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*Bibliothèque nationale de France*

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## Nine Ways of Opening *Macbeth*

Edward Gordon Craig  
edited and introduced by Patrick Le Boeuf

Two versions of this text are available, both held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Département des Arts du Spectacle, Edward Gordon Craig Collection. One is a holograph manuscript (shelf number EGC Ms B 36), while the other is a typescript (EGC Ms B 169). The manuscript is dated 1920–22, September 1928, April 1932, July 1933, January 1935, and February 1937; it also contains a flyleaf, dated approximately 1900. The typescript was made in April 1932 by Daphne Woodward (1906–65), with some handwritten annotations added by Craig after 1935; it is accompanied by an unrelated letter from Richard Boleslavsky (1889–1937), dated October 18, 1927, and a letter from Edith Kaye, American Laboratory Theatre, dated February 4, 1929, asking Craig whether he received Richard Boleslavsky's unanswered "letter of December 5th, in reference to *Macbeth*."

On the cover of the manuscript, Craig wrote:

The Three Witches  
The First Scene in *Macbeth*  
~ an Exercise ~  
.EGC.  
1920–21–22

On the back side of the front cover of the manuscript, he copied the following phrase: "Witches say their prayers backwards' (Roget)," taken from Peter Mark Roget's (1779–1869) *Thesaurus of English words and phrases classified and arranged so as to facilitate the expression of ideas* (Longman, Green & Co., 1901), a book that fascinated Craig, who used it intensively throughout his life. The typescript consists of five fascicles, marked "A" to "E."

Although Craig's intention was to provide actually nine complete propositions, he never achieved that plan, nor did he ever strive to polish this essay and give it an overall satisfying shape. No effort is made in this edition to make the text read more consistent than it is indeed. It is to be understood, and assessed, as the mere statement of an interesting idea, rather than the actual realization of that idea.

Whenever two different wordings of the same conceptual content are available in both the manuscript and the typescript, this edition is based on the typed version, and the manuscript version is given in endnotes, independently of the respective dates. When the manuscript and the typescript contain essentially the same text, this edition reproduces the typed text, and occasional variants found on the manuscript are indicated in endnotes. Passages that are to be found in only one of the two sources become automatically part of the main body of the edited text. Craig's holograph corrections on the typed text are

tacitly reproduced in this edition; they are only mentioned in endnotes when they are more significant than merely stylistic emendations.

Craig's spelling, punctuation, and use of capitals are idiosyncratic. Woodward normalized much of it while typing Craig's text; this edition further normalizes it only when it is indispensable for a good comprehension, and keeps as many of Craig's idiosyncrasies as possible.

The following essay is published with the consent of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

## I.

### On the inconsistency of Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>

*"Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the cauldron boil and bake."*

*Macbeth, Act IV, sc. 1.*<sup>2</sup>

"'Boil and bake' is really extravagant (I have known many clever people who argue like this about Shakespeare) for you cannot boil and bake at the same time; and if you boil first, by the time you have boiled the fillet of a snake fresh from the fens there will be little left to bake."

Emerson repudiated that "foolish consistency" which little minds adore before all things.<sup>3</sup> But indeed, the cleverest and most inconsequent of people seem to become foolish lovers of consistency of a sudden, when asked to swallow the illogical, eccentric and splendid lines and gestures of Shakespeare.

Why clever people should be like this, I, for one, cannot attempt to say—but it is so. I have known a group of these people devote the winter evenings to deleting from the works of Shakespeare all that they considered absurd and sweeping up the small change. Amongst the group was a celebrated, a very erudite art-critic, the head of a[n]<sup>4</sup> Academy, and five or six of the most intelligent and charming others.

I have read Schlegel, Gervinus, Shaw, Barker and Chambers, on Shakespeare, and the books of a dozen more—some of whom can be charmingly inconsequent, by the hour, but who will never allow Shakespeare to be so for a moment. One and all, while accepting his reasonable side (when it is reasonable), either apologise for his eccentricity and inconsistency, or flatly say that they could have done the thing better. If *better* is a synonym for "more consistently," then doubtless these remarkable men could have avoided all the grave errors into which this artist, Shakespeare, fell when working over some poor text of an old play and giving life to it; but whether they could have avoided falling into others, is another matter.

In the theatres, as in books, one comes across a good many commonsense people who like their Shakespeare to be reasonable. When I visited Moscow, in 1909, I found that here, too, Shakespeare was taken very logically by the theatre.<sup>5</sup> It measured him all day and it wrote out the measurements at night. On the next day, it discovered that Shakespeare had changed—was larger than it had calculated, was yellow where he

had seemed red, and was purple where he had seemed sea-green. On discovering this, they shook their heads—and, while admitting that the Englishman was a very great genius, they could not forgive him his inconsistency.<sup>6</sup>

The logical point of view is one from which, presumably, *Tchekof* can be seen quite clearly, but it is one from which a glimpse of the real Shakespeare will never be caught. *Chaliapine* is probably the only Russian actor sufficiently of Shakespeare's world to see him aright, inconsistencies and all. It was the general feeling in Moscow that Shakespeare, although a world-wide name, was not exactly in his right mind—was not quite a man of commonsense. This is a reasonable supposition for good middling folks to hold, but it is a very risky one for his interpreters, the theatre people, to entertain for two seconds. In the Moscow Art Theatre, they liked to reason out every line—to argue, as did Old Father William in *Alice in Wonderland*:—

“In my youth,” said his father, “I took to the law,  
And argued each case with my wife;  
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw,  
Has lasted the rest of my life.”<sup>7</sup>

The reason why no one performs Shakespeare as he was meant to be performed (and no one<sup>8</sup> does so perform him) is that everyone brings to the plays a far too sane, a far too reasonable frame of mind. We had better put ordinary logic aside when we take up Shakespeare, and not expect sense and “no dam' nonsense” when we study him, or act him, or try to produce him, or go to see his plays performed.

His world (how often has it been said) is quite another world from the world of our everyday life; it is nearer to reality than is this world which we invent by spoiling it and then take to be the real world. His theatre, too, was something not merely larger than our notion of a theatre—it was milder—sweeter—harsher—more horrible—more tender and more beautiful and always finely exaggerated. If we measure Shakespeare by one of our little footrules, we shall never measure more than one of his feet. Indeed, this is about all that our reason has ever been able to do. There is no play by Shakespeare that cannot somewhere suddenly arrest us and all our orderly notions of life and of conduct, and leave us utterly unable to go along with him another yard of the way, if we still would cling to the laws of our consistency and our work-a-day logic.

Very great poets have that baffling way with them. The Greek dramatists and Shakespeare have it more than others, and I suppose that only poets understand them. Whether we have become too civilized to perceive the truth, whether our eyesight is growing dimmer, who can say? But assuredly, we are losing our perception of the works of Shakespeare. To regain it, we must become like poets.

\* \* \* \* \*

### *Simplicity in Production.*

Believe me, nothing is less “simple” than “simplicity” in this work of producing. Yet, like the much derided “simple life,” it is supposed to be the easiest of things to achieve.

The “simplicity of effect” which critics rightly call for, can only be brought about by a process which is very elaborate, different and costly. It is something like the ideal peace amongst nations, which not only passes understanding, but which can only be maintained by force of arms; or it is like a perfect rest, which can only be secured after intense activity. What was it that [Berlioz](#) said about producing the effect of silence in music? Didn’t he require a massed orchestra of hundreds of instruments, to produce that effect?<sup>9</sup> So it is with the effect of simplicity in stage production. It is the most difficult thing to secure, for it takes so much time, money, labour and wit to secure it.

Yet the phrase, as used by critics and playgoers, is tossed so easily to and fro, as though it meant merely an empty stage, some sounds and movements that needed no study, and nothing where before there was something.

That immense simplicity which we feel dwells in the Greek tragedies and was apparent in a Greek production four hundred years before Christ, is assuredly an immense simplicity. We need not deny it, just because it is not to be recaptured to-day. But we must not refer to it as though it consisted solely of a couple of columns, a curtain, two actors, and some plain speech.

The Greek tragedy was simple, thanks to that elaborate background of gods and goddesses, from Zeus down to Ganymede, that elaboration of myth, from the tale of Tantalus to that of Helen. Drama had to be simple which was to emerge from that background. To allow it to stand out and apart, and be seen against such a tangled growth of legend, they cleared a circle for it—a big circle—and put up a tall, square wall to back it; and in this theatre, began to elaborate their performance. The circle and the square wall were to keep all clear.<sup>10</sup> That once done, the elaborate, fierce thought might once again be unloosed in it and allowed to riot ... all would be safe.

With Shakespeare it is, I think, quite different.

No such helping boundaries were provided for him. To keep the flood of his thought from pouring out over the edges, nothing strong enough was devised.

They put him up a bit of a stage in a homely sort of a hollow O, as he called it,<sup>11</sup> a little “o”—minion or pearl.

“Fit yourself into that, my boy,” was their parting word of advice.

And it is mainly due to this casual way of providing him with his house, that he fits exactly into nothing.

His plays do sprawl. They career away, they tear along. “Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled,” as Edgar cries in *Lear*.<sup>12</sup> And there are actually some inhuman beings who would go chasing after the same dogs, in the vain attempt to kennel them—to put them back again into a new hollow O—ruby or nonpareil—constructed to the sixteenth century plans, for twentieth century purposes.

But—aware of the present, anticipating the future—Shakespeare threw the twelve-inch rule of [James Burbage](#) out of the window, smiled at [Dick Burbage](#), his friend, a grim, good smile, drew in an immense breath (which took away the breath of London for the next three centuries), and slowly, deliberately, delivered himself of his “impossible” plays—“for which an ‘impossible’ theatre may be built—by that fellow Craig, who is coming along,” said he. “But which must be built,” he added, “if ever they are to be performed in my way ... in my ‘impossible’ way.”

\* \* \* \* \*

## II.

*Nine Ways and Other Ways*

We who are producers of a play of Shakespeare must certainly do our best to become as poets, if we are to catch his spirit.

This is rather difficult for us, because for most of the time we are at work we are situated unlike poets, for we are surrounded by din and darkness, by a rush of people, the upheaval of sceneries, the eternal changing of lights—blue, green, orange and red. The actors and the supers ask us, “What dresses do we wear?” “Where do I come on in this scene?” “How do I get onto that platform?” Others, less pleasant, ask nothing, but they tell us what they positively won’t do: “Macbeth comes on right? Then I can’t possibly come on left, because —.” Or, “My reading of this passage is \_\_\_\_\_,” they inform us. “Why?” “Because \_\_\_\_\_.”

The reasons given are the most empty reasons that the mind of man can conceive; and one comes to say at last: “Really, the foolishness of the stage is immense.” Its lack of discipline certainly is the root trouble. But since it is our calling, and since some of our fellows—Garrick, Goethe, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, Irving, Reinhardt and Stanislavsky—have bettered the discipline and reduced the folly, we must not despair. Things are better than they might have been, lacking the example of these men.

Still, it is no light thing to assert that the producer must do his best to become as a poet in the midst of this folly and disorder. The artist who tries to think as a poet—not to reason like a Fabian<sup>13</sup>—this is the man who must redeem the stage.

How was the poet thinking when he conceived “Macbeth”? These witches—what are they? What are they like? If they move and speak, how do they move—how speak? In the air? Like the wind?—where and how?

From the first ten lines one can gather nothing, so it is best to continue reading—best to go right through the play, to discover what Shakespeare had in mind.

This is what we find:—

They are three weird sisters, withered-looking, not like the people of this earth; like women, yet bearded. They are supernatural, able to vanish into the air, to sail in sieves, to unchain winds at will. Like mortals, they are quick to take offence, to avenge themselves terribly for a slight. Like immortals, they are able to read the future, acknowledging masters who can read the thoughts of men.<sup>14</sup>

This is all that Shakespeare tells us about them.

Now this rules out of the programme any serious thought we may have had of treating them as old Scotch women of Elizabeth’s time, who every day told fortunes, drank whiskey until they were fuddled, and tricked superstitious people in trifling ways. They are now proved to be more than that. These women are more nearly related to the old Greek idea of the Three inexorable Fates, than to any English and Scotch notion of hanky-panky. We are nearer to the Sibyls than to Old Moore and his Almanac.<sup>15</sup>

And I regret this ruling out of one of my nine ways of doing the scene—the little old petticoat notion which still prevailed in the [nineteenth]<sup>16</sup> century. It would have been amusing to have tried it—but the Fates are against us. Old Mother Shipton really will not do. She must go and chat over a cup of tea with Old Mother Hubbard.<sup>17</sup> The hell-broth which Shakespeare has brewed would be too much for



the pair of them. In the midst of their incantations, these two old bodies would raise a laugh by coughing over the fumes and spluttering out, "Where are my spectacles?" Great fun for those who, like Macbeth, wish to avoid the equivocations of the fiends who lie like truth. Great fun, perhaps, but best keep away from the theatre of Shakespeare altogether if we are in the silly, playful mood. No great fun is to come out of *Macbeth*.

So far as I can see, the words of the poet rule out none other way I had in mind to try; and these are as follows:—<sup>18</sup>

1. In the scholarly way, the so-called Shakespearean way, an attempt at reconstruction of what happened in the Globe Theatre in 1610.
2. The witches as the Three Fates.
3. As sorceresses of the Middle Ages.
4. As shades in the air.
5. As machine women, born of industrialism and all its terrors.
6. As demons—things which assume unheard-of shapes, as in the tales of the East.
7. Ditto, as they might be (if Philosophy could find it out) in the West.
8. The serio-comic way—something powerfully terrible, but comic too.
9. The marionette way of dealing with the whole thing.

And then there are other ways which may not be rejected, since they prevail familiarly. These ways are:—

10. The playful way—laughing away Shakespeare and his highbrow nonsense with a superior little jest.
11. The modern way—seeing red all the time.
12. The usual way—this bringing some sense of relief at the end. All's well—let us sleep and snore.

Besides this "usual way," there is a way which I should like to know more about, but of which there seems to be faint record—that is to say, **Garrick's** way of dealing with these witch-scenes, especially this first scene.

Some notion can be gathered from reading **Mrs. Siddons'** words, reported in the story of her life, by **Campbell** (Vol. II, page 8).<sup>19</sup> She was a young girl when she would see Garrick's production of *Macbeth*. As she sat watching, she thought to herself, "I strongly suspect that the appearance of the weird sisters is too wild and poetical for the possibility of its being ever duly acted in a theatre"—and this Campbell quotes.<sup>20</sup>

Poor Mrs. Siddons. She hated being unsure, indefinite. She liked to feel that she could say the last word about most things theatric—and here, for once, she was flummoxed.

It seems to me that she wishes to excuse her manager's work without criticising her master Shakespeare's audacity. For to her, it really did appear a little too audacious to be so "poetical." It is, of course, only in the *appearance* that the difficulty will ever arise, she feels. And to a late eighteenth century mind, even after having heard of the wild appearance of **Gluck's** *Orphée* and of *Armide*, by the scenic man, **Bérain**, it must indeed have seemed a hopeless business.<sup>21</sup>

“For,” thought Mrs. Siddons, “these excellent English—may God ever bless them—are no longer able to rise to the situation which my more than eccentric (but certainly that, too), which my divine master, William Shakespeare, evolved from his teeming brain—his only too poetic fancy.”

Yes, I think we can reconstruct Garrick’s way of doing these scenes from what Mrs. Siddons does *not* say—and now that I have given you what she *did* say, you can see that what Garrick did was nothing at all. He simply avoided the whole thing, and got on quickly to those scenes with himself, Macbeth, and Mrs. Pritchard, “the” Lady Macbeth of the age, or Mrs. Yates, his latest partner.

\* \* \* \* \*

### III.

#### *Witches and Artists.*

These are the sixty-one words of this brief ten-line scene as Shakespeare wrote it:—

Three witches speaking.		
1st witch.	When shall we three meet again?	1.
	In thunder, lightning, or in rain?	2.
2nd witch.	When the hurlyburly’s done,	3.
	When the battle’s lost or won.	4.
3rd witch.	That will be ere set of sun.	5.
1st & 2nd witch.	Where the place? upon the heath.	6.
3rd witch.	There to meet with Macbeth.	7.
All:	I come, Graymalkin; Paddock calls:—anon.	8.
All:	Fair is foul, and foul is fair	9.
	Hover through the fog and filthy air.	10.

Let us stop and consider these lines before all else. The lines are not regular. They are just a jingle, and would be real old women’s rubbish, but for the sudden break in the seventh line. The eighth breaks again and is queer—beyond every rule queer—and then the lilt of the first lines is taken up again. But lilt though these be, and though the lines approximate more or less to the trochaic metre, the whole thing is far too ominous, the words and meaning too grand for any regular metre to control them rigidly. Had they been rigid, we should have had but one way of seeing, hearing and producing these witches—they would have become but three ordinary old hags of Scotland. “Hurlyburly” and “Graymalkin” are two words which suit old hags of this kind. But the first two lines and the two last, suit none but the terrible figures of high tragedy.



So while it is possible to show these figures on the stage as ordinary little old women of a Scotch province, it is obvious that high Tragedy (not tragedy on stilts, but of the imagination) cannot dream of reducing their stature to that extent, nor their significance.

Considering the ten lines as every ordinary person will do, we ask first, what do the words mean?

They have to mean something, we say. And on going over them, we find they mean very little—so little, that we wonder whether the play could not get on quite well without them. That scholars have thought this also, is recorded by [Furness](#) in his valuable variorum edition. He quotes [Seymour](#) as saying that “the witches seem to be introduced for no other purpose than to tell us they are to meet again; and as I cannot discover any advantage resulting from such anticipation, but on the contrary, think it injurious, I conclude the scene is not genuine.”

But hear what [Coleridge](#) says—Coleridge the poet, the guide for us all. “The true reason for the first appearance of the witches is to strike the keynote of the character of the whole drama.”<sup>22</sup>

If the play could proceed quite well without these first half-meaningless lines, then Shakespeare is a strange playwright, for playwrights never waste their words. Yet, it is true—the whole scene *could* be omitted. Had it not been written, no one would have missed it, for it contains no word which is necessary for us to hear.

Exactly—but it contains a thing—an idea—an impression—a glimpse of something—and that is why it was written.

How extraordinary that without saying anything of value to the play, the mere sound of the words, the mere look of the thing, is so valuable.

That is Shakespeare—Shakespeare plus Burbage. That is Poet and Theatre combined; and a queer, eccentric combination, some three hundred years or more in advance of the times for which the play was made—and still in advance of the times.

Is it essential, even as a theatre-scene? If the play didn't begin with it—if it were cut out altogether—should we in the theatre miss it?<sup>23</sup>

I think we all should, for I know I should—but I cannot say more than that.

I cannot think of any better way of beginning *Macbeth*, can you? It depends, of course, on how it be done—how the producer treats it—how far he can connect it with the play: but it is already pretty perfect as it is, no matter how it be done—and is sufficiently connected with the tragedy if it but give us a cold thrill right away. It won't give us a literary thrill, surely: for it cannot compare with Othello's speech before the Senate, or Hamlet's soliloquies.

Let us look again carefully and see what the lines do say—*when shall we come together, and where, and to what end? When the battle's done, on the heath, and to meet Macbeth.* Is any “*why*” asked? None at all—very mysterious is this understanding between these three people. But the whole thing is mysterious—it means so little and is only a theatre-scene. When and where, ask these three witches—not why, not how, and that is exactly what we who are artists always ask, and no more. Witches and artists are not unlike; at least they have no doubts; and so, being alike, we both are utterly in sympathy with ordinary hob-goblins, terrific banshees, and the whole line of mystery-workers, up and up, till we arrive at the Three Fates. Here our sympathy is tinged with more than a little respect—with even a little terror.

It was with more than a little terror that Mrs. Siddons would light her candle and creep upstairs to bed, after working on *Macbeth* downstairs at night, and many there are who will shudder at these ten lines which open the tragedy, but who will not be at all thrilled by any production of it on a stage.<sup>24</sup>

There is no one way of producing the plays of Shakespeare—there are many ways. Shakespeare is different from many another great playwright—Molière is best, maybe, produced in the traditional way, because the Molière tradition is unbroken—Goldoni, too. The tradition of Shakespeare production is lost.

If this were all, and if to recover a lost tradition were not impossible, it would still be sufficient reason for artists of our day exercising their best faculties to create him as a fresh work. But this is *not* all: the very nature of a Shakespeare play is so unlike that of any other—he himself is always changing—first prose, then verse—now bombast, now moderation—exaggeration to facility, and then suddenly all that is reasonable and profound, the perfection of truth and reality.

There is another reason for artists to try their hands on these Shakespeare plays—it is that there is no modern playwright who deals so much in the mystical and the beyond words imaginative. His ghosts, his fairies, his magic islands and his magic transformations, are nothing to treat in a scholarly way. When you are forced to show them on a stage, you *must* take liberties. Thank God, you producers, that Shakespeare has, in innumerable passages in his plays, told you clearly to go ahead and not to potter around trying to be too precious—his whole spirit tells you to take his work and do your damndest. If I am wrong about this, then I have misread his works and misunderstood the man.

My notion, then, is to take this, the shortest scene known, and attempt to describe how it can be done in nine different ways—and if there is time, to make a design for each way. It is only an exercise, not a very difficult one, but, to a stage manager or two, possibly quite thrilling.<sup>25</sup>

And there may be some curiosity felt by a large number of the public, also, to learn how it is that it is possible to produce a single scene in a play in nine different ways, how one can visualise it so often and so unexpectedly through one's imagination—and this public may be sufficiently intrigued to follow me and find out how all this happens. It would be possible to subject the whole play to this treatment, for it is feasible to produce *Macbeth* in many different ways and to keep each way distinct, one from the other. It is because *Macbeth* is too often produced in two or three different ways at one and the same performance, that a thing called "the traditional way" came into being. It was and is a confused affair: and to this hotch-potch tradition is always adding new ingredients, and ends by becoming quite incomprehensible and unpalatable.<sup>26</sup>

"In the role of Blank, Mr. Jones always came on reading a book," says the oracle in the theatre; and so the young actor, Mr. Smith, has to come on in the role reading a book, or be considered a great fool, lacking in all common sense. *Common sense*—have you got the idea?

"Mr. Smith always came on holding a newspaper," says the oracle ten years later, referring to the same role; so the young actor, Mr. Robinson, has to come on reading a book and holding a newspaper somehow or other.

Another ten years later, the oracle says: "Mr. Robinson always came on reading a book, in a newspaper." Everyone around takes this quite solemnly ... why not?—how can the oracle be anything humorous? And the next young actor, Mr. Browne, comes

on with a book inside a newspaper and reading both. So it goes on and on until, a hundred and fifty years later, the oracle is heard saying: “Mr. Jones, in 1750, always came on reading a book bound in paper, with a volume of *The Times* in his pocket.” So much for tradition.

\* \* \* \* \*

I shall try to describe what happens during the first scene in *Macbeth*, and describe it as one preparing the play on a stage, or as one who sees it as something real, or as one who has heard it described by another.

Sometimes I have given names to the different ways—for example, the “serio-comic way,” the “usual way” and the “Shakespeare way.” This last I have had to imagine, for I have not the faintest trust in what I have been told was the Shakespeare way.

Mine won’t be his way, but I’ll risk it in the belief that it was true he liked his wine and good company.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

[The Romantic way]<sup>28</sup>

“Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine  
And thrice again to make up nine— *(a little bell)*  
Peace!—the charm’s wound up.”<sup>29</sup>

For them—but not for us. By no short cut, nor by any roundabouts, can we escape the difficulties—mine the difficulties of *describing* what I was born to *show*; thine the difficulty of having to read, instead of look.

*(Lightning)*

Suppose I issue 999 numbered copies of this book, and you read your copy, no. 99, at one hour after your morning sack—say at 9 minutes to 9—it won’t wind up the charm for me, and the word *Peace* is a false alarm.

*(Lightning and thunder)*

This word, *Peace*, properly spoken by [Rachel](#), were she alive to-day, would send a shudder through the whole house ... but if she were alive to-day, she would not consent to play one of the three witches in any production of *Macbeth*—unless, of course, Mr. [Playfair](#), carrying on the [Beerbohm Tree](#) tradition, could persuade Mrs. [Kendal](#) and Miss [Ellen Terry](#) to play the other two—or, failing these, [Bernhardt](#) and [Duse](#).

*(A rumble of thunder)*

But here we two—you and I—have the pull of [Playfair](#), his tradition, and the whole visible world. For we can call on the invisible world to aid us: and as our scene is one which deals with the supernatural, let us make infernal hay while the moon shines.

(*Lightning and a crash of thunder*)

I would rather produce you the scene nine times, on a stage of my own, in your theatre. But folk won't let you have a theatre, so I can't have the stage of it—and business is business—and eggs is eggs—and if I may, for once, be allowed to give myself away, I'm cruel enough to be<sup>30</sup> very glad that poor Playfair and Du Maurier and Bouchier and the others are all saddled with theatres<sup>31</sup>— which they think they ride, but which are riding them to death.<sup>32</sup>

When and if ever I am asked to control a theatre, I will accept only on the condition that I am the sole proprietor and manager. I want no three committee-meeting again, to decide my fate—throwing in the poisoned entrails of their mischief, to my harm.<sup>33</sup> If I have a theatre, I must be in a position to buy out all the witches in the world, so as to be able to get to *work* with my good men and true. It is important, you know, that work should not be interrupted—the spell of creating a good thing not broken by hags and their hassish or haggis.

And it is not unimportant that a book about a certain scene in *Macbeth* should not be split up at the very beginning by digression: see how these fiends work—how they can succeed in spoiling everything, even now and here!

Far-off thunder—the storm has passed—what a relief it is to me to have at last discovered a lightning-conductor ... Playfair and the others! My house, my table, are where they were, and I am where I was, and there is blue sky outside my window: and an immense stage spreads itself for me—actors innumerable—scenes—lights—and no grease-paint. And here, inside my room, I sit and call to the huge stage to yield me up all I need to produce this scene for you nine times—and what man cannot give us, nature, maybe, will.

I will send you<sup>34</sup> the nine productions which I have received from nature; and you, in your room, will get a glimpse of what I have seen here.

As Miss Albery<sup>35</sup> asks £35 a week for interpreting the role of the third witch, I will, with your approval, engage Rachel. For the first witch, I had imagined Miss Tony Lumpkin; but she is<sup>36</sup> always getting ill—refuses to rehearse after a certain hour—brings out a book of trumpery Rules of the Actors' Union—worries me to death—so I am engaging Mademoiselle Raucourt for the first witch. How well<sup>37</sup> she will open the fourth act, with the line: "Thrice the brindled cat hath mew'd!"

For the second witch, I had thought of William Poel—but seeing that Rachel and Raucourt are to be the other two, I fear Poel would not be seen or heard. I must have something stronger—less afraid of the old school—able to spout—spout fire—*le diable au corps*. I have decided on Voltaire.<sup>38</sup>

My stage shall be any stage you like—all stages adapt themselves to our Poet-Dramatist—although they admit they are all too mean for him. If only actors ... but no more digressions.

Our scene-shifters—any that exist—*they* are all right.

Our lighting men—any who have no other occupation by day.

The only difficulty was to find the actors, and that difficulty is now removed.

The curtain rises.

My God, what is happening!—who ordered the stage to swarm with creatures, black and glistening like rats?—what is this thud ... thud ... thud, which sounds like the far-off tomtoms in the valley of Ismahoola in Masuto Land? Who dared to interfere when I was going to begin a rehearsal—why is the thing taken out of my hands—my plans upset—the thing finished before it is even begun? It isn't at all as I would do it—like some characters in a novel, which run away from the novelist and do as they will, so are these three witches doing.

I am about to cry to Potter, the Prompter, to lower the curtain, when an immense shadow sweeps down and covers the crowd who thump and trill, and hushes them as a kettle hushes when it comes to the boil. There is a slamming of three immense doors, and at every slam out go the lights<sup>39</sup>—first at one side, then at the other side and then at the back. In the silence which follows I can hear, afar off as it were, the faint cries of poor Potter, who can no more control what's going on.

I have now retreated to the back of the pit, to see if I can get out—when I stumble against someone—it is old Potter, who has groped his way down from the stage, through the upstairs passage of the Royal Box, and is indignantly panting and saying he never heard of such a thing.

Suddenly: "Look there!" he cries; and as a flash of violet light seems to explode on the stage, lighting up the whole theatre, I see Potter's<sup>40</sup> perspiring face, and his grip on my arm pulls me down onto a bench.

Well, then, I will look on, since I never produced the thing in this way. I, who was but a few moments ago on the stage, directing, and had only come round into the stalls to see what the effect would be as the curtain rose—I am become an actor in the event. Let me play the spectator as I know the part is played best, and allow the spectacle to dominate me.

I will describe to you what I saw and heard.

Not three witches, but thirty, and another thirty, and thirty more. In three rings, close-packed, like crushed files of soldiers: black, grey and green, these three wheels revolve—churning the ground up till they become a cone—at the summit of which, half toppling down, but, like a frozen spear, erect—the three witches emerge.<sup>41</sup>

In the deliberate, slow, forced tones of hypnotic drunkenness, each word is uttered; and at the end of each line a solemn support is rendered by first one circle, then another—uttering "gain", "rain", "one", "won:" and so the lines stagger out, till the final "y air" ... and once again an effort is made by the circles of rat-like, drunken soldiers to circle round to the howl of the eight syllables—"Fair—oul—oul—air—over—og—ilthy—yare."

As the attempt is being made, the wheels seem to slowly become frozen—and at the end, nothing living remains, but a mud-heap which some bursting shell from some forgotten gun made once in Flanders.<sup>42</sup>

Copied 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1932.

\* \* \* \* \*

[An unnamed way]<sup>43</sup>

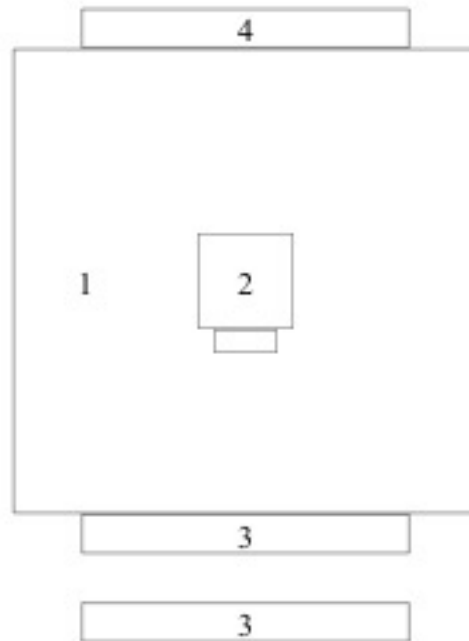
January 1935.

Now for one of the ways. This time put down as though at rehearsal.

We have for scene a more or less bare stage.

— Backcloth plain—to receive some lines cast by the light men from above.

— On floor are two large square steps. Thus:



- (1) Step about 1 foot in height
- (2) Step about 1 foot in height (with low ½ foot tread in front of it)
- (3) Opening near to step 1, or some space from it. It leads down under stage and is composed of 6 steps.
- (4) Opening at rear of step 1 (not steps but a slope leading down under stage from the step 1).

Lights—from above and from low down on the stage—reflectors and slits (see “Technical Book 15”).<sup>44</sup>

Music—voices in rising storm.

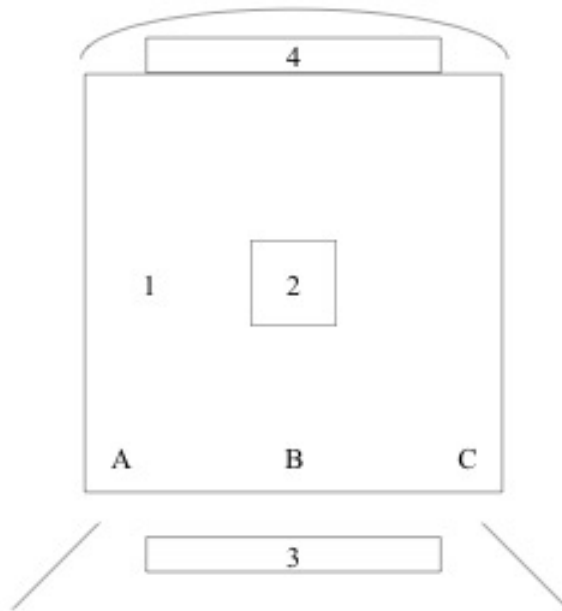
The Curtain is rent into two—at apex of storm.



The hullabuloo continues and we hear beneath a noise which has in it the thud of a machine. All noises are reduced—storm voices rising and falling—and from front opening in stage come a number of grotesque figures such as Breughel has taught us to imagine. Perhaps six, ten, fifteen; all sizes, all shapes, all speeds; they come and all up towards the back they go over the steps 1 and 2—and down into the opening at back 4.

As they flee across from front to back the top lighters release two streaks of light directly onto the floor which form a perspective vanishing in the centre of backcloth and spreading to the side edges of the front opening in floor 3. These streaks seem to flow forwards like 2 streams of jerked light. The grotesque figures gone, after them come the 3 witches.

These 3 figures are wild—furious and fast in movement. Their dresses, hair, ribbons and all stream back from them in shreds—as they advance rapidly toward the back point 4.



They advance—or rather *seem* to advance for in actuality they only *act* this. They tramp—bending against the wind which seems to come at them from point 4. They tramp—sway—are pushed back but advance—the light streaks at the side working towards this delusion?—illusion? The storm keeps up—and the three are in a line A.B.C. They preserve this line more or less exactly all the time they are pressing onwards—talking all the time—muttering—cursing—laughing furiously. They scream their words across at each other—they keep tramping on.

The voices in the air take up this word or that word of theirs and lengthen or clip it off—with cries or wails or what you will.

At the word “Macbeth” one of them goes nearly mad. A flash of lightening sizzles down—i.e., their familiar “Graymalkin;” in other words “Pussy, pussy, pussy!” “Graymalkin” and “Paddock” the thunder are their joys—their little pets. The word “Anon” is flung up with a shriek.

They have disappeared down the opening 4 by the last words “filthy air” and the scene ends.

\* \* \* \* \*

[Another unnamed way]<sup>45</sup>

“When shall we three meet again”

“WE three”—“Did you never see the picture of ‘*we three*’” asks the Clown of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew.<sup>46</sup> The words “we three” in the mouth of the first witch suddenly give rise to a new thought—a new vision. One seems to see grinning face and to hear laughter.

Voices cackle—nothing solemn is here—all is too drunken—rat-like—not fuddled drunkenness but a blazing and fierce riot of intemperance. Excessive and tumultuous laughter—ragged and violent gestures, words screeched and confused—all order gone. The words, the gestures, the noises and cries race out and the scene is scarce begun ere it ends. Before and after it has raced, a song of vehemence—a rattle and a howl.

26<sup>th</sup> Feb: 1937 St G[ermain] en L[aye]

\* \* \* \* \*

[The actors’ way]<sup>47</sup>

.AGAIN.<sup>48</sup>

*“Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine  
And thrice again to make up nine;  
Peace!—the charm’s wound up.”*

The play begins—will you three lend me your aid? You, *Isadora*, you *Eleonora*, and you... nearer to the angels than are most humans, and nearer to the fiends than are most angels. “You should be women, yet your genius forbids me to interpret that you are so.”<sup>49</sup>

To have known you ... and now to call on you—

Ring up the curtain—let us make infernal hay while the moon shines.<sup>50</sup>

*(Lightning and a crash of thunder, and the rag goes up.)*

Onto the stage—here I sit in the darkened house, its empty seats now draped with grey dust-cloths, hanging like palls before the loges, covering like shrouds the stalls and other seats—the theatre ready for work—dead—like tombs, but to us all so strangely dear ... and round me come men and women loved by us all—dead and gone, but eager still to guide things, with Hecate and her legions. For in the dusk I see *Voltaire*, slipping silently into a seat in the stalls, and *Rachel* with him—for once they will not run us down—for once all is alive with longing to create and not to kill.

Solemn [Raucourt](#) is here too, and the giddy, witty Sophie—[Sophie Arnould](#)—she will watch you, Isadora, and understand you best of all. Shakespeare is not in the house—the last person who would dream of coming in person, is present in his verse.

There is a hurried slamming of doors and shutting-out of the last streaks of light, as the curtain rises—and all is as still as death. There is nothing on the stage—utterly bare—only its immense brick walls can be seen, towering up, queerly broken into a hundred different shapes which nothing but an accident of the gods could design so perfectly.

And before a moment has gone, come my three assistants.

Shall I stop them and protest that they have not entered to plan? Good God, no ... here they come, closely linked arm in arm, stepping on—advancing to the deliberate and natural rhythm which only three such beings can move to without a word said in explanation, nothing planned and nothing lacking—only an increased astonishment swelling in us all. Even Voltaire does not smile, but is wrapt.<sup>51</sup>

They slow down—they seem to be aware of each other, yet not to see—they stop. Afar off is a sound—it seems to us a sound, far off, of a terrible din—a noise so hideous—a mixed noise of cries and the labouring of machines—of hopeless cries, with a cry, here and there, of hope—and sounds as though a hundred paviers, afar off, were hammering stones to make a road to nowhere—a light as though a thousand stars were dying out—and the rushing sound of blood to the head of us all.

This immense turmoil, charged full of unspoken grief—becomes almost a silence—and in that silence, as she droops her head sideways, after lifting it twice in vain, we see her lips moving—she is speaking, but the words fall dead: then comes her small, raucous, aged voice, so sweet and yet so harsh;<sup>52</sup> charged full with an awful sadness, it says but this: “*When shall we three meet again?*” and it is a voice which, having tired of all the silly things of this earth, grows more and more strangely quiet as it utters the words which follow.

Who is she? We no longer ask—she no longer cares to say, nor her sister or sister’s sister.

On they go and all the while, it would seem, music falls from them as water which drips down from unseen springs—the words do not matter, because they matter so much—the sounds do not matter, because they more than matter—there is no motion: then what is it that holds us?—their presence alone.

It is of Macbeth they are speaking—of a man who is too weak to catch the nearest way—but who has a wife.

It is this wife they are concerned with, though they speak of him; the word “Macbeth” falls indifferently from their lips, as who should say “the moon,” perhaps—oh yes, the moon.

And from the moon, or from hell, or from a world unknown, seems to come a cry—a call. Are they concerned by that? They prettily answer it; they call it by a silly name—“Greymalkin”—and they call it “Paddock” ... What matter what name, or who calls?—it may be the Devil himself—to them he is but Flibbertigibbet, or Puss: the rhythm is unbroken, for all the callings of ten thousand worlds of demons or angels—on it goes—with the last words which but begin what is never to end:

*“Fair is foul and foul is fair,  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.”*

Nothing moves—no one can move: is the curtain down?—who saw it fall—who sees it, be it here?

This was the first, the last and only way such a scene was conceived to be done.

26<sup>th</sup> September, 1928.<sup>53</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

### Epilogue<sup>54</sup>

*End.* I am asked:

Now, which way would you have it go, this scene? If any of the nine, if it is all the same to you, then what style will your production have? It is a careful question and needs a careful answer. Each way is a key to nine ways of producing the whole play. If I have no theatre of my own, no fellow artists sworn to abide *fascisticamente* by my word, then any way will do—for whatever I may do, the piece cannot be of a piece. It can only be a patchwork: no one’s fault, but the fault of a system—that system which is blind to aesthetics and devoid of imagination.

But if I have a Theatre of my own, I should select one of these ways without hesitation—but which way depends upon the size of my theatre, the — the — and not upon the audience.

All audiences have imagination and a heart and a head. Theirs is not the fault that they are denied so much—it is the fault of modern reason—which reasons very badly about this splendid public, saying it is a fool. It is magnificent.

## NOTES

1. This portion of the typescript has no counterpart in the manuscript.
2. Lines 12-13.
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance* (first published in 1841): "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines" (Emerson 59). This is but a stock quotation, which does not prove that one has actually read Emerson. However, there were at least four Emerson books in Craig's library.
4. The typed text reads: "a Roman Academy"; Craig blotted the adjective "Roman" out, without correcting the "a" into "an."
5. Craig was in Moscow in 1909 for the first discussions with Stanislavsky about their production of *Hamlet*, which eventually was performed in 1912. In this paragraph, Craig is probably alluding to the Moscow Art Theatre's habit of noting down, day by day, every detail of Craig and Stanislavsky's conversations. See Senelick.
6. On the typescript, Craig made the following handwritten addition: "(In 1935 when I again visited Moscow I saw a tragedy of Shakespeare's performed by a Jewish company perfectly)," which refers to the Moscow State Jewish Theatre's production of *King Lear*, directed by Sergei Radlov (1892-1958) and performed by Solomon Mikhoels (1890-1948)—a production he enjoyed so much that he saw it four times in a time-span of six weeks.
7. Carroll 87.
8. Craig's holograph addition: "except the Jewish company in Moscow."
9. Craig's holograph annotations on his copy of Katharine F. Boulton, *The Life of Hector Berlioz as Written by Himself in his Letters & Memoirs* show that he regarded Berlioz as an artist twin, who had had to fight the same struggles against narrow-minded opponents who were unable and unwilling to understand his innovative art.
10. Such geometric shapes as the circle and the square are at the root of Craig's scene vocabulary. Craig is therefore implicitly claiming here that his own vocabulary is closely related to the very essence of the Greek theatre.
11. *Henry V*, Prologue 13.
12. *King Lear* 3.6.71.
13. This sentence was probably meant as an attack against George Bernard Shaw, who was a member of the Fabian Society.
14. In the manuscript, a later rewording of this passage reads as follows (EGC Ms B 36, p. 9r-10r):

1933. July

—The weird women—

—a pause for considering their looks and their deeds—

I know it is supposed that we who practise the craft of stage production do not trouble to read carefully what the author has written down. This is not true—we read it all over and over again with great care—we return to it daily. Then we allow our imagination to fill in the gaps—if there are any. And there are wastes here, not gaps—it's what a great writer intends there to be. Let us go through the play and put down word for word all that Shakespeare describes.

These three come upon us suddenly—till they appear there has been nothing said in the play which describes them, because they say the first word.

But the poet has described them later on. He says they seem to Macbeth “withered” and “wild in their attire”—looking “not like the inhabitants of the Earth” each with choppy fingers and skinny lips. Women yet with beards—and says that these vanish—into the air—melt as breath into the wind. This particularly strikes him (M[acbeth]) for he writes it later to his wife saying “they made themselves air into which they vanished” ... “these weird sisters”.

“The weird women” says Banquo, who also saw them. After a while—after forgetting his first shock—they slip out of Macbeth’s recollection, when he again sees them he calls them “filthy hags” again they “vanish”.

At first there is little or no suggestion that they are merely old Scottish hillside women—were they such none would be astonished or ask “what are these who look not like the etc.” They are nearer to the stuff which took possession of the body of Thrawn Janet in the tale [Robert Stevenson](#) tells, than just miserable old hags of a more usual kind.

Yet when all’s said about them they’ve not been minutely described—yet when all’s done they’ve done a lot of mischief.

At the first accidental meeting they startle this tired out man, and their mysterious way and strange words play upon his mind. But they do not resolve it. They only unsettle him. It is a weirder sister of them—the fourth—his wife who makes up his mind for him.

Once resolved he goes ahead only too directly. Indeed he forgets the sisters—doesn’t seem to remember his wife—and thinks only “What a good boy am I.”

For a second time he sees these women—He goes deliberately—He is monarch of all he surveys and doesn’t give a dam’.

In this scene of incantation and hell-broths he is easily the wickedest strongest figure.

Here they are very active—active in body and tricks. At the first meeting they are far more sinister. But in this first of all appearance—before meeting with the mouse they will play with—what then?

15. *Old Moore’s Almanac* is an almanac that was published for the first time in 1764 in Dublin by the astrologer Theophilus Moore. This paragraph can be compared with the following passage from “On the Ghosts in the tragedies of Shakespeare” (Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre* 133):

We should see them, not as Hazlitt imagined them, as “hags of mischief, obscene panderers to iniquity [...],” but rather picture them to ourselves as we picture the militant Christ scourging the moneylenders, the fools who denied Him. Here we have the idea of the supreme God, the supreme Love, and it is that which has to be brought into *Macbeth* on the stage. We see in this instance the God of Force as exemplified in these witches, placing these two pieces of mortality upon the anvil and crushing them because they were not hard enough to resist.

16. The typescript reads: “16<sup>th</sup>”; a handwritten correction, not in Craig’s hand, proposes: “19<sup>th</sup>?”



17. “Mother Shipton” is the nickname given to Ursula Southeil (ca. 1488–1561), an English soothsayer whose prophecies were first published in 1641. *Old Mother Hubbard and her dog* is a popular nursery rhyme by Sarah Catherine Martin (1768–1826), first published in 1805. The name “Mother Hubbard” is already to be found in Edmund Spenser’s (ca. 1552–99) *Prosopopoia, or, Mother Hubberd’s Tale*, published in 1591.
18. The corresponding passage, in the manuscript, reads as follows (EGC Ms B 36, p. 1r):

Methods for doing the sceneries. Built—painted—hung—projected

(1) The Fates. Greek and modern. Classic.

(2) Some statues and architectural. Craigish.

(3) Sorcerers Middle Ages.

(4) Shades and air. *Light*.

(5) Ordinary swift old Scotch humbugs—cracked hags. Romantic.

(6) Mortals more than mortal. Modern dress.

(7) After music in air, drums in earth. more and more. Then the witches come out of earth door with Death— “*Smugglers*”. Behind down a slope passes Macbeth with the fresh drums and pipes of his army. French picture.

(8) The *hammering demons*—on rock—with rocks. Drums like Zulu.

(9) Lady M[acbeth] asleep in a room. Roofs—side house open—Sounds battle and pipes. Witches *in* room, almost unseen. Lady M (head to foot) violent angular gestures of fury from W[itche]s—then creep out of room, lock bolt—1. 2. 3. Whispered “when shall we meet again” (1928).

(10) The comic way. New ways with new theatres designed newly.

19. See Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons* 7–9:

In one respect, the tragedy of *Macbeth* always reminds me of Æschylus’s poetry. It has scenes and conceptions absolutely too bold for representation. ... I wish to imagine these scenes [from Æschylus]: I should be sorry to see the acting of them attempted.

In like manner, there are parts of *Macbeth* which I delight to read much more than to see in the theatre. When the drum of the Scottish army is heard on the wild heath, and when I fancy it advancing, with its bowmen in front, and its spears and banners in the distance, I am always disappointed with Macbeth’s entrance, at the head of a few kilted actors. Perhaps more effect might be given to this scene by stage preparation; though with the science of stage effect I can pretend to little acquaintance. But, be that as it may, I strongly suspect that the appearance of the weird sisters is too wild and poetical for the possibility of its being ever duly acted in a theatre. Even with the exquisite music of Lock, the orgies of the witches at their boiling cauldron is a burlesque and revolting exhibition. Could any stage contrivance make it seem sublime? No! I think it defies theatrical art to render it half so welcome as when we read it by the *mere* light of our own imaginations. Nevertheless, I feel no inconsistency in reverting from these remarks to my first assertion, that, all in all, *Macbeth* is our greatest possession in dramatic poetry. With the exception of the weird sisters, it is not only admirably suited for stage representation, but it has given the widest scope to the greatest powers of British acting.

20. Corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, p. 1v):

“I strongly suspect that the appearance of the *weird sisters* is too wild and poetical for the possibility of its being ever duly acted in a theatre.” *Life of Mrs Siddons* by Thomas Campbell, 1834, vol. II, page 8.

21. Jean Bérain's décor for Lully's (not Gluck's) *Armide* in 1686 was particularly spectacular, especially in Act 5, during which a palace is destroyed and many demons fly up to the sky.
22. Citations are Furness 3, with internal quotation from Seymour, *Remarks, Critical, Conjectural, and Explanatory on Shakespeare*; and Coleridge 241.
23. Corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, back of first cover):

Considering it as any ordinary person etc. It has to mean something—or to swing along so lyrically that it seems to mean something. When shall we come together and where and to what end? When the battle is over on the heath to waylay Macbeth. Why? No answer is given. All's understood. The thing is mysterious but it means very little and is in fact unnecessary as a dramatic scene. Is it essential as a theatrical one?

24. Corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, p. 1v):

*When* and *where* ask the 3 witches—not why! not how! and that is what we who are artists ask and no more—for witches and artists are very alike—in London in 1930—at Drury Lane—Done! Flash if lightning or a look and all's clear.

And to all those who have imagination and who allow it to move in the mysterious way that it can move, this booklet can only be an annoyance. It will only confuse their expression and confound them. These have but to read the ten lines and read them again—and then again—and their own fancies will provide sufficient sights and sounds—and like Mrs Siddons they will go off shudderingly to bed.

Paradox comes up in its baffling way when an attempt to write matter and spirit creates this obvious disharmony.

It is interesting to compare this passage with what Craig wrote in *On the Art of the Theatre*:

And who are these mysterious three who dance gaily without making any sound around this miserable pair as they talk together in the dark after the dark deed? We know quite well as we read; we forget altogether when we see the play presented upon the stage.

...

We should see the horror of the spirit on perceiving the triumph of this influence. Instead, we see of all this nothing on the stage. ... We see bogies and imps of the cauldron, and pitchforks, ... but we never see the God, the Spirit, which we ought to see ... . (132–34)

25. The corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, p. 1 bis) is a clean copy, not in Craig's hand. It reads as follows:

My notion is to take the shortest scene known—and describe how it can be done in eight or nine different ways—and design the ways.

My plan is to speak through two people—report what one says he saw done by the other—and as (maybe) a third dreams it in his room—maybe he is a Scotch minister reading the terrific words for the first time—a fourth “Start eyes what! will the light stretch out to the crack of doom.” In fact “Show their eyes and grieve their heart (if they have one) come like shadows ... Each “showing” to be different to the last.

*Realistic* selecting 3 Russian actors for the three parts.

*Romantic* and I call Rachel, Raucourt and Voltaire.

*English* Every one worth calling refuses the three roles: they all want to play Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. I devote part of this description of the “method” used in describing the interviews with Miss [Thorndyke](#) and Mr. [Ainley](#) and their reasons for refusing and their

price for agreeing. Finally I take a charwoman—a fireman and the lady in the box-office for the parts.

*Symbolic* Three singers chosen.

*Decorative* Three artists models maybe and so on if I can last out nine times.

Just after that passage, Craig jotted the following holograph notes:

Pace: swift—slow—deadly slow. Voice and gesture.

Position: high—low—down.

Sound: hushed—croaking—immense.

Mask: face—half and half.

26. Corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, p. 2r):

—The apology—

This is an exercise—not a very difficult one nor very interesting perhaps—except to stage managers.

Yet there may be some curiosity among a large number of others, to know how it is that someone has seen four or six different ways of doing one scene in a play, and sufficient—to find out how.

It would not be too much to attempt to subject the whole play in a book to this treatment and if well writ it would not be tedious. Yet one scene sufficiently demonstrates the thing I want to demonstrate, which is, that each play—each act—and each scene of Shakespeare is capable of many different interpretations.

I shall describe what happens during the scene—either as one who is at work preparing it in his room—or as one who sees it as something real which is happening. I shall indicate each scene by sketch or plan.

I am of course unable to do more than show in how many different ways it has occurred to me the scene could be treated—and I can but make the whole thing personal.

Where I have not been able to add designs I have contented myself with a few words.

Sometimes I have given *names* to the different ways—but as a rule I have not. For example “The Shakespeare way:” I have tried to imagine what this could be—unsatisfactory to attempt such a thing. One’s own way is spite of our limited capacity better than when we ape the way of another however terrifying his name may be. We, spite of our frailty, will do better by being ourselves than by pretending to be Godlike.

27. *Henry VIII* 1.4.5–7: “he would have all as merry / As, first, good company, good wine, good welcome, / Can make good people.”

28. This chapter title is not to be found on the typescript; it is the editor’s conjecture, based on Craig’s statement in the manuscript, on p. 1 bis. On the typescript, Craig inserted two holograph annotations, one at the beginning: “(Written circa 1920–22)” and the other at the end: “Written 1920–22 (not later).” The typed text is followed by this annotation in Daphne Woodward’s hand: “about 1,430 words.” The corresponding passage in the manuscript covers pages 3 to 7 and is immediately followed, on p. 8r, by these ill-related sentences:

There are three witches who live in a house in Bedford.

I was told it was in Bedford they lived, and the man who told me the story told me; but I can't think Bedford is to be held responsible.

These three witches delight in destroying. (ET [Ellen Terry] and the three witches of Bedford Street).

These cryptic sentences actually refer to Edward Gordon Craig's sister, Edith Craig (1869–1947). In 1932, she was dwelling with two other women, Christopher St John (1871–1960) and Clare "Tony" Atwood (1866–1962) in one flat in Bedford Street in London. Katharine Cockin sheds some light on the reasons for Craig's anger at his sister and her two companions:

As regards the family battle over ownership of Ellen Terry's story, 1932 was for Edith Craig the year of speaking out. Craig and St. John collaborated on a revised edition of *The Story of My Life*, renamed *Ellen Terry's Memoirs*, with extra chapters and explanatory notes. This was published explicitly in response to Edward Gordon Craig's *Ellen Terry and Her Secret Self*. (Cockin 167)

This was but the climax of a battle that had been being fought since 1930, the year in which Edith Craig and St. John had published *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*. That book infuriated Craig, who replied by publishing his own *Ellen Terry and Her Secret Self* in late 1931. Craig's purpose in his biography of his mother was to minimise her public life as an actress, and highlight the domestic aspects of her life as a mother and housewife. Holroyd sums up the consequences of this two-year long battle as follows:

Gordon Craig soon found himself fighting on two fronts: against GBS [George Bernard Shaw], the usurper who could not control his pen; and against Edy's army of supporters who could not control their rage. "King of Cads—Prince of Hypocrites—Lord of Cowardly Assassins," one of their letters read, "Your mother weeps in heaven at the spectacle of your degradation. To this can jealousy and vanity bring a man—the public traducing of his mother, the public slander of his sister." (Holroyd 528)

29. Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.3.35–37.
30. The words "cruel enough to be" are a holograph addition of Craig's to the typescript.
31. Craig's holograph annotation in the margin: "Written in 1922—or 1920—".
32. These words, which are to be found on both the manuscript and the typescript, were later substituted, on the typescript, with Craig's following handwritten correction: "and thinking they rode, were riding to death."
33. Craig is probably alluding here to the failure of his project for an International Übermarionette Theatre in Dresden in 1906, which was due to "insufficient support from committee and backers" (Newman 61). Ever after that infelicitous event, the very term "committee" remained unbearable to Craig.
34. Two words in the manuscript were not typed by Woodward: "from here."
35. A pencilled annotation in the margin, not in Craig's hand, reads: "(a real name)." James Albery (1838–89) was a British playwright in one of whose plays Henry Irving acted in 1870; his son Bronson James Albery (1881–1971) was a theatre manager, in whose memory the New Theatre in London was renamed the Albery Theatre in 1973. However, it seems very unlikely that Craig had any intention to attack here either of them. The choice of the names "Albery" and "Lumpkin" may be attributed solely to Craig's whimsicality.
36. The word "is" is blotted out.

37. "Well" is a manuscript addition.
38. Here Craig intended to insert a footnote with biographical details about Voltaire, Rachel, and Raucourt, but eventually he only sketched Voltaire's biography as follows:

You know Rachel, Raucourt, and Voltaire, but for some who do not here is a little footnote. The last first. Voltaire was an actor—a playwright too, but an actor first and last. That he happened to write *Candide* is so much added to his credit. It was Voltaire who was so keen about "*le diable au corps*." (See 1743 and quote). Raucourt ... Rachel ...

Craig's assertion that Voltaire was "an actor first and last," able to "spout fire" on stage, is certainly based on this passage from Francis Espinasse's *Life of Voltaire*, a copy of which he possessed: "Voltaire opened in his Paris mansion a private theatre of his own, chiefly for the performance of his new dramas ... . At subsequent representations [of his 1749 play *Rome sauvée*] Voltaire himself played the part of Cicero, with vigour and fire in abundance and superabundance" (Espinasse 108). Craig annotated that last sentence with this interjection: "Inconceivable!"

The parenthesis "(See 1743 and quote)" alludes to the rehearsals for the première of Voltaire's *Mérope* in 1743, during which Voltaire blamed the actress Mademoiselle Dumesnil (1713–1802) for not being passionate enough. The actress replied that it took one to have the devil in the flesh in order to meet his requirements, to which he responded that it takes one to have the devil in the flesh in order to excel in any art—a motto that could but appeal to Craig. Condorcet (1743–94), in his *Vie de Voltaire* (first published by Kehl: Société littéraire typographique, 1789), describes that scene as follows:

Lorsqu'il [= Voltaire] fit répéter *Mérope* pour la première fois, il trouva que cette fameuse actrice ne mettait ni assez de force ni assez de chaleur dans le quatrième acte, quand elle invective Polifonte. Il faudrait, lui dit Mademoiselle Dumesnil, avoir le diable au corps pour arriver au ton que vous voulez me faire prendre. Eh, vraiment oui, Mademoiselle, lui répondit M. de Voltaire, c'est le diable au corps qu'il faut avoir pour exceller dans tous les arts. (Condorcet 43)

Voltaire is known to have had an ambivalent attitude to Shakespeare. On the one hand, he contributed to make him known in France, through translations of Hamlet's famous soliloquy and of *Julius Caesar*; on the other hand, he criticized his "barbaric" style, and protested that French theatres should produce plays by Corneille and Racine rather than by a playwright so profoundly different from the French taste.

39. Thus on the typescript. On the manuscript: "out goes the light."
40. Two words in the manuscript were not typed by Woodward: "tight drawn."
41. This paragraph is an elaboration on the text found on the second unnumbered flyleaf inserted by Craig in his manuscript (EGC Ms B 36). The upper part of that leaf was evidently torn away; Craig wrote, around 1920–22:

This cut away portion said that the stage was to hold many witches during the [wheels' devilry? *these two words are difficult to read*]—and that during the movement one, two and three detach themselves from the rest who continue their doings. These three stop each other and speak. (About 1900).

The rest of the text carried, along with a sketch, by this flying leaf, was probably written around 1900:



They stop in the centre  
 the rest           3 or 4 deep  
 and close together in a  
 circle with bent backs  
 Continue to circle round  
 then with a low sighing  
 noise

[Sketch]

Frogs all around, croaking.  
 The circle is *blue*, the centre purple with one red spot.

42. Craig may be alluding here to the *Macbeth* directed by Henry Kiell Ayliff (1872–1949) at the Court Theatre in London in 1928, which was “set as if in World War I . . . . Battle scenes at start and finish of the play were brought up-to-date with exploding shells and rattling machine-guns” (Styan 149).
43. This unnamed and unnumbered way was not typed by Woodward, as it was written by Craig much later than the rest of the text. It is available in the manuscript only (EGC Ms B 36, pp. 12–14).
44. This must refer to one of Craig’s manuscript notebooks. He often provided them with a nickname and/or a number.
45. This second unnamed and unnumbered way was not typed by Woodward either, as it is even later than the preceding one. It is to be found in the manuscript only (EGC Ms B 36, p. 15r).
46. Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 2.3.16–17.
47. This chapter title is not to be found on the typescript; it is the editor’s conjecture, based on Craig’s statement in the manuscript, on the first unnumbered flying leaf. The corresponding passage in the manuscript (EGC Ms B 36, first unnumbered flying leaf) reads as follows:

9<sup>th</sup> way    The words alone  
 Each word, syllable,  
 No motion, no costumings, sceneries = a wall, lights full up and suggest by these words—  
 word for word: the dark, the storm, the dread, the Fate, the place, time and act.  
 This is the actors’ way—where are they?  
 END

48. This word is a holograph addition by Craig on the typescript.
49. Craig is altering here *Macbeth* 1.3.45–47: “You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so.” Surely, Craig’s substitution of “your beards” with “your genius” can be regarded as just another manifestation of his well-known misogyny: Duncan, Duse and Terry are supposed to be women, yet they have genius, and in Craig’s opinion, it is impossible for women to have genius: therefore, they cannot be women.
50. Craig’s holograph annotation on the typescript: “This is a repeat from D,” i.e., from the “Romantic” way.
51. Craig is probably alluding here to Voltaire’s “hideous smile,” a French catchword borrowed from a poem by Alfred de Musset (1810–57), “Rolla” (first published 1833), Section IV, lines 1–2: “Dors-tu content, Voltaire, et ton hideux sourire / Voltige-t-il encor sur tes os décharnés?” (de Musset 307).
52. The recordings of Ellen Terry’s voice, made in 1911 and available on *Great Historical Shakespeare Recordings*, correspond quite well to Craig’s description. Her voice, in those recordings, already sounds “raucous” and “aged,” although she was only 63 years old.



53. Terry had died two months earlier, on July 21, 1928; Isadora Duncan had been dead since 1927, and Eleonora Duse since 1924. This last “way of opening Macbeth” can therefore be understood as a tribute to the three women whom Craig had admired most in his lifetime. Woodward added the following handwritten statement after these last words: “Copied 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1932. About 850 words.”
54. This undated epilogue was not typed by Woodward. It is to be found in the manuscript only (EGC Ms B 36, p. 42).

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON PERSONS MENTIONED BY CRAIG

- Ainley, Henry (1879–1945). British actor.
- Arnould, Sophie (1740–1802). French actress and singer.
- Bérain, Jean (1637–1711). French theatrical designer.
- Berlioz, Hector (1803–69). French composer.
- Bernhardt, Sarah (1844–1923). French actress.
- Bourchier, Arthur (1863–1927). British actor-manager.
- Brueghel, Pieter, the Elder (ca. 1525–69). Dutch painter.
- Burbage, James (ca. 1530–97). English actor and manager, father of Richard Burbage.
- Burbage, Richard (ca. 1567–1619). English actor and manager, son of James Burbage.
- Campbell, Thomas (1777–1844). Scottish poet. Author OF *Life of Mrs. Siddons* (1842).

Chaliapin, Feodor (1873–1938). Russian singer and actor.

Chambers, Edmund Kerchever (1866–1954). English literary critic and Shakespeare scholar.

Chekhov, Anton (1860–1904). Russian playwright.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1772–1834). British poet and critic.

Du Maurier, Gerald (1873–1934). British actor-manager.

Duncan, Isadora (1877–1927). American dancer.

Duse, Eleonora (1859–1924). Italian actress.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo (1803–82). American transcendentalist philosopher and essayist.

Furness, Howard Horace (1833–1912). American Shakespearean scholar. He edited a variorum edition of *Macbeth* in 1873.

Garrick, David (1717–79). British actor, manager, and playwright.

Gervinus, Georg Gottfried (1805–71). German literary and political historian. He wrote commentaries on Shakespeare in the mid-nineteenth century.

Gluck, Christoph Willibald (1714–87). German composer.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (1749–1832). German poet and playwright. From 1791 to 1817 he was the director of the Court Theatre company in Weimar.

Goldoni, Carlo (1707–93). Italian playwright.

Granville-Barker, Harley (1877–1946). British actor, director, playwright, and theater scholar.

Irving, Henry (1838–1905). British actor-manager, and Craig's mentor.

Kendal, Madge (1848–1935). British actress.

Molière (1622–1673). French playwright and actor.

Playfair, Nigel (1874–1934). British actor-manager and director.

Poel, William (1852–1934). British actor and director.

Pritchard, Hannah (1711–68). British actress.

Rachel (1820–58). French actress.

Raucourt, Mademoiselle (1756–1815). French actress.

Reinhardt, Max (1873–1943). Austrian director, actor, and manager.

Saxe-Meiningen, George II, Duke of (1826–1914). He founded the Meininger Company in his court theater in 1874, and made it famous for their sense of ensemble playing in crowd scenes. He was one of the first to emphasize the role of the stage director.

Schlegel, August Wilhelm (1767–1845). Critic, playwright, and translator.

Seymour, Edward Hickey (1755–1819). Irish actor. He compiled a collection of *Remarks, critical, conjectural, and explanatory, upon the plays of Shakespeare* (1805).

Shaw, George Bernard (1856–1950). Irish playwright, director, and critic.

Siddons, Sarah (1755–1831). British actress.

Stanislavsky, Konstantin (1863–1938). Russian director and actor.

Stevenson, Robert Louis (1850–94). British writer. In June 1881, he wrote a story devoted to Scottish witchcraft and titled “Thrawn Janet,” which was published in *Cornhill Magazine*, 1881, 44, pp. 436–43.

Terry, Ellen (1847–1928). British actress, and Craig’s mother.

Thorndyke, Sybil (1882–1976). British actress.

Voltaire (1694–1778). French philosopher, playwright, and novelist.

Tree, Henry Beerbohm (1853–1917). British actor-manager. His “traditional,” Victorian way of putting Shakespeare’s plays on was often the target of Craig’s sarcasms.

Yates, Mary Ann (1728–87). English actress.

**Patrick Le Boeuf** has been head of the Archival and Printed Materials Unit within the Performing Arts Department of the National Library of France since 2014. He was in charge of the Edward Gordon Craig Collection from 2006 to 2009, and again since 2014. He wrote several articles about Craig and curated in 2009 the exhibition in Avignon titled “Craig et la marionnette”.