CHAPTER – III
REINTERPRETING BRADLEY

Today in the year two thousand and two, Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy (1904) still enjoys a celebrity status. Bradley has survived two major assaults the first one introduced by the ‘realists’ as they were named and the other one carried out by the ‘New Critics’.

For generations in the past, it has been acclaimed by reputed critics as the truest the most profound book ever written on Shakespeare.¹ And in reality, even today we cannot ignore Bradley’s ten very carefully written Lectures. To quote John Russell Brown, ‘...an essential landmark in the endless terrain of Shakespearean criticism and Scholarship.”²

It would benefit us to remember the factors that escalated this massive offensive against Bradley. These important critics of the twentieth century Wilson Knight in his Wheel of Fire, L.C. Knight in his famous essay, How many Children had Lady Macbeth and Lily B. Cambell in Shakespeare’s Tragic Heroes, in opposing Bradley were actually rejecting the prevalent interest of character analysis, that had become almost an obsession with the victorians.³

The progenitors of character study highlighted only one side of Shakespeare’s work. It was alleged by the assailants of these victorians that they could not comprehend the nature of Shakespeare’s drama. They treated Shakespeare as if he was Ibson, and never paid heed that the character were not true to life. The initial doctrine of Dryden and then of Johnson had become gospel truths for them to be followed blindly. That all ‘characters are essentially true to nature and to life.”⁴ And most important they had completely divorced
Shakespeare from his background and the use of conventions in his plays were never considered. His plays appeared to have become novels in their tenure and his characters were no longer stage fit but men and women with real feelings and problems and this legitimized the use of psychology. These victorian critics also did not attach any special significance to the use of poetic language. They have excelled in the glorification and idolation of Shakespeare’s word but thought poetry and drama were to be studied as two different entities.

Bradley makes us feel, he has definitely pondered and lived with Shakespeare’s plays for quite a long time. His style of writing is conversational, it is the students he wants to address and hence it is in the form of lectures. His presentation is very subjective, it is not that he lacked the knowledge of the ancient art, history, philosophy or the stage craft. He just does not want his attention to stray from the text. He pours his entire heart and mind into the characters of Shakespeare’s plays. He explores minutely and probes very deep and actually transcend into the realm of philosophy.

Bradley in his own vicinity could be said to be an original thinker. He was daring enough to adventure into a new avenue that had never been explored. He put his belief regarding Shakespeare into words. He set about it in a very organized manner. First of all he propounded a hypothesis regarding, ‘The substance of Shakespearean Tragedy’s.’

As a critic of Shakespearean tragedy he presents the following characteristic of the protagonist for our enlightenment:

It is the story of one person, the hero, from a high status of life. “It is, in fact, essentially, a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death.” (Shakespearean Tragedy, P.7) This extreme suffering and calamity is exceptional and also sudden, they
Thus Bradley's explanation of Shakespearean tragedy is very similar to the medieval conception of tragedy being a reversal of complete fortunately during complete of wealth and destiny. This tragic sense does not stop here but the protagonists downfall affects the well being of the entire Kingdom or state that he belongs to.

And when he falls suddenly from the heights of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man, and of the omnipotence—perhaps the caprice—of Fortune or Fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival.

Bradley further enlightens that tragedy befalls men of high rank because of their own deeds. "The center of the tragedy, therefore, may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action." Each character has some 'flaw' or the other, he may be sick in the mind, or rather too ambitious, the supernatural and chance also has a role to play in misleading the hero.

In Bradley's, Shakespearean Tragedy the heroes are not perfect but they are exceptional human beings. And when in the end the tragedy befalls such a great human being there is an utter sense of loss and of 'waste'. This compels Bradley to exclaim: 'what a piece of work is man', we cry; 'so much more beautiful and so much more terrible than we knew!'

Bradley proceeds further and describes the universe of Shakespeare, its moral order, its source of good and evil and reaches a conclusion that it is not
properly described by Shakespeare and neither is the law and order just and benevolent that is why, when the good person suffers it is utter ‘waste’ all that was lofty, noble and exalted. He could also be called a pioneer because it was he who for the first time responded to the poetry of Shakespeare’s verse and paved the way for the imagist and the new thinker to explore an absolutely new method of studying Shakespeare. Although the critics of the symbolic movement see them selves as diametrically opposed to the nineteenth century character criticism. But Viswanathan argues, they have all the more reason to be thankful:

“The rise of the poetic approach has more to do with these developments than with a revolt against Bradley.”

John Russell Brown applauds Bradley because as a critic of Shakespeare, his method is very modern, he always proceeds by questioning and doubt followed by multiple answers. He also plays the role of an explorer, his thirst for learning and achievement never seems to be quenched, he is always advancing and improving. Bradley as an interpreter was not only at pains to figure out Shakespeare’s text and his meaning but also was very conscious of the needs of his reader.

Bradley was enamored by the classical thinkers and writers of the ancient time. While discussing the ‘substance of tragedy’ Aristotle is fleetingly acknowledged with reverence yet he seemed to be more under the influence of Socrates. In the beginning he seems to have adopted Hegel’s point of view but gradually leaves him far behind, although Hegel was well known during Bradley’s time.
In his later Academy Lecture on ‘Shakespeare the Man; “…he addressed himself with singular skill and caution to the task of mediating between the flamboyant confidence of the Brandes and Harris type of interpreter, and the negations of the School of Lee.”\(^{14}\) Perhaps, these were the reasons for Bradley to have been regarded as an authority on Shakespeare, in his own days. And even after ten years had passed D. Nichol Smith wrote and edited an introduction, (which he included in three centuries (1623-1840) of Shakespeare criticism,) in which he presents Bradley as a ‘traditionalist’.

Mr Bradley’s penetrative analysis of the four chief tragedies is the last great representative of nineteenth-century criticism, and nothing better in its kind need be expected. It continues the traditions inaugurated by Whitely and Morgann, and established by Coleridge and Hazlitt.\(^{15}\)

Although Mr John Russell Brown in his introduction, attached, to Shakespearean Tragedy, interprets Bradley’s discourse, ‘in the form of an active dispute’ but this is not acceptable. It was written as lecturer and even Bradley acknowledges this fact, dedicating it to his students.

“These Lectures are based on a selection from materials used in teaching at Liverpool, Glasgow, and Oxford; and I have for the most part preserved the Lecture form.”\(^{16}\)

Gary Taylor informs us that in 1900 Bradley was elected professor of Poetry at Oxford. These Lectures that have been merged in Shakespearean Tragedy (1904) and Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1909) were delivered during his occupancy for five years. Both his works got printed after Queen Victoria had departed for her heavenly abode. They represent the critical tendency of the last two decades of nineteenth century.
Bradley’s Lectures on Shakespeare were the most highly developed and influential specimens of the Victorian epoch of literary scholarship.\textsuperscript{17}

These discourse of Bradley’s were intentionally planned to appear like Lectures, very similar to Dowden’s method and currently popular during that time. The initial purpose of these addresses were to very gently introduce a novice or a green horn into the realm of Shakespeare’s criticism, a discipline that was thought to be understood only by the dons of Literature. Hence if viewed against this background, Bradley becomes, much more accessible and approachable.

When compared to his predecessor Coleridge or even Keats, with their excellent and sudden moments of memorable and brilliant illumination of Shakespeare, that glitter and gleam may be absent from Bradley because as Mr Taylor conveys:

“Bradley uses the lower, steadier voltages of an electric bulb. What dazzles may cause momentary confusion; too memorable a phrase may distract us with its own elegance, luring us into speculations of our own when we should be attending to the Lecturer’s next paragraph. Bradley inducts us into routine.”\textsuperscript{18}

These so far are favourable evaluation of Bradley but there are other very hostile ones too. Precisely three years after Bradley’s book was published Sir Walter Raleigh, made this stricture regarding the way characters were dealt by him: “The critics must needs be wiser than Shakespeare, and must finish his sketches for him, telling us more about his characters than even he knew.”\textsuperscript{19}

Lily B. Campbell has written her estimate of Bradley forty years after he was published; it is her intention to recapitulate his significance in the light of what she has learned from the discovery of the formula of new criticism which
does not accept the value of any object, without exposing it to vigorous evaluation.\textsuperscript{20}

As a result of all her intense examination of Bradley's particular version of Shakespearean Tragedy, she finds him afflicted with preconceived notion that was the trend of the era he lived in. In other words he could not transcend the tradition that existed in the Victorian age. Hence Bradley's interpretations of Shakespeare did not take his Elizabethan setting into account. In fact Campbell feels, occasionally he took interest in petty matters and could not grasp

'The significance of evidence important to the tracing of the moral pattern in the plays, to which task he had set himself.'\textsuperscript{21}

Passage after passage of Shakespearean Tragedy is scrutinized meticulously judged and rejected ruthlessly. She does not hesitate to word her objections, the very issue that Bradley focuses attention on, is called misleading. She does find Bradley, following in the footsteps of his originators and hence is unable to explain Shakespeare on the Elizabethan terms. But she does concede that A.C. Bradley's interpretation was:

'Partly psychological and partly metaphysical, was to serve as a new landmark and a new point of departure in Shakespearean criticism--- one may almost say in Literary criticism.'\textsuperscript{22}

In his own days when, Shakespearean Tragedy was published it was received with so much eagerness and interest not only that but the book made a powerful impact. It is said that this 'mighty book' took 'Shakespearean criticism again into the realm of the universal and the significant.'\textsuperscript{23}
Most importantly, so powerful was the impact made by Bradley that he became the mouthpiece of Shakespeare. Even in 1989 there are scholars like Gary Taylor who consider Bradley a model among Shakespearean critics. Even critics like Herford does not accept the historical version of Shakespeare because it does not reconcile with Bradley’s insight or interpretation:

The current doctrine hardening into dogma, that Shakespeare, like lesser men, can be interpreted only through the historic conditions in which he wrote, meant by the board, Bradley’s instrument of interpretation was the intensive insight of a trained, alert, and kindled imagination.24

Such critics who favored Bradley opted for the aesthetic tradition, they refuted the claim of historical critics because according to them they chained the genius of a person like Shakespeare and restricted and confined him to a certain time and place.

Katharine Cooke did the same job as L.B. Campbell of studying Bradley once more in the year 1972, the only difference was in their attitude. Cooke was an avowed admirer of Bradley and she out rightly defends him by asking who among the critics of Shakespeare has not some time or the other been lured to get attracted to Shakespeare’s characters. And since the opponent critics are themselves guilty of such fanciful indulgence they are trying to save face by ‘castigating’ Bradley. Another reason that Cooke suggests, ‘character-criticism is a vein exhausted by Bradley and hence looked upon with disfavour because it is no longer exploitable’25

Even, Bradley’s opponents who have scathingly attacked him for ‘character analysis have practiced this approach and found solace in such an indulgence though in a different manner. F.R. Leavis, L.C. Knight and later on
Empson have all responded to this indulgence. Bradley’s method of character analysis may have become old fashioned but it has been replaced by some other ‘valid views.’ The nineteenth century character criticism still very much invogue but in a modified manner, according to the present day utility.

Another aspect that Bradley has completely ransacked is the obsession of greatness in Shakespeare and also the magnitude of his major character. He has made discloser in his book that he ‘worshipped’ Shakespeare this reflects itself, in the intensity of his feeling and in his writing. In the very beginning of his discourse on ‘the substance of Shakespearean Tragedy, he bestows all praise to the ‘tragic hero’ of Shakespeare that he ....

’need not be “good” though generally he is ‘good’ and therefore at once wins sympathy in his error. But it is necessary that he should have so much of greatness that in his error and fall we may be vividly conscious of the possibilities of human nature. Hence, in the first place, a Shakespearean tragedy is never, like some miscalled tragedies, depressing. No one ever closes the book with the feeling that man is a poor mean creature. He may be wretched and he may be awful, but he is not small.

In his entire book Bradley is preoccupied with this mania of grandeur, where this Elizabethan author is concerned. When the tragic heros of Shakespeare suffer, the ‘calamity’ obviously becomes ‘exceptional’ because it inflicts a ‘conspicuous person’. The man who suffers ‘stood in high degree’, unknowingly he is beset by complete reversal of wealth and prosperity.

Tragedy in Shakespeare, observes Bradley, befalls only men of eminence like ‘kings’, ‘princes’ and leaders of states like Coriolanus, Brutus and Antony. The ache of separation of anxiety and regret are equal in royalty and
rustic, but the ‘dignity’ and ‘greatness’ of the royal person exceeds that of a rustic. \\

The condition of suffering of this noteworthy person has a reflection over the entire ‘nation or empire’. The description of the ‘mightiest of tragedies’ and the powerfulness that emanates. Really Bradley does his best to place Shakespeare and his tragic plays on the pedestal for all time to come. The constant use of such words like ‘greatness’, the many faces of ‘power’ ‘intelligence’, ‘life’, ‘glory’ ‘grand’, ‘beautiful’, ‘heroic’, ‘colossal’ are identification of the all powerful Shakespeare that Bradley has made of him. Lear’s description when he has lost all to his daughters except ‘the soul in its bare greatness’, this is all very awe inspiring. Shakespeare in Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy has been transformed into a master strokesman who has written about fantastic, ideal persons who are endowed with so much grandeur that the very universe seems to shrink in their sublime presence.

Stoll was of the opinion that the dramatist during Elizabethan time gave preference to dramatic situation and theme and their characters were never consistent, moreover the conventions had a very significant role to play. The flaws that were noted by Bradley and put up for analysis were only dramatic inconsistencies that never even attract notice during a stage performance. He does not want his attention to stray from the text. He pours his entire heart and mind into the characters of Shakespeare’s plays. He explores minutely and probes very deep and actually transcends into the realm of philosophy.

Stoll and Bradley differ in their presentation of Shakespeare. For the American critic is very down to earth. He sees in Shakespeare a craftsman, a clever artisan, who had a job to perform that of pleasing his audience. That he
achieved the effect of staging and entertaining his audience through the contrast he conjures between the hero and his action. Othello is shown as a noble general and yet he is engulfed by jealousy so that he murders his innocent wife. Again the nobility of Macbeth is contrasted with the heinous crime he commits. It has been pointed out by Stoll that the inconsistencies that these nineteenth century critics talk about was not felt by the audience, when the plays were staged because then one's whole attention is drawn by the characters and no one gets the time to think about such loopholes.  

Bradley’s definition of greatness that he finds in Shakespeare, is sublime and spiritual whereas Stoll views in Shakespeare the greatness of a dramatic poet who achieves success on the stage through manipulation and evasions, even artifices.

Whereas the ‘New critics’ use imagery not to expose the greatness of Shakespeare nor the eminence of the character for investigative purpose to reveal the change or progress in a character; it is through the knowledge of symbolism that the drastic change in the behaviour of the protagonists is pinpointed and individualization of the character is revealed. Hence if we take into account, Bradley’s discussion of loftiness and the colossal image that he presents of Shakespeare and his characters in the major tragedy Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear and Othello. In this age and time of equality, fraternity and liberty its appears too childish and fictitious. That Shakespeare’s men and women have to be considered above all human beings and even superceding the nation because they belonged to a high ranking family. May be Bradley believed in the divinity of Kings and Queens, since he belonged to the Victorian era.
Perhaps, Bradley has succeeded, in surviving even today in the age of science and technology only because of the power of his lucid writing. Because such a belief as he nurtures of a pious and just hero, having the strength and might to transform this world into an ideal one. Such an obsession with greatness would be laughed at because nobody believes in such fiction. But still he presents a particular version of Shakespeare, that is totally at variance with all other critics. Bradley has maintained that individuality of approach that has helped him in surviving even in today’s, fast life.

If Bradley is estimated according to the readers response, he never tries to impose upon his readers, his own judgment or even advice. He appeals to us as being sincere and truthful. He is given to questioning himself again and again always doubting before accepting and even at times frankly admitting his incapability to understand. He is so confident of his authority on Shakespeare, that he felt that critics who did not adore Shakespeare or did not share his view were untrue to Shakespeare.

He shows his preference for an ‘unscholarly lover’ of Shakespeare rather than a critic who is a Shakespearian scholar. He encourages the perusal of an enthusiastic mind, who could imagine himself as an actor and try to learn all the parts but this recreation should only concern the mind and the recitation of verse and should have nothing to do with the gestures and movements on the stage. Hence in his opinion, ‘... a drama, is the right way to read the dramatist Shakespeare; and the prime requisite here is therefore a vivid and intent imagination.’ This is the reason why, critics have thought it right and proper to censure Bradley for his presumptions. His Shakespearean Tragedy has been highlighted as ‘....a great monument to the closet Shakespeare’
As we know, Bradley in his book has shown preference to the study of Shakespeare’s major characters. Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth systematically. In doing so perhaps he was following the tradition that Coleridge had started; ‘I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so”. There is a lot of similarity between Bradley’s depiction of characters to the ‘over-reflective intellectualism’ already prescribed by Coleridge. Shakespeare in Coleridge’s pages becomes his mouthpiece and reflects the romantic ideals of the author himself even for his convenience extracted from Shakespeare’s to be studied independently. This habit of Coleridge went mis-used by the of lesser critic. Coleridge himself was guilty of this offence he forgot that, plays were written to be staged.

Bradley was desirous of studying each play from the actors point of view but never like a director to whom the characters are just creations and no more. After having propounded his theory about Shakespearian tragedy he goes on to analyse each and every play at his own leisure and focuses his attention mainly on the characters. The stage creations of Shakespeare were personified by Bradley and mostly he remains engrossed in discussing their problems or their greatness as if those were the only reason Shakespeare depicted them. This conventional method that Bradley has adopted to present the Shakespearian characters is still under surveillance.

Interest in character compelled Bradley to explore the universe that exists in Shakespeare’s plays and his philosophy of life. All this constant scrutiny of the text benefits the readers. For Bradley promotes himself from the position of an interpreter to that of a teachers and he shows as how to probe deep, below the surface and gather all kinds of evidences, external and internal. Regarding characters Bradley elucidates:
Shakespeare has concentrated attention on the obscurer regions of
man's being, on phenomena which make it seem that he is in the
power of secret forces lurking below, and independent of his
consciousness and will.36

As a critic of Shakespeare, Bradley has always been approved by his
fellow critics but it is his habit of going into unnecessary detail that is most
irritating and that has been objected to. During the time Bradley's book was
published it was reviewed by a scholar and critic Mr J.C. Collins who expounds
his opinion in The West Minster Gazette;

...... Professor Bradley treats us to special dissertations on such
subjects as 'Did Lady Macbeth really faint?' Did Emilia suspect
Iago?' 'Had Lady Macbeth any children?'37

One must keep within limits, this is what may have been suggested by
these critics. All this inquiry is unnatural and it does not in any way enhance
our appreciation of Shakespeare's play.

When Stoll's writing is considered it is full of comparisons; you have the
ancients and Greek, the moderns and the contemporary compared all the time.
He has all the facts and figures on his finger tips. He is indeed a very well read
person. He firmly believes that we must not forget the roots of an artist, and
literary art has a lot of influence on his work.

Among the new critics, L.C. Knight's was one of the first to object and
show his distaste towards the intense enthusiasm in character depiction. This
amusing title in the form of question was asked by Bradley himself which was
adopted by L.C. Knight in his essay in 1932. 'How many children had Lady
Macbeth?'. But much later in the year 1959 in a lecture, 'The question of
character in Shakespeare', Mr Knight did grant some concession to Bradley
that he had made the presence of Shakespeare, an inevitable reality in our lives. His criticism no longer has that earlier sting, only a desire that Bradley could have interpreted the play as a whole and could have held a broader outlook not just characters or tragedies.

Bradley's treatment of Shakespearean characters appears as if he was writing biography, and it did not appeal to most reasonable critics. Even L.C. Knight's assault was on the same vein, although much later. No matter how inevitable it was to know whether Lady Macbeth had been a mother and given suck to a child. Even if we do get the answer how old Hamlet was and why Lady Macbeth had fainted it really does not contribute towards the impact that a Shakespearian play has made on our mind. We must not forget that they are only stage characters and beyond that they do not exist.

Another very great reaction was towards Bradley's ignoring the literary scholarship of Shakespeare which started making its presence felt during this time. This attack was carried out by the realist school of critics as different as E.E. Stoll, L.Schucking and Robert Bridges. The only thing common was their criticism of Bradley, his psychological interpretation and lack of understanding towards the audience and the stagecraft of the Elizabethan time.

Among all the critics, it is felt most keenly, that Stoll was the only genuine scholar whose object was to restore Shakespeare to his settings. Hence his stricture on Bradley for studying Shakespeare in a historical vacuum was legitimate. In book after book, Stoll has vociferously proved through valid evidence that, great drama is rooted in melodrama. And on the stage the artist cannot just cannot present situations or character which are lifelike, he can only do so by creating an illusion. The artist thrives on creating a good impression.
The artist cannot be arbitrary in this context, the company for whom he is writing has to survive and also the audience’s appreciation has to be seriously taken into account.

Bradley was converted into an easy target whom everybody loved to assail. But if we follow the history of Shakespearean criticism after a few years at the end of the twentieth century; it becomes apparent he had many followers. Gary Taylor studying him once again in 1989, is of the opinion that since ‘his meaning is so easy to follow’ hence he was frequently copied and even criticized.

Among the emulators of Bradley Mary Cowden Clarks, Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Heroines can be quoted as illustration, which can be rated as second hand literature. This is the reverse turn of all of Bradley’s imagination and musings on matters of no consequence, like what would have happened if Cordelia exchanged places with Desdemona.

If one focus our attention on the critics who came after Bradley, we find that with reference to Bradley, there were some reaction or the other, either critical or favourable. The following books that were published during that time was on the pattern that Bradley had established, that is character Analysis; Agnes Mure Mackenzie’s, The Women in Shakespeare’s plays (1924) and John Palmer’s Political characters in Shakespeare (1945) and Comic Characters in Shakespeares (1945-6).

But it is H.B. Chartlon who excelled in his book Shakespearian Tragedy (1948) which was:
.... Avowedly written as a kind of supplement to Bradley’s book on the same subject, with needless modesty Charlton speaks of himself as ‘a mere scholar’ who can only hope by an examination of sources and a study of the ‘cosmic framework’ of each play to add a little to the truth about Shakespeare which is contained in its purest form in the pages of Bradley.38

J.L. Styan’s has carried out a review in 1977 on the theatre practice and Elizabethan conventions and tradition prevalent during that time. He labels, Bradley’s criticism as old fashioned and out moded. His effort of ‘re-creating’ Shakespeare’s scenes concealed’ more than it has revealed. He agrees with Kenneth Muir that Shakespearean Tragedy was ‘a great monument to the closet Shakespeare’.39

Harley Granville-Barker in Styan’s opinion was declared the greatest supporter of this current theatre based criticism, and is said to have been the greatest fan of Bradley because according to him Bradley studied the plays as plays only.

Hence on this topic of massive escalation towards Bradley, we can sum up that this author was a challenging adversary that his dissenters were rather proud of combating, they thought Bradley worthy of such attention. Bradley had a well known reputation to have been read by all, hence all this familiarity. This can surely be set up as an example a back handed compliment.

In order to trace the influence of Bradley on the new approach, in understanding Shakespeare’s work we have to shift our attention towards those great forerunners especially Coleridge as he was revived during that very time of poetic thought. These progenitors of the modern movement have rejected all other approaches except, that, Shakespeare’s plays are poetic creations. The plot and characterization has second hand significance for such critics and they
are desirous of interpreting Shakespeare’s plays through the poetry, images and ‘symbolic forces.’

This new approach can be said to be an extension of the tradition represented by Coleridge, Hazlitt and Bradley, in finding in Shakespeare a philosopher rather than a man of the theatre. Knight saw in Shakespeare above all a poet and Bradley has transformed him into a novelist. These character analyser’s of Shakespeare wanted to find the author in his character and according to Wilson Knight this kind of interpretation gave rise to adverse criticism.40

But these very critics who have de-emphasized the study of characters, and even opposed it vehemently seem to indulge themselves in a similar way. In the preface to, The Wheel of fire Wilson Knight presents a case against the school of character analysis and also the realist group. But he does not seem to practice what he preaches. Even L.C. Knight in his essay on Hamlet (1940) writes about ‘Hamlet’ as if he was a known person living next door. He simply forgot that for the same reason he had vehemently condemned Bradley and even made fun of him for showing a curiosity regarding Lady Macbeth’s children. Their method of interpreting Shakespeare was very similar to Bradley’s though a bit modified. These poetic critic may imagine themselves to be inaugurating an absolutely new approach the truth is that they were using their knowledge of imagery and symbol to reveal the developments and the changes in Shakespeare’s characters only.41

It would be wrong to think of Bradley an only as interpreter of character, his contribution can be assessed in other directions as well. Wolfgang Clemen’s has acknowledged Bradley’s service in this regard, that he was one of the first
to decipher the ‘metaphors and images’ of Shakespeare’s plays. Bradley’s. Shakespearean Tragedy is given a place along with the work of Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare’s Imagery (1935) and also G. W. Knight’s. The Wheel of Fire (1930). He describes the contribution of these critics of whom Bradley was thirty years older in a similar manner.42

Even in the present century, Bradley’s name does crop up under some pretext or the other, he is still a factor to reckon with. No matter, in what ever manner they praise or blame Bradley, his name is never dropped from the critical scene. Kenneth Muir a distinguished and established critic of Shakespeare, (when got to) editing the main text for the Arden Shakespeare, is found him seeking Bradley’s assistance very frequently, although he is a very well read person, having the knowledge of all that the critics have been writing on Shakespeare from the last twenty years, but it is to the outworn pages of Bradley that, he refers to most often.

When Maynard Mack’s, The Jacobean Shakespeare: Some Observations on the Construction of the Tragedies had been published in 1960 the writer modestly describes his wish of writing a book with ‘a modest supplement to A.C. Bradley’s pioneering analysis, of the construction of Shakespearian Tragedy.’ He also concede’s Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy to be ‘still the best account we have of the outward shape’ of Shakespeare’s plays.44

The originality of character- criticism that existed during the Victorian era may have lost its glitter and gleam, but if we scan carefully it is still flourishing in some form or the other in the modern criticism of today. There are scholars like Charlton who are declared devotees of Bradley, who imitate his love for characterization but of course with a lot of amendment. Their
approach towards a character is external and objective and not psychological like Bradley’s.

Another modification of Character analysis can be found in J.I.M. Stewart’s, *Character and Motive in Shakespeare*. To achieve through his book a modern critical aspect he has made use of Freudian psychology and Frazerian anthropology. The book is also adorned with the importance given to the poetry during this time, by the New critics. Even Gary Taylor a very current author acclaimed as ‘the leading practitioner of the new histrionics by the English Literary History’ and ‘a superstar among the younger generation of textual critics’ by The Times Literary Supplement has thought it fit to present Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy as a work of ‘philosophical scholarship.’ He is further of the opinion that:

Like literature itself, the study of literature evolves; as biological evolution culminated in man, so critical evolution culminated in philosophy.

To provide strength to his statement he quotes from Dowden’s introductory lecture, that in a student of English Literature expansion takes place and that he passes three stages in his life, ‘from the biographical and the historical to the philosophical study of Literature.’ When Bradley is viewed in this light the weak points in his book could be explained.

To sum up, Bradley’s, his book may not be a complete guide on Shakespeare which it is impossible to expect any single book to be. He may not have done full justice to Shakespeare as a stage writer of the Elizabethan time, but very few books can be said to have had a proximity as Bradley is said to, with a mind as great as Shakespeare. Bradley’s master piece in the form of Shakespearean Tragedy is a necessary requirement a true companion to
Shakespeare’s plays, and we just cannot do without it. It was written ninety eight years ago and it still does the job of enhancing our knowledge and granting a sense of general well being that Bradley is there and now we can enter into the Shakespearean world.

The superb comprehension of the book keeps us engaged. The frequent reading of the book opens new vistas of meaning. Before the final summing up, it would be suggested to read Bradley with the heart and not the mind, during leisure, when we have the time ‘to stand and stare’.
References:


3. See Kennith Muir; Ibid, p.3; P. Murray; Ibid., pp.1-10. The factors that brought about the wholesale rejection of 19 century mode of Character analysis has also been discussed in a broader perspective in the first chapter of this work.


6. Ibid., p.7.

7. Ibid., p.10.

8. Ibid., p.5.


10. Ibid., p.16.

11. See Ibid., p.18 for a detailed explanation of Bradley’s concept of Shakespeare’s universe.


15. Shakespeare Criticism, Ibid., p.xxi.
18. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p.V.
23. Ibid.
27. Shakespearean Tragedy, Ibid., p.15.
28. Ibid., p.3.
29. Ibid., p.4.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p.5.
33. See the preface in Bradley’s Shakespearean Tragedy Ibid.


36. Shakespearean Tragedy, Ibid., p.XVII.

37. The Westminster Gazette (28 January, 1905)

38. Shakespearean Survey 4, 1951, p.4.

39. Cited from Bradley’s, Shakespearean Tragedy, Ibid., p.XXI.


41. What many of us do not know, this gay remark ‘How may children had Lady Macbeth’ was the contribution of F.R.Leavis adopted from Bradley’s book itself and used by L.C. Knight’s.

42. Wolfang Clemen’s, The Development of Shakespeare’s Imagery 1951.

43. Cited from Bradleys, Shakespearean Tragedy Ibid., p.XXII.


46. Gary Taylor, Ibid., p.223.

47. Ibid.