Macbeth could have said with King John,

> How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes ill deeds done !

In the Play, as we have it, this visit is a second temptation linked with the prophecy.

The force of this temptation was less in the Play as it was before it was shortened. In that form Macbeth saw his wife before the visit was planned and suggested the crime to her. She says in the seventh Scene of the first Act :

> What beast was it then
> That made you break this enterprise to me ?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man ;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both :
> They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
> Does unmake you.

He did this before he saw the Weird Sisters, and so they were of much less importance because they merely strengthened his project.

Simon Forman suggested another change when he wrote, " And when Mackbeth had murdered the King, the blood on his hands could not be washed off, by any means, nor from his wife's hands, which handled the bloody daggers in hiding them, by which means they became both much amazed and offended." In the Play, as we have it, *Macbeth* says in the second Act,

> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand ?

and Lady Macbeth answers,

> My hands are of your colour, but I shame
> To wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking
> At the South entry : retire we to our chamber :
> A little water clears us of this deed.

She echoes his words and her own when she says in the fifth Act, seeming to wash her hands, " Out, damned spot, out I say. Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him ? Wash your hands, put on your nightgown ; look not so pale : I tell you yet again Banquo's buried ; he cannot come out on's grave."

In the Play, as we have it, she does not see the Weird Sisters or Witches, and Banquo's Ghost is hidden from her : she is only in touch with the Other World through her husband. Perhaps Shakespeare saw that this effect would be spoilt by a Scene in which she and her husband could not wash the blood from their hands and so cancelled that superfluous horror. According to Forman, she did not smear the servants with blood, but only handled the bloody daggers in hiding them. This may be a sign that in the form of this Play acted in 1610 she was absolved from any share in the crime except her encouragement of her wavering husband, and that a later version of it (which may have been Ben Jonson's) restored her former iniquity.

This Play, as we have it, is damaged because it is confused with a young story of horrors and because it is controlled by the change of the Weird Sisters to Witches, for this changes its atmosphere and while making it popular and fit to attract the roughest audience degrades it by altering a Poem to Prose. While like *Hamlet* and *King Lear* and *Othello* it has a nobility and passionate strength which set it apart from *Julius Cæsar*, it is divided, like them, from *Antony and Cleopatra* because its chief Characters are partly transformed and because the merits and faults of *Titus Andronicus* are still to be seen.

Robert Burton wrote of the Diseases of the Mind in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, printed in 1621, " Dotage, Fatuity or Folly is a common name to all the following species as some will have it. Laurentius and Altomarus comprehended Madness, Melancholy and the rest under this name and call it the *Summum genus* of them all." And when he defined Melancholy he wrote, " The *Summum genus* is Dotage or Anguish of the Mind, saith Aretæus. . . . We properly call that Dotage, as Laurentius interprets it, when some one

principal faculty of the Mind, as Imagination or Reason, is corrupted, as all melancholy persons have."

While all these last Tragedies deal with dotage only two of them, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, are concerned with Melancholy tending to Madness, for though Timon is thought crazy his savage indignation is justified. There is the same theme in these Plays, the Melancholy or the Anguish of Mind of a nature too noble for the everyday World.

Shakespeare could have said to Hamlet and Lear with the Messenger in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*,

> Too much sadness hath congealed your blood,
> And Melancholy is the nurse of Frenzy.

These Plays are companions because *Hamlet* sprang from Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and *King Lear* from Shakespeare's imitation of it in *Titus Andronicus*.

All we know of the publication of *Hamlet* is that a crude form of that Play now called the First Quarto was printed in 1603 and a much longer one in the following year and that this was reprinted in 1605 and 1611 and was changed in the Folio of 1623.

There is an entry in the Stationers' Register on July 26, 1602, according to which a printer named Roberts entered a book called *The Revenge of Hamlet, Prince Denmark*, "as it was lately acted by the Lord Chamberlain his Servants." A bookseller named Nicholas Ling published the First Quarto in the following year without a printer's name, calling it "*The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, By William Shakespeare, As it hath been divers times acted by His Highness's Servants in the City of London, as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford and elsewhere." And in 1604 the Second Quarto was published with the title page, "*The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy, at London, printed by J. R. for N. L."

Some students have held that the First Quarto was a pirated version and that the entry in the Stationers' Register referred to the second one which was legitimate and corrected the other. Still, both were produced by Nicholas Ling, and

it may be that all the Quartos were pirated. Heminge and Condell seemed to affirm this in their Address to the Reader in the Folio of 1623, but Mr. Pollard, for instance, contends in his *Shakespeare's Fights with the Pirates* that they only referred to four inaccurate Quartos, *Romeo and Juliet* of 1597, *King Henry the Fifth* of 1600, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* of 1602, and *Hamlet* of 1603. In any case, the First Quarto of *Hamlet* seems to have been compiled from rough notes taken while the Play was performed and the Second one printed from an accurate copy.

The entry in the Stationers' Register seems to prove that the Play was called *Hamlet's Revenge* in 1602, and the Quartos, taken together, show that many changes in it were made in or after 1603—even some of the names of the Characters are altered; for instance, in the First Quarto Polonius is called Corambis.

Thomas Lodge wrote in *Wit's Misery and the World's Madness*, printed in 1596, that Hate-Virtue "looks as pale as the vizard of the Ghost which cried so miserably at the theatre like an oyster-wife, 'Hamlet, Revenge.'" In *Satiromastix*, which is ascribed to Dekker and others and seems to have been acted in 1601, Captain Tucca says, "My name is Hamlet Revenge." In *Westward Ho*, which was printed in 1607, we read, "Ay, but when light wives make heavy husbands, let their husbands play mad Hamlet and cry revenge." And in Rowland's *Night Raven*, which was printed in 1620, there are the words, "I will not cry 'Hamlet, revenge my griefs.'" It has been argued that these and similar allusions must show that there was another Play on this theme because the Ghost does not cry "Hamlet, revenge!", but this seems a rash inference. In the Play, as we have it, the Ghost says,

> If ever thou didst thy dear father love,
> Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

It may be that in the early forms of this Play he cried "Hamlet, revenge!" under the Stage, and that this was altered to "Swear" because it had become ludicrous through its use as a catchword, or this may have been done because the call was too openly copied from the Ghost in *Jeronimo*, whose cry

for revenge was cited by Dekker in *The Seven Deadly Sins of London*, printed in 1606: "I would that every miserable debtor that so dies might be buried at his creditor's door, that when he strides over him he might think he still rises up (like the Ghost in *Jeronimo*) crying 'Revenge.'"

Henslowe's Diary proves that a Play called *Hamlet* was acted in 1594 at Newington Butts by the Admiral's Men performing with the Chamberlain's Servants. Since the two Companies were acting together this may have been written by Shakespeare. It is possible that a juvenile Play was revised and revived in 1601 and, if so, there is no need to imagine that there was another popular *Hamlet* which has been lost. The fact that Meres did not cite *Hamlet* in 1598 may only mean that it was obsolete then like all the other Plays of Revenge except *Jeronimo* and *Titus Andronicus*. I do not think that Shakespeare would have turned to employ their obsolete methods if he had been inventing a Play in 1601.

Many of the faults of the First Quarto seem due to the fact that it was founded on notes. For instance, while in the Second Quarto Polonius says,

> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade,

the First Quarto makes Corambis say,

> But do not dull the palm with entertain
> Of every new unfledged courage.

And throughout the First Quarto the Prose and Blank Verse are confused and misprinted as they might have been if they had been copied from recitation alone.

Throughout the Second Quarto revision and expansion are evident. In the First Quarto Leartes (whose name is Laertes afterwards) says of Ofelia,

> So she is drowned:
> Too much of water hath thou, Ofelia,
> Therefore I will not drown thee in my tears.
> Revenge it is must yield this heart relief,
> For woe begets woe, and grief hangs on grief.

In the Second Quarto, Laertes says,

> Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
> And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
> It is our trick; nature her custom holds
> Let shame say what it will; when these are gone,
> The woman will be out,

and the Queen says,

> One woe doth tread upon another's heels
> So fast they follow.

The first version seems a faulty note of a passage which was revised in the second.

The revision sometimes omits passages, for instance when Hamlet says in the Second Quarto, "That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it," the first Quarto continues in Prose, printed as Verse,

> And then you have some again that keep one suit
> Of jests, as a man is known by one suit of
> Apparel,

and gives examples of such jests which may show that the blame was meant for Kemp who had quarrelled with Shakespeare's Company in 1599 or in the following year. If these jests were Kemp's favourite ones a hit of this kind might well have been short-lived in the Play.

This passage, the advice to the Players, offers a clue to the date of one of the versions. The years in which Essex was seen hesitating and half demented like Hamlet, 1600 and 1601, were marked by three things which had a personal effect on the Players: these were the War of the Poets and the sudden success of the Boy-Players, the Children, and the Privy Council Decree of June, 1600, against "the immoderate use and company of Play Houses and Players," according to which only two Theatres, The Fortune and Globe, were to be used, and these only on two days in a week, and no Plays were to be acted elsewhere in or near London. There are allusions to these things in the second Act of this Play when Hamlet asks why the Tragedians of the City are travelling and Rosencrantz answers, "I think

their inhibition comes by reason of the late innovation," and adds that there is "an eyrie of children . . . these are now the fashion," and that they are now employed in a feud, "there was for a while no money bid for argument unless the Poet and the Player went to cuffs in the question." And Rosencrantz' assertion that the boys carry it away, "ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too," may refer to Ben Jonson, who ceased working for the Chamberlain's Servants in 1599 and wrote *Cynthia's Revels* for the Children of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel in 1600.

This advice to the Players is abbreviated in the First Quarto. There Gilderstone only says that the Tragedians travel because

> Novelty carries it away,
> For the principal public audience that
> Came to them are turned to private Plays
> And to the humour of children.

This may have been a hasty note of that passage, and in any case it proves that this Quarto was not merely a version of an obsolete Play. And it is not probable that the allusions to the War of the Poets and the Privy Council Decree were added after 1602.

It may be that the Scenes with the Players were a separate Interlude written as a companion to the Interlude of the Rustical Players in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The City Tragedians are introduced in the same way as the Players are in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, and they act samples of their old stock-in-trade, a Murder-Play with a Dumb-show, and a Senecan Tragedy. Since both these entertainments were obsolete in 1601 we can infer that this Interlude was earlier work.

The Senecan Tragedy is a plain imitation of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. That Play was printed in 1594, and in it the same scene is described and Pyrrhus stands still after Priam's death,

> So leaning on his sword, he stood stone still,
> Viewing the fire wherewith rich Ilion burnt.

In this imitation of it Pyrrhus hesitates before he kills Priam,

> So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
> And like a neutral to his will and matter,
> Did nothing.
> But as we often see, against some storm,
> A silence in the heavens, the rack stands still,
> The bold winds speechless and the orb below
> As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
> Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus' pause
> Aroused vengeance sets him new awork;
> And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall
> On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
> With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
> Now falls on Priam.

It may be that these speeches survive from a Tragedy which Shakespeare had written or had begun to write in his Youth. In the Play, as we have it, Hamlet knew that he stood in Pyrrhus' place,

> And like a neutral to his will and matter,
> Did nothing,

and this was why he had asked the Players to remember that speech. The Play itself has the same hesitation. Mr. Masefield says of it, "The baffling of Fate's purpose leads to a condition in life like the 'slack water' between tides. . . . The Play seems to hesitate and stand still while the energies spilled in the baffling of Fate work and simmer and grow strong."

This Interlude of the Players is a comment on the rest of the story in the same way as the Comedies of the Rustical Players and of Falstaff are comments on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Tragedy of Hotspur. It is divided in the Play, as we have it, as those other Interludes are. It seems to be meant to be a token of Sanity, for it shows Hamlet as one who is still able to give sober advice and as one who was fond of acting and able to simulate emotion at will. And it may have been blended with the Tragedy of Hamlet's Revenge when he began to be sane.

The statement of Hamlet's age is one of the changes in the Play as we have it. When in the fifth Act the First

Clown is asked how long he has been a grave-maker he says, "Of all days in the year, I came to it that day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras . . . it was that very day that young Hamlet was born," and he adds, "I have been sexton here, man and boy, these thirty years." This can only mean that Hamlet is thirty. In the First Quarto this Clown says of Yorick's skull,

> Here's a skull hath been here this dozen years,

but in the Second Quarto he says, "This skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years." Hamlet must have been a child in the days when Yorick kissed him and carried him. According to the Second Quarto, he was seven years old when Yorick died. If so, the First Quarto exhibited him as only nineteen.

It is probable that in the First Quarto Yorick was meant to suggest Richard Tarleton, who acted the Clown Derick in *The Famous Victories of King Henry the Fifth* and died about a dozen years before 1601, in 1588. If so, we can infer that the Scene with the sextons was one of the things added in 1601.

It is a coincidence that the Earl of Southampton was aged thirty in 1603. If we could conclude that he was drawn as Hamlet we could infer that the first version was written when he was young. If Shakespeare first saw him in 1587 and quickly professed a fantastic admiration for him, he may have borne him in mind when he was writing a Tragedy as he may have done also in Italianate Comedies like *Love's Labour's Lost.* And it so happened that Southampton was linked with the story of Hamlet.

That story as it was told by Saxo Grammaticus seems partly based on the Mediæval Romance of *Bevis of Hampton.* In that Romance the wicked Sir Murdure killed the hero's father, Sir Guy, and struck off his head:

> To a Knight he took his head in hand,
> "Go," he said, "and bear this fonde
> To the Countess that is so bright,
> And say I come to her bower this night,"

and Bevis rebuked his mother when he was seven, swearing

to avenge his dead father, and twice afterwards before his adventures, and kept his word by boiling Sir Murdure.

Amaury Duval, in his *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, contended that this story was French and that Sir Bevis came from Antonne, but though it was probably first written in French, it dealt with the English home of Romance and the English version recognized this, setting the tale in Putney, for instance, and ending,

> Thus endeth Bevis of South Hampton,
> King and Knight of great renown.

The young Earl of Southampton was frequently compared to Sir Bevis, as when he was welcomed at Oxford in 1592,

> Jure suo dives quem South-Hamptonia magnum
> Vendicat heroem,

and when Peele praised him in *Anglorum Feriæ* in 1595. But though the melancholy which haunted his life and his outbursts of rage and sudden recklessness gave him a resemblance to Hamlet, this was shared by his friend Essex, who was nineteen when he first became prominent in 1588 and was thirty-two when he was beheaded. Though both must have been in Shakespeare's mind in the days following the Essex Revolt, his last Hamlet has more in common with Essex.

It may be that he made Hamlet a youth first because he was young himself and ripened him because his own heart had grown to maturity. And he had another reason for making Hamlet mature in 1603 in the fact that Richard Burbage, for whom the Character was written, was then about thirty-six. Besides, the meditations came better from a grown man than from a boy of nineteen.

The fact that this change is made in the Second Quarto appears one of the signs that the Play represented in the First Quarto was a hasty revision. The change was imperfect, for Hamlet still acted with the moods of a boy because this was essential to the drift of the Play. Even if Hamlet was thirty Shakespeare could still have called him young: in *Much Ado About Nothing* he wrote, " How giddily a turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-

thirty." And when Southampton was aged about twenty-eight Cecil called him "the poor young Earl."

This was a change from the original story, and there was another when in the Second Quarto the Queen no longer said,

> But as I have a soul, I swear by Heaven
> I never knew of this most horrid murder,

and no longer took sides with Hamlet, saying,

> I will conceal, consent, and do my best
> What stratagem so e'er thou shalt devise.

In the Play, as we have it, she stands neutral, hesitating between her son and her husband. This change extenuates Hamlet's wild behaviour to her.

Another change in the Play is the omission of a definite Creed. The Ghost is apart from all the rest in the Plays, for it is the only Catholic one. Reginald Scot wrote in his *Discovery of Witchcraft*, printed in 1584: "How common an opinion was it among the Papists that all souls walked on the earth after they had departed from their bodies! In so much as it was in the time of Popery a usual matter to desire sick people on their death-beds to appear to them after their death and to reveal their estate. . . . The walking of these souls (saith Michael Andreas) is a most excellent argument for the proof of Purgatory, for (saith he) these souls have testified that which the Popes have affirmed on that behalf. . . . They never appear to the whole multitude, seldom to few and most commonly to one alone."

In Shakespeare's time there were many Catholic stories of ghosts seeking prayers, for instance, the one recorded in *Father Manger's Narrative*, printed in *Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, according to which the eighth Lord Stourton's ghost appeared to Father Cornelius, who was saying Mass in Sir John Arundell's house in London: "the dead man appeared to him at the Altar entirely surrounded with flames. . . . The Father asked him wherefore he was in that state and what he wished for. The apparition mentioned who he was and in what suffering: he entreated

his prayers and those of all of them: then he vanished." In this story the ghost was only seen by Father Cornelius, though Lord Stourton's mother, who had married Sir John Arundell, was hearing the Mass.

In this Play as we have it a Catholic version survives, contradicted by a Roman Philosophy: Hamlet still laments that his father died without the Last Sacraments, but now (after seeing his ghost and hearing it prove the rejected Doctrine of Purgatory) he can speak of,

> The undiscovered country from whose bourne
> No traveller returns.

In the First Quarto, the passage beginning "To be or not to be" runs thus:

> To be or not to be, ay, there is the point,
> To die, to sleep, is that all? Ay, all:
> No, to sleep, to dream, ay, marry there it goes,
> For in that dream of death, when we awake
> And borne before an everlasting Judge,
> From whence no passenger ever returned,
> The undiscovered country, at whose sight
> The happy smile and the accursed are damned,
> But for this, the joyful hope of this,
> Who'd bear the scorns and flattery of the World
> Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poor?
> The widow being oppressed, the orphan wronged,
> The taste of hunger, or a tyrant's reign,
> And thousand more calamities besides,
> To grunt and sweat under this weary life,
> When that he may his full *Quietus* make
> With a bare bodkin, who would this endure
> But for a hope of something after death?

This first version looks like a confused note of a passage which had been changed, but the man who made such a note could hardly have mistaken the drift by adding the joyful hope and the compensating Justice of God.

It may be that when Shakespeare revised Hamlet in 1601 he began a change which he developed in 1603, turning it into a Philosophical Play in Seneca's manner. And it may

be that this change was suggested by the revision of *Julius Cæsar* in which he copied Plutarch by making Brutus expound the Stoic Philosophy.

He may have studied the younger Seneca's Philosophical Works, such as *Ad Lucilium Epistolæ Morales*, as well as his Tragedies, for he seems to echo them often. For instance, in the eighty-second Epistle, *Contra delicias*, Seneca writes: "Illa quoque res morti nos alienat, quod hæc jam novimus: illa ad quæ transituri sumus, nescimus qualia sint, et horremus ignota. Naturalis praeterea tenebrarum metus est, in quas adductura mors creditur." Still, such meditations are common to all who have ever paused to reflect, and so we cannot conclude that when Shakespeare made Polonius advise Laertes on friendship he was thinking of Seneca's third Epistle, "Diu cogita, an tibi in amicitiam aliquis recipiendus sit. Cum placuerit fieri, toto illum pectore admitte," or that when he helped himself to other men's work he was guided by the sixteenth Epistle, "Quicquid bene dictum est ab ullo, meum est," any more than we can decide that when he made Hamlet fear Death he remembered Bacon's *Essay on Death* (which was first printed in 1597), beginning, "Men fear Death as children fear to go in the dark: and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other." Neither need we think that he borrowed Hamlet's doubts from the *Troades* as when the Chorus says,

> Verum est, an timidos fabula decipit,

or Andromache says,

> Si manes habent
> Curas priores, nec perit flamma amor,

or that he was remembering Catullus',

> Qui nunc it per iter tenebricosum
> Illuc unde negant redire quenquam

or any of the scores of such phrases in the poets of Rome when he wrote of the country from which no traveller returns.

If he turned in these days from Ovid to Seneca's Meditations and Plutarch he resembled Montaigne, who wrote when he had secluded himself in his country home in his

fortieth year that he had loved Ovid in his Youth and had grown weary of him, " Sa facilité et ses inventions qui m'ont ravy autrefois, à peine m'entretiennent-elles à cette heure. . . . Les livres qui me servent c'est Plutarque, depuis qu'il est François, et Seneque." The younger Seneca's Philosophical Works had always been popular, partly because his reflections were mediocre and practical and partly because the tone of his piety led Tradition to say that he was a Christian and a friend of Saint Paul's. Chaucer, for instance, wrote of him in *The Man of Law's Tale*,

> Well can Senek and many philosopher
> Bywaylen Time, more than gold in coffer,

and in *The Tale of Melibeus*, " Measure of weeping should be conserved after the lore of Christ that teacheth us Senec," and in *The Monk's Tale*,

> For of Morality he was the flower.

The author of *Piers Plowman* wrote,

> And proven it by Seneca
> That all thing under Heaven ought to be in commune.

And Ben Jonson showed his admiration by borrowing much of Seneca's wisdom.

All the meditations in *Hamlet* are as old as the hills, and this is one of the reasons why this Play is immortal. The note of mediocrity in them has ensured them a fame which would not have crowned a difficult greatness. For instance, in the passage beginning " To be or not to be," the reflections on the sorrows of Life and on the terror of Death will always be popular because they are common; but the more beautiful Sonnet,

> Tired with all these, for restful death I cry

and the supreme harmonies of *Measure for Measure* are " caviare to the general."

In Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Brutus* Cassius explains the Vision according to the Epicureans : " In our sect, Brutus, we have an opinion that we do not always feel or see that which we suppose we do both see and feel, but that our senses

being credulous and therefore easily abused (when they are idle and unoccupied in their own objects) are induced to imagine they see and conjecture that which in truth they do not. . . . For our imagination doth upon a small fancy grow from conceit to conceit, uttering both in passions and forms of things imagined. For the mind of man is ever occupied, and that continual moving is nothing but an imagination. But yet there is a further cause of this in you. For you, being by nature given to melancholic discoursing, and of late continually occupied, your wits and senses having been once laboured, do easier yield to such imagination."

Hamlet is weary of life and given to melancholic discoursing before he sees the Ghost. Even in the First Quarto he says,

> The spirit that I have seen may be the Devil,
> And out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such men,
> May seek to damn me.

In the First Quarto Ofelia says,

> O young Prince Hamlet ! the only flower of Denmark,
> He is bereft of all the wealth he had,
> The jewel that adorned his feature most
> Is filched and stolen away, his wits bereft him.

In the Second Quarto she does not say this, and when Polonius asks " Mad for thy love ? " she replies,

> My Lord, I do not know,
> But truly I do fear it.

In the First Quarto the King says after this,

> Right noble friends, that our dear Cousin Hamlet
> Hath lost the very heart of all his sense
> It is most right, and we most sorry for him,

but in the similar passage in the Second Quarto he says,

> Something you have heard
> Of Hamlet's transformation : so I call it
> Sith not the exterior nor the inward man
> Resembles that it was.

The people who saw the Play which the First Quarto represented were told that Hamlet was mad immediately after his hysterical merriment when he encountered the Ghost, and they had no reason to think that they were being misled. In the Second Quarto the other Characters hesitate, and they are the best judges because they have seen much that is not shown on the stage: Ophelia would not suffer so much if she was sure that he raved.

In the original story *Hamlet* simulated Insanity to protect himself against the King's malice. It may be that Shakespeare changed this when he made the story resemble *The Spanish Tragedy* by introducing the Ghost in it and by making it end tragically. In the Play, as we have it, the King shows no malice till he is threatened by Hamlet. It may be that in the first version Hamlet shared the distraction of old Hieronimo and Titus Andronicus, who are both partly sane: Hieronimo says,

> I am not mad:
> I know thee to be Pedro, and he Jaques,

in the same way as Andronicus says,

> I am not mad: I know thee well enough,

and as Queen Elizabeth said, "I am not mad: you must not think to make Queen Jane of me." This may have been changed gradually to put Hamlet in touch with the audience, but even in the Play, as we have it, his Sanity is left open to doubt. Horatio's grief is the best evidence for it, since he must have known the truth, and he is supported when Fortinbras says at the end,

> He was likely had he been put on
> To have proved most royally.

But Hamlet's soliloquies and his talk with the Ghost are as distracted as his Scenes with his mother or with the King. If we judge him by the Play, as we have it, we can only conclude that he was more mad than he thought he was though more sane than some other people believed. And this seems more evident if we compare this Play with *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus*. No dramatist intending

to write a Play in which his hero should merely feign madness would begin it by making him long to kill himself while he is alone. There is no room for doubt in *King Lear* when Edgar is simulating Insanity.

Anthony Scoloker wrote in *Daiphantus or the Passions of Love*, printed in 1604, " Or to come home to the vulgar's element, like friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies where the Comedian rides when the Tragedian stands on tip toe, faith, it should please all like Prince Hamlet. But in sadness then it were to be feared would run mad," and he said that the Lover,

> Puts off his clothes, his shirt he only wears,
> Much like mad Hamlet, then as passion tears.

In *Westward Ho*, printed in 1607, it was said, " Let their husbands play mad Hamlet and cry Revenge," and in Dekker's *Lanthorn and Candle-light*, printed in 1609, " but if any mad Hamlet, hearing this, smell villainy and rush in by violence."

These references cannot determine whether Hamlet was supposed to be mad or to be feigning Insanity; but there may be a clue to their meaning in Samuel Johnson's note on this Play. He wrote in his *General Observations*, " If the dramas of Shakespeare were to be characterized, each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the Tragedy of *Hamlet* the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the Play would make a long tale. The Scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity, not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New Characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth."

It so happened that *Hamlet* was one of the few Plays by Shakespeare which had always been popular. Betterton had won fame as the Prince and as he seems to have begun acting in 1659 and to have joined Davenant's Company in

1661 he may well have known how Burbage looked on this part. It is probable that Garrick adopted the traditional view when he followed Betterton and that when Johnson wrote "the pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth" he was repeating the verdict of the people who saw Burbage as Hamlet. If so, Hamlet was rather a Comical than a Tragical Character, and this would explain why Scoloker appears to allege that he tore off his clothes (as Lear did in the storm) except his shirt, in one of the Scenes. This Tragi-comical idea of Hamlet would explain why he mocked the Ghost and Polonius and jested with the Players and Gravediggers.

Johnson's note proves that this Play was shown in his day not as a Tragedy but as a Tragi-comical Pantomime in the Classical sense. And the things in it which could be reckoned as faults if it was judged as a Tragedy are justified if it is taken to be a Pantomime, a picture of life the more accurate because it contrasts sorrow and laughter and because misunderstandings and doubts and baffled dreams darken its mirth. A Tragedy can only be checked by the repetition of platitudes and it must be left ineffectual if the purposes fail and it must have the climax of a Tragical moment. In this Play there are no Tragical moments, unless we include the casual slaughter which repeats the indiscriminate end of *Titus Andronicus:* the chief picture of Hamlet shows him holding a skull and making the most obvious reflections on it. He is above all things a spectator, and this (which would be a fault in a Tragedy) keeps him in touch with the audience watching the Play. He interprets the Tragedy, which is part of the Pantomime, instead of controlling it and he is the victim of his own meditations. This justifies these meditations: they express the thoughts of the audience and therefore (as Johnson remarked) they are not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. The poetical violence which lifted *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* above the scope of everyday Life separated the Tragical victims of those Plays from the audience and those Plays were made alien by a terrible beauty.

The vagueness of Hamlet's character now keeps him in

touch with people who could not see their own nature in a definite hero. Coleridge, for instance, and Goethe and Schlegel were able to see themselves depicted as Hamlet though they had very little in common with the English of Queen Elizabeth's time. This vagueness may be due to the fact that the boy of the first version, the Andronicus-Hamlet, remains confused with the Essex-Hamlet, the man whose soul is tossed to and fro. Perhaps Shakespeare knew Hamlet too intimately to draw him distinctly, as a father looks on his son remembering him a baby in arms.

It may be that he recognized the advantage of this. Actors of all sizes and shapes or of any character or none can attempt Hamlet's part because he is vague. And the Play itself shares this advantage—it can be acted in any language or mood. The melancholy Victorian version with its sorrowful Prince, who would have scorned to cause laughter by only wearing a shirt, was no less admired than Garrick's bright Pantomime. The profound German Hamlet of recent days was as popular as the old *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, a Comical Tragedy which must represent an early form of this Play since it keeps the old names, such as Corambis. This Play is the more lifelike because its meaning is left open to doubt, like the drift and the character of current affairs. And it is universal because Hamlet expresses the common thoughts of Mankind.

THE TRAGEDIES

II

AN entry in the Stationers' Register dated November the twenty-sixth, 1607, records that *King Lear* was played "before the King's Majesty on St. Stephen's Night at Christmas last" and in the next year a Quarto edition was published under the title, "Mr. William Shakespeare his True Chronicle History of the Life and Death of King Lear and his three Daughters. With the unfortunate life of Edgar, son and heir to the Earl of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humour of Tom of Bedlam. As it was played before the King's Majesty at Whitehall upon St Stephen's Night in Christmas Holidays." This Quarto was printed again in the same year or in 1619. The title page of the Quartos may have been written in 1607 or the Tragedy may have been acted at Court both in that year and in 1606.

Sir Israel Gollancz, who says that "the Play of *King Lear* may safely be assigned to the year 1605," cites for proofs of this the entry in the Stationers' Register, the fact that (according to him) the names of Edgar's devils and many of the allusions in the fourth Scene of the third Act were derived from Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, which was first published in 1603, and the facts that "British man" is substituted for "Englishman" in the famous Nursery rhyme and that the mention of late eclipses may refer to the eclipse of the sun in October, 1605. But none of these things can prove that this Play was first written then.

The entry in the Stationers' Register in 1607 may deal with a late form of this Tragedy and in any case cannot prove when it was written. If the word "Englishman" was altered to "British man" in allusion to the fact that King James ruled the whole Island of Great Britain, this change might have been made at any time after 1603. Besides, if this was a change, it may have been due to the fact that

Lear was King of Britain. In those days eclipses were often linked with tragic events, as when Othello said,

> Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
> Of Sun and Moon.

Sir Israel Gollancz says : " This supposition is borne out by the fact that John Harvey's *Discoursive Problems Concerning Prophecies*, printed in 1588, actually contains a striking prediction thereof (hence the point of Edmund's comment, 'I am thinking of a prediction I read this other day')." But if Edmund referred to that book he might have read it "this other day" in 1588. And even if we can conclude that Edgar refers to the Exorcisms mentioned by Harsnett, he might have done this before 1586.

Richard Bancroft, who was Bishop of London from 1597 to 1604, when he became Archbishop of Canterbury, seems to have compiled Harsnett's book. Father Antony Rivers wrote to Father Robert Parsons in June, 1602, " His Lordship is in hand with a piece of work touching the incontinency of Priests, for which purpose he hath called unto him Tyrell and some such lost companions." In 1603 Samuel Harsnett, who was then Bancroft's chaplain and became Archbishop of York in 1629, published the fruit of Bancroft's industry as " *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* to withdraw the hearts of Her Majesty's subjects from their allegiance and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out Devils, practised by Edmonds alias Weston a Jesuit, and divers Romish Priests, his wicked associates." Father William Weston wrote afterwards, in his *Account of his Life* (which was probably first written in Spanish), " The book is a vile book, full of the foulest insinuations." Father Anthony Tyrell, Bancroft's chief witness, was arrested in 1586, and in that year (according to his later Confession published by Father John Morris in his *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*) defended the Exorcisms when he was questioned first, but afterwards yielded. His evidence is of no value on either side because he recanted all his confessions and was three times converted to the Anglican Church when he

was in prison, though he ended by escaping to Belgium when he was old and dying as a Jesuit there.

These Exorcisms, which Bancroft or Harsnett denounced in 1603, were mainly conducted at Sir George Peckham's house at Denham near Uxbridge and Lord Vaux' house at Hackney before 1586. It is probable that the theatre-goers were not interested in polemical tracts (even when they were able to read) and would have understood the allusions, if there were any, much better in days when the Exorcisms were recent than they would have done when Harsnett produced his belated version of them. Indeed, any such allusions might show that *King Lear* was first written when the Exorcisms near London were the talk of the town.

Some students think that *King Lear* was partly derived from a Play called the *True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan and Cordella*, which was printed in 1605, "as it hath been divers and sundry times lately acted." That Play was of an obsolete fashion, and it seems to have been licensed in 1594. Sir Israel Gollancz writes: "It may be pronounced a very favourable specimen of the popular 'comedies' of the period to which it belonged (*circa* 1592) with its conventional classicism, its characteristic attempts at humour, its rhyming couplets." If it was acted in 1604 there must have been a particular reason for reviving it then. There would have been such a reason if Shakespeare's *King Lear* had revived interest in it. Sir Israel Gollancz writes: "It looks indeed as though the original intention of the publishers was to palm off their *Leir* as identical with the great Tragedy of the day." This date, 1604, would agree with *King Lear's* position in the Folio Order, and that is confirmed also by the resemblance between the themes and the structure of this Play and of *Hamlet*. *King Lear* is a Tragical Pantomime: two separate Tragedies are entangled in it and it is crowded with Characters and with Scenes which illuminate a terrible story.

The different manners of *King Lear*, as we have it, prove that Shakespeare had worked on it at different times. In the first Scene Kent says,