VI.—THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE GHOSTS IN SHAKSPERE.

Of late the common belief in the subjectivity of the ghosts in Shakspere has received fresh currency from the sanction of scholars who belong unquestionably to the newer school—Professors C. H. Herford and A. C. Bradley and a gentleman named F. C. Moorman who writes in the Modern Language Review. The first and the last may for the time being speak for all:—

A ghost is demanded in Macbeth by virtue of the peculiar constitution of the ghost-seer’s mind. The hectic imagination of the Celtic chieftain, which conjures up the air-drawn dagger and the voice crying ‘Sleep no more, Macbeth doth murder sleep,’ evokes by inward necessity the ghost of the murdered Banquo. . . . . It cannot be doubted that Shakspere, to use the phrase of Professor Bradley, meant the judicious to take the Ghost for an

1 Common, even universal, the belief seems to be, whether among those who teach Shakspere or among those who write on him, though, as is the case with many beliefs, little is said about it. Nothing, so far as I know, has been said against it. Spalding in his valuable book on Elizabethan Demonology throws much light on the attitude toward the supernatural held by the Elizabethans in general, but little on that taken by Shakspere himself. Dramatic convention, moreover, he quite ignores.

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hallucination. Its two appearances synchronise exactly with the expression of Macbeth's hypocritical wish that our dear friend Banquo were present; its first exit, as just noticed, falls in with Macbeth's bold summons to it to speak, and its final exit with his command, 'Hence,' etc. It is of course visible to the spectators, but so also are the sleep-phantoms of Richard III. The ghosts of Richard's victims are the figments of a coward conscience: the ghost of Cesar is the embodiment of Brutus's sense of the egregious mistake he has made in slaying Cesar, and of the approaching overthrow of republicanism. In like manner, the Ghost of Banquo is the outcome of the play of Macbeth's frenzied imagination upon his deep sense of insecurity. . . . . The ghost of the 'majesty of buried Denmark' stands on a different footing. Of its reality there can be no question. ¹

It is clear that these beings [the witches] who so vitally moulded the fate of the traditional Macbeth were not for Shakspere, like the dagger and the ghost, mere creations of his feverish brain, embodied symbols of his ambitious dreams. ²

Quite as these scholars agree on the subjectivity of the ghosts in question they agree on the objectivity of the Ghost in Hamlet and of the Weird Sisters; ³ yet it is only a few years since by other critics these too were rationalized away. ⁴ It is my opinion that the point of view involved is in both cases practically the same—that is, the romantic, absolute attitude toward Shakspere which arose at the beginning of the century, and that as it has yielded to the pressure of scientific, historical inquiry in one case it must eventually in the other.

Far from being subjective, the ghosts of the Elizabethan

² Eversley Shakspere, ix, p. 161.
³ Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 346–48. It is fair to add that in his Appendix, where Mr. Bradley sums up the evidence for the subjectivity of Banquo's Ghost, he expresses diffidence in it.—About the same distinctions as these scholars make are made by Professor Richard Moulton in his Moral System of Shakespeare, pp. 260 f., 299.
⁴ As regards the Ghost, not long since, I learn, by a well known professor in an eastern American university in a lecture to his class; as regards the Sisters, by such uncompromising idealists as Gervinus. The last named was confuted by Spalding.
drama, like the ghosts of folklore, were, as Mr. Lang has observed of the latter, 'ghosts with a purpose.' They were not used recklessly, as in some modern drama and fiction, for mere uncanny and melodramatic effect.\(^1\) Groan and gloat, curse and harrow the senses as they might, they came, first and last, to effect a definite end. That, above all, was to wreak revenge by appearing either to the victim or to the revenger; or it was to protect some loved one;\(^2\) or it was to prophesy;\(^3\) or to crave burial;\(^4\) or simply, in the capacity of an omen of death,\(^5\) to appear. All of these purposes were from of old the special purposes of the ghost of folklore. All except the next to the last are represented, as we shall see, in Shakspere; but in all four examples of the ghost, those in *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Macbeth*, the paramount purpose is revenge.

As regards motive, then,—for the moment we beg the question and speak of motives—Shakspere's remaining ghosts are to be classed with the Ghost in *Hamlet*. They differ from it in that they appear not to the revenger but to the victim of the revenge. Here it is, perhaps, that the critics have stumbled: the Ghost in *Hamlet*, appearing to the revenger to incite him, is not open to subjective interpretation; the Ghost of Cæsar and the Ghost of Banquo,

\(^1\) In the decay of the drama, in Shakspere's *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII* and in Webster (see the author's *John Webster*, pp. 120–1, 150–1), the supernatural begins, under the influence of the Masque, to be treated without much meaning, spectacularly. See below p. 224.


\(^3\) Marston's *Sophonisba*, Ghost of Asdrubal.

\(^4\) The *Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), Ghost of the Lady.

\(^5\) Webster's *White Devil*, Brachiano's Ghost; Chapman, etc. It is a widely spread superstition that ghosts—the ghosts of friends—come to fetch the souls of those left in the land of the living. Cf. Frazer's *Golden Bough*, i, p. 132.
appearing to the murderers, in some measure are. One has disclosures to make and exhortations to deliver; the other may accomplish its purpose merely by its presence—by its gestures and bloody wounds and by the fate which its mere appearing bodes. In short, one has to make for itself a hearing: the other may appeal to a witness and advocate dwelling within the victim’s breast. When the latter is so treated, accordingly, without such crasser and more material features as speaking or as appearing to more than one person, it is but natural for a nineteenth century critic to interpret it as an embodiment of conscience, or, as the merely ominous becomes more prominent, even as a pre-sentimental hallucination. But not always was it so treated. Just as the Ghost in *Hamlet* belongs to the Kydian tradition, which begins with Kyd’s *Hamlet* and runs down through Marston and Tourneur to Webster’s *White Devil*, the other ghosts in Shakspere belong to a tradition which begins, so far as I know, with *Locrinc* and runs down through Massinger to the end of the drama; and at the same period the two varieties are treated much alike. In spite of the difference in dramatic exigencies the ghost of Albanact in *Locrinc* plays pranks and bustles about the stage as freely as the ghost in Kyd’s *Hamlet* could have done; the ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Cesar* are not much more delicately handled than the Ghost in Shakespere’s *Hamlet*; and Banquo’s is less so than the slightly later Kydian Ghost of Isabella in Webster’s *White Devil*. What swayed the dramatists as, notably about the time of the last two dramas, they made their ghosts less crude and material and heightened the imaginative horror of them, was not so much a perception of the greater dramatic and psychological fitness of such a refinement in the case of the ghost which appears to his victim as it was a revulsion of popular taste against the shrieking, bustling ghost of the old
style in general. And psychology in the sense of refining and subduing it into a symbol or personification never, so far as I can discover, came into play at all. Either sort of ghost, at the end of the Elizabethan drama as at the beginning, was a ghost and no more.

To show this so far as Shakspere is concerned—the question need not be raised with regard to the other dramatists—we shall not deal further with the evolution of the two types of ghost, with differences of function or tradition. Thus much has been said of these to explain the difference in effect between the Ghost in Hamlet and Shakspere's other apparitions—to show why they talk less and do less and stand more aloof; but in order to prove that they were none the less the ghosts of popular superstition we shall turn to other considerations. Beginning with the crux, Banquo's Ghost, we shall, instance by instance, try to prove this from the situation itself, from the evidence of folklore and of a comparison with other Elizabethan ghosts of certainly objective character no matter in which tradition they be, and from Shakspere's attitude toward the abstract, the supernatural, and the occult in general.

Macbeth.

In Macbeth the situation lends itself admirably to our interpretation. Banquo has been invited to a feast by his would-be murderer, and when his murderer, among his guests, believes that Banquo now bides safe in a ditch, he stands before him. He has been bid—ironically—not to fail our feast, and with irony for irony he keeps the word he pledges. Such a situation is personal, concrete, objective, if any is. So it is understood by Macbeth, it seems to me, and so it would be understood by the audience. At first he seems not to see the Ghost—he finds the table full. It is only when Lennox points to
the chair that he recognizes him. 'Which of you,' he then
cries, 'have done this?' What he means by this—the trick
of filling up the table, the making of an effigy representing
Banquo, or the actual killing of him—it is hard to say.
Probably the last, and forthwith he snatches the opportunity
of warding off such an imputation from himself. For to him
at least the Ghost's errand is plain: it is prophecy, retaliation,
vengeance. He sits in Macbeth's royal chair as a token
that none the less his seed shall sit there hereafter. He
shakes his gory locks at the King in anger, and perhaps as a
dark menace of the nemesis that awaits him. He makes
other pantomimic signs of a sort that drives Macbeth to
desperation—'what care I?'—and to a challenge to speak
and out with it. As the Ghost retires, Macbeth vows that
hereafter 'the monuments of his victims shall be the maws
of kites'—the body annihilated, that is, so that the ghost
may not walk.\footnote{Cf. Nash's \textit{Summer's Last Will and Testament}, Hazlitt's \textit{Dodsley}, viii,
p. 77.—The interpretation originates, I surmise, with Professor Kittredge.}
1 Easily recovering himself thereupon, he calls for wine, and, in the teeth of this experience,
drinks to Banquo's health. Equal to Macbeth's presumption,\footnote{A capital instance this of the classical \textit{tērētēs}.} however, is the Ghost's ironical rancor, and he
reappears. This time Macbeth's fear and rage are well-
nigh frenzy'd; but the Ghost gone, he is himself again.
Throughout the scene, then, everything comports with
objectivity—the completeness and abruptness of Macbeth's
changes on the one hand and the spirit of mere personal
antagonism in both parties on the other, the unremorseful
fear and defiance of the murderer and the ironical vindictive-
ness of the Ghost. Macbeth hears no cry of conscience,
ever thinks of brushing the reality of the Ghost aside as
he does that of the dagger, but himself comprehends, in that
day of the feud and vendetta, the purport of its errand very well:

It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood.

Even more objective, even more evidently revengeful is the second—or perhaps we should call it third—appearing of the Ghost. This, at the Witches' Cavern, takes place, like the appearing of the shade of the prophet Samuel at Endor and that of the spirit Asmath in Shakspere's Henry VI, by dint of conjuring, and one is as little susceptible of allegorical—rationalistic—interpretation as the other. Banquo plays a part like that of the most material and vindictive ghost of the Kydian Tragedy of Blood, Marston's Andrugio,¹ or like that of Heywood's Agamemnon,² taunting Macbeth with his 'bloodboltered' smile as he points at the line of kings-to-be 'for his.'

This interpretation—that Banquo's Ghost is but a disembodied person seeking revenge—restores to us, moreover, the effect of ironical reversal, lost under an allegorizing interpretation, which Shakspere had intended. Banquo is bid, sardonically, not to fail the feast, and he comes as a ghost. In the folly and hypocrisy of his homicidal success Macbeth gives voice to a wish that Banquo were present, and turns to find him—father of a line of kings—seated on the throne. Macbeth had called Banquo 'our chief guest,' and there at the head of the table he sits, a ghostly kill-joy, the proverbial death's-head at the feast outdone. To the Elizabethan audience all this meant that Banquo was getting even, and how could it mean that if his ghost were merely a figment of Macbeth's imagination? It is but the simple, objectively ironical nemesis which, in the Knight of the Burning Pestle,³

¹ Antonio's Revenge, v, 1,—'tossing his torch about his head in triumph.'
² See below, p. 213. He points at his wounds.
³ As the Knight of the Burning Pestle was acted in 1611, it is almost contemporary with Forman's notice. See below, p. 222.
Beaumont, recalling possibly this very scene, makes Jasper, entering with face mealed as his own ghost, threaten against his enemy:—

When thou art at table with thy friends,
Merry in heart and filled with swelling wine,
I'll come in midst of all thy pride and mirth,
Invisible to all men but thyself,
And whisper such a sad tale in thine ear
Shall make thee let the cup fall from thy hand
And stand as mute and pale as death itself.¹

Such a reversal, with its abrupt, sensational irony and its personal revenge for nemesis, is characteristic of the Elizabethan drama. Whirls of the wheel like this occur not infrequently, in the works of Shakspere and his brother dramatists, to overthrow the fatuous and presumptuous. Such are the solutions of the witches' enigmas in this very play, Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane and Macduff confronting Macbeth as one not of woman born; such is Hamlet's letter announcing his return at the moment when Claudius was on the point of telling Laertes how he had forestalled the latter's revenge: such, still more exactly, are the condemnation of the much-warned, headlong Hastings out of his own mouth and the fulfillment of Buckingham's jesting prayer.² In the case in question the irony is accentuated by Macbeth's wish that Banquo were present and by the health he drinks to him, either of which coincides with

¹ K. B. P., v, 1.
² Cf. such irony in the fulfillment of Anne's curse of herself, Richard III, i, 2 and iv, 1, 72–85, and of Buckingham's prayer that his friend may be faithless, v, 1, 12–21.—

That high All-seer which I dallied with
Hath turned my feigned prayer on my head
And given in earnest what I begged in jest.

And compare in point of abruptness of reversal 1 Hen. VI, i, 1, 51–61.
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an entrance of the Ghost. These have been interpreted, according to the law of the association of ideas, as provocatives of the hallucinations. But thus the irony—the Elizabethan meaning—is obliterated. Really the words of Macbeth are words of impiety, of a classical Infatuation and Insolence,¹ and they are answered from the other world. They fly in the face of Heaven, and, like those of Hastings and Buckingham, are hurled back upon the speaker's head. Other instances quite parallel to this in Shakspere there are perhaps none, but there are plenty in the other dramatists. It is no uncommon thing on the Elizabethan stage for ghosts and the heavenly or the infernal powers to answer words of appeal, defiance, or blasphemy with outcries or with thunder and lightning; and in the passage below cited from Massinger we have a remarkable instance of ghosts, objective as one could wish, answering the murderer's challenge, to his amazement, on the spot. The situation may be presented as a whole because it is parallel to that in Macbeth in more ways than one. It is Malefort, the murderer of wife and son, that speaks:—

Though this centre
Labour to bring forth earthquakes, and hell open
Her wide-stretched jaws, and let out all her furies,
They cannot add an atom to the mountain
Of fears and terrors that each minute threaten
To fall on my accursed head,—

Enter the Ghost of young Malefort, naked from the waist, full of wounds, leading in the Shadow of a Lady, her face leprous.

Ha! is't fancy?

Or hath hell heard me and makes proof if I
Dare stand the trial? Yes, I do; and now
I view these apparitions, I feel
I once did know the substances. For what come you?
Are your aerial forms deprived of language,
And so denied to tell me, that by signs

[The Ghosts use various gestures]

¹ 'Ἀτη, ὥβρα.
You bid me ask here of myself? 'Tis so:
And there is something here makes answer for you.
You come to lance my sear'd up conscience; yes,
And to instruct me, that those thunderbolts,
That hurled me headlong from the height of glory,
Wealth, honours, worldly happiness, were forged
Upon the anvil of my impious wrongs,
And cruelty to you! I do confess it;
And that my lust compelling me to make way
For a second wife, I poisoned thee...

yet, thou, being my son,
Wert not a competent judge mark'd out by heaven
For her revenger, which thy falling by
My weaker hand confirm'd. — [Answered still by signs]—
 'Tis granted by thee.

Can any penance expiate my guilt,
Or can repentance save me? — [Ghosts disappear]
They are vanish'd!

What's left to do then? I'll accuse my fate,
That did not fashion me for nobler uses:
For if those stars, cross to me in my birth,
Had not denied their prosperous influence to it,
With peace of conscience, like to innocent men,
I might have ceased to be, and not as now,
To curse my cause of being —

[He is killed with a flash of lightning],
v, 2.

Equally Elizabethan and far more Shaksperean is the conception, according to our interpretation, of nemesis as a personal revenge. So in Shakspere (though so the critics do not interpret it) nemesis is always conceived. Hamlet’s father, old Gloster, Cesar, and the infinite villains and victims of Richard III and the Henry VI cycle, are avenged, as the parties concerned themselves generally make clear, in a blood-feud. Hardly one of the dozen or more of princes and peers who fall under Richard’s axe fails to recognize that his fate is due to Queen Margaret’s curse,¹ and these and all

¹ Queen Anne (v. supra, p. 208) suffers from her own curse.
the others, be they guiltless or be they guilty, crave Richard's blood, in turn, as ghosts on Bosworth Field. Here blood will have blood, regardless of considerations of law or guilt; and it is not vague powers of nature or society or justice that take order to that end but, in the body or out of the body, the murdered one himself. Even in the political drama Julius Caesar the nemesis could not be more highly personal: not only does Caesar's ghost actually appear to Brutus on the eve of battle, but, as Brutus and Cassius severally at the end confess,¹ and Antony had prophesied, it was his ghost—and by that is meant, not the spirit of Caesar, as we should say, but his indignant shade, 'mighty yet' and 'ranging for revenge,'—that 'turned their swords in their own proper entrails.' The nemesis does not take the form of society outraged, a mob devoted, after all, to absolutism, the spirit of the times revolting against republican conservatism, or any other form that philosophical critics have devised, but, as both Antony and Octavius avow,² that of a vendetta.³ Macbeth himself falls not as an usurper,

¹ v, 3, 45; v, 5, 50; v, 3, 94-6. Antony's prophecy, iii, 1, 270 f:

And Caesar'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;
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

² Cf. the whole tenor of their words in the parley, v, 1, especially ll. 50-5.

³ The impression is confirmed by a passage of like tenor in Antony and Cleopatra, where Sextus Pompey says to Octavius and Antony:

To you all three,
The senators alone of this great world,
Chief factors for the gods, I do not know
Wherefore my father should revengers want,
Having a son and friends: since Julius Caesar,
a foe of liberty or justice, but, at the hands of Macduff, explicitly to appease the ghosts of the latter's wife and children.\(^1\) The nemesis which Shakspere habitually delineates is direct and simple, an even-handed justice that strikes the human breast from without rather than from within, and takes, not by preference so much as in instinctive sympathy with the spirit of his age, the primitive, popular form of a personal, or supernaturally personal, vengeance. It is retaliation rather than retribution, and of such a nemesis Banquo's Ghost is but a capital instance.

What now are the arguments adduced in favor of the contrary interpretation with which we are contending? Professor Bradley has tabulated them,\(^2\) and even at some

Who at Philippi the good Brutus ghosted,  
There saw you laboring for him, etc.  
And that is it  
Hath made me rig my navy; . . . . 
with which I meant  
To scourge the ingratitude that despiteful Rome  
Cast on my noble father.  

_A. and C., ii, 6, 8 ff._

And the passage testifies as well to the objectivity of the ghost of Cæsar and the revengefulness of his mission.

\(^1\) _Macbeth_, v, 7, 15:—

If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,  
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.

This is the true spirit of vendetta, still stronger in the remarkable passage which precedes this:—

_Malcolm._ Let's make us medicine of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

_Macduff._ He has no children.  

\(^2\) See Bradley, pp. 492–3. In quoting Professor Bradley I sometimes condense his language.
inconvenience to ourselves we will consider them in his order:—

1. *Macbeth* has already seen one hallucination, that of the dagger; and *Lady Macbeth* would remind us of it here.

The main answer to this, as to all the other arguments here quoted, is that as the stage-directions in the first edition of the play, the Folio of 1623, indicate and the account of the acting in Forman’s Diary proves, the ghost was represented and was meant to be represented on the stage; whereas the true hallucinations, the air-drawn dagger and the voice that cried ‘Sleep no more,’ were not. The dagger and the voice *Macbeth* himself acknowledges to be the creation of his fancy,—‘methought I heard a voice,’ ‘there’s no such thing.’ 1 Of the ghost, despite the testimony of all his guests, he is certain—

If I stand here, I saw him—

and he remains so almost to the end of the scene. And as for the authority of *Lady Macbeth*, are we against the witness of Hamlet’s eyes and ears and our own to accept *Queen Gertrude’s* explanation—

This is the very coinage of the brain?

or, in the case of the Ghost in Heywood’s *Iron Age* (an unmistakable instance, as Professor Bradley admits, of objectivity) Clytemnestra’s similar explanation to Orestes,—

*Thy former murder makes thee mad?* 2

These, who by the traditions of folklore, as we shall learn, 3 are not privileged to see the ghost, must of course have their say.

The argument from character, moreover, has in this matter

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1 *Macbeth*, ii, 1, 47. 2 See reference below, p. 219.
3 See argument 6, below.
little, perhaps no, force. For if Macbeth sees ghosts by
dint of imaginative leanings, why do Richard III, Brutus,
and dozens of other persons in the Elizabethan drama see
them without such? Even apart from these pressing con-
siderations, what on its own merits can be made of the
psychology? The esthetic critics hold that the strength
of this hallucination, in which Macbeth believes, is a logical
and inevitable development from the previous hallucinations,
in which he did not believe. But if things have gone thus far
why do they go no farther? Nay, why do they come to a
pause and leave Macbeth henceforth hallucination-free? The
scene itself, moreover, does not bear out such an interpreta-
tion. The murder done, Macbeth expresses his complacency,
and at finding it after all but half done he chides. Of
that half he assures himself, however, and after appointing
another meeting with his mercenary he turns, cheerfully
enough, with a conventional table-greeting, to his guests,
and, with the instinct of a sneak, voices a hypocritical wish
for Banquo's presence. When he sees the ghost, fear—pure
fear and horror—overwhelms him, but when it is gone he is
himself again; and the experience is repeated at the Ghost's
return. The conclusions which Macbeth then reaches are:
the wonder of the apparition and of the guests' not seeing
it, the wisdom of making assurance doubly sure by dis-
membering the body, and the impossibility of keeping
murder hid. In all this there is no remorse, nor the slightest
concern for the crime. There is indeed something of what
Mr. Moorman posits—a deep sense of insecurity; but it
appears rather only when the ghost is present, and it is not
half so much fear of being published a murderer, or fear of
Fleance proving father of a line of kings, as fear of the
ghost before his eyes, the hideous, horrible shade that dogs
him. A subjective cause, then, has not been indicated by
the poet, nor has an adequate subjective cause been suggested
by the critics.
2. The Ghost seems to be created by Macbeth’s imagination, for his words—

Now they rise again
With twenty mortal murders on their crown—

describe it, and they echo what the murderer had said to him a little before,—

Safe in a ditch he bides
With twenty trenched gashes on his head.¹

Taken as Shakspere would have us take it, this is not a matter of psychology but of story-telling, of narrative fact. Macbeth, to be sure, does not count the gashes—twenty anyway is only a round number—and he has recourse to his remembrance of the murderer’s words; but with the gashes’ getting there neither murderer’s words nor murderer’s imagination has the least thing to do. He sees the twenty gashes because they are there. For by the laws of folklore the world over and the usage of literature ancient or modern a ghost is in outer semblance no more than the corpse revivified. It is pale, livid, or blood-bespattered; it is leprous and tettered from poison; it is befouled with the dirt of the death-struggle or the dust of the grave; and always it shows its wounds. So with the Ghost of Hector in the Æneid—

raptatus bigis, ut quondam, aterque cruento
pulvere, perque pedes traiectus lora tumentis.
Ei mihi, qualis erat, quantum mutatus ab illo
Hectore, qui redit exuvias indutus Achilli,
vell Danaum Phrygios iaculatus puppibus ignis,
squalentem barbam et concretos sanguine crinis
volneraque illa gerens, quae circum plurima muros
accepit patris, —

¹The same subjective point of view is taken by Professor Moulton, Moral System, p. 261. Indeed, he seems bent on taking no other point of view: the blood on First Murderer’s face as he appears at the door he makes out to be ‘in Macbeth’s imagination.’
so with the Ghost of Agamemnon in Heywood as he appears to Orestes pointing at his wounds, and so with the Ghosts of Malefort's Son and Lady cited from Massinger above. Banquo's Ghost, then, rises with twenty mortal murders on his crown, not because Macbeth remembers the words of the murderer, but because the ghost must be like the corpse. It is no matter of psychology or symbolism, but the exceedingly simple matter of a story hanging together.

3. *It vanishes the second time on his making a violent effort and asserting its unreality:*

Hence horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!

*This is not quite so the first time, but then too its disappearance follows on his defying of it:*

Why what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

*So, apparently, the dagger vanishes when he exclaims 'There's no such thing!'

The unreality of the Ghost is asserted by Macbeth not, certainly, in the sense of its subjectivity but only in the sense of its being insubstantial as a shade. Immediately after this he wonders that the others can keep the natural ruby of their cheeks when his are blanched with fear. As for defying it, that of course is quite another matter, on which I, in these pages, would be the last to spend words, but with which the passage quoted for comparison, where the dagger is dismissed as an illusion—

There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes,—

has nothing in the world to do. Elsewhere¹ Professor Brad-

¹ P. 493.
ley quotes to the same purpose Brutus’s words to Cæsar’s Ghost—

Now I have taken heart thou vanishest.

But does Brutus want it to vanish? In the next line he cries after it,

Ill spirit, I would have more talk with thee

just as Macbeth himself cries to the witches,

Stay you imperfect speakers, tell me more;

and Brutus’s first utterance is no more than an outburst of mystified vexation. Here the situation is only that to be found in ghost-stories and folklore the world over—the oracle breaking off at the tantalizing moment. Quite otherwise in Macbeth. The Ghost will make no disclosures—his vengeance is the horror and menace of his presence, and of this the murderer is but too glad to be rid. That he himself does this, by will-power, is far from having been proved, and certainly the burden of proof is on the shoulders of the asserter. Indeed, the assertion itself depends for proof upon the proposition that Banquo’s Ghost is subjective—which it was adduced to prove.

4. At the end of the scene Macbeth himself seems to regard the Ghost as an illusion:

My strange and self abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use. III, 4, 141–2.

There is force in this argument as in none of the others; but granted that in folklore and the Elizabethan drama a ghost may appear to only one person in a multitude (as below we shall see that granted it must be), these final words of Macbeth’s become, I think, the most natural reaction from such an experience. No one has seen anything; the Queen has rated and taunted him and cast in his teeth his former hallucinations; and his guests have tried to overlook his passion

1 ‘Self-deception.’ A different interpretation, recently proposed by a German critic whose name I cannot now recall, will not hold.
as the fit of a moment. The case is different from that of Hamlet—there the Ghost speaks, and Hamlet has only one witness, his mother, against him;—and how can Macbeth stand out against his sarcastic queen and the whole table? Be that as it may, there are instances in the Elizabethan drama of the most unquestionably objective ghosts being received, even by one person alone, with equal incredulity. In the present play, after the indubitable witches have taken flight, Banquo asks Macbeth,

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

Likewise, after their second appearance, Macbeth questions, fruitlessly, his lord-in-waiting Lennox. For your subtler dramatist must have a way of distinguishing the natural and the supernatural when, as on the Elizabethan stage, both are represented in a form equally substantial and corporeal.

5. It does not speak.

This is no real difficulty, whether from the point of view of folklore or of the drama. A ghost, says Brand, need not speak at all, and generally does not till bidden. Banquo’s Ghost, though bidden, does not speak simply because he has nothing to say. He cannot cry, like the ghosts of Richard’s victims or the Ghost of Cæsar, I will meet thee on Bosworth Field, or at Philippi; for revenge is in the hands of others than his friends and kin—Malcolm and Macduff—and is for other causes.2 His program is to push the usurper from his stool

1 Tourneur’s Atheist’s Tragedy, ii, 6; iii, 2; Massinger’s Roman Actor, v, 1; Webster’s White Devil, v, 4. See also below, pp. 224–5, notes, and Cymbeline, v, 4, 30–151, in particular 130–151.

2 Obviously there would be no point in Banquo’s Ghost’s denouncing a retributory death which should come at the hands of Macduff, not Fleance, to appease the ghosts of Macduff’s wife and children. Contrast the situation in Julius Cæsar.
and plague him with a blood-boltered presence and inscrutab\-le menaces, and at the Witches' Cavern to taunt him with the show of a line of kings stretching to the crack of doom. Silence and gestures, moreover, were now getting to be the approved demeanor for ghosts on the stage. The talkative, familiar ghost was shelved, and those few ghosts that hereafter tread the stage, Webster's, Massinger's, and Heywood's, point, nod, or beckon, but hold their peace; and Massinger's¹ and Webster's² at least, awe and plague their victim much as Banquo's does.

6. *It is visible only to Macbeth.*

It is strange that with the scene between Hamlet and his mother in mind Professor Bradley and other critics³ should in this matter find cause for question. From the point of view both of folklore and of Elizabethan dramatic practice—the only point of view, I must think, to take—it is quite regular. With one consent authorities on folklore like Reginald Scot and Brand⁴ declare that most commonly a ghost appears to one person only, even when that person is in company with others; and so it appears in Chapman's *Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*,⁵ Heywood's *Iron Age*,⁶ as well as Shakspere's *Hamlet*,⁷ in all of which cases the objectivity is beyond a cavil.

¹ *The Roman Actor, The Unnatural Combat.*
² *White Devil, Brachiano's Ghost.*
³ Fletcher ( Rolfe's *Macbeth*, p. 216) and others.
⁴ Reginal Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Nicholson's reprint, 1886, p. 449: 'Also they never appeare to the whole multitude, seldome to a few, and most commonlie to one alone. Also they may be seene of some, and of some other in that presence not seene at all.' Hazlitt's *Brand*, 1905, i, 270: . . . 'rarely visible to more than one person, although there are several in company.' And Wilson (v. Furness) reminds us of Pallas appearing to Achilles at the council.
⁵ Bussy's Ghost appears to Cleremont, p. 206 (Shepherd's ed.), without being heard or seen by Guise, although, p. 209, he is visible to others.
⁷ Mr. Richard Moulton, indeed, after accepting this ghost as objective
He appears, that is, to the person in question and the audience. This last circumstance is, I think, the crucial test of the objectivity of any Elizabethan ghost. Whatever, under the load of outworn traditions, may be the occasional practice nowadays, then the audience was never made a prey to an illusion. Shakspere, as usual, has here provided against all mistake on the part of the sensible spectator by giving him the key to the situation, just as he provides one for misunderstandings and mystifications such as those in the Comedy of Errors and the Midsummer Night's Dream, or those in the Tempest where Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban are being beguiled by the invisible Ariel;¹ and nothing could be more stupid of the spectator than not to take it and to insist on putting himself on a level with the characters on the boards. The case of Ariel, indeed, is one much in point: not only in the scene mentioned but invariably he is invisible either to all but the audience or to all but the audience and the person or persons to whom it behooves him to appear; as to Prospero when in company with Miranda or others, or to the three criminals when in company with Gonzalo, Adrian, and Francisco.² Indeed, with Shakspere, as with the Elizabethan dramatists generally, it may be taken as a rule, fairly absolute, not only that whatever is represented by him on the stage is actual and objective, but at the first appearance is inclined to refuse him that quality at the second. This the Elizabethan historian cannot possibly do. If the Ghost was real at the first appearance, how to the audience, as he comes and speaks at length to stay Hamlet’s wrath and whet his purpose, can he, without any hint on the part of the author, lose his reality? If the Ghost was a ghost when he appeared in person to command, he is just as much one now that he appears to reiterate his command.

¹ Tempest, III, 2.
² Tempest, III, 3, 52–82. It is possible, but not probable, that here Ariel, like Prospero (stage-direction, l. 18), is visible to the audience (and Prospero) only.
that what is unobjective is not so represented. Thus it is
with Lear's lunacy, and thus with Cardinal Beaufort's death-
bed vision of the ghost of Duke Humphrey, whom he had
murdered.¹ In the latter case there is no reason that Shak-
spere should not have put the ghost upon the stage except
that he intended here to portray what the critics, with a
ghost before them, are bent on finding portrayed in Macbeth—
terrors of conscience and phantasms of disordered imagina-
tion. Not (as we shall see) that Shakspere makes Humphrey's
ghost what we nowadays should call subjective—no Eliza-
bethan ghost, not even that of Webster’s Isabella² is quite
that—but that his intent seems to be to throw the emphasis off
the motive of revenge and upon the time-worn motive of the
mental anguish of a dying villain. In Macbeth, with Ban-
quo’s ghost on the stage, his intent was evidently something
different.

That it was Shakspere himself who provided that the Ghost
appear on the stage cannot be disputed. The two entrances
and corresponding exits and the seating of the Ghost are

¹ Second Henry VI, III, 3. That Beaufort's vision is of Duke Humphrey's
ghost appears from sc. 2, ll. 171 and 372-4, and from l. 15 of sc. 3. In the
original of Second Henry VI, the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of
Yorke and Lancaster, the treatment of this subjective ghost is similar, and
the identity of it with Duke Humphrey's is made explicit. Cf. Hazlitt's
Shakspeare's Library, Pt. II, vol. i, pp. 479, 482, where both Vaux and the
Cardinal himself roundly declare the figure seen to be Duke Humphrey's
ghost. Shakspere softens these statements in his effort to get a vaguer,
more inward meaning.

² Skeptical as Shakspere was not and living in a more skeptical atmosphere
(compare Donne in his poems) Webster, after the later Elizabethan fashion,
presents his ghosts as silent and more insubstantial. Yet Isabella’s Ghost
(White Devil, III, 3), although she purports to be the coinage of Francisco's
‘melancholy,' appears on the stage and that, too, to her revenger; and the
other ghost, Brachiano’s, though its demeanor is symbolical, is itself sub-
stantive—cannot at any rate be interpreted as subjective—and is actual
enough to throw earth at Flamineo.
indicated in the first text. To the contemporary acting, moreover, there is the witness of Dr. Simon Forman,—

And as he thus did, standing up to drink a carouse to him, the ghoste of Banco came and sate down in his cheier behind him. And he turning a-bout to sit down a-gain sawe the goste of banco, which fronted him so, that he fell in-to a great passion of fear and fury, vterringe many wordes about his murder, by which, when they hard that Banco was murdred they suspected Mackbet ¹—

as well as the very definite testimony of Beaumont, quoted above, and that of the anonymous play called the Puritan—

Instead of a jester we'ull have the ghost in the white sheet sit at the upper end of the table ²—

to the acting of such scenes in general.

Richard III.

The ghosts which appear to Richard in a dream on the eve of battle are easier to interpret. Much that has been said of Banquo's Ghost may be said still more emphatically of these. They are the ghosts of Richard's victims seeking his blood, and any one who with a knowledge of contemporary Elizabethan drama had read the preceding portion of the play would feel the inevitableness of their appearance before the curtain fell. In the way of this interpretation there are two slight stumbling-blocks— the dream and Richard's doubts. In general, dreams are treated by Shak-

¹If Forman is right here, he is describing the second entrance and a second seating of the Ghost. This took place from behind—not before Macbeth's eyes like the other—and by bringing him within an ace of sitting in the horror's lap must have produced a tragic sensation well over the verge of the comic. It would be like the Friar's Umbra frightening away the murderer of Bussy.

²This passage has been used to determine the date of Macbeth—the Puritan was published in 1607—but the context proves that it has no reference to that or any play.
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erobjectively, in a superstitious fashion unsusceptible of psychological explanation, as the avenue of occult information to the soul; and in this same play Clarence, even though he has dreamed of Gloucester’s perfidious murderousness, refuses at first to believe the witness of the cutthroats before his eyes. So with Romeo, Posthumus, Calpurnia, and the poet Cinna—they dream more wisely than they can know or think. In folklore, moreover, which knows nothing subjective, dreams are treated not only after the fashion just mentioned but as the special medium for ghosts, just as they are for ghosts in Homer and Virgil, and in the Bible for Gabriel or ‘the angel of the Lord.’ So in the Elizabethan drama generally and in the case before us. There are few ghosts less insubstantial than that in Tourner’s Atheist’s Tragedy; he appears to one person, then to two persons at once, then to one person again, and once he stands fire for his pains; and yet his first appearance is in a dream. Another instance, still more explicit, is that in Massinger’s Roman Actor, where, as Caesar dreams, the ghosts of his victims, Rusticus and Sura,

although their ashes were cast in sea,
   Were by their innocence made up again,
   And in corporeal forms but now appear’d,

1 Romeo and Juliet, v, 1, 6-10.
2 Cymbeline, v, 4.
3 Julius Cesar, ii, 2; iii, 3, 1-4. Cf. Duke Humphrey’s dream, 2 Henry VI, i, 2; Andromache’s, Troilus and Cressida, v, 3, 10 and 63; Balthazar’s, Romeo and Juliet, v, 3, 138, etc. In tragedy all Shakspere’s bona fide dreams are fulfilled, except in the rare cases, where, as in that of Duchess Eleanor (if hers be bona fide), they flatter the subject in his folly.
4 So the messengers of Zeus appear to mortals; so Patroclus’s Ghost appears to Achilles and Hector’s to Æneas. Subjective, of course, none of these can be. As conceived by the primitive mind, indeed, the dream is a state in which the soul is out of the body and is roaming about, collecting information, communicating or being communicated with; and the question of subjectivity here is simply not in point.
Waving their bloody swords above my head,
As at my death they threaten'd. And methought
Minerva, ravish'd hence, whisper'd that she
Was, for my blasphemies, disarm'd by Jove,
And could no more protect me. Yes, 'twas so, [Thunder and lightning]
HIS thunder does confirm it, against which,
Howe'er it spare the laurel, this proud wreath
Is no assurance. V, 1.

Nor do subjective interpretations of the dreams in Shakspere square with the characters of the persons who have them. This becomes clear when applied to another instance in a later and more finished play—Queen Katharine's dream in Henry VIII:—

Sad and solemn music. Enter, solemnly tripping one after another, six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays and golden vizards on their faces; branches of bays or palm in their hands. They first congee unto her, then dance; and, at certain changes, the first two hold a spare garland over her head; at which the other four make reverent curtsies; then the two that hold the garland deliver the same to the other next two, who observe the same order in their changes, and holding the garland over her head: which done, they deliver the same garland to the last two, who likewise observe the same order: at which, as it were by inspiration, she makes in her sleep signs of rejoicing, and holdeth up her hands to heaven: and so in their dancing vanish, carrying the garland with them. The music continues.

Shall we interpret these spirits as the figments of Katharine's meditation? It would mean monstrous complacence, and it would altogether defeat the poet's intention of signifying heaven's recognition of her saintly character. They are but a stage-device of course, yet they are not subjective; they are—operatically, unreligiously conceived—'spirits,' 'angels

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1 A statue had been carried off by the ghosts in his dream.
2 As a stage-device compare the masque-like dream of Posthumus, Cymbeline, v, 4. Nothing could be more objective—Jupiter descends with a tablet the oracular contents of which are read by Posthumus on awaking. But the marvel is without the sincerity or the meaning of the ghosts in Hamlet and Macbeth. Jupiter and the apparitions of the Leonati make mere dramatic machinery.
of the Lord.' And shall we more justly interpret these ghosts, so rancorous against Richard and so propitious to Richmond, as the figments of his conscience? What has he, a thorough Machiavel, lineally and immediately descended from Aaron the Moor and Barabas the Jew, to do, before this or after, with conscience or remorse? They are without him, voices of an Elizabethan Nemesis, ghosts shrieking for his blood.

Richard himself, however,—and this is our other stumbling-block—seems, as Mr. Moorman says, to explain away the ghosts as the figments of conscience in his subsequent soliloquy. It is not clear that in his awkward and obscure speech he means that; but what is clear is that he is trying to shake off the great dread that has seized him. Such questionings and explainings arise in the Elizabethan drama, as we have seen, after the appearance of the most indisputably objective ghosts—especially when they have appeared in dreams—as is but to be expected of human nature. Who would not cry 'I but dreamed' if else he must think that in the fray of the morrow eleven ghosts were to 'sit heavy on his soul?' Yet even in the face of that prospect Richard observes, bluntly, that the lights burn blue.

1 Marlowe's.
2 With one accord they, as Elizabethan Machiavels, scoff at conscience. Cf. Meyer's *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* for the evidence, and Richard's own words—

Conscience is but a word that cowards use. v, 3, 309.

3 See references to the *Atheist's Tragedy* and the *Roman Actor* above, pp. 223-4. See especially the remarkable parallel the dream of Posthumus cited above, p. 218, note. Posthumus doubts the reality of his vision with the tablet, or book, in his hand! The Elizabethan mind seems indeed to be incapable of keeping the objective and the subjective clear. See below.

4 This of course is old folklore. See Brand, quoting Grose, p. 69:—'this is so universally acknowledged, that many eminent philosophers have busied themselves in accounting for it, without once doubting the truth of the fact.' In *Julius Caesar*, at the appearance of Caesar's Ghost—'how ill this taper burns!'
This second stumbling-block is not out of the road, however, and it must be admitted that the evidence, particularly in view of Shakspere's sources, is somewhat ambiguous. In some of the chronicles and in the *True Tragedie of Richard III* the hero is represented as haunted by remorse—like Marlowe's Faustus, as Professor Churchill suggests, rather than like the Machiavels; and even in Shakspere Richard harks back at times¹ to this earlier conception. It may be, then, that Shakspere meant that the ghosts should be no more than a dream, no more than pangs of conscience. But even so our thesis stands, for he has not succeeded. They are objective still. Not only do the ghosts tread the stage and lift up their voices, but—unmistakable, immemorial token—the lights burn blue. Moreover, at the same time these ghosts appear and prophesy to Richmond, and by him too are recognized, though not doubtfully as they are by Richard, as the 'souls of the bodies which Richard murdered.'² The same dream—the same figments of conscience and imagination, therefore—for two men, murderer and avenger, at once! In short, the genius of the poet cannot belie itself. The mind of the Elizabethans—and theirs was Shakspere's—like the mind that informs folklore or, for that matter, the mind that has made all poetry and drama before the Elizabethan and much of it after, was far from clear on the head of the subjective and the objective. Posthumus in *Cymbeline* doubts the reality of the vision which brought him the book in his hand. Even Duke Humphrey's ghost, considered above, is, though invisible to the bystanders, very evidently not a figment of conscience and imagination but is after all, as Vaux³ declares, a ghost. However much emphasis is thrown on the facts of conscience and crime,

¹ As, i, 3, 222; iv, 1, 85.
² v, 3, 230.
³ See above, pp. 221, note.
neither the personality of the relation between murderer and murdered, as then commonly conceived, nor the traditional reality of a revenging presence is obscured. His hair stands upright and his eyes are blinded with the dust of the grave. These two features of the corpse, even though the former was seen by the Cardinal, are, in this connection, objective, superstitious touches, and by the Elizabethan audience would certainly be taken not to be the effect of memory in one case or of a frenzied anticipation in the other, but, however invisible to the bystanders, to be the features of the actual ghost, itself, like Hector's shade, only the corpse resurrected. Here at work is but the same poetic, instinctive materialism, the same inability to discriminate things subjective and things objective that in the popular mind and popular literature, as we have already seen, lends an ear to dreams as to presages and oracles, that peoples them with veritable angels of the Lord or with the souls of the departed, or that out of the digestive and sexual operations which perturb them creates fiends like the nightmare and the incubus or succuba. Into this undiscerning, mythopoetic way of thinking, then, Shakspere lapsed when, in dealing with Richard's conscience, he represented it (if that really be what he represented) as the hauntings of menacing ghosts. And that too without any need. In the True Tragedie Richard when in the throes of remorse simply declares that the ghosts of his victims throng him night and day gaping for revenge, and in the chronicles of Holinshed and others he dreams before the battle that he is haled by devils to hell: out of hints so slight Shakspere makes up his scene of eleven individual ghosts, amid blue lights, crying, in conventional melodramatic fashion, each for ven-

1 Compare Professor G. B. Churchill's Richard III up to Shakespeare for the contributions to the Richard legend by chronicler and by poet.
gence on his particular wrongs, and vowing to have it, too, in battle on the morrow.1 Surely, whatever Richard on awaking says about all this and however Shakspere meant it to be, there is little in it that in our sense of the word can be called subjective.

*Julius Caesar.*

Of this ghost we have already treated. The ghost speaks—and not in a dream, if that remains a difficulty—and Brutus does not undertake to doubt its reality. He questions his men, indeed, as Macbeth does Lennox at the Witches' Cavern, as to whether they had seen or heard anything or themselves had made an outcry, but their negative answers, like Lennox's, only go to prove the supernaturalness of an undeniably real appearance. Caesar's Ghost is, as the confessions of the dying conspirators and the corroborating testimony of Sextus Pompey, quoted above,2 conclusively show, only what by its own words, the stage-direction,3 and Brutus's subsequent remark to Volumnius4 it purports to be, and it is only our nineteenth century prepossessions and philosophizings

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1 Professor Churchill, though somewhat non-committal on the question of subjectivity, insists on a difference between these ghosts and the ghosts of the ordinary revenge plays (p. 510). And, as we have been admitting, a difference there is: not only are they interpreted by Richard as the advocates of conscience, but they avoid the words *revenge* or *vindicta* and they threaten the pains of despair quite as much as those of defeat and death. Nevertheless I cannot admit that these ghosts do not appear, as do the revenge ghosts, 'to satisfy themselves.' Each one recounts his wrongs, curses Richard's sword and lance in battle, and foretells his death. Prophecy, perhaps, is their main office, as often in the Elizabethan and the Classical drama, but, as there again, it is the prophecy of the injured, resentful ghost.

2 See above, p. 211.

3 *Julius Caesar*, iv, 3, 274—enter the Ghost of Caesar. This is in the first edition, the Folio of 1623.

4 *Julius Caesar*, v, 5, 17.
that have dissolved that famous apparition into an 'embodi-
ment of Brutus's sense of the egregious mistake he has
made in slaying Cæsar and of the approaching overthrow
of republicanism.' Political drama that this is, it, like the
rest of Shakspere, has little politics or statesmanship in it,
and really it is conceived and wrought out as a thoroughly
Elizabethan murder and revenge play, the latter half of it,
like Hamlet, containing a ghost to preside over the revenge.

I have shown, I hope, that Shakspere's ghosts are all
objective—all, that is, but Duke Humphrey's ghost, which,
as an hallucination, is not represented on the stage,—and
that those here discussed, though having a different function
and belonging to a different tradition, are as objective, if
not so material, as the ghost in Hamlet. Though they appear
to the victim alone instead of to the revenger, and though
they arise, in one notable instance—that of Banquo's Ghost—
at a time when an effort was making to divest the ghost of
its cruder and more material qualities, they never melt away
as we moderns think they must into the subjective or abstract.
They are neither hallucinations nor abstract personifications:
they are the murdered appearing to the murderer. Their
motive is revenge, and their errand is to menace, taunt, or
forebode. They are the concrete representations of Nemesis,
after the world-old conception of it by our forefathers as a
blood-feud carried beyond the confines of the grave, and
as such they are the products of an art and a culture widely
different from our own.

A naïve and literal art, but the art that is Shakspere's.
We have seen how he conceived of nemesis as a personal
blow-for-blow—even when by the hand of God¹—rather
than as the vague, devious, impersonal retribution that we

¹ Richard III, v, 1, 20 f.
nowadays read in nature and in human experience and history and try to body forth in our drama and novels; and we have seen how superstitiously, how unpsychologically he conceived of curses and dreams. The same may be said of all else in Shakspere—and there is much else—that borders on the supernatural and occult. It is altogether supernatural, altogether occult,—it is nowise rationalized, or allegorized, after the fashion of modern authors such as the German. His witches and wizards are the witches and wizards of James I, who ride on a broomstick and sail in a seive, boil unspeakable caldrons, call up spirits and familiars, and raise storms; and in Macbeth the name and office of vulgar witch and awful Norn are by him so confounded\(^1\) that all possibility of allegory—as of fate or destiny—is quite foreclosed. His conjuring and magic in the Second Part of Henry VI, Macbeth, and the Tempest is the ordinary conjuring and magic of his Elizabethan—half-medieval—Age, introduced to make plot and to satisfy a love of shows, pranks, and marvels, and in any other author than Shakspere would hardly have been made out to be more. To get a meaning from it, as it brings the three drunken cronies to fisticuffs, or sets dogs to worry them, or goes through the sonorous rigmarole of the Witches' incantations, there is nothing for it but to shut our eyes or roll the world back three hundred years, to bow down before Shakspere with the transcendentalists or in heart and wit ourselves become a Faustus or a Ulenspiegel. And his portents and omens, his prophecies and soothsayings and presentiments, are of the same stripe. They are all literal, objective, binding. A portent like that of the subterranean music which betokens that the god Hercules is forsaking his minion Antony, or that of the horses devouring one another in

\(^1\)See Spalding, pp. 88 ff.; Bradley, pp. 341–2; Herford.
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Glamis Castle, or that of the Lion stalking by the Capitol, or that of the slave holding up his hand to burn, itself unscorched, like twenty torches, has in Shakspere no more subjective coloring or wavering outline than it has in Plutarch or Holinshed. Such things stand forth as unreasoned, prodigious facts; they are the history, the staple and stuff of the plot. So even with his presentiments. They are always fulfilled unless they are cheerful and flattering; and, whether that or no, they are the promptings of occult wisdom—wisdom beyond the reach of the wit of man—sent to warn or to cajole. Many of them, of course, are of constructional import; but some of them are not, and all of them, as well as every soothsayer's word or augur's omen,1 Shakspere substantiates, without a trace of a modern attempt at subjective interpretation. Most remarkable of all in this respect are the curses: as treated in Richard III2 and the other 'histories' nothing was ever more literal, more superstitious, more unillumined by a ray of reason. Not only do the curses hold, but, as in the most benighted byways of folklore, they hold by the letter only and to the last jot and tittle. Queen Anne and Buckingham unwittingly curse themselves, the fiendish Queen Margaret, herself bowing under the curse of dying York, curses eight princes one after the other, and Richard is cursed by his mother;3 and of all these every particular syllable comes true as if the gods kept books. In such matters Shakspere knew not reason or symbol, where we moderns know nothing else.4

1 Antony and Cleopatra, i, 2; 2 Henry VI, iv, 1, 33 f.
2 It is noteworthy that the curses are deliberately introduced by the dramatist into his fable, without authority in his sources, as a convenient, though crude and highly superstitious, means of giving a local habitation and a name to nemesis.
4 And our age like every other reads its own ideas into the literature of ages gone by. So in England, America, and Germany it has done with
He heard no call to press beyond the veil of seemingly supernatural phenomena to a natural fact or a human meaning; to him the phenomena themselves were both meaning and fact; and so far from ever evincing discontent with that meaning or doubt of the fact, he betrays at times a primitive, ceremonial preoccupation with the mere form and letter.

Did Shakspere, then, believe in these things—in the supernatural character and significance of portents and omens, prophecies and presentiments, dreams, magic, curses, witches, ghosts? So much as that we must not—need not—here undertake to prove: it is the implication and corollary of all that we have proved. We have been dealing with his art, but his art was the frank, unconcerned utterance of his belief. And of that of his age, to be sure, for to speak of his belief as in such a connection it would now be understood is misleading: all such matters he took for granted. How fully he utters the beliefs of his age may be learned by consulting works like Spalding's. It was the day when, of high degree or of low degree, devils and demons, like angels, were numbered up into the hundreds of thousands, and every man, like Marlowe's Faustus, was attended by his own; when sickness, even by physicians,

Shakspere, as with Dante, Homer, and the Bible. The present writer recalls that of a dozen themes or more received from freshmen during the current year on the old ballad of the Wife of Usher's Well almost all explained the return of the drowned men to their mother as a dream or an hallucination.

1 'We cannot even be absolutely certain,' says Brandes, speaking of ghosts and witches, as if it were enough to concede, 'that Shakespeare himself did not believe in the possible existence of such beings.'

2 Spalding's *Elizabethan Demonology*, pp. 34–6. Scot gives names for seventy-nine, and Shakspere mentions twenty. The Good Angel and the Evil Angel in *Faustus*, who contend for the mastery of the hero's soul, are not allegorical, as, in their prepossession, most critics take them to be, but are as substantive—as substantial one might almost say—as the hero himself.
was held to be a sort of demoniacal possession; when one of the controversies raging was not whether ghosts appeared or miracles took place, but whether the former were devils or souls from purgatory and whether the latter were the doing of heaven or of hell; when witches, by storms and contrary winds, impeded the progress of royal personages and were discoursed upon and legislated against by the king on the throne and the dignitaries and worthies of his realm; when so trifling a circumstance as a jackdaw's entering the window of Westminster Hall actually found record in the minutes of the House as a sign from heaven. Such beliefs, such superstitions Shakspere took up into the web of his great art without a cavil or a scruple, like an Elizabethan, like the 'Soul of the Age' that he was. As did his fellow playwrights, he represented ghosts, witches, omens, dreams, and the like always as simply as if he believed in them, and his belief there is no more reason to question than theirs.

Elmer Edgar Stoll.

1 Spalding, pp. 64-6, 80.
3 See Lecky (N. Y., 1873), vol. 1, chap. 1, p. 123, for an account of James presiding over the horrible tortures of Fian.
4 Bacon, Selden, Sir Thomas Browne, all avowed their belief in witchcraft. See Lecky, chap. 1, for evidence which shows the universal acceptance of a belief in which Protestant and Puritan outdid even Catholic and Anglican. The last great advocate of the belief was Wesley.
5 Spalding, p. 31.